



Category: Outstanding In-House Public Relations Team

Company: Skipton Building Society

Number of staff employed - including executive / support staff - and annual public relations budget, showing areas directly under the control of the in-house team:

Skipton Building Society's Corporate Communications is delivered by a team of just five people. This small, dynamic team is responsible for protecting and enhancing the 165-year-old reputation of the UK's 4th largest Building Society –challenged by tight regulatory parameters and operating under intense member scrutiny, while battling wider financial services reputational stigma. Our outputs include all media relations activity, community relations, corporate social responsibility, crisis management, and – most recently –public affairs activity.

We oversee the Society's Group media relations function– working tirelessly to build strong relationships with regional and national journalists and influencers. Work includes the strategic creation and tactical delivery of all proactive, consumer and corporate PR for the Society, ensuring all communications align with Skipton's commercial and, importantly, mutual goals. The team are responsible for the creation and delivery of the Society's corporate social responsibility strategy.

Business objectives and analysis of team performance against budget over the past three years:

Since 2015, we have delivered successive record years in terms of the level of effective media coverage generated across all of the Society's key business areas, ensuring they feed into the wider commercial objectives, supporting the Society's goals and vision.

We have a budget of £100,000 per year to reach out to new and existing members. This budget is split between three large creative campaigns per year, collateral creation, the commissioning of research, media training, broadcast days, and delivery of our new CSR strategy.

Conscious any funding is Skipton members' money, we ensure we maximise all budgets to ensure delivery of appropriate, cost effective campaigns. Often, much of what is delivered often has no budget set aside for it and is done purely in-house with existing resources utilized and a reliance on good media relations and execution tactics.

The team has delivered year on year improved levels of media outcomes across all metrics, going from passing mentions to having strong levels of message placement and what the team has achieved against the small annual budget they have to work with is testament to the skills and determination of the team.

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

We recognised the communications landscape is continually changing and we were conscious we may have become a little stagnant in our approach and delivery of our work. We decided to invest some of our budget in ourselves, commissioning a press office audit in 2015, reviewing how the press office function operated, how it delivered and planned campaigns, how it interacted with the media – scrutinising everything, to create a robust business plan and new approach for the team.

Building on the findings we created our first, strategic business plan. This focussed effort, dovetailed with the wider commercial plan, highlighted opportunities for communications to stand out at key points during the year. It became a very handy tool in building engagement and understanding with key internal stakeholders – securing buy-in for our work and greater understanding of what we work towards (and how they can help). A tiered storytelling framework programme was also set up alongside the business plan to ensure we meet and deliver our objectives in an effective way.

The plan not only sets out the wider objectives of the team, It also details how these will be delivered in line with the Society's core values.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Operating in one of the most challenging scrutinised and heavily regulated sectors in the UK, we must keep ahead of the fast-paced changes of our industry. We prioritise taking ownership of our professional development as it's essential in ensuring our knowledge and practice stays relevant.

Some of the specific ways we actively embrace development is through monitoring external sector knowledge, opening our doors to PR undergraduates, and by organising internal speaker slots to continually raise awareness and understanding of our work, and how Skipton's colleagues from across the head office and the UK branch network can support us. We also take advantage of formal training opportunities when we identify a gap in our knowledge.

A summary of recent outstanding achievements:

2017 was a year of outstanding achievements for the team, it not only provided a year of record coverage results and significant attention to CSR but it enabled the team to build stronger and more meaningful relationships with the media, which proved vital to the success of 2017, ongoing in 2018.

Generating a total of 3,437 pieces of media coverage in 2017, a significant increase on 2016, as we saw a 78% increase in coverage and reached an audience of 1.6 billion people. We ensured, Skipton Building Society featured in our core members' preferred news outlets every week in 2017.

2017 also delivered record levels of broadcast media interviews (84) and saw an increase number of journalist enquiries– 160 in 2017 (76% increase on 2016).

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

The campaign we are most proud of is the launch of the UK's only Lifetime ISA product. We delivered this successful product launch with zero budget, but achieved significant reputational and commercial outputs for the Society.

Following an announcement from the Chancellor's in The Budget, the Government wanted to create a unique savings product to enable people aged 18 – 40 to save for their own home and/or their retirement; they called it the Lifetime ISA.

Skipton quickly identified it wanted to launch this account and we spotted a golden PR opportunity, as the first to market with this would dominate the personal finance pages given the profile of the Government backed account.

We set ourselves three clear objectives to launch this product and designed a multi-tiered, tactical campaign:

1 – An announcement of intent to launch the product – It was crucial to be the first financial provider to announce our intention to offer this anticipated savings product. But we had to do so in a simple but impactful way, utilising our Press Office twitter feed to make the announcement.

Due to the impact it had and the conversations we had started on twitter #LifetimeISA was featured in the top 10 trending # tags that day.

2 – Launch day programme of activity – ensuring journalists and key influencers were regularly liaised with ahead of the launch to keep them engaged with Skipton's plans.

High jacking a meet and greet opportunity with Martin Lewis, to talk to him about the Lifetime ISA paid dividends and every time he mentioned Skipton's product on national TV, traffic to Skipton's website would spike.

3 – Maintaining a post announcement drumbeat activity programme

The results that were delivered based on this programme of activity have been significant for the Society – generating 368 pieces of strong coverage just for the launch , building strategic, relationships with key media which continue to pay dividends. It's positioned Skipton as a savings champion, driving new customers to our website and reaffirming awareness of our mutual purpose.