

CIPR – PRide Awards 2010

Region: North East

Category: Outstanding Small Consultancy

Entrant: Stride PR

Title of Entry: From baby steps to giant Strides

Headlines

- Substantial year on year growth since company launch in April 2007 – turnover rose by 63.5% from Year 1 to Yr 2; 61% from Yr 2 to Yr 3 and in the first three months of the current year we are 28% ahead of the same period last year
- 3,409 client articles featured across online, print and broadcast media for July 2009 to July 2010
- Total AVEs* for print coverage for the year = £2,525,746
- Staff growth from 1 to 5 staff since launch
- Undertook major re-brand in May 2010 as part of drive to win work with bigger businesses
- More than £25,000 in fee income won in the first two months as a direct result of re-brand & subsequent PR/marketing campaign
- Strengthened skills/expertise/service offerings through recruiting senior national talent
- We have not lost a single client due to dissatisfaction over the past three years
- Recommendations and referrals made up more than one third of our business in the past 12 months

(* we appreciate AVEs is now considered an out of date method of evaluation but it is the one clients have requested we currently use. Our AVEs are calculated by Adfero Newsmanger and have no weighting multiplications added)

Aims & objectives

Stride has a clear focus:

- To provide high quality communications services for its clients
- To identify client business needs and dovetail communications plans to help deliver those needs
- To find creative and innovative solutions to help our clients stand out from the crowd

- To deliver value in every facet of our work – with first rate results, in financial terms and, where possible, in social terms (we have provided pro bono services for a charity worth more than £4,000 in billable fees)

From a business perspective, we want to grow turnover consistently while maintaining profitability

Rebrand

The company was launched in April 2007 as Mike Parker Media. As we grew, the brand didn't grow with it – too much focus was on the principal and did not recognise the quality of our staff. Feedback from clients showed the previous name made us appear too much of a one-man-band which was off-putting for larger organisations.

Rebranding as Stride has given the business a fresh appearance, a larger company feel and renewed focus that has already paid for itself many times over. We have since won work with two larger private sector employers in our region.

Challenges

We'd be lying if we said it has all been a bed of roses. It hasn't. The year 2009-10 has been by far and away our most challenging with some clients forced by their financial predicament to freeze fees.

Despite this, we have put in place a clear strategy for growth, we are beginning to use targeted marketing to grow our client base beyond our existing clients and we have a greater range of services to offer existing clients which is having a positive impact on the bottom line.

Staff

Our over-riding desire is to recruit the best staff, commit to train them continuously and to win business on the quality of the work they deliver. To that end, we have:

- Recruited one staff member with experience of working with blue chip companies including GlaxoSmithKline and PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Appointing a non-executive director with vast experience who previously headed up Porter Novelli's social marketing division
- Appointed the former editor of one of the fastest growing online business news titles

- Put in place a quarterly appraisal process. This gives managers the opportunity to review performance, agree targets and identify training needs as well as giving the employee a forum to raise issues in a supportive environment

Winning business

We have used the new brand as follows:

- Awareness raising direct marketing campaign to 250 clients, wider contacts and new targets
- The campaign directly resulted in three new contracts, growing two existing contracts by making clients aware of new services we offer and more than a dozen new client meetings. We anticipate converting at least two of these into new business

Furthermore, we are introducing two marketing initiatives to raise awareness of the new brand.

Why is Stride outstanding?

First and foremost, we deliver results for clients. Our focus is on using communications to support their business needs. Getting the right results gets us repeat business and referrals.

Secondly, we are deeply committed to excellence coupled with value for money. We don't cut corners and we go the extra mile to make sure our work is a success – however we don't do this at the expense of profitability. Clients are charged for the work we deliver, no more, no less.

Finally, we are constantly striving for perfection. We're not perfect, but we want to be. That pushes us to find new ways to achieve our clients aims and objectives, to develop our own skills and abilities and this, in turn, has allowed us to open new services to a wider base of existing and potential clients.