

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

North West

Category:

22. Best COVID response

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

Social & MC2

Client name (for joint entries only):

The Growth Company

Entry title:

#HereforBusiness – the Greater Manchester business support response

Entry

Brief, objectives and budget:

In March 2020 The Growth Company (GC) adapted its resources and approach to quickly and effectively reach Greater Manchester (GM) businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the social enterprise, like many, had to become completely agile with employees suddenly working remotely, GC quickly started providing advice, guidance and support to the GM business community.

Dedicated to enabling growth, creating jobs and improving lives, GC has played a pivotal role in GM's response to COVID-19, working in partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Greater Manchester LEP (GMLEP).

Throughout the crisis GC has rapidly changed the way its services are delivered, proactively engaging the local business community and introducing new services. GC has worked alongside its partners Social and MC2 to reach the target audience and promote support.

GC continues to provide a range of services that directly respond to the challenges businesses are facing, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and drive growth.

Objectives

- Demonstrate that GC is a key resource for people and businesses affected by COVID-19,

a thought leader on business resilience and supply chain strategy and build trust as a provider of integrity and excellence.

- Analyse the impact that COVID-19 is having on local business performance, to inform communications tactics and support services that minimise the impact to productivity and jobs.
- Demonstrate to GM businesses that their health, well-being, and safety is a top priority in all scenarios; and provide factual guidance and reassurance.

Budget: £70,000

The idea, research and planning:

From the outset GC knew it had to showcase the immediate support available to businesses through GC and the GC Business Growth Hub against a rapidly evolving situation, whilst supporting GM in its COVID-19 response.

While many businesses were being negatively impacted by COVID-19, others were experiencing massive growth and demand. Activity therefore needed to show that GC and the Hub could support businesses at either end of the spectrum.

Speed was of the essence. The scale and seriousness of the pandemic allowed only a matter of days for planning. Businesses needed immediate support and did not necessarily know where to turn for it. Working with our agency team we set about developing and launching an inbound campaign #HereForBusiness before moving to an outbound campaign.

Strategy, creativity and innovation:

GC Business Survey

The rolling GC Business Survey launched in March 2020, collecting over 7,000 responses and vital intelligence to understand the local landscape. This has informed our response throughout the pandemic.

Resources

We were quick to create a COVID-19 microsite, providing resources including:

- Web pages on immediate challenges such as supporting self-isolation, monitoring cashflow and managing overseas travel
- A remote working video and guide
- Signposting our support services, extended opening times and expanded call centre
- A hugely popular business recovery webinar series

We have continued to provide accessible resources to help businesses navigate the changing national and local guidance. By monitoring our Business Survey responses, we were able to tailor our content to meet the audience's needs. This led to the development of resources including:

- a Mental Health and Wellbeing guide - which was subsequently white-labelled and provided to all Growth Hubs in England
- the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme timeline
- Test and Trace scheme graphic

Stakeholder engagement

GC led the Economic Resilience working group for GMs response to COVID-19. Stakeholders included GMCA, GMLEP, GMs 10 local authorities, the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), as well as the local Business Representative Organisations (BRO).

GC's role was to develop and maintain the central resource for business support and guidance. Throughout, GC has worked with partners to develop public awareness campaigns, led on business messaging and communications campaigns to ensure that businesses played their part in keeping the city-region moving, whilst ensuring the safety of residents.

Delivery/implementation of tactics:

#HereForBusiness inbound

Launched in March 2020, the campaign encouraged local businesses to contact the Hub and speak to a dedicated business advisor to offer advice and signpost financial support packages.

Tactics included:

- Email
- Paid and organic social media
- PPC
- Video
- Media relations
- Advertising

#HereForBusiness outbound

From August #HereForBusiness continued to promote help and information available with a focus on:

- Supporting Covid-secure workplaces:
 - o Guidance for businesses as part of joint safety campaign with GMCA and TfGM**#SafelyReopeningGM #GreaterTogether**
- Adapting in response to COVID-19:
 - o Practical guides for business on topics including Cyber Security and digital workplaces, to enable businesses to pivot ways of working
 - o Skills for Growth - £7m contract to help 4,000 SMEs reskill their workforces
- Access to Finance via GC Business Finance
 - o £10m GMCA Bounce Back Loan scheme (BBLs): launched in November 2020 and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS): to provide loans of £50,001 - £250,000
- Support for self-employed and job seekers:
 - o EnterprisingYou: targeted support for the self-employed
 - o GC Kickstart – work placements within smaller firms for young people

o Employ GM – job opportunities and career support for jobseekers and people at risk of redundancy

Media relations

- Proactive media relations - to promote COVID-19 support services and business success stories
- Reactive media relations - providing reactive commentary and thought leadership on breaking news
- Participating in BBC Radio Manchester's £10M Jobs and BBC Radio Merseyside's Just the Job campaigns.

Lobbying

GC joined the BROs of GM in sending an open letter to the Government ahead of the anticipated introduction of the tiered framework for local social distancing, calling for the Government to act on three key areas to support businesses and keep the economy moving. Coverage appeared on the front page of the Financial Times.

Measurement, evaluation and impact:

Between 1 March 2020 and 28 February 2021:

- 11,546 businesses engagements
 - 2,046 businesses supported
 - £7.1m finance provided to 192 businesses via CBILS and BBLs
 - 551,564 page views and 238,163 sessions on the Hub website, 49% and 72% year on year increase
 - 30 press releases issued, resulting 200 pieces of coverage
 - 8,532,915 OTS
 - 1,123 organic social posts generating 7,594 engagements
 - 9,596 inbound calls
 - 9,174 direct email conversations
 - 463 online chats
 - Paid social reached almost 90,000 and created 4,404 clicks
 - PPC activity seen by almost 86,000 generating 858 calls
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Supporting Information

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

Provided
