

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

Anglia, Thames and Chiltern

Category:

28. In-House PR Team of the Year

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

Bedford School

Entry title:

Captain Tom helps comms team smash PR goals

Entry

Number of employees within the PR team and annual PR budget:

The PR team consists of just five. They are supported by a small annual budget of £12,000 and a £50,000 pot for advertising.

Business objectives and analysis of team performance against budget over the last two years:

The expertise, creativity and drive of Bedford School's in-house PR operation saw it deliver the world's biggest positive news story of 2020 and achieve unprecedented media coverage.

This involved the 100th birthday celebrations of Captain Sir Tom Moore – and the efforts of his grandson Benjie Ingram-Moore, a school pupil.

Not only did the communications team make the most of this opportunity but it used it to meet all of its PR objectives which are:

• Raising the school's reputation

• Boosting pupil numbers

• Increasing UK boarder numbers

• Diversifying the international population of the school

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

In 2019 the team solidified a strategy to meet objectives by undertaking research to identify the essence of the Bedford School brand.

They developed the 'Good Men' campaign exemplified in the strapline 'That They Be Good

Men', brought to life through a new prospectus, ad materials and significant use of PR to drive awareness.

A further push in the area of boarding was incorporated, primarily working to drive numbers of UK boarders beginning with conversion of existing day pupils.

This strategy was enhanced with the provision of training.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

The communications department commandeered up to £3,000 of the school training pot in 2019. This covered networking and presentations by Admissions, Marketing and Communications in Independent Schools in brand and communications, engaging feeder schools, understanding wider boarding markets, and implementing advanced digital marketing strategies.

They also took part in Inside Government conferences for Independent Schools and a crisis communications course with the Press Association.

As part of the Harpur Trust they took advantage of the Trust-wide training programme for people skills, as well as undergoing InDesign training and social media training to enhance PR delivery.

Further development opportunities were taken via collaborative learning and sharing of strategies and tactics with other boarding schools, facilitated through networks including The Boarding Schools Association, the British Boarding Schools Network and Metropolis.

A summary of recent outstanding achievements:

A summary of recent outstanding achievements linked to the strategy include:

- The Good Men campaign

- A full brand analysis was carried out. Advertising campaigns and PR materials were then used to push messaging.

- Media coverage was achieved in Independent Schools Magazine and the Times Education Supplement.

- A Movember campaign saw Bedford School boys create a mock pop video which went viral with more than 35,000 views in five days. The school subsequently topped the leader board for school fundraisers for Movember in 2019 and again in 2020.

- The boarding campaign

- Independent research was carried out into the appeal and benefits of boarding at Bedford which concluded that lack of awareness was the biggest barrier.

- The team created a series of articles to place the school at the forefront of the conversation about boarding.

- Coverage included articles in Independent Education Today, School House Magazine, Hertfordshire Life, Country Life and Independent School Parent.

- The team is a finalist in the Boarding Schools Association award for Boarding Research.

- An awards drive

- Plans to boost reputation led to the team winning a number of awards in the independent schools sector, including Tatler Schools Awards 2021, the Independent School of the Year Awards and Best of the Best and Great for Sport in The Week Independent Schools Guide.

- The Good Schools Guide, Tatler Schools Guide and Muddy Stilettos all favourably reviewed the school.

- Bedford Prep School (top 50) and Upper School (top 100) were both named in the

Cricketer Schools Guide 2020.

- The school has been shortlisted for Remote Learning Provision in the Education Business Awards.

- PR team shortlisted in the AMCIS Impact Awards for communication.

The biggest achievement of the last year however, was the team's work on Captain Tom's 100th birthday.

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

When pupil Benjie suggested to grandfather Tom that he complete 100 laps of his garden by his 100th birthday, we knew there would be opportunities for the school to support this.

Summary and brief

The school offered to open and display Captain Tom's 100th birthday cards in its Great Hall. The PR team were to get maximum exposure for this.

Strategy and objectives

The PR team wanted to use the opportunity to meet its ongoing objectives – enhance reputation, attract more applications, increase international exposure.

It devised a strategy focused on making the most of the visual impact and creating messaging linking the school culture to the Tom Moore effect. The challenge was to get the balance right between achieving exposure without jumping on the bandwagon.

Tactics

The team created a formal press release sent to 376 journalists, a media call adhering to social distancing measures with bookable time slots, professional photographs and a time lapse video of the 150 volunteers from the whole school community opening and arranging cards over a combined 1,750 hours. Bedford School branding was kept to a minimum to prevent the school monopolising the moment.

Outcomes and outputs

- Broadcast coverage with headmaster interviews on Sky, BBC news, ITV news, Channel 4, Channel 5, This Morning, BBC Breakfast, Good Morning Britain and Radio 4 and Radio 5.
 - PA and Reuters stories and Getty and Shutterstock images syndicated and used worldwide.
 - More than 2,500 UK media clippings mentioning Bedford School.
 - Front page coverage in The Times, The Metro and The Express.
 - Coverage in every single newspaper in the country and hundreds overseas.
 - Facebook posts seen by 3,576,727 unique people compared to an approximate average reach of 3,000 people per standard post.
 - A social media post on how Bedford School had supported Captain Tom reached more than two million.
 - Biggest admissions year in four years for 2021 and fullest the school has been in 10 years.
 - The strongest recruitment year in seven years (13% up versus 2020)
- There was no extra budget allocated for this campaign.
-

Supporting Information

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

Provided
