

Excellence Awards - 2021 Entry
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Entry ID: 9753

Third Party Authorization

Are you entering on behalf of, or in association with, any third party?: Yes

If yes, please tick here to confirm you have the third party's permission to submit this entry: Checked

Basic Information

Category: 10. Global Campaign

Entry Information

Entrant company name: Woodrow Communications

Entry title:

Woodrow Communications for the 'Crew Change Crisis'

Entry

Brief, objectives and budget:

Our brief, from the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), focused on achieving 'key worker' recognition from national governments for seafarers (from 175+ countries) trapped on board ships due to the Covid pandemic.

The process of crew change is vital for shipping to continue to deliver medicine, food and essential goods the world over. But travel restrictions were stopping seafarers leaving or boarding ships, putting their safety and the integrity of global supply chains at risk. The problem was a uniquely political one; the classification of seafarers as 'key workers' was an act that was only possible at the highest levels of government, and it would only be effective if a large chunk of world governments got on board.

Budget: £60,000

The idea, research and planning:

We needed to make sure our audience of political decision-makers could no longer ignore the sacrifice being made by seafarers, and that to do so would threaten their supply

chains and speed of recovery from Covid-19. We executed a major data dive with the ICS team, and interviewed stakeholders from ship captains, to politicians, to senior leaders at shipowners.

We found that each month, 100,000 seafarers around the world needed to board or disembark their ships to keep global trade moving. However, Covid-19 restrictions meant that was impossible for many. At the peak, 400,000 seafarers were trapped. Despite seafarers' resilience, this was increasing the risk of accidents at sea, supply chain failure, and emotional and physical injury. Seafarers were also losing out on pay, and missing births, weddings, and funerals of loved ones.

At the same time, we found that 90% of worldwide goods were transported by sea. The world was clearly in the midst of a hidden crisis on trade, with the very people who kept global supply chains running stretched to breaking point. We saw an opportunity to bring this hidden crisis into the light.

Strategy, creativity and innovation:

In March 2020, ICS declared a global 'Crew Change Crisis'.

We knew we had to humanise this crisis by bringing the story of forgotten seafarers to the fore, and harness the power of the world's most influential decision-makers, such as the UN. We also knew that we had to identify key maritime nations and persuade them to lead by example.

We valued simplicity – we stripped our message down to one that everyone would understand. Who moves goods from A to B? How has their wellbeing been affected? If global trade were to stop, we said, then there go your bananas and avocados and your latest i-Phone, but also the petrol for your car, your PPE, and even your vaccines.

Our key question was: How could we vaccinate the world, without helping those who transport the vaccines?

Delivery/implementation of tactics:

We worked hand in glove with the ICS Secretary General, and the Director of Communications, in a rapidly shifting policy landscape when restrictions and health protocols across the world's ports changed on a day-by-day basis. We produced thorough and adaptable Covid-19 'best practice' guidelines for countries, which formed a baseline of messaging that informed all international media work.

We took an approach that focused on delivering high-impact pieces within top-tier media, that policy makers would read or watch, across the UK, US, APAC and Latin America. We filled front pages and opinion pages of international papers, and prime time slots on worldwide broadcasters with stories of heroic seafarers who were being wilfully ignored by governments.

We also led a reactive press arm that was able to target national and regional media when we saw that communications could help win an argument to support behind-the-scenes political lobbying.

Notable moments from the campaign included:

- We instigated a virtual summit hosted by Britain in July 2020, with governments from a dozen other seafaring nations, where it was agreed to open up foreign borders for seafarers and increase the number of commercial flights to speed up repatriation efforts.
- We ran a #HeroesAtSea day, working with shipping associations around the world to encourage ships to simultaneously sound their horns in protest against the lack of seafarer recognition. We saw a concerted social media push from shipowners, seafarers, and industry bodies on this day to drive the message home.
- We wrote an open letter to Jeff Bezos on Black Friday, calling on the world's richest man to recognise the hidden workers who helped build his goods empire. We supported this with a joint op-ed with UK maritime minister Nusrat Ghani and ICS secretary general Guy Platten in The Guardian.

Measurement, evaluation and impact:

By the summer of 2020, governments across the world, led by the UK, began to recognise seafarers as key workers after a consistent drumbeat of lobbying and communications. By the end of the year, the number of seafarers affected by the crisis had halved from 400,000 stranded to 200,000 impacted. Key results included:

- After consistent lobbying, the UK was the first to formally acknowledge seafarers as key workers; by February 2021 the number of countries following suit had risen to 53.
- We achieved a landmark ruling from the International Labour Organisation in November 2020. The ILO, one of the most influential UN bodies in the world, found that governments had acted unlawfully through their treatment of seafarers, and compelled all governments to treat them as key workers.
- Our call reverberated through the offices of world leaders, propelling them to advocate for seafarers. Pope Francis and UN Secretary General António Guterres both came out in support of seafarers in 2020.
- 400 international organisations, including big hitters like Shell and the World Economic Forum, signed the 'Neptune Declaration' in early 2021, confirming their commitment to prioritise seafarers for Covid vaccines.
- Between 1 January, 2020 and 28 February, 2021, ICS attained over 7,000 pieces of media coverage on the 'Crew Change Crisis' across 91 countries.
- This included a front page spread in the FT, which sparked discussions between ICS and several nation states.

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):

Provided

Campaign image (if entering individual/team awards, upload headshot/team photo here):

Provided

Company logo:

Provided

Please write a 30 word entry summary in the third person:

Woodrow Communications ran the 'Crew Change Crisis' campaign for the International Chamber of Shipping in 2020. This campaign gained worldwide recognition for seafarers as key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.
