

CIPR PRide Awards 2010

North East

Category: 12 Corporate Responsibility
Entrant: Robson Brown
Title: Student ReThink project
Client: Premier Waste Management

Strategy

Premier Waste Management is the North East's largest independent waste management company, recycling waste for both the public and private sectors across the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside. Local authority customers and thousands of businesses from multi-nationals to corner shops rely on Premier to manage their waste, divert it from landfill, and help them increase their recycling targets. www.premierwaste.com

As a responsible waste management firm, Premier is committed to undertaking recycling activities and charity donations to reduce the waste within the areas that it operates:

- Over 55,000 tonnes per year of recyclate collected from household in its Kerb-it kerbside recycling scheme.
- Over 16,000 tonnes per year of compost made from garden and park clippings.
- Over 101,000 tonnes per year of aggregates and soils made from recycled building and demolition waste.
- Over 82,000 litres of waste oil collected for recycling into fuel.
- Donations in 2008 to County Durham Environmental Trust (CDENT) for environmental projects: £532,995.
- 40,000 square metres of land seeded.
- 1,000 trees planted.
- Over 106,000 tonnes of soil placed.
- Over 1,500 metres of fencing built.
- Two newt ponds and two newt habitats created for great crested newts.
- Over 45,000 megawatt hours of electricity generated from landfill gas.

As part of our annual strategy for Premier, we recommended that the company formed a partnership with a North East educational institution to raise awareness of the importance of recycling amongst young people through a design competition.

Premier joined forces with Newcastle College to encourage designers of the future to become environmentally aware of their products. The challenge was for students to design and construct sustainable products out of recyclable

materials that solve recycling problems, in a competition to determine which designs are best for the environment and will protect the planet in the future.

The 28 competing students were aged 16 to 18 years old, studying for a National Diploma in 3D Design, which develops skills in this design discipline and prepares the student for higher education or employment in all aspects of design.

Overall, we wanted the ReThink project to:

- Raise the profile of Premier Waste Management, as a responsible, knowledgeable and ethical environmental organisation in terms of its corporate responsibility.
- Enthuse and educate young people on the importance and benefits of recycling and protecting our planet.
- Ensure that North East designers of the future become environmentally aware of their products.
- Generate positive media coverage for Premier Waste Management and raise awareness across the North East on the importance of recycling.
- Lay the foundations for successfully rolling out the project to future students and other North East educational institutions.

Implementation

In-line with the start of the new academic year, we devised a four month programme of study for students, which included presentations, ideas research, planning and designing, and construction of final products.

We advised that it was fitting for the project to support the ReThink module, inspired by British furniture and lighting designer Tom Dixon, which addresses the need for designers to consider the environmental cost of the things they design.

Premier introduced the ReThink module by giving a graphic presentation to the students on the importance of recycling, as well as a range of environmental issues facing the planet. The students were also presented with a series of thought provoking waste statistics about the scale of the problem the planet is now facing.

Students also learnt about Premier's expertise in recycling and commitment to protecting the environment, which provided them with inspiration to construct bespoke products, which would reduce the colossal amount of waste disposed by keeping it in the recycling loop.

Following the presentation, each student was required to research, develop and design a range of concepts for a final product.

Research ranged from climate change and cutting Co2 emissions to natural disasters and capturing waste washed up onto sea shores which led to a diverse range of design ideas, such as:

- Emergency housing for disaster-stricken countries built entirely out of recycled materials
- Solar powered LED lights
- Metal cutlery and keys to make a range of homewares and novelty items.

Throughout November, students began their construction processes in the workshop with support from Premier.

Creativity

Students had the opportunity to present their ideas to Premier in a 'Dragons Den' style pitch, in return for industry feedback on the logistics, environmental impact and marketability of their products.

Robson Brown organised photography and filming at each student session and drafted accompanying press releases, which were issued to all regional and environmental trade media.

In the same week that Copenhagen hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference to discuss global warming and human impact on our planet, we gave the students the opportunity to showcase their final 3D art installations by organising an exhibition, which was held at the college for fellow students, staff, parents and media to visit.

Winning student, Lewis Fleming aged 17, from Blyth was awarded £500 for his iconic and thought provoking gyre turned into a glass bottle rubbish sculpture to provide a 'message in a bottle' to trigger people into recycling more and becoming environmentally responsible for saving the planet.

Runner up products were a recycled furniture footstool made from discarded leather boots and a piece of furniture made out of recycled tyres.

To document the project and incorporate social media activity we also produced a 7 minute webcast, which was issued to all regional and trade media to feature on their websites. Premier also blogged throughout the project, which was featured weekly on the Sunday Sun's website.

Evaluation and measurement

The campaign was widely covered across regional and environmental trade media and generated an equivalent advertising value of over £25,000.

100% of the coverage was positive and delivered all our key messages to over 3.4m people, as well as the 30,000 students at Newcastle College.

Cost-effectiveness

Hugely cost effective PR campaign at a PR investment of £5,000. It delivered beyond expectations.

Final results against objectives

The project was designed to meet specific objectives and the results achieved do demonstrate that these were successfully achieved.

It was a rewarding experience to see how the project influenced the students' attitudes and environmental responsibilities that now sit in-line with Premier's ethos of diverting waste from landfill.

Through Premier's interaction with the students, the project created a platform for Premier to project itself as a responsible environmental organisation. Working alongside the students at each stage of the project, as well as offering them supportive industry advice on the pros and cons of their designs, enabled Premier to instil an environmental responsibility into the students to ensure they continue to consider the environmental impact of their work.

The subsequent regional and trade media coverage, which was achieved, successfully raised awareness of the project, as well as the importance of recycling on a regional and national level.

We are now in the process of approaching with larger UK educational institutions to execute a similar activity on a larger scale.

Client testimonial

Mark Stouph, Director of Regulatory Affairs, Premier Waste Management

"Robson Brown delivered results beyond expectations and were imperative in ensuring the smooth delivery of this project. They have proven to be creative and professional when dealing with young people and the media, and successfully built bridges for communication between Premier and an educational institution. Their contribution was invaluable, and together we hope that we have encouraged designers of the future to become environmentally aware of their products, as well as helping the students to recognise their true potential."

PR Budget

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