

PRIDE AWARDS 2017

Category: Outstanding Public Relations Consultancy

Company: Liquid

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

Liquid is an integrated communications agency, established in April 2004, with UK offices in Birmingham, London, Jersey and Guernsey, serving diverse sectors including high-wealth financial and professional services, consumer, food, education, health and lifestyle. Our clients are based in the UK, Canada, Ireland and the Channel Islands, and operate as far afield as Singapore, Hong Kong, Dubai, New York and New Zealand.

Our burgeoning food division employs a full-time chef, a national food writer/critic and a nutritionist – a first for our industry.

In total, Liquid's team comprises 17 permanent members: 12 PR practitioners; two designers; a finance director; a chef; and a specialist food writer. We work with a team of consultants including a dietician, a public affairs expert and digital specialists.

Total fee income for the last 12 months = £1,665,000.

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

We have short and long-term SMART objectives.

Long term:

- To be recognised as international communications experts
- To continue to grow Liquid's head count (to 40) and maintain margins of 25%
- To be acknowledged as brave and innovative by clients and peers
- To prioritise our clients' needs and, if required, appoint appropriate specialists, challenging the traditional PR constituency.

Short term:

- Further develop cross-office interaction and integration, reinforcing the goals of: (a) stretching individuals and providing new challenges and opportunities for staff; (b) fostering greater creativity and remaining motivated; (c) facilitating career progression
- Continue to develop our digital offer with ongoing social media and digital training; integrate our digital partners; and bring all video production in-house
- Continue to develop our sector knowledge and expertise
- Continue to maintain professionalism at all times.

Budget against performance for the last three years:

2017

Turnover – £1,711,776. Profit – 243,711 (14%)
2016

Turnover – £1,200,007. Profit – £146,242 (12%)
2015

Turnover – £1,002,641 Profit – £146,128 (14.5%)

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Liquid is committed to providing the highest level of service but we don't believe in a one size fits all approach and each account will have differences depending on the needs of the client and personalities of those involved. We aim to be an extension of our client's team, working hard to deliver effective communication of the highest quality. Our reputation is our biggest asset and has been built through commitment, honesty and integrity – values that were at the core of our business when it was established and remain at its heart today. What we believe separates us from our competitors is our breadth of experience and expertise across all elements of the communications mix.

Liquid truly embraces integrated communication, evaluating each piece of client work and identifying the most impactful and cost-effective way of handling it.

Every client has different requirements and we tailor our offering to complement a company's in-house capability, capacity and requirements.

We don't work with clients unless we feel we can make a difference. Integrity and authenticity are key Liquid values and we are committed to excellence and quality in everything we do.

We also work collaboratively across our three offices, which adds creativity that 'one office' companies struggle to offer.

It's not one thing that makes Liquid different, but the combination of all of the above.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Every team member is a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and Liquid is a member of the PRCA. This means we are governed by their codes of conduct and committed to continuous professional development.

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

A momentous 12 months for Liquid included:

- A dramatic increase in revenue to £666,077 for food division Liquid Lunch
- The team has grown by almost 25% and overall revenue is up 33%
- A board restructure saw a reallocation of responsibilities, reinvigorating the senior team
- Sustained growth prompted a move to larger premises in Jersey and an expansion of the professional services PR team and design function
- A commitment to recruiting the best. Our award-winning chef is a member of the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts and a Visiting Professor of Culinary Arts at University College Birmingham. Our specialist food journalist writes for national titles and has appeared on the BBC's Rip Off Food
- Promoted five team members. Our finance director joined Liquid seven years ago as an assistant and now works across three tax jurisdictions
- Appointed an additional member to the Guernsey team with UK PR experience

- Realigned our HR strategy with a greater focus on training and development, and gave the HR function a seat at board level. All employees have a CPD programme with the PRCA – our newest recruit began her training four weeks into the role
- Launched a salaried intern programme
- Developed our education team – appointed to the roster for King's College London, and represent Arden University and University College Birmingham
- Launched a new business development team, a business bonus scheme and a marketing committee to ensure all employees are engaged with the business
- Built on our internal communications strategy including: improved weekly team-wide communication; cross-office training and frequent creative meetings; an annual team weekend (Belfast in 2017); and the sharing of top-line figures with team members.

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

Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers – "make maple a staple."

Amid growing awareness about excess sugar in diets, Liquid was appointed by The Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers to increase exports of maple products to the UK. Using research and focus groups, Liquid mapped the UK market, establishing how people use maple syrup, where they buy it, the drivers to purchase, and the key messages and communication channels. Our goal was to encourage consumers to move away from only associating maple with pancakes and realise its wider culinary applications to "make maple a staple".

We established the positioning of maple and ensured our integrated approach encompassed the new UK maple website; digital and social platforms; and media relations. Our chef took traditional British dishes and gave them a maple twist. Our nutritionist showed how maple provides a diet free from processed sugar.

Our 'We Love Maple' campaign, continuing through 2016-17, worked on two levels: a press office function to inform, educate, and encourage consumers to cook with maple; and a parallel strategy targeting chefs, ensuring key culinary influencers introduce maple to their menus.

The results: widespread media coverage; leading chefs such as Dan Doherty (Duck & Waffle) and John Williams (The Ritz) endorsing the product; maple included on the curriculum at University College Birmingham, a global first; and, most importantly, a 36% increase in exports to the UK after our first year and an additional 6% rise after our second year.

Liquid's work in 2016 was acknowledged by the BBC

Liquid's fee for April 2016 to April 2017, including additional grant funding, was £589,000.