

CIPR Pride Awards 2023

Best Event

Agency name: The Marketing Pod (TMP)

Client name: E.ON

Campaign title: Better Together

The brief

Following its 2019 acquisition of npower, E.ON carved out npower Business Solutions (nBS), which initially continued to operate separately as a leading provider of energy solutions for businesses. During 2020, E.ON began combining the two companies' successful Industrial & Commercial (I&C) activities, to give customers access to a greater range of expertise and energy solutions. This would operate under the nBS banner - 'powered by E.ON'.

Unfortunately this activity began just as the Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK.

During the pandemic, E.ON implemented communications initiatives to keep remote workers connected. However, when teams began to return to the office in 2022 after restrictions were lifted, feedback revealed that many employees, particularly in the Industrial and Commercial (I&C) division, felt disconnected from their peers; the pandemic had created unavoidable stress and the transition back to 'normal' was challenging for many.

This was obviously magnified by the significant changes taking place within the business, which was implementing a new operating model. Feelings of uncertainty were intensified by the energy crisis, which was affecting customer relationships.

The 'Better Together' event was devised by the senior leadership team (SLT) and delivered by The Marketing Pod (TMP) as a way of recognising the contribution made by employees during challenging times, reminding them that they are valued, and providing an opportunity for fun and 're-networking' in an informal setting after many months apart. It would also be an opportunity for some team members to meet for the first time, where nBS and E.ON teams had merged during lockdown.

The SLT realised that the event needed to take place quickly to have the desired impact. The objectives were to reconnect team members, raise employee satisfaction levels and

boost productivity. Employees would be encouraged to share their experiences on social media with the hashtag #BetterTogether, to raise the employer profile of nBS, start peer-to-peer conversations and improve brand perception.

With support from TMP, a date was set for July 2022 - four weeks in the future. Invitations were sent to >1000 I&C employees for an event set to take place over five days. The budget was £50K.

The plan

TMP was tasked with designing and planning the agenda and activities for the event, along with a short awards ceremony on each day. It was decided to run five half-day events rather than one larger event, to provide a more relaxed atmosphere.

After researching venues, The Butterfly Room in Solihull was booked; a versatile space providing enough room for a buffet and planned activities. TMP divided the space into three 'zones', each manned by members of the SLT: a Retro Zone with arcade games, a Funfair Zone with games stalls and an oversized wheel of fortune, and a Sports Zone with mini-golf course.

Creativity and innovation

The Better Together event was promoted to the I&C team through a series of personal invitation emails from the SLT. This was nBS' way of saying thank you for their commitment during two difficult years. All those who sent an RSVP received further reminders, to build anticipation.

The Better Together games were designed to promote interactivity, spark conversations and create shared experiences. It was an important event for the I&C team and for the SLT, who needed to see their teams in person and rebuild positive feelings about the business after a period of change.

A photographer took reportage shots, which were shared with attendees and featured a 'Better Together' watermark. The intention was to capture positive memories and provide keepsakes.

Delivery

TMP's Content, Creative and Accounts teams worked with trusted print partners Mauve Create to devise and produce a fully branded event within a short 4 week deadline. All games, decoration, merchandise and signage was branded, to ensure employees felt a sense of pride and belonging.

TMP's Creative team also produced an event video to welcome attendees, which was played on five 55" screens throughout the venue. The video displayed messages saying 'Thank you', 'We're celebrating you', and 'Better Together', interspersed with video footage of nBS leaders talking to camera about the reasons they were grateful for their teams, and why employees should feel proud of their own achievements.

The event was hosted by the venue staff, members of TMP team and the SLT, who donned fancy dress to greet employees and man the stalls.

The Better Together awards took place at the end of each day, with five Thank You awards given to employees who had made a particular contribution to team life during lockdown, along with £75 experience vouchers. Prizes of £25 vouchers were awarded for games winners from each day. At the close of day, branded Better Together cupcakes were delivered on trays and attendees were provided with drinks tickets to use at the bar.

The event, all branded goods, prizes, food and drinks for 1000 employees was achieved within the £50K budget.

Measurement, evaluation and impact

Feedback for the Better Together event was overwhelmingly positive, with many employees sending written thanks and others taking to social media to share memories. Management reported an instant change in atmosphere and renewed levels of motivation among teams. All those who provided feedback agreed the event was well organised and enjoyable, with one describing it as a, 'true testament to what 'better together' looks like'.

Others said: "The event was fantastic, thank you. I must admit that in the 14 years of being here, I'd say it was the most enjoyable event I've been fortunate enough to be part of. Great work!"

"Huge congratulations on the events. They've been so well received. Everyone really enjoyed themselves. You've clearly put a hell of a lot of effort in."

The longer-term impact of the Better Together event is less easy to measure but is believed by E.ON to be a unified I&C division, capable of providing customer service excellence and consistent performance, as well as a positive representation of employee culture on social media.