



Category: Not-for-Profit Campaign

Company: The Right Agency

Entry title: Lhasa: Predicting the Data Sharing Future

Brief and objectives:

Lhasa Limited is a not-for-profit organisation and educational charity that develops prediction software and chemical databases to facilitate collaborative data sharing in the pharmaceutical, cosmetics and chemistry-related industries. Its software predicts the toxicity of drugs, reducing the need for testing and is credited with speeding up development of some of the most important, safe, effective and life-enhancing drugs released in the last 20 years.

All the company's profits are ploughed back into the ongoing development of its software, so its survival is dependant on attracting new members/customers to continue to aid drug development.

Rapid growth meant the company needed to attract new software developers at its Leeds HQ, where the likes of Sky Bet was sucking up much of the talent.

In early 2017, Lhasa won a second successive Queen's Award for innovation and appointed a new Chief Executive - an excellent opportunity to engage with the media and showcase it as an excellent place to work. However, previous attempts to achieve press coverage had been unsuccessful as the complex nature of Lhasa's business had not translated well. The Right Agency was tasked with:

1. Raising Lhasa's profile nationally as an innovative organisation and the "go to" honest broker for collaborative projects within chemistry and the life sciences
2. Raising Lhasa's local profile, showing it to be an innovative, expanding organisation, offering great career opportunities for software developers and scientists
3. Leveraging successive Queen's Awards to generate media interest
4. Unlocking member benefits of Lhasa's software and translating it into key media messages

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Global pharmaceutical companies are famously reticent about sharing proprietary data for fear of losing competitive edge. However, the benefits, in terms of speeding up drug development as well as cost saving, are becoming increasingly important. We believed a media relations campaign with thought-leadership around these topics at its heart would put Lhasa in the driving seat.

Our first priority was to adequately understand the technology so we could 'de-mystify' it for the media, without dumbing it down. We held information sessions with Lhasa's academics/scientists before running media training for all potential spokespeople and 'authors' to help them understand what we/the media were looking for.

Working with Lhasa's marketing team we defined the key audiences, matched against business objectives:

- Senior staff (senior VP R&D or above) at the world's leading pharmaceutical companies
- Mid-level employees at pharmaceutical, cosmetic and chemical companies
- Regionally-based experienced software developers, chemistry-related scientists, undergraduates, graduates

We then carried out a media audit to form defined media lists for each audience. The ten most relevant trade titles were classed as Tier One targets.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

To achieve our primary objective of raising the profile of Lhasa in the key pharmaceutical and scientific trade media we needed to establish them as leaders in data collaboration and prediction software development, to allow them to put forward arguments for data collaboration, so we developed thought-leadership topics, including:

- benefits of sharing proprietary data
- managing big data in the pharma industry
- speeding up drug development
- how to overcome competition between drugs companies with use of an honest broker

Using these topics we

- developed synopses to secure opinion articles in key media
- worked with scientists to write media-digestible authored articles
- developed case studies and news stories demonstrating the benefits of data collaboration

- created content for Lhasa's customer communications and social channels

We organised an event, with regional, trade and broadcast media in attendance, for the presentation of the Queen's Award by the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, which allowed the new CEO to outline his business development plans. We also secured profile and interview opportunities

We developed a stream of pro-active press stories using case studies, research and contract wins to showcase Lhasa's pedigree in working with the worlds' biggest pharma brands and we entered Lhasa into regional business awards to raise its profile amongst prospective employees.

Implementation of tactics:

- April 2017: Information sessions, media training with senior team, key audience research, media audit
- April 2017: Key message development, creation of 'understandable' company biog
- April 2017: Announcement of Queens Award and new CEO
- May 2017 – Feb 2018: Securing profile opps and thought leadership outreach
- May 2017- Feb 2018: Media relations activity, including award entries
- September 2017: Queens Award event

Measurement and evaluation:

Media relations activity helped raise the profile of the business nationally and locally, with articles published in magazines that Lhasa had only previously appeared in with paid-for content or technical white papers.

Regional coverage supported Lhasa's recruitment process, with all available roles filled for the first time in more than two years

Outputs:

- 46 pieces of coverage in the 11 months to February 2018, generated by a mix of thought leadership, authored articles and news:
 - 10 features of two pages or more
 - 7 full pages
 - 20 online pieces
 - Print circulation of 235,000 and online of 3.78 million

Analysis showed:

- 83% of all trade coverage was in Tier one pharmaceutical/scientific titles
- 72% of all coverage (online and print) contained a link to the Lhasa website, or Lhasa contact details
- 64% of regional coverage highlighted employment opportunities/growth

Business outcomes:

- The Lhasa team reported an increase in incoming enquiries from existing members about new products and from potential customers
- Lhasa won Business Master of Innovation at the Yorkshire Business Masters Awards
- Within the period June 2017-February 2018 all UK-based Lhasa roles were filled
- Lhasa scientists have been invited to speak at a number of global conferences, including EUROTOX 2018

Budget and cost effectiveness:

The only costs incurred were agency fees, which, for the period April 2017-February 2018, were £22,000.

Scott McDonald, Director of Member Services at Lhasa Limited:

“As a business we hadn’t worked with a PR agency before and were unsure whether the complex, scientific nature of our work would translate well into regional and trade media. The Right Agency spent time learning about Lhasa and identifying the stories and messages to best help us communicate our work and its benefits to a wider audience. They understood our objectives and developed a wide range of opportunities in key publications. It was important that the PR activity was clear and concise, while remaining at a high enough level to appeal to the academic publications, and they achieved that by working closely with our team and producing digestible content.

“Regionally the Right Agency significantly increased our profile and Lhasa is now recognised as a scientifically innovative business and a great place to build a career. Overall, they challenged us to think differently, to put ourselves out there, and helped us achieve share of voice in our industry.”