Category: Public Sector Team of the Year

Company: VisitScotland

Number of staff employed - including executive / support staff - and annual public relations budget, showing areas directly under the control of the team:
VisitScotland is Scotland’s national tourism organisation. We market Scotland and work with the tourism industry to grow the Scottish visitor economy. We have two teams – a corporate team (19) which manages press, social, internal and industry communications and a consumer PR team (13) which manages international travel press and influencers. We have a budget of £400,000.

Business objectives and analysis of team performance against budget over the past 12 months:
Our focus is on enhancing the reputation of VisitScotland, the tourism industry and Scotland as a tourism destination.

We:
- Communicate the growth contribution the visitor economy can bring to Scotland
- Position Scotland as a must-visit, must-return destination in key markets
- Position VisitScotland as a catalyst for new thinking and collaboration
- Our last reputation study showed we have raised the reputation of VisitScotland by over 20% in the last ten years. (ComRes) from 2.9 to 4
- In 2017, international visitor spend was at its highest for more than a decade
- In 2017 we worked with more than 1000 media and influencers
- In the last 12 months Scotland has been voted as the most beautiful and most welcoming country in the world by Rough Guide

A brief overview of business / team strategy:
- Bringing the world’s media and influencers to Scotland so they can share their experiences globally
- Engaging with Scottish tourism businesses to create common goals
- Engaging with stakeholders to show the importance of tourism to the economy, encouraging investment and support
- Enthusing our staff to become knowledgeable advocates
- Protecting VisitScotland's reputation
A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:
We commit to continuous improvement, encouraging both innovation and development. We mentor internally and externally, and invest in training – with SEO, proof reading and crisis communications courses in the last six months.

We also employ two modern apprentices whom we develop, and nine members of the team hold CIPR diplomas and an MSc. We speak ten languages and run a staff innovation group to encourage new ideas. Innovation is at the heart of everything we do so we are currently looking to extend our influencer engagement to business commentators as well as developing a digital newsroom, setting up regional closed Facebook groups and driving employee advocacy through LinkedIn. We also work with three local tourism businesses every year to help them with their communications and develop a bespoke strategy and plan for them.

A summary of recent outstanding achievements:
INFORMATION STRATEGY
In October 2017 VisitScotland decided to close 40 of its Visitor Information Centres, making staff redundant. A move to digital by visitors was a strong argument for change, but there was a clear reputational risk. We developed a communication strategy and built a strong bank of advocates in advance, developing messages, detailed briefings and training staff to deliver the news. This ensured our staff were treated with respect and our spokespeople were proactive and honest. The results included 85% of press coverage either positive or neutral, a total of only 20 complaints from 40 closures and minimal social media reaction - just 25 Twitter comments with half supportive.

INSTAGRAM TRAVEL AGENCY
London is a crucial market for Scotland, but also one of the most competitive. Our plan was to attract a younger market with a unique partnership with Instagram. Working with COW PR, we delivered an Instagram travel agency in Camden, asking visitors to choose five Instagram images from a digital wall and then created bespoke itineraries. This created a buzz, gaining nearly 200 items of coverage and a social audience of 250,000. Instagram followers increased by 37%.

COSAGACH
VisitScotland’s research highlighted a growing trend of Hygge for visitors to Scotland in the winter months. In search of our own Hygge, we discovered an old Gaelic word called Cosagach (feeling snug and warm) which helped us create a new travel trend for 2018. A simple media and social media campaign saw the new trend feature in more than 100 titles across the world and reach more than 800million.

A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:
The total cost of pairing 10 influencers with locals was £50,300, achieving an average CPM of £1.17.
The cost of each influencer ranged from £2,500 to around £16,500 (we cannot disclose the exact due to commercial confidentiality).