

Basic Information

Region (Check Region): North East

Category: 30. PR Consultancy of the Year

Entry Information

Entrant company name: Cool Blue Brand Communications Limited

Entry title:

Team triumph in testing times

Entry

Number of employees and annual fee income:

Cool Blue was founded in 1999 and has 16 full time permanent employees.

The agency's annual fee income over the period 2020 – 2021 was £1.075m.

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

Our two-year objectives included:

- To grow fees and profitability in a sustainable way
- To maintain high client retention whilst winning new work
- To improve our team's management capabilities

Our financial growth targets set in 2019 took a battering in 2020 due to the impact of the first few months of the pandemic. Nevertheless, we rounded out the year 2020/2021 with a strong performance.

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Cool Blue helps clients overcome a range of business challenges using creative thinking. This creative thinking was put to the test with the onset of the Covid pandemic which inevitably forced us to re-configure our business strategy.

A key focus was being highly proactive in approaching new prospects from which we gained several new national and international clients (listed below), whilst also placing great emphasis on supporting clients during a period of crisis, which also paid dividends in

terms of goodwill and improved billing.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Below is a snapshot of some of the things we have done over the last 12 months as part of this ongoing process:

- Team members have given free-of-charge coaching to junior members of client marcomms teams to up-skill them in various communications activities, adding significant value to the client-agency relationship.
 - There has also been training to upskill the team on the use of CMS systems to enable our work be more effective on client campaigns;
 - And there has been training on the use of advanced campaign analytics to ensure we can provide the best possible insights to our clients.
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A summary of recent outstanding achievements, including client list growth / retention:

We added the following clients to our roster during the last 12 months:

- Harrogate Spring Water - the fastest growing British bottled water brand.
 - Anglo American - one of the world's largest mining companies, running the multi-billion pound Woodsmith Project in the North York Moors.
 - PfP igloo - a national property business that specialises in placemaking.
 - Spanish-owned FCC Environment - a leading provider of waste management resources.
 - Turnitin - the leading international provider of anti-plagiarism software.
The combined billing of the above retainers during the last accounting year has added £80,000+ to company turnover.
 - We brought in more than £300,000 of new business fees (combined value of new and existing client retainers/fees)
 - Improved net profit by over 300% on the previous year
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A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

Tees Valley Mayoral Election campaign

The objectives:

To build awareness of the Tees Valley mayoral election taking place on May 6, and ultimately drive voter turnout. The objective was to build on turnout of the first mayoral election in 2017 – which was 21.3%.

The strategy:

Pre-campaign research told us our audience – voters across the Tees Valley – lacked awareness of polling day. COVID restrictions meant some channels – for instance

extensive flyering and advertising in public buildings – weren't open to us. At the same time, lockdown dominated the public's attention and we need to work hard to make the election known to them. Therefore, our strategy was to clearly, concisely and consistently tell our broad target audience about the May 6 polling day, and how they could vote. We created a simple, standout visual identity to lead the campaign – one that was straight to the point and delivered our message in the blink of eye.

The tactics:

Our integrated campaign followed the PESO model for marketing.

Paid activity included targeted social media advertising, digital display and print advertising with regional news publishers, YouTube advertising, outdoor advertising including adshells in supermarkets and places of continued footfall, and radio advertising.

Earned activity included media relations. We targeted regional media with a fun press release that used well-known hairdressing and taxi firms – both industries renowned for chit-chat – to call on their contemporaries to talk about the election and plug the polling date with their customers. We also briefed key journalists, encouraging them to cite polling day and voting methods in relevant stories.

Shared activity included influencer collaboration, and engaging stakeholders – including many employers across the Tees Valley – with content that could be easily used to talk to their extended networks about the election. We also invested time in engaging care homes and charities such as Age UK to reach elderly people who were less likely to see the digital activations in the campaign.

Owned activity included extensive social media activity – both organic and paid. We used Tees Valley Combined Authority's Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn channels, as well as those of the Authority's business support function – Tees Valley Business.

The outputs:

- 1.1m people reached via social media
- Key engagement from local advocates/celebrities across Twitter – for example, Darlington-based TV personality @NathanHGShore went on to retweet two tweets to his 393k followers which was invaluable in reaching a younger demographic with key campaign messages
- Facebook advertising achieved more than 500,000 impressions
- 185,000 impressions via YouTube advertising
- Content partnership with key influencer Olivia McHale (@thenorthernist) who helped us reach younger voters
- Coverage in key regional media titles including Gazette, Hartlepool Life and Northern Echo
- More than 1m impressions via digital advertising campaign

Outcomes:

Despite COVID restrictions, the election saw turnout of 33.95% – a 59% increase on the 2017 election turnout.

This was by far the largest percentage increase of the six other areas electing metro mayors for the second time. The nearest was West of England at 23%. Engagement, particularly from business stakeholders was high.

The budget: £40,000

Supporting Information

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

Provided
