



# Florida Panthers Communications & PR Operations

By Lindsey Vazquez

# Key Stakeholders/Publics

- **Fans:** Engage with the team through games, merch, and social media; create the emotional and financial backbone of the organization. This could be local South Florida fans attending games or even out of market fans engaging via internet.
- **Season Ticket Holders:** Bring in constant revenue and are prioritized in promotions and exclusive events.
- **Corporate Sponsors:** Partners like Baptist Health and Amerant Bank get brand visibility through advertising and event sponsorships.
- **Players and Staff:** Ensure the Panthers' on-ice and off-ice success; their performance and professionalism build up the team's image. Star athletes like Aleksander Barkov and even PR staff are essential to the team's image.
- **Media Outlets:** Reporters and analysts give coverage that can influence fan perception and public relations. Some examples are the Miami Herald, ESPN, Sun-Sentinel, and NHL.
- **Community Groups:** Nonprofits and schools' benefit from programs like the Panthers Foundation's youth hockey and health initiatives.



# Communications & PR Team



The Florida Panthers PR and media relations responsibilities are assigned across various specific roles within their communications team, which is organized into two main areas: hockey communications and corporate communications.



Hockey communications is led by Thomas Harding who is Manager. His team is responsible for handling media requests, game related press communications, and coordination with players and coaches. Veronica Lempicki is the Media Relations Coordinator. She provides media access and makes sure there's smooth communication between the team and the press.



Corporate communications is overseen by Adelyn Biedenbach who is Vice President of Communications. Her team manages broader communication strategies, public relations efforts, and corporate messaging for the Panthers as a brand. Other important staff in this area include Chrissy Parente who is Director of Corporate Communications and Amina King who is Corporate Communications Coordinator. They focus on corporate messaging, partnerships, and events.



The PR team collabs with a group of interns and works with the content services team for digital and social media messaging. They were recently recognized with the Dillman Award for media relations excellence. This team's approach shows a separation of responsibilities, with media relations focused on game day and player related communications, while corporate communications handles the team's broader public image and other partnerships.

# Media Influencers Covering the Panthers

- **David Dwork (Local 10):** Known for breaking team news and giving in-depth game analyses.
- **George Richards (Florida Hockey Now):** Gives broad coverage of player stories and organizational updates.
- **Steve Goldstein and Randy Moller (Broadcasters):** Voice of the Panthers, connecting with fans through TV and social media.



## STATE OF THE CATS: DAVID DWORC

ALEKSANDER BARKOV

# 2x SELKE TROPHY WINNER

2021 & 2024



## Highlight: Barkov's Selke Trophy Campaign

One of the Florida Panthers' most notable PR campaigns was centered on Aleksander Barkov's 2021 and 2024 Selke Trophy wins. This campaign's goal was to highlight Barkov's excellence as a two-way forward and his importance as a franchise leader. Through a combination of social media spotlights, press releases, and website features, the Panthers celebrated Barkov's achievement while engaging fans with exclusive content. The campaign emphasized Barkov's dedication, skill, and leadership, strengthening his role as the face of the brand and earning positive attention from both fans and the NHL community as a whole.

# Social Media Strategy: Engaging Fans Across Platforms

The Florida Panthers are great at using social media to connect with fans and strengthen their brand presence. On Twitter, they give real-time updates, game highlights, and breaking news, catering to fans instant information. Instagram is used as a platform for high-quality visuals and player-focused stories, creating a more personal connection with the team. TikTok, on the other hand, shows fun and viral content, which appeals to a younger audience through mascot stunts, player challenges, and behind-the-scenes glimpses. This various platforms approach not only engages different demographics but also creates two-way communication, making fans feel like an important part of the Panthers' community.



# Publicity and Its Impact

## Positive Publicity

The 2023 Stanley Cup Playoffs run, and win brought in lots media coverage, with praise for players like Matthew Tkachuk. Coverage from *ESPN* and *The Athletic* highlighted the team's resilience, while social media campaigns and fan events boosted engagement and revenue. This national media coverage highlighted the Panthers underdog success story since it was their first win.

