

Use of an Organizational Weblog in Relationship Building: The Case of a Major League Baseball Team

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This case study explores the use of a Major League Baseball team's organizational weblog. Organizational weblogs are forums for the 2-way exchange of information and commentary between an organization and its publics. Most sport organizations, however, have yet to embrace the weblog as a form of organizational communication. Recent research suggests a greater need to understand how sport organizations might use weblogs to outreach to target audiences from a communications perspective. This study assesses whether readers perceive an organization's official weblog to be an effective form of 2-way communication and profiles the readers of an organizational weblog based on demographics, consumption patterns, and points of attachment. Results showed that readers perceived the organizational weblog to be highly conversational and effective at communicating organizational commitment. In addition, readers were voracious media consumers of the team's games, repeat ticket customers, and highly identified, both with the sport and with the team.

Keywords: weblogs, two-way communication, relationship building, organizational communication

Sport management scholars have emphasized the importance of developing positive relationships with key organizational publics as a central function of both public relations (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2006) and relationship marketing (Fullerton, 2007; Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2002; Milne & McDonald, 1999). Organizational publics are identified in the public relations literature as groups of individuals who relate to a sport organization in similar ways (Stoldt et al.). Kellerher and Miller (2006) suggested that the weblog, or "blog," was a unique way to

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develop and maintain relationships between an organization and its targeted publics. According to weblog search engine Technorati, there were more than 112 million weblogs on the Internet as of January 10, 2008 (“About Us,” n.d.). *Street & Smith’s Sports Business Journal* identified “the power of the blogger” as one of its Top 10 stories in 2006, calling it “the biggest story in media and marketing, not just in sports” (“Stories of the Year,” 2006, p. 11).

A typical weblog is “nothing more than a personal web site with content displayed in reverse-chronological order” (Scoble & Israel, 2006, p. 26). A unique and important feature of a weblog that distinguishes it from other forms of communication is the ability for readers to post responses to a particular entry. The author of the initial content can read these responses in real time and react to reader comments, creating a virtual dialogue. Regular readers of weblogs frequently develop relationships with one another through these postings, and communities of readers with similar interests can form.

Although most weblogs are personal, many organizations have begun to use weblogs as part of their online presence. Goodman (2006) found that 77% of 150 senior executives in Fortune 1000 companies should have corporate policies regarding organizational weblogs but were concerned about the organizational benefits of engaging in such activities. Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) concluded that organizational weblogs are effective in online relationship-building efforts.

Organizational weblogs, therefore, can be viewed as forums for the exchange of information and commentary between an organization and its publics. In this sense, a weblog meets Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) definition of two-way public relations. And to the extent weblogs and subsequent exchanges result in an organization and a public establishing mutually acceptable positions on various issues, the tactic results in a symmetrical outcome.

Online Communication in Sport

Most sport organizations have embraced the use of an official organizational Web site as a one-way communication tool to strengthen relationships with customers who are already highly identified and loyal to the organization. Milne and McDonald (1999) noted the importance of an organization’s Web site as a powerful tool to dialogue with customers, suggesting, “Marketers who want to be successful in the future must constantly be listening to their customers, gathering information on the types of products they want and services they desire” (p. 143).

Sport organizations have effectively used Web sites to generate revenue through the sale of merchandise and tickets, as well as communicating organizational messages with key publics. Brown’s (2003) study of 328 sport organizations found the potential benefits sport organizations considered most important when establishing a Web site were reaching a desirable demographic and establishing customer loyalty. Cravens (2006) observed organizational Web sites do both. “Most relevant is the use of an official athletic site to continue to grow the relationship that an athletic department has with its most important resources—the fans” (p. 232). Fans who visit sport-organization Web sites tend to be highly identified and loyal customers of the organization. As an example, the Philadelphia Eagles say 10% of traffic to their Web site is from users who visit at least 15 times per day (Fisher & Ourand, 2006).

Despite the successes of organizational Web sites, most sport organizations have yet to embrace the weblog as a form of organizational communication (Ballard, 2006; Brown, 2003; Mickle, 2006). Only recently have scholars begun to study how weblogs might be an effective way to outreach to target audiences from a marketing perspective. Greenwell and Andrew (2007) found that viral marketing, or word-of-mouth communication, was most effective in reaching fans of a minor league baseball team. They recommended that sport organizations enhance their viral marketing strategies by creating messages that can be transmitted between consumers and supporting bloggers. Seo and Green (2008) found that fan expression was a key motivator in consumption of online sport content on a sport organization's official Web site. They described fan expression as relating to expressing oneself through online content, using the Web site as a tool for forming opinions, and enjoying interactions with other fans. They also noted the consistency between fan expression and the concepts of community and belongingness, important benefits of sport consumers (Seo & Green).

