Dawn L. McCall Speech Outline

PDC-USC Forum

February 4, 2013

Working Title: *A Conversation with Dawn McCall*

*Coordinator, International Information Programs*

Good afternoon. Thank you, Adam, for that very nice introduction; I am delighted to be here today. I want to take a few minutes to set some context for you. I would like to share with you my view of the changing landscape of today’s media environment and how it impacts our audience and IIP’s work, talk a little bit about our strategic priorities, and share some examples of how we have implemented those strategic imperatives. I will then turn it over to Bud for some interactive questions and end with your questions.

The reality for Public Diplomacy has dramatically changed and so has the environment in which IIP operates today. I am struck with how much the world has transformed, which has driven our need to adjust to this new milieu. I am sure no one in this room could have predicted five years ago how differently we would engage with each other today.

Today, we must go out and find our audience. Be where they are. Speak to them on platforms they use. Talk to them in their language. We can no longer just broadcast out information or create products and platforms and expect people to find them and be interested in them if we haven’t taken the time, made the effort to reach out to proactively engage them, and speak to them in their language.

Youth and women have been emerging as opinion leaders in their respective communities, empowered by **connective** communications technology. As we seek to enlarge and include new constituencies in our audience, we’ll have to likewise expand our portfolio of platforms. Mobile, which is likely to leapfrog tethered computing in many parts of the world, is expected to grow exponentially in EVERY region of the world. Once mobile telephone prices fall below $50US, there will be an explosion of connectivity.

We must pay greater attention to language, as another reality of the new media landscape. Content is more compelling and effective when provided in local language and, as the online world has turned increasingly interactive people are engaging in their own language.

To help meet these new challenges, IIP has over the past year builtthe State Department’s first-ever capacity to conduct global information campaigns, marrying online and in-person assets. This network has the reach and sophistication which rivals that of any I know of in the private or public sector. It is a global communication network that connects us simultaneously to local citizens in 190 countries both online and offline.

We use this communications network to implement IIP’s core mission: to serve our embassies and consulates, by providing the places, products, and infrastructure that help them achieve their goal of building America’s reputation amongst foreign audiences. Our network provides the holy grail of engagement – delivering campaigns globally while connecting to local communities – in real time – and in local language. We think globally and act locally.

Our places are both physical and virtual, as IIP supports nearly 850 American Spaces in 169 countries around the world and hosts more than 15 million visits a year. Our virtual spaces include a robust social media community that currently numbers more than 11 million followers, and supports our embassies and consulates as they engage with 10 million more.

Our products include publications read by 48 million people, more than 150 videos, and about 650 U.S. expert speakers, who engage foreign audiences both in person and through virtual programs using our state-of-the-art CO.NX platform.

IIP manages the infrastructure for all 450 Embassy and Consulate websites, in 59 languages, that are visited by more than 340,000 people daily. We translate our PD products, as well as speeches delivered by the President and Secretary, into 7 languages.

Over the last two years, the Bureau has also better aligned its mission and goals with the Department’s Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (or, QDDR)strategic framework. The framework sets forth five strategic objectives to inform, inspire, and persuade foreign publics, two of which are specific to IIP’s role:

1. To shape the narrative
2. To proactively seek out our audience, expanding and strengthening people-to-people relationships

To shape the narrative, we developed proactive outreach strategies and moved out from behind the State Department spokesperson’s podium and other traditional platforms into the spaces where ideas are marketed and discussed. Our web engagers move beyond our own properties and onto influential third party platforms.

For our messages to be heard, we made sure our public diplomacy efforts focused on the things people care about. And we broadened our demographic base to include youth, women and other non-traditional audiences. Not surprising to anyone in this room, social media and video are far more ‘consumable’ by these new audiences, than is sometimes true of the written word.

To fulfill the goal and the promise of the QDDR and the PD strategic framework, we have taken some bold and aggressive steps. To ensure we manage the narrative:

* We centralized our web infrastructure to help posts better shape and deliver their narrative and, in crisis situations – like the tsunami in Japan or events in the Middle East – we can provide continuity of operations from our D.C. headquarters.
* We created public diplomacy planning tools that help us create focused, themed content around major policy issues and package them for the field to use in their outreach programs.

To ensure we proactively engage the audience to build people-to-people relationships, we:

* Built our social media properties so we can take part in the discussion in the places where our audiences of youth and women congregate.
* Expanded our American Spaces concept to include more local venues that engage a wider circle of people – that is, those in more rural areas and who are less affluent.
* Created Mobile American Spaces that we can take to our audiences. One of those is on display at the back of the room today.

