



CIPR PRIDE
AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER

Category: Outstanding In-House Public Relations Team

Company: Keele University

Number of staff employed - including executive / support staff - and annual public relations budget:

Five PR staff.

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

There are three key objectives from the University's 2015-2020 strategic plan that the PR team began working to when it was established - from a standing start - in October 2016:

1. Grow overall student numbers
2. Strengthen the University's reputation and the Keele brand
3. Establish the University's international reputation in research.

Our top-level performance against these three objectives has been:

1. Our undergraduate intake in 2018/19 was the biggest in our history. Furthermore, in 2018/19 we had the second highest growth in the UK
2. Our YouGov research shows that we have increased our brand awareness by 7% since 2016 in what is a crowded and competitive market
3. We have sought out, crafted and disseminated over 300 Keele stories since October 2016, resulting in 7,040 pieces of global digital, print and broadcast coverage being secured, and including an exclusive research piece with Reuters that was broadcast globally (all coverage is organic - no advertorials / paid pieces, and no agency support whatsoever).

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Our focus is on building Keele's reputation and recruitment numbers. Since it was created in October 2016 the PR team has done this by:

1. Establishing Keele academics as 'go to' spokespeople within their fields, providing full support and training, and building a directory of 100+ experts as a result

2. Securing frequent and prestigious media opportunities for these experts and their research to raise the profile of the University nationally and internationally - with 100+ interviews secured on BBC World, CNN, Al Jazeera and Sky News, etc.
3. Ensuring that Keele is one of the most published and most read universities on The Conversation, a news network that connects academic insight with the general public (as demonstrated by our regular Top 10 ranking out of 80+ HEIs)
4. Being one of the most engaged universities on social media platforms with innovative video content and a unique tone of voice (as demonstrated by our regular Top 10 ranking on Edurank)
5. Providing a trusted, reliable and successful PR and crisis communications service for internal stakeholders, to build and protect our brand 24/7.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Members of the team are continuously supported and encouraged to develop and hone their skills, and to also undertake training programmes. We are proud of our agile approach and as a team continuously reflect on activity and adapt our skills quickly, in line with new approaches and technologies - we're not afraid to change how we do things in order to improve them.

Two members of our five-strong team have completed the CIPR diploma, with a third currently undertaking the Professional PR Certificate.

We also support CPD across the University by sharing our skills with colleagues from across campus, running regular social media training courses and media engagement workshops for all.

A summary of recent outstanding achievements:

We're delighted that for the year ending December 31st 2018 we:

1. Increased external web traffic by 14% to 1.6m visits
2. Secured an annual Top 10 position on The Conversation (amongst 80+ HE members) with over three million readers of our content that the PR team pitched and secured
3. Increased digital and print media coverage by 38% and broadcast coverage by 70%
4. Secured multiple in-depth interviews for Keele academics last year on BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5, BBC World News, Sky News, CNN, Al Jazeera, France 24, and China Global Television Network
5. In two years, grew our social media connections - organically - by 27% to 133,000
6. To bring our research stories to life, the team produced 170+ videos and animations in-house that have had 1.2m organic views across Facebook, YouTube and Twitter

7. Reached a total of 640m people globally
8. Calmly and professionally managed over 60 crisis communications campaigns, from small yet problematic situations through to major reputational issues that were covered extensively in the national press.

Ultimately though, our most outstanding achievement is the outcome that the above outputs resulted in: that being driving student recruitment so much so that our undergraduate intake in 2018/19 was the biggest in our history, and the second highest growth in the UK.

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

Over this period we designed and delivered numerous targeted campaigns, one of which was to build our reputation with a small yet highly influential audience of regional policymakers.

As such, we approached and then worked closely with the regional Cabinet Office to provide messaging about Keele which they disseminated via their owned channels, and also secured a prestigious visit from the Minister of State for Climate Change to campus, the first university visit in her post, for a roundtable on sustainability with our Vice-Chancellor, researchers, corporate partners, and local business leaders. Several high profile leads were generated as a result of this activity, and new connections forged.

Alongside this work we actively participated in #StaffordshireDay on social media with a suite of eight infographics which celebrated the research created here at Keele that is having a positive impact on societies across the world. These messages were then also tweeted by the regional Cabinet Office, helping to reinforce our reputation for research excellence in line with our institutional strategic plan.

We also recently managed all PR around a visit to campus by Sir David Attenborough - a career highlight for us all! We were tasked with securing maximum coverage from the visit, and are proud that our live stream was watched by over 30,000 people, we had thousands of engagements on social media, and we successfully secured TV coverage on BBC Midlands Today.