Two-Way Communication

Grunig and Hunt (1984) conceptualized one-way and two-way models of communication. One-way communication models are employed when a sport organization focuses exclusively on directing messages to its key publics. Two-way communications models focus on give and take between a sport organization and its key publics (Pedersen, Miloch, & Laucella, 2007; Stoldt et al., 2006; Stoldt, Pratt, & Dittmore, 2007). Grunig and Hunt further distinguish between two approaches to two-way communication—an asymmetrical approach in which the organization's goal is to win a public's acquiescence on a particular issue and a more advance symmetrical model.

Two-Way Symmetrical Communication

The two-way symmetrical model uses both research and dialogue to produce a dynamic relationship between an organization and its publics, resulting in public relations actions that are mutually acceptable (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) argued that two-way symmetrical communications "should be the normative model for public relations—that it describes how excellent public relations should be practiced" (p. 291). It enables organizations and their publics to communicate interactively and as equals.

Organizations employ varied tactics in two-way symmetrical communications in an attempt to develop relationships with key publics, with the ultimate objective being a relationship in which the actions of either entity, the organization or the public, positively affects the economic, social, political, or cultural well-being of the other entity (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). An emerging tactic in two-way symmetrical communication is the use of dialogue on the Internet.

Grunig et al. (1992) stressed that dialogue is one of the most important elements of the symmetrical model of public relations. Stoldt et al. (2006) emphasized the element of dialogue in sport public relations as "crucial to modern public relations as it places much more importance on practitioners as receivers of information rather than merely disseminators" (p. 26). In this sense, practitioners are

concerned with developing long-term relationships with key publics and view the interaction between the organization and public as critical to establishing and maintaining that relationship.

In their study of dialogic communication on the Internet, Kent and Taylor (1998) defined dialogic communication as a give-and-take tactic, calling it a “negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions” (p. 325). They outlined five principles for public relations practitioners to employ if they are interested in building dialogic relationships on the Internet: a dialogic loop, ease of interface, conservation of visitors, generation of return visits, and provision of useful information. Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) conducted the first empirical study to investigate the presence of these features in environmental weblogs and concluded that weblogs “demonstrate many of the dialogic features and principles that are necessary for achieving the goals and objectives of public relations practitioners” (p. 229).

If weblogs are considered effective forms of dialogic communication, a key consideration becomes how that dialogue is portrayed. Kelleher and Miller (2006) studied the presence of conversation in Microsoft weblogs by developing an 11-item measure for conversational human voice (CHV) and a 6-item measure for communicated relational commitment (CRC). CHV was operationalized as a way to “emphasize human communication attributes capable of being conveyed in a computer-mediated context.” CRC was operationalized as a way to “emphasize an expressed commitment to building and maintaining a relationship and underscore the nature and quality of the relationship.” Their research concluded that weblogs are viewed as more conversational than traditional Web sites, and both CHV and CRC correlated positively with desirable relational outcomes for organizations.

Communication Effectiveness

One of the challenges for public relations practitioners is demonstrating how their actions are affecting key publics. That is, how can they measure the effectiveness of their tactics? Scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to this issue (Hon, 1998), yet there is little agreement in the public relations literature about how best to define and measure the effectiveness of organization–public relationships (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997).

Grunig et al. (1992) noted that public relations’ contribution to organizational effectiveness occurs “when it helps reconcile the organization’s goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organization. Public relations contributes to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies” (p. 86).

Hon and Grunig (1999) proposed a model to measure organization–public relationships by emphasizing six constructs: control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationships, and communal relationships. Control mutuality refers to the degree to which an individual and an organization have the ability to influence one another. Trust refers to the level of confidence an individual has in an organization. Satisfaction refers to the extent an individual feels positively about an organization because positive expectations are being reinforced. Commitment refers to the extent to which each party believes the relationship is worth maintaining. In an exchange relationship, both parties exchange benefits because they have done so in the past or expect to do so in the future. In a communal

relationship, both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned about the welfare of the other, even if they receive nothing in return.

The work of Kelleher and Miller (2006) showed a positive correlation between the presence of CHV on an organizational weblog and the relational outcomes of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment. In addition, they found that the presence of CRC on an organizational weblog correlated positively with the same four relational outcomes, as well as a communal relationship.