We also moved from self-creation of products and platforms to utilizing third-party platforms and content. Instead of building our own websites and other platforms, where we would need to attract an audience, we decided to leverage existing platforms that have existing audiences. This is why we pushed into social media so heavily and now have an audience of millions around the globe with whom we converse, or help our posts talk to, every day.

As I mentioned, these are some of the resources we use to deliver global information campaigns. One of the contributions IIP has made to our posts is to expand the knowledge of Public Diplomacy work among our colleagues in the Department’s political and economic cones who previously had little or no contact with PD work and who now depend on it every day.

Let me offer a couple of examples of how we run integrated campaigns using our global capabilities that focus on local communities.

This summer we ran our first ever global information campaign called 50 States in 50 Days in partnership with Brand USA in response to the President’s call for a National Strategy on Travel and Tourism. We profiled each state over 50 days on our social media and embassy websites. Many of our embassies offered offline, in-market events to further extend the campaign. The campaign picked up momentum as state tourism boards started tweeting and our local social media fans around the world uploaded photos and commented on their favorite states. Using Twitter, Facebook and websites, with widgets pushing overseas audiences to “DiscoverAmerica.com,” we reached tens of millions of potential tourists. Our Tweets alone reached 39 million people. And we drew 65,000 visitors to Brand USA’s new website.

In November, we partnered with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to develop the world’s largest “International Virtual College Fair,” in support of International Education Week. The fair was conducted in one 24-hour period and brought more than 14,000 students into on-line contact with nearly 200 U.S. colleges and universities from all 50 states. This campaign not only supported our strategic goal to reach a youth audience, but these international students last year contributed $22.7 billion to the U.S. economy.

We strategically developed a new product line of Ambassador videos in summer 2011 to help posts both manage the narrative for their new Chief of Mission and proactively reach new audiences. These videos quickly proved their worth. For example, between social media and broadcast TV, initial videos for Vietnam and Bangladesh reached more than 30 million viewers each, and our Ambassadors found they were known – and liked – in the far corners of their countries.

In another example, the extraordinary distribution plan crafted by Embassy India generated nearly 1 billion views for Ambassador Powell’s video and it received a glowing review in the *New York Times*.

With proof in hand, we established Ambassador Videos as a full product line, ending other, less successful video products. These new videos are a key way to support our posts and provide our ambassadors with an opportunity to create their own narratives in the countries in which they serve.

This series perfectly marries our core competency to produce higher production value videos, with posts’ extensive local marketing savvy.

Our high quality video capability positioned IIP as a central contributor to the Department’s public diplomacy efforts. It allowed us the opportunity to amplify hard policy goals to a younger audience, on behalf of the highest levels of government. Just one of many examples of this capability is a series of “mash-up” videos of the Secretary and President’s remarks on critical issues, ranging from freedom of expression to LGBT rights.

We also support our posts with training and advisory services. For example, in2012 we established the 20/100 program, taking 20 posts and committing to growing their social media presence by 100% during the course of the year. After initial hesitation in the field, this has become one of our most popular programs, with 39 out of the first 40 posts achieving their goals and some soaring as high as a 1300% increase in fans. During 2013, we will be running three rounds of 20/100, as we commit to meeting the 100% goal within 120 days. Collectively, these programs have increased our posts’ social media audience more than 720,000 to date, and have raised engagement to significant new levels.

Conclusion

IIP now communicates virtually to an international public of 11 million through our English and foreign language social media properties reaching a young audience in strategic countries, and supports posts in reaching 10 million more.

While simultaneously disseminating the same message through 450 embassy and consulate websites, as well as post’s social media properties around the globe.

In-person engagement takes place at our embassies and 850 American Spaces, supported by IIP-created programs that echo the same themes and messages.

As I said at the outset, wehavebuiltthe Department’s first-ever capacity to conduct global information campaigns marrying online and offline assets, with a seamless message, delivered over multi-platforms globally with a local flavor, anywhere in the world – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The results? Last year we estimate our products, services, and outreach efforts reached more than 1.4 billion people.

And this is just a glance at how IIP’s public diplomacy professionals engage person-by-person, in nearly every country, every day – advancing foreign policy goals, shaping the narrative about the United States and our policies, and building trust around the world to enhance our national security and prosperity.

Bud? Shall we talk a bit about public diplomacy?