



CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER

Category: Outstanding Small Public Relations Consultancy

Company: Karol Marketing

Number of employees - including executive / support staff - and annual fee income:

Year Number of Employees:

- 2016/17 6
- 2017/18 7
- 2018/19 10

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

Karol Marketing's reputation is built on delivering award-winning, results-orientated communications.

Over three years we have:

- Grown the business sustainably – both turnover and profitability, achieving an 88% increase in turnover
- Attracted and retained talent – through prestigious client wins and strengthening individual and team capabilities
- Achieved excellence in: Reputation Management, Social Media, Brand and Regional PR.

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Karol is the North East's most awarded and longest established PR consultancy. We're based in the Ouseburn in Karol's 6,000 sq. ft. converted Old Pub.

Around ten years ago the agency took a break from entering awards or investing in business development. As a result our profile dropped. A period of staff churn also contributed towards increasingly unsettled clients.

In 2016, with a new management team at the helm, we embarked on a new strategy.

Our success is built on innovation and staying ahead of the market. With media titles unable to command the reach they once were, levels of trust in corporations falling, and increasing questions around the value or ethics of social media and influencer engagement, the challenge for clients is how to effectively engage audiences against an increasingly fragmented political, social, media and cultural backdrop.

Focusing on three core client requirements (Brand, Regional and Reputation Management) our goals were to:

- Retain existing clients and generate organic growth
- Acquire new retained clients, increasing our presence in the marketplace and cross-selling our services into new markets
- Increase the number and size of one-off projects that we deliver, to supplement retained income
- Create three new staff roles in three years – retaining talent in the North East by uncovering graduate level talent
- Rediscover our award-winning ways!

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Company-wide culture:

In 2017/18 we introduced:

- Weekly all-agency meetings to discuss progress and celebrate success
- Free healthy breakfasts
- Flexible start and finish times
- Increased junior holiday allowance to same as senior staff (25 days per year)
- Cake days, regular staff lunches, early Friday finishes to go to the pub
- Further development of Karol-owned office including introduction of cycle racks
- Random gestures of thanks e.g. champagne and chocolates for staff on new business wins
- CSR: The Children's Foundation, Blood Bikes (CIPR Gold), The Sick Children's Trust (SnowBall Event presentation – helped raise £30k for charity).

Currently introducing:

- Senior team option to work from home 1 day a week
- Additional holiday day for each year of service.

Personal development:

- Individual bi-monthly off-site catch-ups with MD
- Introduction of Personal Development Reviews assessing individual performance against job descriptions and PDPs
- Structured mentoring programme supporting graduate entrants
- Direct access to our retained HR specialist, Accentuate, and bespoke training for line managers
- Joined executive coaching and business mentoring network, Vistage (2017)
- Appointed non-exec John Marshall (formerly joint managing director of Bond Dickinson) to advise on strategy and personnel development (2019)
- Our MD is a Chartered Fellow of the CIM and member of the CIPR.

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

Sustainable growth:

- Organically grown three of our largest clients (NGI +25%, AMG Group +40%, Stotz +15%)
- Won nine retained clients (one, a Swiss client who came back after 20 years)
- Won 23 project clients
- Grown projects to represent 30% of turnover for last two financial years
- Started pitching for PR tenders – securing three wins.

Talent:

- Grown headcount to 10
- Three graduate hires
- Hired our first digital marketing apprentice.

Areas of excellence:

- Digital services revenue +60%
- Crisis Reputation (Crisis) Management income increased since 2017
- Delivered some of the largest regional campaigns of the last three years including Great Exhibition of the North
- Scooped eight Gold and three Silver CIPR PRide Awards in three years

- Our Head of Corporate, has guest lectured on crisis communications at Newcastle University – delivering a series of 14 seminars
- Overhauled business development, including introducing CIPR award-winning print and digital brochures and Karol's own 'Geordie Inspiration' beer for visitors to The Old Pub, brewed by a local independent distillery.

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

We are proud of all our campaigns. Each is special for different reasons. But, for very personal reasons (our MD's son – star of our campaign – had a serious accident requiring large quantities of blood), a pro-bono campaign we are particularly proud of is Blood Bikes – a gold winning CIPR PRide Awards campaign (2017).

Objectives were to:

- Execute within one day for minimal cost (as part of The Drum's Do It Day initiative)
- Increase engagement through owned/shared media
- Drive traffic to NBB's website to encourage volunteers
- Create a high-profile media moment prioritising regional broadcast due to timeframes
- Position NBB for ongoing media support.

Critical to our campaign was conveying that without the vital efforts of NBB volunteers, hospitals and individuals could be left without life-saving blood supplies.

Strategy & Tactics:

- Captured visually striking images to form the basis of our campaign. Our creative concept centred on the loneliness and desperation felt by people waiting for blood
- Created a suite of collateral, including artwork for digital billboards (secured ad space across region for free), posters and flyers to distribute to hospitals, GPs etc.
- Developed social media strategy to drive engagement with NBB, including volunteer templates and direct approaches to influencers
- Created informative video for use on owned channels
- Encouraged volunteer recruitment by driving the public to a dedicated landing page
- Partnered with business district improvement agency, NE1 to secure high footfall locations for a visually impactful stunt, replicating our campaign images.

Outcomes:

- 500k+ OTS achieved through billboards
- Four minute interview with NBB chair live from stunt on BBC Radio Newcastle (300K+ listeners)
- Volunteer interviews at stunt on regional TV Made in Tyne & Wear (196K+ viewers)
- Coverage in leading regional titles including NE Times Magazine, NE Connected and Bdaily (192,309 circulation)
- Twitter:
 - 98%+ impressions
 - 200%+ mentions.
- Facebook
 - 525%+ likes
 - 262%+ engagement.

Budget and Cost Effectiveness

- 1,200+ visits to NBB website in 12 hours
- 32 new volunteers
- Production of collateral and digital ad space secured for free
- Significant social media engagement from organisations such as Go North East
- Campaign collateral used post campaign by NBB and the Nationwide Association of Blood Bikes.