

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

North East

Category:

29. Small PR Consultancy of the Year

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

Karol Marketing

Entry title:

Karol Marketing

Entry

Number of employees and annual fee income:

Year Number of Employees Turnover

2016/17 6 £199,804

2017/18 7 £244,260

2018/19 10 £375,802

2019/20 10 £325,620

2020/21 10 + Non Exec x 2 £372,261

2021/22 Est. 12+ Est £500,000+

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

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

Over three years we have:

- Kept all our clients, bar one, and "shared the pain of Covid" by giving them giving them three months fee free breathing space
- Won four new fully retained clients worth over £150,000 annually
- 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
- Appointed one new staff member with out even meeting him in the flesh! Interviews were exclusively via Teams and Zoom!
- Appointed one Associate Director

- Appointed one retained Consultant (lawyer & business mentor)
 - Won Small Consultancy of the Year in 2019
 - Improved our liquidity by refinancing through CBILS and reducing cost of borrowings by four fifths
 - Redecorated our owned 6,000 sq ft offices (see pictures)
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A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Karol is one of the North East's most awarded and longest established PR consultancies. We are based in the Ouseburn in Karol's 6,000 sq. ft. wholly owned converted Old Pub.

In December 2019 we won the CIPR's Won Small Consultancy of the Year. Less than three months later, and our world was turned on its head! COVID-19 had arrived!

Within months of lockdown (March 2020), we had three big clients requesting a suspension of services. Faced with either enforcing contracts or accepting that we should share the pain, we chose the latter. It would keep relationships strong. This policy paid off with each of those clients subsequently coming back to us and increasing their spend and commitment to Karol.

With home working being the new norm, we bought high performance laptops, remote mice, and keyboards for ALL our staff, setting them up with Microsoft Teams and Virtual Private network (VPN) access to our office server.

This meant we were all able to work from home just as easily as if we were in the office.

Any staff placed on Furlough were paid 100% of their salary and encouraged to undergo training and report back what they had learned. All staff were given access to paid for LinkedIn Premium so that they could access training on that platform.

Three staff undertook training courses with Google qualifying with various Google Certificates.

Our goals were to:

- Retain existing clients and generate organic growth (achieved approx. £12.5k pcm)
 - Acquire new retained clients, increasing our presence in the marketplace and cross-selling our services into new markets (achieved – Keela social media - £30k, Ocucon £10k, Concern Group £80k)
 - Increase the number and size of one-off projects that we deliver, to supplement retained income (achieved – Videcon - £30k)
 - Dominate LinkedIn with valuable content. We ran a series of sponsored video content from our managing director with varying degrees of success. This gave way to regular weekly posts and we have carefully finessed this. The last post placed by our Managing Director, of our socially distanced meeting on the beach, has had over 9000 views!
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A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

- All staff are offered flexible working hours to suit them
- When in the office, staff have access to free healthy breakfasts
- Pre-Covid, there were regular staff lunches and early Friday finishes to go to the pub

- All staff are encouraged and supported to pursue CIPR or other relevant qualifications.
 - All staff have access to the MD at any point – just a Teams call away
 - All staff below director level have line managers and receive ongoing training, support, and appraisals
 - Direct access to our retained HR specialist, Accentuate, and bespoke training for line managers
 - Our MD is a Chartered Fellow of the CIM and member of the CIPR
 - Our Senior Management are members of the CIPR and Accredited Practitioners
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A summary of recent outstanding achievements, including client list growth / retention:

Sustainable growth:

- Organically grown 2 of our largest clients (Montane 25%, Keela 100%)
- Won 4 retained clients
- Won 6 project clients
- Started pitching for PR tenders – currently in the running for 4 such tenders

Talent:

- Grown headcount to 12 including associate director and advisors
 - One graduate hire
 - Taken on our first digital marketing apprentice through to near completion of her apprenticeship and formal appointment to her first proper job!
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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:

We are proud of all our campaigns. Each is special for different reasons.

The Master Locksmiths Association (MLA) was established to set and promote the standards for conduct, practice, and materials within the industry.

Our brief was to use the opening of the MLA's new headquarters in Rugby as an opportunity to raise the profile of the MLA amongst stakeholders and the wider public to increase the credibility of the organisation and emphasise the need to use an MLA-approved locksmith.

But on our first visit we were shocked, whilst the office itself was very smart, it was located on an industrial park with vehicle body parts taking over large parts of the area and tyres strewn behind fences, and even on the pathway into the MLA office.

It would take a very compelling invitation to engage with media and get them to visit.

We wanted to lead with a highly creative invitation that would be a conversation starter. Recent figures had shown that there had been 669,000 preventable burglaries in the UK in the past year.

We wanted to confront journalists with the shock that a victim of crime would experience, whilst at the same time, showing them just how easy becoming that victim could be. Everyday items such as a plastic bottle or hairclip could be used to unlock doors and we wanted to use this as the basis for starting and building a conversation with the media.

Our invitation included:

- A black pillowcase (used to protect the hand of someone smashing a pane of glass)
- Smashed silicon glass (that looks like the real thing)
- A custom MLA-branded credit card (with the long number being 6690 00BU RGLA RIES)
- A hair pin
- A plastic bottle
- Latex gloves
- A Handwritten note placed inside the bottle
- Invitation card to the launch event
- Lots of chocolate coins – the munchy feel good factor!

The invitations, event, and follow up conversations were an outstanding success securing an audience of 14 million and laid foundations for ongoing national media relationships including: BBC Radio 4, Daily Mail, The Sun, and BBC Radio Coventry & Warwickshire.

Supporting Information

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

Provided
