



**Category:** Best Use of Media Relations

**Company:** Confused.com

**Entry title:** The true depth of the UK's pothole problem

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**Brief and objectives:**

Develop an integrated campaign that:

- Communicates key messages in line with Confused.com’s motor-focused strategy:
  - ‘Champion drivers’ and position on ‘the driver’s side’
  - Educate about ‘driver savings’.
  - Position as an authority on motoring.
- Support SEO link acquisition to improve ‘car insurance’ Google rank positioning – a key driver of traffic and business revenue. Achieve 20 links from external sites. This is in line with the target demanded of external agencies.
- Underpin above objectives in line with campaign benchmark targets:
  - PR - 28 pieces of coverage (2-3 tier one, 10+ tier two)
  - Social - CTR of 5%.
  - Email - exceed 29.06% unique open rate average.

**Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:**

- The campaign needed to champion a cause that resonated with UK motorists. Among our panel of 10,000 test drivers, condition of road surfaces is one of the largest pain points (according to 67%, with 85% citing potholes, specifically). A further 70% say road conditions have worsened over the past year. ‘Potholes’ are regularly covered by news outlets, so we knew it had PR traction and link acquisition potential.
- The topic allowed Confused.com to educate on driver savings, due to the costly damage potholes cause to vehicles. Damage leads to increased car insurance costs. By raising awareness of this issue, Confused.com can help people to save money on their car insurance - a key objective for the business.

- Given the scope of the audience and multiple objectives, the campaign needed to be integrated across Confused.com’s channels to reach as many UK drivers as possible and encourage engagement in the campaign.
- There was an appetite to execute this campaign in house due to previous outsourced SEO campaigns yielding no or poor results. There was also a greater link acquisition focus for the business in 2018, so we wanted to develop the team’s expertise in this area.

### **Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:**

- We wanted to present the data in a creative way to help fulfil our campaign objectives. We built an interactive scrolling animation that enabled users to visualise the true depth of the UK’s pothole problem, stretching down past the Earth’s upper mantle. It had regionalised tabs to make it relevant at a local level. Readers could engage with the story through the animation, so this encouraged journalists and sites to link.
- Created a confused.com/potholes vanity URL to make it easy to communicate the link in interviews.
- Obtained FOI data on pothole repair costs and council compensation pay outs to support the story with a ‘driver savings’ message. Journalists were interested in this level of detail, so we were able to hold this information back and ‘trade-off’ for links from news sites.
- Created a hub featuring pot-hole related content, including advice on how to claim for pothole vehicle damage - a further link acquisition opportunity.
- The animation, hub and advice guide were strategically placed within the ‘car insurance’ directory to ensure SEO value was directed towards Confused.com’s core product.
- Hyper-targeted regions on social media using bespoke teaser videos to encourage users to click through to the animation.

### **Implementation of tactics:**

- Retrieved data from 197 councils on the number of potholes reported and fixed in 2016/17. Supported with a nationally representative survey of 2,000 drivers revealing perceptions of the issue. This provided the basis for the story.
- Launched in October when Google searches for ‘potholes’ starts to rise.
- Prepared and issued one national press release and 12 regional press releases.
- Retained broadcast agency (The 10 Group) supported by providing Confused.com’s motoring editor (Amanda Stretton) for interviews.
- Potholes was the page lead in Confused.com’s newsletter to two million customers.

## **Measurement and evaluation:**

### Overview

- Extensive research informed a creative data-driven campaign which resonated with the core audience.
- Tangibly improved 'car insurance' SEO position – key traffic and revenue driver.
- First campaign delivered by newly-formed, fully integrated PR, Content and Social team.
- First link acquisition campaign developed and delivered entirely in-house which exceeded past results produced by external agencies.
- Exceeded benchmark KPIs across all channels.

### Link acquisition

Prior to the campaign Confused.com experienced issues with Google ranking for 'car insurance'. The campaign had a positive impact on positioning, rising from 10 to position five.

Best link acquisition campaign of 2017 - 43 referring domains (vs 20 target).

Average domain authority of 62. High DA links included Kirklees.gov.uk (DA 100), MailOnline (DA 95), City AM (81) and This is Money (DA 80).

#### Key messages

Politicians and stakeholders engaged with the campaign, positioning Confused.com as the authority on the issue. 'Potholes' raised as a motion in Scottish Parliament by the SNP, Rachael Hamilton MSP referenced the research on her website, and Gloucestershire Lib Dems tweeted the story. One campaigner decorated the potholes on his street to highlight his frustration.

'Motor savings experts', 'car savings experts' and 'motor experts' accounted for messaging in 69% of coverage (independent human analysis by Gorkana), proving the campaign delivered a 'champion drivers' and 'driver savings' message.

The campaign resonated with drivers on Facebook, sparking 274 comments outraged at the damage caused to vehicles, 248 shares, 521 reactions – a total reach of 546,908.

### Benchmarks

- Best-performing PR campaign since motor-focused strategy implementation in August 2016, with 515 coverage pieces (vs 28 target).
- One TV, 13 radio interviews. Included ITV.com, Heart.co.uk, The Times, The Mirror, i, and The Sun. Total reach of 65,620,307.
- Social CTR of 34% (vs 5% target) – 80% of traffic to the animation was driven from social.
- Best performing link acquisition content piece in terms of traffic with 19,786 UPVs – 5x more than second best piece.
- 29,655 UPVs across pothole-related content.
- 1min 51sec average time on page proving users viewed the tool from top to bottom.
- Newsletter reach 1,800,778. Open rate 34.81% exceeding 29.06% target.

## **Budget and cost effectiveness:**

### Budget

£9,900 – design and functionality development

£5,000 – Facebook spend

Cost effectiveness

Reach 67,450,740.

0.2p spent for every 1,000 people reached (a figure comprised of budget spent and reach).