



Category: Outstanding Independent Practitioner

Entrant name: Lisa Preston MCIPR

Company: Amplify PR

An overview of your experience, your commitment to professional development and how you contribute to the industry:

I have nearly 20 years' experience working in communications, marketing and journalism. As a student, I ran the university's radio station and gained lots of work experience on local stations. Having established that I loved working in radio, I did a Postgraduate Diploma in Broadcast Journalism. As a journalist, I worked in commercial radio editing and reading news bulletins before starting at the BBC, firstly in local radio on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and then regional TV, at BBC Look North.

I gained my first PR job in 2003 as Press Officer at the University of Southampton, I then went on to further communications roles in higher education ending as Head of Communications and Marketing at the University of Winchester in 2015.

While working there, I led the PR of 'The Search for Alfred the Great' an archaeological dig that was broadcast as a BBC2 documentary. It won Regional Campaign of the Year at the 2014 CIPR PRide Awards and Best PR/Advocacy Campaign at the 2014 Heist Awards. The campaign was also shortlisted for two PR Moment Awards in 2015.

I have always committed time to my professional development, undertaking CIM qualifications and workshops delivered by the CIPR and PRCA. I keep up-to-date with developments in PR and marketing by following blogs and reading trade magazines – like Influence. I follow industry podcasts and regularly sign-up for webinars. I do frequent skills training workshops at BNI, the world's largest referral networking organisation. I am a CIPR Accredited Practitioner and established member of the CIPR Wessex PR & A Pint freelancers network.

I work hard to contribute to the industry, I have done several free workshops and keynote talks at networking events – providing skills training for small businesses on topics such as PR, social media, and lead generation. I blog twice per month about PR and marketing for small businesses, sharing the articles on social media. I also provided PR training and mentoring for young entrepreneurs at the University of Southampton.

Outline your work-related achievements over the last three years, including your business objectives and/or plan:

I began as a full-time independent practitioner in July 2015, when I set up my business – Amplify PR. I wanted to challenge myself and had become disillusioned with working in-house, I also wanted the flexibility to take care of my family.

My vision was to help businesses amplify their brand and reach more customers. I set out to provide a highly-dedicated PR and content marketing service to small and medium-sized businesses and the education sector in Hampshire and elsewhere.

Business objectives:

- Generate 120 days of consultancy each year.
- Achieve monthly net profit target and grow turnover by 10% each year.
- Develop a client ratio, 80% retained and 20% ad-hoc by end of Year 3.
- Deliver robust marketing to build brand reputation and attract new business.
- Commit to no more than 40 hours per week; and play every weekend.

I am very proud of the clients that I have been privileged to work with including:

- Winchester Science Centre & Planetarium, an educational charity and visitor attraction
- Softbox Systems, temperature-controlled packaging for the global pharmaceutical industry
- Brush-Baby, a Winchester-based manufacturer of dental care products for babies and children
- Brace Orthopaedic, Newcastle-based distributor of orthopaedic braces and supports
- OrthoConnections, an online networking platform for the global orthopaedics industry
- Tata Communications, global telecommunications (white-labelled agency work)

I have maintained links with the universities of Southampton and Winchester, doing consultancy work and I also work with others in the education sector.

Referral marketing is a key part of my success. 70% of my business is a recommendation by a client or through business networking, including BNI. This also includes other feeders such as marketing agencies.

I re-positioned Amplify PR when I launched my new website last year. I introduced service packages and published my fees, offering greater transparency. Combined with the free consultation, I attract 2-4 leads per quarter that result in new business.

Amplify PR is a one-stop shop offering a wide range of services for clients. I have built a collective of trusted freelance associates – who work with me on a flexible basis. Clients

benefit from having me as their Account Manager (not a junior associate) doing most of their work and project managing, plus access to a team of experienced specialists that provide solutions. We do this without huge overheads, providing a cost-effective service. I enjoy working with the team and feel confident about the direction and growth of my business.

Outline the biggest work-related challenge you've faced in the past three years, including details of what happened, how you overcame it and what you learnt from it:

My biggest work-related challenge was Brexit when I lost two clients and about 60% of my income. Both clients traded overseas and following the referendum they decided to reduce their costs to compensate for the sharp decline in sterling.

To overcome this, I developed my social media and presence on LinkedIn, had a stand at a series of B2B exhibitions, and did more networking – including joining BNI. I also re-designed my website which improved my SEO and appeal among my target audience.

What I learnt was that continual marketing is essential, you cannot get clients and then sit back and assume you will retain them and continue to attract more. When you are busy – that should be the time to invest in marketing. I am also more conscious of the risk of having clients who represent a large share of my income.

A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

Here is one media relations campaign that I am particularly proud of and I have also provided case studies of other client work as the uploaded PDF.

Client: Ludicrous Balloons

Campaign: World-record attempt

Brief:

Obtain media coverage of the attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the largest balloon modelling done by an individual.

Objectives:

Gain as much media coverage as possible, to help raise the profile of the business owner and his company.

Strategy and tactics:

A news release was written and issued to all local, regional and national media outlets. Encouraged the media to 'follow' his world-record attempt. Did a press call/photo call once the sculpture was complete and interviews with the artist. There were also media opportunities with the shopping centre (where the sculpture was on display), Winchester BID and the sponsors.

Outcomes:

Most media covered the story more than once, by doing an announcement of the attempt or following his journey, then doing the final reveal.

Gained coverage in all local newspapers and on local radio and TV including Southern Daily Echo, Hampshire Chronicle, Wave 105, BBC Radio Solent, ITV Meridian, and BBC South Today.

National coverage: The Sun, The Mirror, and BBC News Online.