Fan Identification

Sport provides a unique setting for sport communications given the degree to which sport consumers identify with their favorite sports, teams, or athletes. Trail, Anderson, and Fink (2000) defined identification as an “orientation of the self in regard to other objects including a person or group that results in feelings of sentiments of close attachment” (pp. 165–166). Much research has focused on the effects of team identification, a fan’s psychological connection and attachment to a team (Wann, 1997). Robinson and Trail (2003) were among the first researchers to consider additional points of attachment beyond team identification, suggesting that fans might also identify with, among other aspects of the competition, the sport, coach, or players. Therefore, to profile who is reading organizational weblogs, it is important to understand the nature of their attachments.

Case-Study Purpose

Research has shown weblogs to be effective in relationship building for corporations (Kelleher & Miller, 2006) and environmental organizations (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007), especially in the principles of conversation and dialogue. In addition, sport management researchers have suggested that a sport organization’s official Web site is an effective tool for building relationships with key publics (Seo & Green, 2008). This recent research suggests a greater need to understand how sport organizations might use these Web-based communication tools to reach important organizational publics and further enhance the sense of community and belongingness prevalent among consumers of organizational Web sites and weblogs. This project is significant because the communication environment in which sport organizations operate is evolving and becoming more complex and difficult to manage (Pedersen et al., 2007). An analysis of a relatively new yet popular form of communication might be beneficial to sport communication professionals and students seeking to understand the environment and employ communication tactics that stand to benefit their organizations.

This case also develops a profile of a weblog reader. Specifically, this study attempts to identify key characteristics of weblog readers, such as customer location, ticket consumption, and media consumption. Furthermore, research has pointed to multiple points of attachment for sports fans and spectators (Robinson & Trail, 2003; Robinson, Trail, Dick, & Gillentine, 2005; Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003). Users of a sport organization’s official Web site are perceived as highly identified with the organization (Cravens, 2006; Fisher & Ourand, 2006),

although there is no empirical evidence to validate that statement. Therefore, this study uses points of attachment as an additional method to profile weblog readers.

Method

This study employed a survey instrument with three sections. The first section used previously validated scales to measure CHV and CRC. The second section measured points of attachment using previously validated scale items. The third section asked additional questions concerning demographics, media consumption, and game attendance to complete the profile of respondents. The appendix displays the complete survey instrument.

Kelleher and Miller (2006) developed a scale to measure both CHV and CRC as they related to organizational weblogs run at Microsoft Corp. Eleven items loaded on the CHV factor with an eigenvalue of 5.15, explaining 30.32% of the variance. The CHV scale produced a standardized alpha reliability coefficient of .87 (Kelleher & Miller). Six items loaded on the CRC factor with an eigenvalue of 3.73, explaining 21.96% of the variance. The CRC scale produced a standardized alpha reliability coefficient of .82 (Kelleher & Miller).

As indicated, the CHV and CRC scales developed by Kelleher and Miller (2006) were used and slightly modified, with references to Microsoft being changed to specifically reflect the team name. The instrument used a 7-point Likert-type scale with anchors of *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (7).

Subscales for identification from the Point of Attachment Index have previously shown good reliability and construct validity (Robinson et al., 2005; Trail et al., 2003). Specifically, the subscales measuring team, sport, and player identification were employed in the current study. Each scale included three items. References to university were changed to specifically reflect the team name. This portion of the instrument also used a 7-point Likert-type scale with anchors of *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (7). Subscale items in this portion of the instrument were mixed to prevent response bias.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they lived in the team's market; how frequently they attended games as ticket holders; how frequently they consumed the team's game through mediated communication such as television, radio, and the Internet; and basic demographic information such as age, gender, and zip code.

A field test was conducted to confirm the readability of the instrument. Students in a graduate sport management course at a northeastern U.S. university read the instrument and provided anonymous feedback. None of the field-test participants indicated problems with understanding the instrument, and the changes incorporated were cosmetic in nature.

The survey was administered electronically through Formsite.com on August 21, 2007. Josh Rawitch, vice president of public relations and broadcasting for the Los Angeles Dodgers, agreed to post the secure link as part of one of his daily postings on the team's official organizational weblog, <http://insidethedodgers.mlblogs.com>. Readers of the weblog were provided the option of linking to the

survey. The team made it clear the research was being conducted independently and was not affiliated with the team at all.

