

The logo for the CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER. The text "CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019" is in white, and "GOLD WINNER" is in a large, multi-colored font (pink, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

Category: Consumer Relations Campaign

Company: WPR

Entry title: Pub-licist

Brief and objectives:

Hungry Horse, a casual dining business, is a value brand, long-known for its generous portions and wide drinks selection.

In 2018, after two well documented, tough years for the casual dining sector, the business went through a major repositioning exercise. At the time, like-for-like (LFL) sales across the UK's leading casual dining brands were falling by 0.3% a month. In contrast, the country's managed pubs and bars were seeing a LFL sales increase of 0.6%. Working ahead of this trend, Hungry Horse brand chiefs had identified a need to 'put the pub back' into Hungry Horse – investing in adult-only areas and increasing event-driven marketing.

They now needed WPR to build the profile of Hungry Horse 'pubs' on a local level, and communicate the benefits:

- Always something going on (pub quizzes, entertainment, sport etc)
- Great value food
- Variety of drinks
- Zoned areas (something for all the family).

Crucially, we had a maximum budget of just £4,500 to deliver a UK-wide consumer PR campaign which would put the local back into Hungry Horse.

For this, we had to deliver:

- 50-60 regional newspaper hits (ensuring the Hungry Horse brand name was included in 90% of coverage)
- 1,320 clicks to site (1.2% CTR)
- A 40% backlink rate (from DA+30 sites).

The ultimate KPI, however, was sales.

The idea, research and planning:

On a basic level, we had been asked to devise a very commercial campaign which would inform value seeking families that their local Hungry Horse was better than ever, and worth a visit. The challenge lay in packaging this up in a way that would deliver column inches, which would translate into sales.

We pored through reports uncovering the challenges facing the sector, and identified an article from YouGov which revealed that 63% of Brits feel pubs are no longer the heart of the community, and 40% believe pubs should do more to help organise local events.

Strategically, we recognised an urgent need to:

- Focus on the ‘always something going on’ messaging
- Position Hungry Horse pubs as the heart of the community, and committed to serving it
- Unearth community champions.

Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:

We took the strategy and insight into a team brainstorm, and very quickly ‘Pub-licist’ was born – the world’s best job, where someone would get paid to drink beer.

A world first, it ticked all of our campaign objectives:

- Always something going on:
 - As well as drinking on the job, the Pub-licist would have responsibilities including attending events, watching sports, and playing darts, pool and snooker
- Heart of the community:
 - The Pub-licist would be required to make a number of visits to their local, in order to provide feedback and recommendations to help make their pub the best in the country.
- Unearth community champions:
 - A local spokesperson, the Pub-licist would represent the pub company in return for a £500 salary.

Delivery:

We tapped into a media trend:

- The media appetite for ‘dream jobs’ hit its absolute peak in 2018.

We delivered regional news hits:

- The joy of this story was that it could be tailored for each and every one of Hungry Horse's 290 pubs nationwide.

We drove social coverage:

- This was 'clickbait' heaven e.g. 'Where do I sign up?', 'Is this the world's best job', and 'Dream job alert'. When carrying out our sell-in, we provided journalists with all the inspiration they needed.

We secured backlinks:

- We hosted the job spec on the Hungry Horse website, knowing most journalists would be happy to refer readers to an application form.

Measurement and evaluation:

Target: 50-60 regional newspaper hits (ensuring the Hungry Horse brand name was included in 90% of coverage):

- We hit the coverage target in just 24 hours
- We had doubled it within 48 hours, and tripled it in 72 hours
- All told, we delivered 147 regional press hits – surpassing the KPIs by 194%
- A testament to the strength of the story is the volume of national coverage achieved. A national sell-in was outside the brief and budget, but it was still picked up by 14 titles including Metro (twice), LADBible, MSN, Mirror, Independent and RadioX
- More importantly, a staggering 80% of titles shared the story on their social channels. This free, earned social coverage received over 17,000 engagements, with LADBible alone clocking up over 10,900 engagements
- Above all, 100% of coverage mentioned the Hungry Horse 'local pub' messaging.

1,320 clicks to site (1.2% CTR):

- We promoted the search for our Pub-licist on the Hungry Horse Facebook brand page with both a canvas and direct response ad. Through this activity we delivered 6,176 clicks to site (368% above target)
- For a media spend of just £900, we reached 132,562 people (against a target of 110,000)
- This means we delivered a click through rate (CTR) of 4.7% – 292% above the industry average CTR of 1.2%.

A 40% backlink rate (from DA+30 sites):

- 92% of online articles (DA+30 sites) included a back link.

Budget and campaign impact:

Budget = £4,500.

During the campaign period, sales at Hungry Horse were up 1.4%. To put this into context, takings across the casual dining sector are estimated to have shrunk by circa 0.45% in that time. We had bucked the trend, and then some. We had also paid for the campaign several times over.