



A NEW MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS RIGHTS

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After the Sydney Olympic Games, the International Triathlon Union (ITU) decided to take its entire media and television production as well as distribution activities back, in-house, after several years of working with agencies. The goal was to control our key messages efficiently and cost-effectively, and to retain full control of the ITU's media rights.

Knowing that television and media appeal is key to the success of an Olympic sport, the ITU decided to invest significant resources into this area, in order to develop the sport.

A young, energetic, media-savvy team was established to achieve the ITU's aggressive goals of becoming a market leader in TV and new media.

A ubiquitous media strategy has been developed in-house to deliver the sport across all media, using TV, radio, online and mobile technology.

The ITU has full control over its key messages, such as absolute gender equality, a clean and healthy sporting lifestyle, and the need for spectator and athlete-friendly events.

Controlling rights and working in-house ensures a cost-effective workflow, as we provide our stakeholders with large-scale media support, such as custom sponsor videos, archive footage, print material and so on. Stakeholders include National Federations (NFs), athletes, events organisers and sponsors. The cost of outsourcing these services would be prohibitive.

As a result, the ITU has found an optimal hybrid solution for maximising exposure while retaining control over important media rights. The ITU works in conjunction with SPORTFIVE, a major TV distribution and marketing company (which has now acquired Olympic rights), to produce and distribute our TV coverage. We are a fully integrated team, with ITU staff producing the TV programming and working closely with SPORTFIVE to maximise exposure and leverage our industry position.

The ITU currently produces more than 40 hours of live TV programming per year, plus 15 hours of highlight shows. We work with networks

to make bespoke programmes for each national broadcaster. This has paid dividends, securing important deals and exposure on free-to-air national broadcasters, such as NBC (USA), ARD/ZDF (Germany), BBC (UK), NHK (Japan), TVE (Spain), RTP (Portugal), TEN (Australia), TVNZ (New Zealand) and CCTV (China).

Our TV programming is now focused on promoting the sport to all sports fans, not just the established triathlon audience. The focus is on showing the dramatic aspects of the sport and generating sporting heroes for the general public, while stressing the importance of a healthy lifestyle for all ages, especially the younger generation.

The ITU has warmly embraced online media as a way of satisfying the needs and demands of the core triathlon audience. To ensure the widest possible reach, all events are broadcast in full, live and in high definition on the ITU website. All races are available on demand to view at any time, one hour after each race has finished. A one-hour magazine show featuring exclusive interviews and behind-the-scenes footage is produced and distributed the day after each event. This is also made available on line immediately.

In-depth interviews, training tips and behind-the-scenes features are also produced and distributed online to satisfy the growing demand for triathlon-focused programming, which is too specialised for the general TV audience.

The ITU's online audience has grown by an average of 90% per annum for the last five years, and continues to grow.

The ITU also distributes to all forms of media, including mobile media devices, games consoles and mobile phones. Race results and images are also distributed via MMS and SMS to mobile users.

All of this media material is produced in-house, and all the rights are completely controlled by the ITU, in association with our distribution partner. This is important, as some territories are more important in terms of exposure than of revenue. Having influence on distribution in house ensures the best possible balance of exposure for the sport, and revenue to reinvest in its future development.

The ITU also retains 100% of all online and new-media rights in respect of its content. This means that the ITU can ensure the widest possible distribution of ITU events, and also effectively control the revenues from a growing online market. In certain territories, the ITU will grant live online exclusivity, where significant broadcasting agreements are established and the broadcaster can show it has an online capability to effectively air the content.

Management of sports rights is an important topic to which the ITU has paid close attention. Controlling our Federation's sports rights ensures control of our message and the future direction of our sport.