



spottydog communications and Mitchells & Butlers: Ten years of serving up PR for one of Britain's biggest pub businesses



SECTION 1: BRIEF, OBJECTIVES AND BUDGET

[Mitchells & Butlers plc](#) (M&B) is one of the UK's biggest hospitality businesses, employing over 30,000 people and operating over 3,000 pubs and restaurants across including Toby Carvery, Harvester, All Bar One, Browns, Nicholsons, Miller & Carter and Ember Inns.

Brief:

- In 2013, set against massive rise in voucher offer incentive driving consumer choice of where to eat out, M&B's newly recruited Marketing Director recognised that building reputation would build loyalty and assist in the battle to gain guests. Recognising that M&B was not utilising PR as part of its brand marketing strategy the **business turned to spottydog to develop a new PR Strategy** and outline a plan to 'restart' PR within the organisation.

Objectives:

- Develop a **strategy** which would enable M&B to increase brand voice and achieve economy of scale by enabling PR support across the brand portfolio
- Outline a **delivery plan**, including defining the process, implementation to get the 50 strong brand marketing team bought into utilisation of PR as well as enabling response to corporate PR issues
- Provide a **resourcing solution** to support the inhouse PR manager, which could be flexed to respond to peaks of PR demand

Budget:

- Initial budget to develop strategy in 2014 was £50,000
- Ten years on, through expansion of our remit our annual budget is now £400,000

SECTION 2: IDEA, RESEARCH, PLANNING

Steps taken at planning stage included:



1. Needs analysis across brand marketing and corporate functions to understand the PR requirements and opportunity:
 - a. For corporate PR, analysis indicated the requirement was **corporate brand protection**
 - b. For brand PR, analysis indicated that the goal was to win hearts and minds around the communities M&B venues served, so here **proactive brand PR** was desired

This planning insight informed the PR Strategy:

1. To outline the process and delivery approach to facilitate brand PR, using a templated approach to facilitate economy of scale
2. The need to provide flexible corporate Press Office resource to respond to around 40 issues a month involving food procurement, security, nutrition, loss of life, employment matters and filming requests.

SECTION 3: STRATEGY, CREATIVITY, INNOVATION

The PR Strategy we developed centred on creating “**the Voice of Mitchells & Butlers**”. For industry reputation, it was about enabling MAB to have a Voice when they wanted to speak. For the brands, it was about being the Voice of the Community, with proactive brand PR initiatives.

We developed an innovative delivery approach, with an **embedded spottydog team member** seconded into MAB to act as the link between Corporate PR and proactive brand PR and a rota system to provide 24/7 cover 365 days a year.

We facilitated deployment of the strategy through the creation of a **toolkit of PR resource**, together with **learning workshops** for the brand marketing team.

Successful delivery of the strategy has led to M&B upweighting its commitment to PR across the board, with our brief significantly extended from our initial £50k brief in 2013 to an annual commitment in the region of £400k now in 2023.

SECTION 4: DELIVERY/IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS

Once we presented our Strategy to the M&B Board in December 2013, we had approval to move forward to delivery into 2014. Our initial brief was to implement the strategy and ‘set up’ PR systems, process and resource delivery whilst additional internal resource was recruited.

As we progressed through implementation, **confidence in spottydog led to M&B changing their resourcing strategy**, from their plan to recruit further inhouse PR resource, to the decision to **outsource their entire PR requirement** and the TUPE of their inhouse PR Manager to spottydog.

Successful implementation of the PR Strategy meant M&B increased our brief, extending utilisation of PR across corporate and brand activity, plus internal communications.

Key milestones of implementation from brief in 2013 to present day:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 2013/4: | Strategy Development = £50k |
| 2015: | Briefed to deliver PR for annual 100+ pub reopening programme = £75k |
| 2015: | + briefed to deliver Corporate Press Office = £175k |
| 2016 - 2019: | + briefed to deliver brand PR projects, Recruitment PR, Internal Comms support = £350k pa |
| 2020/1: | Continuation of Corporate Press Office through covid = £100k |



2022: + re-establishment of pub opening programme and brand projects: = £350k
2023: Forecast return to deliver £450k corporate, brand and IC activity

SECTION 5: MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND IMPACT

The impact we've made to **M&B is evident through the longevity of our relationship** resulting in the business increasing investment in PR and spottydog, year on year.

They've **trusted us to counsel them through serious issues** - food shortages, environmental activists, nutrition issues, and our most challenging issue ever - the second incidence of Covid in February 2020 when the 'super spreader' was found to have visited The Grenadier Pub in Brighton.

To provide our best of breed consultancy approach, **empirical data evaluation is essential**. Therefore, as part of the PR Strategy we implemented our own PR scoring tool to measure impact. This provided consistent evaluation of tactical activity, measuring for quality and quantity of PR output. Year on year we have consistently seen (aside from 2020-21) **an average 15% growth in the impact of PR content**.

Measuring the activity just from 2022 demonstrates the scale of our contribution to M&B:

Corporate Press Office:

- 858 issues managed - ranging from Michael Gove going wild in O'Neill's in Aberdeen, through to a sinking Miller & Carter restaurant in Essex which was located in a riverboat! Plus, confidential issues we can not disclose across loss of life, security and food procurement.
- Managing 120 filming requests from Netflix using our pubs as locations through to ITV News.

Capital Plan:

- Supporting 114 sites with a range of activities including:
 - Press outreach, achieving 283 PR items with OTS of 120m
 - 24 launch events with 1200+ event attendees
 - 100+ photography shoots
 - 300+ influencer visits to achieve a reach of 500,000+

Brand projects:

- 37 brand projects, including launching Toby Carvery's foot-long Pigs in Blanket (the SuperPig) and Harvester's To Good To Go food waste partnership.

Evidence of the strength of our relationship: personal note attached from M&B's CEO Phil Urban and Head of Brand Marketing Anna-Marie Mason in December 2020.



Re: Mitchells & Butlers Press Office Christmas cover.. and Christmas best wishes



Urban, Phil (MAB) <Phil.Urban@mbplc.com>
To: Mason, Anna-Marie (MAB)
Cc: Rachel Roberts

Reply Reply All Forward

Sat 19/12/2020 09:23

You replied to this message on 19/12/2020 10:08.

Hi Rachel

Can I echo Anna-Marie's thanks to you and your team, and the fact that we haven't had to speak, is testament to the job Spotty Dog does for us! When this nonsense finally ends, let's make a point of meeting up.

Have a great Christmas

Kind regards

Phil

Sent from my iPad

On 19 Dec 2020, at 09:15, Mason, Anna-Marie (MAB) <Anna-Marie.Mason@mbplc.com> wrote:

Thank you Rachel.

As ever, the Spotty Team have been first class throughout this year. Particular thanks to you and Oly for supporting our teams so well and with such empathy.

Let's hope for a peaceful and restful festive break and let's catch up very soon.

Anna-Marie