## Negative Publicity

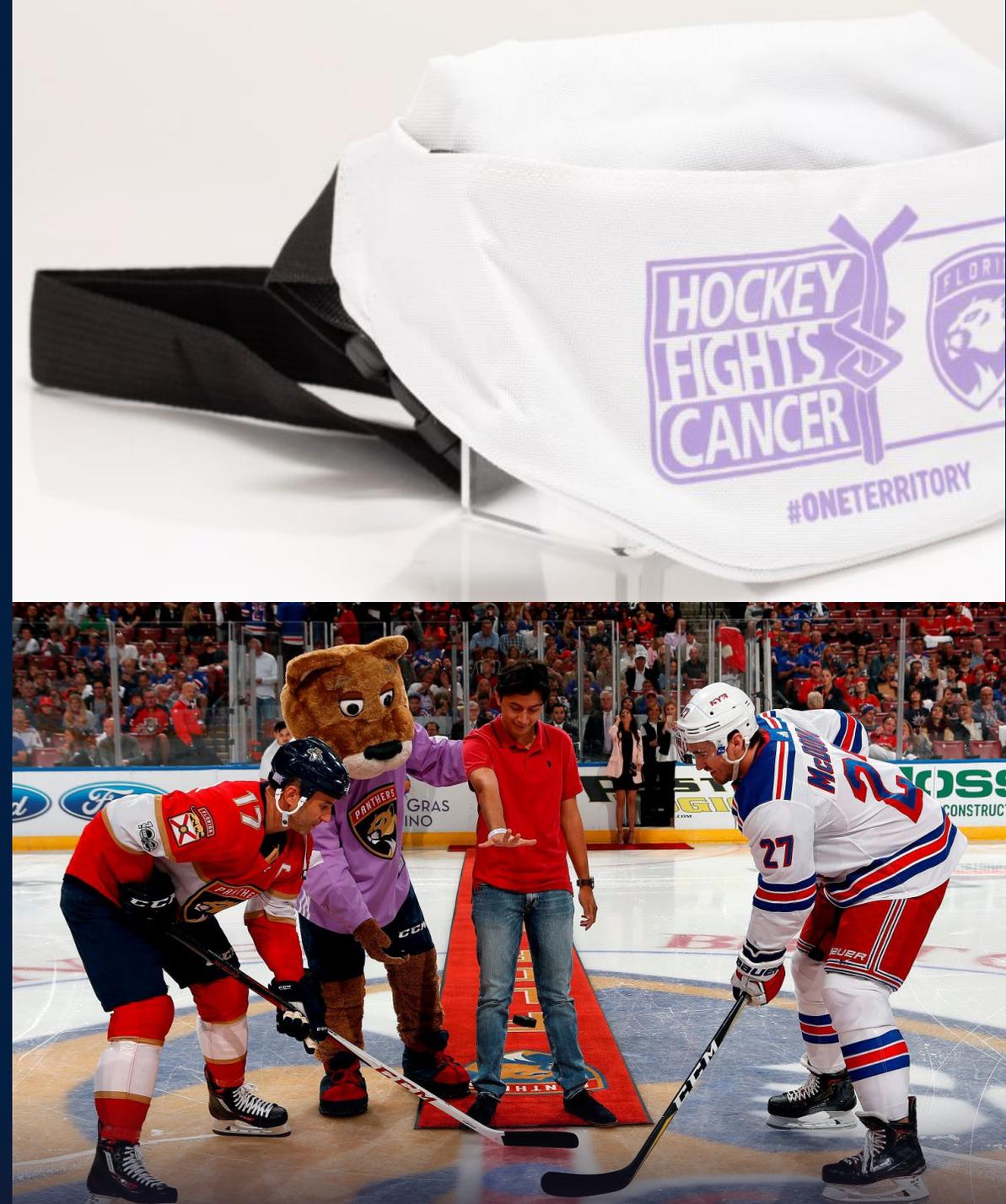
The resignation of head coach Joel Quenneville in 2021, tied to the Chicago Blackhawks' sexual assault scandal, led to backlash. Media outlets like *The Miami Herald* criticized the Panthers' delayed response, raising concerns over their handling of the crisis. Later in 2022, there were reports of low attendance which had people questioning South Florida's viability as a hockey market.

## Impact

Positive publicity strengthened fan loyalty and boosted ticket sales, while negative publicity exposed the need for faster crisis management. The Panthers have since worked on rebuilding trust through transparency and community outreach.

# Building Community Connections

The Florida Panthers are deeply committed to community engagement through initiatives that make a meaningful impact. The Panthers Foundation focuses on youth hockey development, education, and health programs, offering resources and opportunities for young athletes. Their "Hockey Fights Cancer" campaign raises awareness and funds for cancer research and support, connecting with both local families and the larger hockey community. Also, partnerships with local organizations, such as the Coral Springs Hockey Club, promote grassroots hockey and create a sense of community pride. These efforts strengthen the Panthers' bond with South Florida residents while boosting their reputation as a socially responsible organization.



# Crisis Mode

## **Crisis:**

In October 2021, the Florida Panthers faced a crisis involving head coach Joel Quenneville's resignation due to his connection to the Chicago Blackhawks' 2010 sexual assault scandal.

