



Category: Travel, Leisure or Tourism Campaign

Company: Midnight Communications

Entry title: Celebrating 20 years of hen and stags

Brief and objectives:

Midnight was appointed in April 2017 with a brief to create a national buzz about Red7, reinforcing its status as the original and best hen and stag specialist travel agent, in the face of new market entrants. Red7 was also keen to use PR for the first time to support its recruitment and retention efforts to see off stiff competition – including from a local copycat business.

Midnight's campaign objectives were to:

- Raise awareness and preference for Red7 amongst target audiences, particularly within regional press, relevant wedding titles and nationally.
- Increase Red7's share of voice
- Profile the founder, Ian Lucas, as a great employer locally
- Position Red7 as the original and best travel agent in the hen and stag sector
- Drive traffic to the Red7 website by securing backlinks.

Between June 2017 and June 2018, the campaign delivered nearly 300 items of coverage, reaching over 1.2bn. 183 backlinks were secured – well ahead of expectations at 43 per cent of total. One creative campaign idea went viral on LadBible resulting in a deluge of job applications!

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

Our initial competitor mapping research highlighted a need for high-profile action to cut through the noise.

Having spoken to the founder we discovered that 2017 marked the 20-year anniversary of Red7. We persuaded him to do something special for his team to mark the occasion – and to fuel a PR campaign. Ian agreed and took his entire team away on an all-expenses paid trip to Marbella, arranging a photoshoot for us to use.

We also analysed the enquiries the company had received over the last few years and, having spoken to the sales team, identified a shift in trends in wedding and stag and hen trips. We then liaised with our market research partner and arranged a think-tank to discuss a consumer survey.

We investigated ways to create additional stories for the national, regional and wedding press. Through our discussions with Red7's marketing team we discovered that they had held a competition to find 'Britain's Best Bridesmaid' in 2016 but had only received two items of coverage.

This seemed like a huge missed opportunity, so we devised a plan to launch a second Bridesmaids competition. This ran alongside a new competition to find Britain's Best Best Man, with a comprehensive PR strategy to maximise coverage.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

Our strategy was to create a national buzz around Red7, to make the brand synonymous with weddings, hen and stags, by using three key tactics:

1. A photo story regarding Red7's anniversary staff trip to Marbella, positioning the founder as 'Britain's Best Boss' – also a great recruitment tool!

We made sure the photos were ideal for the tabloids and men's lifestyle titles – to suit the company's target market – and ensured the story included the key messages around the 20-year anniversary as 'the original and best hen and stag expert'.

2. A consumer survey into changing wedding traditions and the nation's favourite celebrity wedding was conducted with over 2,000 respondents – giving the press another reason to rehash photos of top celeb weddings. We carefully crafted the questionnaire to ensure we could generate multiple stories to show excellent ROI.

3. A comprehensive plan was created to maximise coverage for Britain's Best Bridesmaid and Best Man competitions. We decided to shortlist the candidates by region, creating 14 regional finalists, seven regional winners and one overall winner to create opportunities in the regional press. We also planned out a series of press stories including the launch, the regional finalists and winners and finally the overall winner.

Implementation of tactics:

The Best Boss: We issued the photo story in July 2017 to targeted press, positioning the founder as 'Britain's Best Boss'. The story went viral with features on the LadBible Facebook page as well as online on the Metro, The Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Star and Independent.

This was followed up in May 2018 as two employees were rewarded for 10 years' service with long-haul holidays. This achieved coverage on the Dailymail.co.uk and in the local paper, The Argus. In total, the 'best boss' stories achieved 12 items of high quality coverage reaching over 718m.

The Wedding Traditions Survey: We divided the results into several press-worthy stories and issued them to targeted journalists from women's lifestyle titles, wedding and national press. Headlines included 'Britain's great wedding traditions are under threat' and Kate and Wills crowned the nation's favourite celebrity wedding'. 44 items of coverage were achieved in key titles including Bride Magazine, Yours Magazine, Vows and Venues, You and Your Wedding, Wedding Ideas Mag and Female First.

Britain's Best Man and Britain's Best Bridesmaid: The competitions were planned with the Best Man competition launched in June 2017 and Best Bridesmaid in January 2018.

The PR plan was staggered to maximise media take up and included:

- 'The hunt is on' launch release
- 'Two weeks to go'
- Top 14 regional finalists
- Seven winners
- National winner announcement
- Top tips – how to be a great best man or bridesmaid

We liaised with each finalist to gather information and photos to provide human-interest stories for their regional press to support them.

The two competitions achieved over 230 items reaching over 473m including two exclusive stories with Dailymail.co.uk.

Measurement and evaluation:

The campaign delivered nearly 300 items, reaching over 1.2bn with 183 backlinks to the Red7 website (43%).

Coverage was achieved in every region of the UK. Of the total, 20 items were national, including four features on Dailymail.co.uk. Over 60 items were print, nearly 200 online plus 40 broadcast.

The Red7 brand is now overwhelmingly synonymous with hen and stag travel. In fact, the founder is so secure with the strength of the brand that he is now diversifying into business travel. To him - and to Midnight – that brand confidence is the best possible measure of the campaign's success.

Midnight has just been appointed to handle the PR campaign for the whole group.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

On a total PR budget of £30,600, Midnight delivered outstanding results, securing 285 items of quality coverage reaching over 1.2 billion.