



Category: Outstanding Small Public Relations Consultancy

Company: Story Comms

Date of incorporation, number of employees - including executive / support staff – and annual fee income:

Date of incorporation: August 2014 with operations kicking off in January 2015

Number of employees: Four full time

Business objectives and analysis of performance against budget over the past three years:

We've performed incredibly well in our first three years. We've also delivered net profitability of over 40% since launch. Our start-up objectives included marking Story out as a specialist corporate and public affairs agency that knew how to leverage UK regional devolution for business growth.

Our five-year growth goals:

1. To be a leader of the Midlands PR industry – breaking through on the national stage and entering the PRWeek Top 150 listing
2. To score 90%+ on our staff and client 'happiness' survey annually by making sure we attract/create the very best PRs - with each client contributing to our growth with at least two referrals per year
3. To win national and regional PR and business awards.

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Spin, fluff, wacky creative with no purpose, overpromising and a lack of measurable results has led many to be suspicious of PR's value to a business' bottom line. And it's everything Story stands against. We do 'No-Nonsense PR', setting out our stall as a straight-talking partner for businesses – in ways that bring demonstrable change to the bottom line/KPIs.

We're built by a client for clients. We understand client frustrations because our MD's been in their shoes - so our focus on their needs, challenges and desired outcomes is genuine. We believe in being partners, not suppliers.

In three to five years we will continue to build our credentials and portfolio of B2B and political organisations in the Midlands and beyond. Areas experiencing devolution are initial targets.

Building an agency that attracts the best talent is crucial to our growth. We're passionate about enabling storytellers to do their best work by finding the balance between their home and Story life. As a team, we challenge each other out of our comfort zones.

It is important for that all staff feel ownership of the business, its vision and growth. Every six months we have a strategy day with each team member running sessions on developing the business such as client service, innovation, and operations.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Story is committed to developing its team's intellectual might, here's a snapshot of how:

Monthly lunch and learn talks

Expanding our minds and presentation skills, team members take to the stage to tell us what they've learned on a particular subject.

Film training

Including production, equipment 101 and editing, allowing us to shoot and create video content for clients.

Networks – Team members are active members of Birmingham Future, Future Faces, the IoD and Chamber.

A summary of recent outstanding achievements, including client list growth / retention:

New clients

In the past six months, Story has secured long-term contracts with the British Business Bank's Midlands Engine Investment Fund and inward investment body Enterprise Telford, following competitive pitch processes. We've won and delivered projects for Town Hall & Symphony Hall, Drive Midlands, The FA and the West Midlands Combined Authority.

We've achieved a 90% retention rate for retainer clients since launch and satisfaction is also running at 90%.

Awards

Shortlisted for PRWeek's New Consultancy of the Year and awards and nominations from the PRCA, TheBusinessDesk and Birmingham Post.

Our people

In the last 12 months, our people have done us proud. Story veteran Sophie Drake was named the Future Face of Communications 2016 by Birmingham Chamber, and in a UK first, appointed as Director for Young People for the Greater Birmingham LEP. Our Chief Amanda Lowe is shortlisted for the Midlands IoD Director of the Year.

A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

John Lewis: 'A conversation with Birmingham'

Brief

To launch John Lewis' first flagship shop in four years in the heart of Birmingham city centre.

Objectives

- Create talked about moments and stand out in a competitive retail, leisure and tourism landscape
- Champion the pride of John Lewis in becoming a long-term part of the city
- Develop robust and positive stakeholder relationships
- Drive footfall and sales

Strategy

- To deliver a digital and social campaign led by film and imagery
- To 'put John Lewis at the front of the conga line' – celebrating the city and the people driving it forward
- To orchestrate an original launch that didn't involve talking about products and sales

Tactics

Two digitally and socially driven elements:

1. #Brumscape
 - a) The largest panoramic photograph ever taken of the city – an interactive 80megapixel image comprising 33 different shots stitched together, spanning 180 degrees and a 15-mile skyline
 - b) Launched #Brumscape via johnlewis.com, Twitter, Facebook, media and stakeholder outreach
 - c) Secured coverage in BuzzFeed, Metro and Shortlist – who challenged readers to find a host of landmarks
2. #ForwardBirmingham:
 - a) A showcase of Birmingham's future through a series of cinematic films:
 - i. A short, social media friendly piece designed to be shared
 - ii. Teasers to build anticipation
 - iii. A 'feature length' ten-minute showstopper for use at city events, including the store's launch
 - b) The series told the 'hidden' stories of those driving the city's future including a conductor for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, a baker, doctors and a jewellery maker. We seeded photos and shorts of the films ahead of launch through Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, johnlewis.com and media outreach. A short version of the film was played on the 'media eye' screens outside Grand Central. Supporting activity included a dinner for 70 key stakeholders and media relations around recruitment and the shop's build.

Outputs

- #1 most successful John Lewis store opening
- #ForwardBirmingham
- First John Lewis regional campaign to trend nationally on Twitter (above the election of new Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and the Rugby World Cup)
- 5.9 million impressions for #ForwardBirmingham on Twitter in the first 24 hours and over 200,000 views on YouTube
- Brumscape
- Coverage on BuzzFeed, Metro.co.uk, a front page+double page spread in Birmingham Mail

- Image drove significant traffic to johnlewis.com. #Brumscape received over 6.6million impressions in the first 24 hours and trended in Birmingham on Twitter
- On launch, tweets about John Lewis Birmingham had a reach of 310,165, up from 59,853 the previous day

Outcomes

The anticipation driven by the campaign helped to drive shop sales 26% above target in the first three days alone.