## **Timeline of Events:**

Findings of Quenneville's involvement in the scandal became public, and the Panthers faced backlash for allowing him to coach a game before addressing the situation. Shortly after, the team announced his resignation and appointed Andrew Brunette as interim head coach.

## **Response:**

The Panthers released a statement emphasizing their commitment to integrity and accountability. But the delay in removing Quenneville led to criticism from fans and media, suggesting the team could have acted more decisively.

## **Opportunities for Improvement:**

In future crises, the team could release stronger initial statements, immediately remove implicated staff, and show zero tolerance for ethical violations. Taking proactive measures would reinforce the organization's values and rebuild trust with stakeholders.

# Website Strengths and Weaknesses

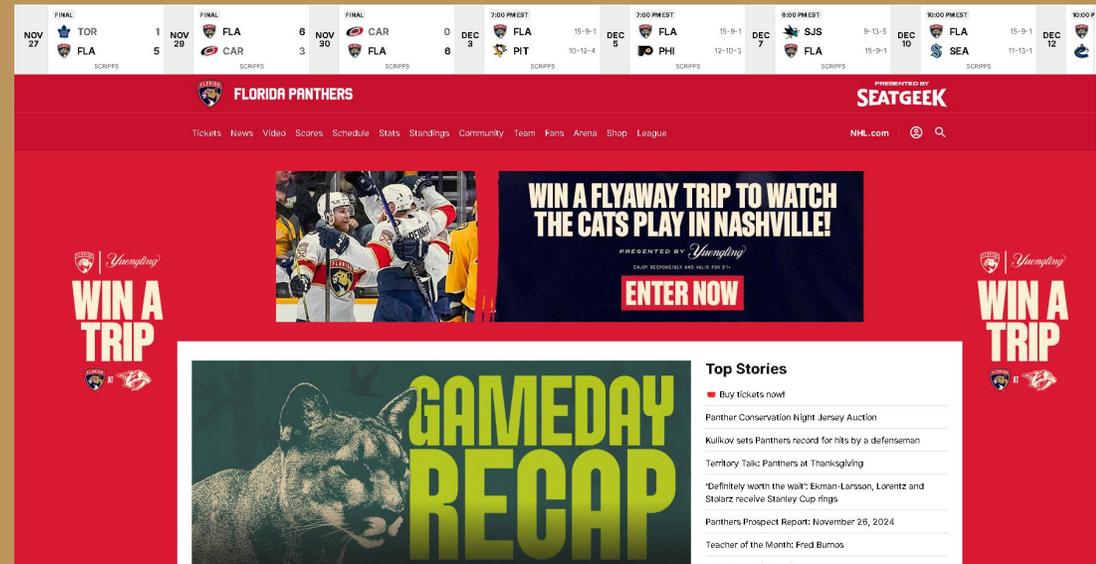
## Strengths

- Clean, easy navigation with sections for news, tickets, and game schedules.
- High-quality images and videos showing players and important moments.
  - Works well on mobile and desktop.
- Includes live scores, ticket sales, and video highlights.

## Weaknesses

- Sometimes loads too slowly, especially on mobile
- Too much information on the homepage may overwhelm users.
- Lacks embedded live feeds and content from social

When compared to other NHL teams like the Tampa Bay Lightning or New York Rangers, the Panthers' website holds up well in terms of design and functionality. But teams like the Lightning offer faster loading times and cleaner homepage layouts. The Rangers' site does a better job of integrating live fan interactions and social media content directly into the homepage, something the Panthers' site could improve.



# Communications Effectiveness



The Florida Panthers' communications operations are largely effective in achieving their organizational goals. Their strength lies in storytelling, mainly through digital platforms that engage fans and celebrate the team's achievements. But there are areas for growth, specifically in expanding bilingual content to better serve South Florida's diverse population. Another opportunity lies in strengthening personalization efforts, such as tailoring experiences for season ticket holders and frequent game attendees. By investing in innovative technologies, such as AI-driven fan interactions, and expanding their cultural outreach, the Panthers can further solidify their position as a leading team both on and off the ice.

# Suggestions

Overall, to better achieve their organizational goals, the Florida Panthers could focus on improving crisis management by shortening response times and preparing pre-written statements for quick action. Enhancing social media integration by embedding live feeds and interactive content on the website could strengthen fan engagement. Also, leveraging data analytics to track fan behavior would allow the team to tailor content and sales strategies more effectively. Expanding community outreach programs and partnerships with local schools and charities would deepen connections with the South Florida community. Finally, improving website performance by shortening load times and simplifying navigation could improve the user experience, helping the team better meet their overall objectives.