

PRIDE AWARDS 2017

Category: Issues, Crisis or Reputational Management

Company: Stone Junction

Entry title: EU Automation - tackling obsolescence

Explanation of issue/crisis and objectives:

How does a business that sells obsolete components position itself in the brave new world of digitalisation? It's this problem that faced EU Automation, an international provider of obsolete parts.

Against this background, obsolescence is a contradiction. Businesses selling obsolete components have to communicate with engineers, driven by buying cutting-edge technology.

The company is on track to turnover £30 million by its 2017/18 year-end. It credits us with sales worth £1.39M in 2015/16.

To maintain results, we set these objectives:

1. Manage and own how digitalisation in manufacturing and its associated concepts are framed in the media, by generating 285 relevant clippings, June 2016 to May 2017 (one clipping per £200 of spend)
2. Increase attributable sales to £2M, using customer magazine and e-mail content and the production of high value linkable assets to develop a leadership position on those same concepts by May 2017
3. Increase international awareness of EU Automation by generating Asia-Pacific and US clippings, maintaining high value coverage in Europe — 50 international clippings June 2016 to May 2017
4. Respond to shifting stakeholder expectation and perception, and improve direct customer communication, by delivering 24 email marketing shots, targeting an average increase in traffic of 500 visitors per e-mail, alongside a quarterly company magazine, both digitalisation themed
5. Fill in the gap between customer expectation and EU Automation's delivery, by producing a high-value linkable asset by October 2016, generating 350 requests for copies.

Research, planning and strategy:

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

We first identified the issues associated with digitalisation in manufacturing, anticipating conceptual changes and planning goal-driven tactics.

We categorised maturity based on how thoroughly the concepts had been covered in the media and scored them on media relations usefulness (see appendix one, list of identified issues).

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Research included customer interviews and industry reports. Key actionable findings included:

- 58% of users acknowledge having no plan for managing the lifecycle of their technology (ARC Advisory Group)
- 88% of process manufacturers acknowledge the use of automation beyond the obsolescence date (ARC Advisory Group)

We conducted interviews with:

- COPA-DATA
- GAMBICA
- IIOM
- Megger
- Nexus GB
- Renishaw
- Rochester Electronics

Based on this research we established that the issues we should focus on were obsolescence management and digitalisation in manufacturing.

STRATEGY

- We themed all media relations and content around the identified issues, using a content plan, including one piece of content for UK and international trade media titles each week (see appendix five – sample of content plan).
- We established an editorial calendar for EU Automation's quarterly customer magazine, AUTOMATED
- We arranged a twice monthly e-mail marketing schedule to distribute the magazine and other thought leading content

STRATEGY – BoOM!

We decided to create a high value linkable asset: The Book of Obsolescence Management – BoOM, a printed book that would overcome the simplicity of the short-form white-paper.

Our objectives for BoOM were:

- Generate 350 requests for the book
- Deliver 10,000 visits to the BoOM landing page
- Garner 20 trade media clippings about the book

We arranged pre and post-launch campaigns, including:

- Securing media coverage
- A landing page to encourage people to request copies

- e-mail marketing
- Direct marketing
- A Thunderclap account for the launch
- Direct initial download requests to Amazon to improve rankings.

Tactics and their implementation, including creativity and innovation:

We wrote every word of BoOM and worked with a designer to layout the content. We contacted journalists by post, enclosing a floppy disk that contained a press release about BoOM.

A letter told journalists that if they couldn't access the press release on the floppy disk, they could contact Stone Junction to find out more about BoOM. This demonstrated that the feelings that maintenance engineers experience when they can't source an obsolete part.

We also reached out to Stone Junction's and EU Automation's extensive contacts in relevant industries, asking them to commit a social media update via Thunderclap.

Our international PR team approached journalists across the world, in their native languages, to develop international media relations.

Improve direct communication

We published four issues of AUTOMATED in six languages. Each issue contained interviews with an industry expert from a relevant trade body and a start-up.

E-mail marketing shots were sent to EU Automation's database bi-monthly to promote industry guides and special reports.

Demonstrate how negative impacts were avoided, positives achieved and improvements made:

- The entire campaign was produced on schedule and in budget
- In 2016 Gorkana listed Jonathan Wilkins, EU Automation's marketing director, as the leading UK commentator on Industry 4.0
- EU Automation has twice been invited to speak at IIOM (the world's leading authority on obsolescence) events
- EU Automation credits the issues management process with generating £3M of sales
- Neil Mead, one of the UK's leading automation journalists, describes himself as 'very impressed' with 'each and every issue' of Automated

Measurement and evaluation:

Objective one:

- Stone Junction generated 384 press clippings in total from June 2016 to May 2017, equating to one clipping per £125 of PR spend (target exceeded by 34%)

Objective two

- EU Automation attributes £3M of its sales between June 2016 and May 2017 to the campaign (target exceeded by 50%)
- EU Automation's sales have nearly doubled from £13.1M in 2015/2016 to £22.2M in 2016/2017.

Objective three

- 67 clippings in Belgium, Canada, Germany, France, Iran Italy, US, India, Nepal, New Zealand and Spain

Objective four

- We delivered 24 e-shots. Each one has caused a dramatic spike in web traffic; issue nine of AUTOMATED generated over 1,000 additional visits in the week following its launch. The following three weeks also saw increased web traffic, peaking at 4,512 visitors per week — around 3,250 above base level. Overall, traffic levels are approximately 50% above target.

Objective five

- Launched BoOM in October 2016 with 730 requests for the book, in addition to Amazon sales (exceeded target by 108.5%). In addition:
 - 17,000 visits to the landing page (exceeded target by 70%)
 - Number one in Amazon's manufacturing chart for three weeks and the top ten for three months
 - The Thunderclap campaign gathered a total reach of 198,247 on the launch day.