Results

Thirty-seven usable surveys were completed. Requests to increase the response rate by reposting the link on the weblog site were denied by the team. Of the 37 participants, 70% ($n = 26$) were male and 30% ($n = 11$) were female, with a mean age of 35 (min = 14, max = 74). Twenty-three of the 37 participants indicated they never post comments on the site, and only 1 participant indicated that he or she posts comments on a daily basis.

Mean scores were calculated for the 11 items that made up CHV scale and the 6 items that made up the CRC scale. Results from the study indicate that the Los Angeles Dodgers' official weblog is perceived favorably in relationship building because of its conversational nature and perceived relational commitment. The high mean scores for CHV ($M = 5.37$, $SD = .92$) and for CRC ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.29$) indicate that a sport organization's weblog is an effective relationship-building tool. Women reported greater levels of both CHV ($M = 5.84$, $SD = .60$) and CRC ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.02$) than men. Table 1 reports means and standard deviations for different subgroups of survey participants on CHV and CRC.

In terms of the profile of weblog readers, results from the study showed they were voracious media consumers of Dodger games (83.7% watch 41 or more of the team's games per year) and frequent ticket customers (45.9% attend more than

Table 1 Scores for Weblogs as a Form of Two-Way Symmetrical Communication

	Conversational Human Voice		Communicated Relational Commitment	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Overall ($N = 37$)	5.37	.92	5.08	1.29
Men ($n = 26$)	5.16	.97	4.91	1.38
Women ($n = 11$)	5.84	.60	5.47	1.02
Read weblog daily ($n = 25$)	5.54	.93	5.41	1.24
Read weblog 2–5 times/week ($n = 11$)	5.03	.86	4.39	1.19
Live in team market and attend games as ticket holder ($n = 26$)	5.45	.85	5.17	1.25
Live outside of team market and cannot attend games as ticket holder ($n = 8$)	5.03	1.03	4.58	1.39
Attend 5 games or less as ticket holder ($n = 12$)	5.08	1.08	4.64	1.51
Attend 6–10 games as ticket holder ($n = 8$)	5.78	0.79	5.48	1.26
Attend 11–40 games as ticket holder ($n = 12$)	5.61	0.67	5.58	0.87
Attend 41 games or more as ticket holder ($n = 5$)	4.78	0.95	4.27	1.19

10 of the team's games per year). Seventy percent ($n = 26$) of the participants indicated they live in the team's market and attend games as ticket holders. Out-of-market fans accounted for 21.6% ($n = 8$) of the participants.

In addition, mean scores were calculated for each of the three point-of-attachment measures: sport identification, player identification, and team identification. Results of the study indicated that readers of the Dodgers official weblog will be highly identified with the team. Participants in the current study clearly indicated a high degree of identification with the team ($M = 6.42$, $SD = .77$) but a low degree of identification with individual players on the team ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 1.15$). They also rated sport identification highly ($M = 6.11$, $SD = .64$). No major differences in identification levels were observed between genders or among subgroups. Table 2 reports means and standard deviations for different subgroups of survey participants on point-of-attachment measures.

Final Thoughts

The results of this case study provide sport public relations practitioners and sport marketers with several useful observations regarding the use of an organizational weblog in building and maintaining relationships with their fan base.

Table 2 Scores for Point of Attachment

	Sport Identification		Player Identification		Team Identification	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Overall ($N = 37$)	6.11	0.64	2.82	1.15	6.42	0.77
Men ($n = 26$)	6.12	0.69	2.81	0.91	6.41	0.71
Women ($n = 11$)	6.09	0.56	2.85	1.65	6.45	0.93
Read weblog daily ($n = 25$)	6.07	0.64	2.72	1.28	6.52	0.68
Read weblog 2–5 times/week ($n = 11$)	6.21	0.70	3.06	0.88	6.39	0.74
Live in team market and attend games as ticket holder ($n = 26$)	6.05	0.64	2.78	1.22	6.49	0.78
Live outside of team market and cannot attend games as ticket holder ($n = 8$)	6.25	0.75	2.92	0.94	6.58	0.30
Attend 5 games or less as ticket holder ($n = 12$)	6.28	0.65	2.89	0.99	6.12	0.80
Attend 6–10 games as ticket holder ($n = 8$)	6.00	0.64	2.25	0.83	6.54	0.92
Attend 11–40 games as ticket holder ($n = 12$)	5.89	0.64	3.00	1.42	6.47	0.77
Attend 41 games or more as ticket holder ($n = 5$)	6.40	0.60	3.13	1.28	6.73	0.28

This case is limited in that the sample was drawn from readers of only one team's, the Los Angeles Dodgers, weblog and only 37 subjects completed the survey. The small sample size illustrates a common difficulty in research of this type; responses from this type of population are difficult to obtain. On the day the survey link was posted on the weblog, 467 comments were registered. Although that does not necessarily mean 467 unique individuals posted comments, it is likely that many people commented on the weblog but did not choose to respond to the survey. Therefore, future research efforts should focus on methods to increase response rates and include multiple teams and leagues or sport settings to increase sample size and diversity.

