

Excellence Awards - 2021 Entry
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Entry ID: 9567

Third Party Authorization

Are you entering on behalf of, or in association with, any third party?: No

Basic Information

Category: 28. Independent PR Practitioner

Entry Information

Entrant company name: Jane Hunt, MD of Catapult PR

Entry title:

The Essence of PR

Entry

An overview of your experience, your commitment to professional development and how you contribute to the industry:

My business has just celebrated its 23rd birthday. I scooped Catapult's 41st award in 23 years in November and exceeded '70' runners-up accolades, despite being located in a backwater, supporting clients with extremely modest budgets

During the pandemic – I enhanced skills via two-day courses - '2020 Sorted' and Cambridge Social Media – underwent podcast training with Mosaic and content training via ContentCal. I attended a travel writers' virtual seminar.

I put all previous crisis training theory into practice, rather than pondering actions, with 11-hour days the norm.

I also provided work experience for a Public Relations MA student and my projects kept smaller designers trading.

In my eyes, my industry contribution constitutes having 'been there' for every one of my 20+ clients, not just for work but to listen to their worries, dilemmas and mental health issues. They could talk when they needed to. I was more than just a PR consultant, as I always am. I guided decisions and buoyed them up. That, to me, is the essence of real PR contribution.

Outline your work-related achievements over the last 12 months, including your business objectives and/or plan:

2020's objectives:

- increase fee income to £102k (average day rate = £350)
- increase copywriting business share from 5-10%
- retain all existing clients/win two more
- develop pet PR niche
- win a PR award, for 'benchmarking'
- increase social media content to help drive growth

Following Covid-19, success seemed unlikely.

December 2020 situation:

- fee income - £110k
 - copywriting - 20% of the business
 - 100% client retention
 - 11 new clients (6 project; 2 pet)
 - quirky pet video
 - new podcasts
 - new Instagram channel
 - two CIPR Excellence 2020 and 3 PRMoment.com awards shortlistings 2020
 - two PRCA DARE Awards wins – Best Media Relations and Campaign Challenges
 - topped Northern Marketing Awards 2020 table, winning Best PR Campaign; Best Travel Campaign; Best Retail Campaign
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Provide an outline of a work-related challenge you have faced in the last 12 months, including details of what happened, how you overcame it and what you learnt from it:

The challenge was Covid. I was entitled to no financial support and had just upgraded offices. Over 80% of my clients are in hospitality, coach insurance, non-essential retail or tourism. I feared the worst.

I woke on day one completely panicked. Without waiting to hear about financial support (lucky, as there was none) I went into overdrive, being positive, suggesting positivity to clients, pushing creative ideas and working like a Trojan. I quickly emailed out strategies and created masses of client content. I increased, rather than decreasing marketing and

training activity and adopted social media positivity strategies. I pushed clients forward, rather than leaving them in limbo. I remembered a primary teacher's words. "There's no such word as can't."

I created dynamic campaigns, initiatives and marketing collateral for all.

I single-handedly run Northumberland Day for free and was determined to keep it alive. I did, delivering the UK's first virtual county day.

I created Lancashire Day social media posts for free download and sharing, to spread positivity in my own county.

Living alone, but caring for a vulnerable parent nearby, I used nature for mental health support. From a new garden-facing office, I watched birds, appreciating their resourcefulness. I had no bird-feeders. I now have six hanging and two ground-feeders, filled with seeds for different species, plus a squirrel feeder. I am overrun with wildlife food but nature sustained me. I have repaid it.

I learned to work harder than hard; be intentionally positive. I have emerged stronger than the 'supported' and earned clients' eternal gratitude, as they are stronger too, due to successful/award-winning campaigns.

Provide an outline of a piece of work you have delivered in the last 12 months that you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

Northumberland-based Langley Castle has largely been closed for a year.

Original Brief:

- raise awareness
- achieve no 1 castle positioning
- increase occupancy from 50% to 60%
- increase wedding bookings - 15%

Budget = £6000 fee

Costs = £90

Strategy

Jacobite-linked activity, a dog-friendly guide, press trips and events - were completely scuppered and became:

Survival Strategy

- positivity in all media messaging
- 'make do and mend' approach – marshalling all I could from an empty hotel
- intensive campaign, pre-July 4 're-opening', positioning Langley as the perfect staycation venue

- product creation

Creativity

I ...

- planned a story about Langley's ghost 'Maud' having Langley's 'exclusive use' of during lockdown. My commitment to researching Maud's genealogy, led to the discovery that Langley's weeping ghost legend was inaccurate. 'Maud' was probably previously unknown 'Agnes'. I recognised huge potential in a Ghostly Mix-up story.
- suggested using Langley's seven-foot-thick walls as the embodiment of 'defences' within Covid-safe staycation stays and adopting a defiant, siege mentality tourism thought leadership approach
- made children's story characters of door-hanger teddy 'Langley Bear' and the Langley reception knight, christened 'Gilbert'
- latched on to soap stars filming kisses through screens to suggest a 'Pooch Smooch' story - Langley's dog-friendly team, unable to cuddle canines, interacting from behind screens!
- suggested creating 'Bubble' and 'Key to the Door' Weddings
- promoted 'Weddings for Two' as the 'new normal'
- used 'Gilbert' in a hospitality thought-leadership photo
- suggested a 'Hairy History' booklet as an edu-staycation asset

Tactics

- successfully pitching ghostly mix-up story to the Sunday Times
- ongoing castle promotion plus Tier 3 twist - using 'I'm a Celebrity's' castle location as a hook
- creation of bullish 'all defences in place' Covid-compliant stay editorial
- launch of 'the world's first Bubble Wedding' and meaningful Weddings for Two
- Covid-compliant Pooch Smooch photo
- achieving 96% occupancy rate and promoting that!
- photo-led 'bed knights' call for localised, not region-wide, Tier restrictions
- writing Langley Bear and the Snowy Night; launching new children's story podcast
- researching/writing Langley's own Horrible Histories-style history crammer – Hairy History

(320)

Results

Please see:

<https://ace.media/dashboard/acebook/view/mQ80JP?>

- valuable inclusion in PA's official post-lockdown 'staycation' article
- Having generated various 'defences in place' editorials, the Government lifted our copy, using Langley manager's quote and Langley's photo as the centrepiece of over 300 sponsored travel articles.

We became the staycation campaign 'poster-boy'. Guests, from locations nationwide, waved articles during check-in!

- 290 editorial pieces (collected) + TV, radio + hundreds of syndicated articles we could not afford to collect via the cuttings agency
- 96% occupancy (July-September). Up from 50% (2019).
- 23 Bubble Weddings booked (summer 2020), plus 19 Weddings for Two (42% increase)
- Campaign reach: 23.1m (editorials alone)
- 249 links/40 follows
- 762 brand mentions

NUMBER 1 'ENGLISH CASTLE' SHARE OF VOICE

The essence of PR, delivering business survival for my client.

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:

Despite no Covid-19 financial support, Jane Hunt used positivity, energy, training, creativity and dedication, to drive her and her client' businesses forward, exceeding targets and delivering the essence of PR.
