

"How Opus Dei Tries To Break the Spell Of 'Da Vinci Code'"

Extracto del artículo publicado en The Wall Street Journal sobre la estrategia de comunicación que emprendió la Oficina de Información del Opus Dei ante 'El Código Da Vinci'.

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Lea el artículo completo (\$) en The Wall Street Journal. Copiamos a continuación un extracto:

"We had to get totally naked to confront this problem," says Mr. Mora, a jovial 47-year-old Spaniard who teaches communications at Rome's Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, which is run by Opus Dei. (...)

When "The Da Vinci Code" was published three years ago, Opus Dei hoped to be able to ignore it, convinced that speaking out would merely boost sales. Then, when Sony Pictures purchased the movie rights, Mr. Mora and his colleagues started to shift gears, hoping to soften the film's portrayal.

In early 2004, Thomas G. Bohlin, Opus Dei's top official in the U.S., wrote a letter to Sony asking that the group's name not be used and asking for a meeting with Amy Pascal, chairman of Sony's Motion Picture Group. Ms. Pascal declined. Opus Dei then released an open letter to the

"shareholders, directors and employees of Sony" that encouraged the company to run a disclaimer at the start of the film, stating that the movie was based on a work of fiction. Sony's reply: no disclaimer.

Sony Pictures spokesman Jim Kennedy says the company is confident that audiences will understand the movie is "a fictional thriller, not a religious tract or historical documentary." Sony, he says, has been sensitive to Opus Dei's concerns. He cites a Web site set up by Sony to air debate.

Opus Dei spurned the Sony-controlled site as a marketing gimmick. Mr. Mora says several PR companies approached Opus Dei offering their services but the group declined. Opus Dei, he says, "prefers its pasta homemade."

It began thinking up ways to reach the movie's future audience with its

own message. Having taught several courses on crisis management, Mr. Mora was familiar with the basic principles. He realized that Opus Dei shouldn't stay silent, a mistake that many companies make when faced with bad news -- and one that backfired on the Catholic Church during the U.S. scandal over sexual abuse of children by priests.

But textbook cases of damage control had only limited value for a religious organization, says Mr. Mora. Opus Dei didn't have a product it could pull from shelves and repackage. Opus Dei, which is made up largely of laypeople but also includes some priests, offers a strict brand of Catholicism. It calls on members to extend the spirit of Sunday worship into their everyday lives through frequent prayer and good works. It wasn't about to change that, but decided it could alter the packaging. (...)

So, while some Catholic groups are boycotting the film and threatening legal action, Opus Dei is calmly promoting its work and presenting itself as a victim of Hollywood. Instead of generating buzz, it wants to be seen as banal.

"People who come here looking for something surprising or shocking are going to be very disappointed," said Jean Granier, a schoolteacher, father of 10, and Opus Dei member who this week took part in an open house at the group's center in Marseille, France. "What we do is very, very ordinary." His oldest daughter, Aude, also a member, handed out pamphlets explaining that, contrary to "The Da Vinci Code," Opus Dei "has no monks, no murders, no masochism and no misogyny." (...)

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