Despite the sample size, several conclusions can be drawn from the case study. First, results indicate that the Dodgers' official weblog is perceived favorably in communicating both in a CHV, one of the hallmarks of successful weblogs, and in CRC. These findings mirror those observed by Kelleher and Miller (2006) in their study of Microsoft's official weblog. Kelleher and Miller found a nearly identical score for CHV ($M = 5.16$, $SD = .86$) as in the current study ($M = 5.37$, $SD = .92$) and a slightly lower score for CRC ($M = 4.44$, $SD = .97$) than in the current study ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.29$).

Kelleher and Miller's (2006) research showed significant positive relationships between CHV and CRC and Hon and Grunig's (1999) four relational outcomes: trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment. This emphasizes the commitment the organization has to building and maintaining a relationship with its publics. Sport organizations are challenged by an environment in which publics have much greater access to information and rumors and fan attendance fluctuates greatly based on an organization's on-field performance. Establishing honest, trustworthy, and frequent communication with key publics can help an organization navigate through variations in the demand for its product. Researchers have consistently noted the organizational advantages of creating a long-term commitment (Milne & McDonald, 1999). Weblogs would appear to be an effective tool in generating that commitment.

An interesting result relative to the effectiveness of weblogs in communicating was the overall lower mean scores for CHV by fans who attend 41 or more Dodger games as ticket holders. Those same fans had the highest mean scores among subgroups for sport, player, and team identification. This might lead one to believe that the more highly identified a fan is, the less likely he or she is to believe the organization is interested in maintaining a long-term relationship. One possible explanation for this is that fans attending more games have a greater financial investment in the organization and, therefore, believe the organization owes them more. They might also be more critical of the organization and personnel moves because of this increased financial commitment. This would suggest that sport organizations have an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with fans at the top of the consumption scale.

An additional practical finding of the study is the ability of the Dodgers' weblog to have similar effects on fans who live in the organization's market and attend games regularly and those who do not. Participants outside Los Angeles

indicated slightly higher levels of team identification ($M = 6.58$) than those inside Los Angeles ($M = 6.49$), but had slightly lower impressions of CHV ($M = 5.45$ to $M = 5.03$) and CRC ($M = 5.18$ to $M = 4.58$). This result seems to indicate that sport organizations have an opportunity to cultivate a communication-based relationship with a group of highly identified fans but might not be taking advantage of that opportunity. Much of an organization's marketing and communications efforts are steered toward the team's home market. The presence of a weblog eliminates any geographic barriers that previously existed between a team and its fan base. CRC was operationalized to emphasize a commitment to building and maintaining a relationship. A weblog might be an ideal tactic to develop and maintain a relationship with loyal fans who do not purchase tickets but might be inclined to support the team in other ways.

Although it was not the focus of the study, a one-way ANOVA run for gender on the measure for CHV showed a significant difference between men and women at the .05 level, $F(1, 35) = 4.61, p = .039$. This finding suggests a factor of weblogs not previously reported in the literature, that women ($M = 5.84$) view weblogs as significantly more conversational than men do ($M = 5.16$). Because CHV was operationalized as emphasizing human communication attributes (Kelleher & Miller, 2006), this finding suggests that women might be more open than men to receiving organizational messages through weblogs and might view this form of communication as more human, or personal. Because this was not the focus of the current study, further empirical research is needed to identify the generalizability of this finding.

The ability of a weblog to reach a diverse audience quickly and inexpensively makes this form of communication beneficial for sport organizations seeking to maximize return on their marketing communication efforts. Scoble and Israel (2006) noted that weblogs are the "lowest-cost communications channel, you can reach thousands, perhaps millions of people for an investment of a few cents and some personal time. Blogs are infinitely more efficient than any other corporate communications medium" (p. 27). Given the increasing emphasis in the sports industry on globalizing brands, the weblog's ability to reach anyone worldwide is attractive. The challenge facing sport communication professionals is to demonstrate the value added to the organization by developing a communications vehicle that might only reach a small, but highly identified, segment of the population.

