

The logo for the CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 Gold Winner. It features the text 'CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019' in white on a black background, followed by 'GOLD WINNER' in large, multi-colored letters (pink, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

Category: Corporate and Business Communications Campaign

Company: Holyrood PR

Entry title: Skyrora – Putting Scotland in Space

Brief and objectives:

The UK Space Agency's investment in its first spaceport in Sutherland rocketed interest in the UK's revitalised space race - leaving Skyrora at a critical juncture in its business journey.

However, Skyrora's rivals had stolen a march in terms of media coverage and funding – potentially hobbling the firm's future growth plans and aims to achieve enquiries for its services.

Holyrood PR was tasked with creating a media campaign that would propel Skyrora ahead of rivals, becoming the go-to firm for an upcoming wave of UK-based satellite launches.

The objectives of the campaign were to:

- Deliver high quality coverage in UK media - at least 250 items and to include a TV magazine-style feature. Raise awareness of Skyrora to new audiences; boost engagement on social channels by 10% and to drive traffic to its website
- Attract at least three new qualified enquiries for payload space or investment
- Attract the attention of key stakeholders including at least two MSPs and at least one prominent industry figure.

The idea, research and planning:

We met with Skyrora team to better understand the situation, what media coverage, if any, had been achieved and map out exactly how we would transform its profile.

While Skyrora has an offering quite unlike its competitors, there was a real danger that the funding head-start, stronger awareness and louder voice of both space giants Lockheed Martin and Orbex could make future UK growth challenging.

This required a focus on building awareness and education of Skyrora's offering – with a focus on maximising the potential from Skyrora's association with Black Arrow, the UK's only rocket to successfully reach space.

Skyrora's decision to bring Black Arrow home after 50 years in the Australian outback would be the centrepiece of our communications campaign which would see the firm become intrinsically linked with Scotland's spaceport – catching up and overtaking the two prominent competitors while gaining the respect of the industry, the public and decision-makers.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

We knew we had to amplify Skyrora's messaging across an audience that may not necessarily fully understand the technology behind rocket launches, payloads and satellite capabilities.

We positioned Skyrora – particularly initially via Black Arrow - to be the Irn-Bru to Lockheed Martin's Coca Cola - a Scottish firm channelling the spirit to reinvigorate the passion behind Black Arrow, through a series of creative activity.

Our strategic approach included:

- Issuing media comms – and targeting priority media targets - supported by strong photos and agreed key messaging
- Engaging with industry figures to add weight to the campaign – further building its social audience, especially on Twitter and LinkedIn
- Convincing Skyrora to drop its initial plan to have a low-key unveiling of Black Arrow at its HQ and instead plan a fully-coordinated 'return of a piece of history' launch event maximised across all channels.
- Setting up interview features with key UK media targets to showcase Skyrora and its aims
- Production of video content to support the campaign.

Delivery:

Our campaign followed three distinct stages – firstly to build Skyrora's credentials among the media, then to focus on the return of Black Arrow before maintaining and building on this momentum to ensure Skyrora's rivals were left firmly in its media shadow.

1. Building media credentials

We utilised our story spotting skills to identify things happening within Skyrora that had previously been allowed to pass by without media fanfare.

Our campaign focused on a wide range of stories – from the first commercial rocket launch in Ross-shire, to hard business stories about expansion and new offices, to a series of stories to promote the firm's STEM work with the next generation of rocket testers.

We achieved powerful coverage in key titles across local, national and trade media to kick-start our activity.

2. The return of Black Arrow

We organised great photography and our in-house video team captured video to chart Black Arrow's return from Australia to its Scottish unveiling.

We helped to plan/organise the unveiling event with attendance from original Black Arrow engineers, politicians, the Royal Air Force and the media.

On top of this we arranged a school competition with local schools for the children to design a poster with their interpretation of space.

Our work generated some key coverage including a feature on the BBC's One Show, watched by 5m+ viewers.

3. Follow-up coverage/momentum

After such an incredible burst of coverage – which represented the most successful haul in the agency's 17 year history – it was essential we didn't allow it to fizzle out.

We continued to push stories about Skyrora's new engine testing and STEM work while we arranged follow-ups for Black Arrow.

We worked with space influencer Helen Sharman – the UK's first astronaut – on an article about Black Arrow's visit to the Scottish Parliament and again used strong imagery to ensure the story made national headlines. We also celebrated MSP visits to workshops, as well as carefully managing announcements of its new test sites - and a call out for a launch site, crucial milestones for the young firm.

Measurement and evaluation:

We smashed our initial targets, delivering 709 items of coverage across the year-long campaign.

Crucially there were six qualified-leads from customers interested in taking payload space that emerged directly from the PR – worth between £40 and £50 million.

We also attracted four MSPs and two MPs to visit Skyrora's offices while our influencer engagement included Robin Ince of BBC radio show the Infinite Monkey Cage with Professor Brian Cox, and Dallas Campbell of The Gadget Show and Bang Goes the Theory.

Highlights included:

- A total reach of 48,893,967
- TV coverage on BBC The One Show
- UK wide coverage in titles including The Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail, The Times, ITV, The I, The Daily Mirror and key Scottish titles such as The Herald, The Scotsman and The National
- Widespread coverage across the UK – more than 100 articles in regional UK titles, as well as reaching worldwide news outlets in Australia and Germany

- Broadcast coverage on STV news at Six, Forces TV, BBC Radio's Good Morning Scotland and TALKRadio
- Over 500% spike in web traffic to the Skyrora website
- Minimum 20% boost in engagement levels to Skyrora social channels
- 44% increase in Facebook followers.

Budget and campaign impact

The PR budget was our annual fee of £23,040 meaning that for every £2,122 people saw an item of coverage.

Skyrora has reported an increased awareness of its business in venture capital circles.

1:3 contacts at key-influencer trade conferences state that their awareness of Skyrora comes from the PR activity.