

Survivor's rat-kabobs send PETA scurrying onto streets

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to CBS: no more rat-kabobs!

Following a recent installment of the ratings juggernaut *Survivor*, during which the plucky island inhabitants had themselves a rat-B-Q, PETA held a protest to, well, protest the treatment of everybody's favorite vermin. Armed with homemade signs and a giant rubber rat suit, eight PETA activists managed to draw an incredible amount of media attention – including nods in *The Wall Street Journal* and on CNN – to their cause.

“We don’t have the advertising budget to combat CBS’ reckless promotion of animal abuse,” says Lisa Lange, PETA’s director of policy and communications. “That’s why we have to resort to more colorful tactics – in this case, a six-foot-tall man in a rat suit.” She added that PETA is a longtime champion of rodents’ rights, though usually in the context of laboratory experiments.

Not surprisingly, the story was too tasty for the main-

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PETA... the group is understandably proud of its pro-rat agenda

stream media to ignore. Mercilessly punning their audiences into submission with dopey headlines (“Critter Rights Group Smells Rat,” “Tastes Like Chicken!”), the media’s coverage of the PETA protest was very much tongue-in-cheek, which didn’t bother Lange in the slightest: “Any press is good press, so long as they talk about these important issues.”

Smirking CBS officials weren’t impressed. “We have tremendous respect for PETA and their crusade, but viewers recognize that hunting and fishing for the sake of sustenance has been acceptable since the dawn of time,” says Chris Ender, SVP communications at CBS Entertainment. “The eight people, including the guy in the rat suit, were a very, very vocal minority.”

PR PLAY OF THE WEEK

Natural PR found in natural disaster

By Craig McGuire

Can a natural disaster make for good PR? When the 18-member crew from the sinking Don Gregorio fishing vessel was plucked from the sea 72 miles off the coast of Chile, Orbcomm communication pros answered the question by springing into action.

The fishing crew had been located the evening of September 5 by rescuers using Orbcomm’s low-Earth orbit satellite network and Marine Imaging Systems’ S.A. software.

Orbcomm chairman and CEO Scott Webster and PR

director Michelle Ferris sensed a PR opportunity to showcase the technology – especially the system’s value to the maritime industry.

To maximize the effect, the PR team at Orbcomm quickly crafted a dramatic press release. With Orbcomm drawing its 300-plus clients from markets spread around the globe, the company distributed various versions of the release internationally over PR Newswire.

According to *The Perfect Storm*-esque narrative of the release: “Water began to rapidly flood the engine room, and the pumps were failing ... the crew of Don Gregorio had taken refuge in life rafts as their vessel began a rapid three-mile descent to the bottom of the Humbolt Trench in



Emotional rescue... the mission made a splash in South America

the Eastern Pacific.”

Of course, the crew was rescued just in nick of time – and with no significant injuries to report.

At press time the story had already been reported in sev-

eral South American media outlets, with Orbcomm expecting coverage in the States.

● *Nominations for PR Play of the Week should be sent to news@prweekus.com*