An important consideration for sport organizations to ponder before undertaking a weblog is the dialogic aspect of the medium. Because the weblog is effective at two-way communication, the sport organization must be willing to receive communication and feedback from its publics, even if it is negative. Organizations that do not want to hear what their customers have to say, good or bad, about the organization in a public forum should not engage in weblog communication tools.

Finally, because of the data gathered for this case study in August 2007, the Dodgers have expanded their involvement with their weblog in 2008 to include occasional posts from General Manager Ned Colletti, Team Travel Manager Scott Akasaki, and others. The insight provided by these individuals further removes barriers between the team and its fan base.

Case Questions

- How many sport organizations have an official organizational weblog? How many offer a feedback or dialogue mechanism? What are the barriers to creating such a weblog?
- Would an official organizational weblog be effective at two-way asymmetrical communications such as advocating publics' voting a certain way in a tax referendum for a new stadium?
- Why might Dodger fans who are highly identified with the team and attend many of the team's games as ticket holders have lower impressions of CHV than fans who are not as identified or not as financially invested in the organization?
- Visit the "Inside the Dodgers" blog at <http://insidethedodgers.mlblogs.com/>. Based on the findings of this study, evaluate the content of the most recent organizational postings. Are they effectively serving the interests of their readers? What recommendations might you make for future postings?
- Again, visit the "Inside the Dodgers" blog. Review the readers' comments associated with the organization's most recent entries. Can you identify themes or trends in those comments? If so, do those messages from readers warrant action or response on the part of the organization? How so?
- If you were a member of the Dodgers' communications staff, what other research regarding your online community would be valuable to you? How would you propose undertaking such a project? How would you anticipate using the findings of such a project?
- Would it be ethical to edit readers' feedback? What if responses were overly negative? What if feedback were factually incorrect?
- Would it improve the credibility of the weblog if players posted? Other fans posted?
- To whom should the weblog be targeted? Committed fans, casual fans, or current customers?

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Appendix: Instrument Items

Note: CHV indicates a measure of conversational human voice; CRC indicates a measure of communicated relational commitment.

For each of the following items, please indicate your level of agreement on the extent to which you perceive Inside the Dodgers does each of these to maintain a relationship with you and others.

The Dodgers invite people to conversation (CHV).

The Dodgers are open to dialogue (CHV).

The Dodgers use conversation-style communication (CHV).

The Dodgers try to communicate in a human voice (CHV).

The Dodgers try to be interesting in communication (CHV).

The Dodgers use a sense of humor in communication (CHV).

The Dodgers provide links to other information sources (CHV).

The Dodgers attempt to make communication enjoyable (CHV).

The Dodgers would admit a mistake (CHV).

The Dodgers provide prompt feedback addressing criticism with a direct but uncritical manner (CHV).

The Dodgers treat me and others as human (CHV).

The Dodgers demonstrate they are committed to maintaining the relationship (CRC).

The Dodgers communicate their desire to continue to maintain and/or build a relationship with me and others (CRC).

The Dodgers stress commitment to me and others (CRC).

The Dodgers imply that our relationship has a future/is a long-term commitment (CRC).

The Dodgers discuss the nature of the organization directly (CRC).

The Dodgers emphasize the quality of our relationship (CRC).

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your relationship with the Dodgers.

First and foremost, I consider myself a baseball fan.

I identify with the players on the Dodgers more than with the Dodgers.

I consider myself to be a “real” fan of the Dodgers.

Baseball is my favorite sport.

I am a big fan of specific players more than I am a fan of the Dodgers.

I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the Dodgers.

I am a baseball fan at all levels (e.g., professional, college, high school).

I consider myself a fan of certain players rather than a fan of the Dodgers.

Being a fan of the Dodgers is very important to me.

Demographic Questions

What is your age?

What is your gender?

What is your zip code?

Which of the following profiles best describes you?

Attend Dodgers games as a ticket holder

Live outside Los Angeles and can't attend Dodgers games

Live near Los Angeles but don't attend Dodgers games

If you attend Dodgers games as a spectator, how many do you attend each year?

5 or less

6–10

10–40

More than 40

If you watch/listen to Dodgers games on television, radio, or the Internet, how

many do you watch/listen to each year?

5 or less

6–10

10–40

More than 40

How long have you been reading this weblog?

Less than 1 month

Less than 6 months

Less than 1 year

More than 1 year

How often do you read this weblog?

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

How often do you post messages to this weblog?

Never

Multiple entries daily

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Which other weblogs do you read on a regular basis?