

Introduction

Cheeky tweets, 'Thunderclaps' and bike detectors: not the usual ingredients for a technology sector PR project but they all added together to make for one hell of a campaign.

SETsquared is a partnership of the universities of Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Southampton and Surrey. It exists to incubate and grow technology start-ups, as well as to nurture a new generation of tech entrepreneurs.

It briefed Carswell Gould (CG) to:

- Promote it in its 10th year, raising awareness of the partnership and its successes to those involved in technology, business and investment
- Raise awareness of its Accelerating Growth event*

*Accelerating Growth brought SETsquared companies to London to pitch for investment live in front of scores of investors and business leaders. Think Dragon's Den x100. The event also incorporated, on CG's advice, a panel discussion to entice press and a technology showcase.

Objectives took the form of these KPIs set by SETsquared:

- At least two substantial pieces of national coverage
- 100% increase in Twitter followers
- At least two substantial hits in leading financial / investor media
- At least one substantial hit in leading technology media
- Increased funding opportunities from government / other support agencies

Strategy

- Demonstrate the strength of SETsquared's offering and showcase its successes by seeding stories on SETsquared and businesses within its incubator in the media
- Use Accelerating Growth as a vehicle for positive news stories and engagement with key stakeholders such as media and MPs

Tactics

Accelerating Growth PR

(From September 2013)

CG undertook a specific media drive around Accelerating Growth, using it as a vehicle for delivering positive news. CG worked with the media to ensure releases about the event had newsworthy angles. For example, one of the pre-event releases hooked onto a company that had created a cyclist detection system for buses. CG used this as an angle for the release because, after a recent spate of cyclist accidents in London, it knew that this was a key topic for national journalists. CG also worked with specific journalists to bring them to the event.

Outputs:

- 20 pieces of coverage about the event in titles including The Sunday Observer, BBC Technology website and Techworld

- CG brought the Financial Times, Observer and Techworld to Accelerating Growth

Outcomes:

- Awareness of the event reached a potential 4,417,996 people through these 20 pieces of coverage alone
- Improved relationships with these journalists, leading to greater coverage in future

General media relations

(From June 2013)

Longer-term, CG got under the skin of SETSquared's incubated companies and used them as a way of promoting success by pitching case studies to the media. CG also worked with regional university PR teams to spread the reach of releases.

Outputs:

- Widespread coverage across national, regional, consumer and trade press. Hits included The Telegraph, Daily Express and Wired Magazine
- 14% of stories appeared in the regional press

Outcomes:

- Increased awareness of SETSquared locally and nationally

Social media

(October 2013)

A specific strategy was devised for social engagement around Accelerating Growth. CG identified a network of advocates and high profile influencers to raise awareness of Accelerating Growth and used them to generate noise about SETSquared, which built into a crescendo on the morning of the event.

Outcomes:

- #acceleratinggrowth seen in 583,865 timelines – raising awareness
- SETSquared's followers increased by 100% in 2013 – increasing opportunities to raise awareness of its work
- Through all SETSquared's followers and their audiences the partnership can now reach 3,327,572 people

Thunderclap

(November 2013)

CG got innovative with its use of technology on this campaign and created a 'Thunderclap' to promote SETSquared, Accelerating Growth and the values it stands for. Thunderclap is an online tool that allows people with a cause or message to create a simultaneous burst of noise on Twitter by getting supporters to sign up.

Outputs:

- 128 people tweeted simultaneously about SETSquared at 9am on the day of Accelerating Growth.
- #acceleratinggrowth was just outside of the top 10 trending UK topics on Twitter at that time.

Outcomes:

- The social reach of these people's messages meant some 105,647 people heard about SETSquared on the morning of the event.

Direct Twitter approaches to MPs and key government influencers

(November 2013)

CG researched, identified and targeted key MPs via Twitter to make them aware of Accelerating Growth and SETSquared. It had the cheek to very publicly tell them they should come to Accelerating Growth.

Outcomes:

- Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise, Matthew Hancock MP, attended as a direct result of one of the tweets
- Four MPs attended event and/or tweeted about SETSquared
- Head of the Technology Strategy Board, Iain Gray, repeatedly tweeted about SETSquared to his 7,650 followers

Follow up

(December 2013 onwards)

Following Accelerating Growth CG has undertaken a range of tactics to reinforce messages of success, build on the awareness raised and seek to position SETSquared as an expert in technology start-ups. These tactics include:

- Thought leadership and opinion pieces around technology start ups in investor, technology and business media
- Twitter Q&A series designed to promote SETSquared's expertise
- Continued 'good news' drive

Outputs:

- Several large pieces in key media including a 1,000 word piece in Global Corporate Venturing
- Increased engagement via Twitter through Q&A

Overall outputs and outcomes

CG created custom scoring fields on Precise to monitor the sentiment, relevance and impact of all coverage.

- Over 305 pieces of coverage June 2013 – May 2014
- 86.7% positive, 12.91% neutral, 0.33% negative
- 96.91% in high relevance publications, 1.97% in medium and 1.65% in low
- 83.88% contained key messages
- 75.66% of coverage was online, leaving a lasting content legacy
- Total reach of all coverage throughout the year of 31,411,654
- PR coverage has positioned SETSquared as a driver for growth of UK tech start ups
- All KPIs achieved and the majority surpassed