

# Laying the digital foundations for winning new business

CIPR PRide Awards Yorkshire & Lincolnshire 2014

**Entrant:** Engage Comms Ltd

**Category:** 17 Best Use of Digital

**Client:** Harry Fairclough Construction

**Period:** June 2013-June 2014

**Budget:** Under £25k

## Background and Brief

Harry Fairclough Construction (HFC) is a small-to-medium sized company in a traditional sector with a 100 year history as a leader in regeneration in the North of England. They had always relied on their technical expertise and competitiveness on cost when it came to winning new tenders but were increasingly being put under pressure to demonstrate the quality of service to prospective tenderers. An innovative new approach was required.

Engage Comms was brought on board to act as an extension of the Harry Fairclough business development team, creating a 'communications culture' from within.

## Objectives

- Maximise HFC's online presence to support and streamline the business development process
- Raise awareness of HFC's establishment of a Yorkshire presence to help win business in the region
- Increase the tender success rate

## Strategy

The HFC team comprises highly experienced and capable technical experts with family business values who are able to deliver an outstanding level of service to their clients. The strategy was simple – use engaging digital communications content to set HFC apart from its competitors by showcasing its unique approach in an innovative way.

## Tactics and implementation

1. **Website content development:** We applied the innovative approach we had already been taking since starting working with HFC back in June 2012 in turning their technical content into engaging case studies for tenders, to re-developing and refreshing their outdated website content to make it more attractive to prospective clients. We did this by getting under the skin of what really makes them special as a business and developing a brand communications guide that articulated their brand personality, tone of voice and values. This resulted in an identity that acknowledged the firm's valuable heritage alongside its cutting edge, future-fit approach.
2. **Video content:** When we first met the team, the thing that struck us as most important about selling HFC to prospective clients was the personalities within the business. The team's hands-on, personable approach was what clients valued most and made projects run so smoothly. We therefore decided to turn one of the case studies we were developing for a tender on the build of Gwersyllt school in North Wales into a piece of video content that would allow the site team to tell the story themselves direct from a live site. We worked with our video production partner to create a piece of high quality, engaging, multimedia content that could sit on the website, be

shared via social media, used in e-marketing materials and shown directly to prospective new and existing clients.

3. **Community engagement blogs:** To support the community engagement aspect of the opening of the school in Gwersyllt, we heavily utilised a 'live site blog' we had previously developed during the final stages of the project. This contributed to the school build being finished on time ready for the new term and enhanced the service to client Wrexham Council, by opening up lines of communication with local residents, teachers and other key stakeholders.
4. **Social media engagement campaign:** The new website content, video case study and blogs gave us the engaging content required to engage relevant audiences via Twitter and LinkedIn and keep HFC at 'front of mind' with prospective clients and stakeholders. This included direct engagement with existing/potential public sector clients and tapping into relevant regional and sector-based communities using Twitter hashtag networking events and LinkedIn groups.
5. **Business development support function:** We were aware that this new approach to digital communications needed to be integrated into the existing traditional business development process to ensure consistency of communications across the board. The new Yorkshire-based HFC team did not yet have its own dedicated new business development resource so as well as providing training and support to the central team based in Warrington, we also provided our Digital Communications Executive Erin as a dedicated resource on a weekly basis. Her work involved engaging with prospects via Twitter and LinkedIn, sharing the multimedia and blog content, and using online media to closely monitor the Yorkshire construction market to identify new opportunities.

## Research and planning

Before planning the campaign, we carried out an online audit into the UK's top construction companies looking at how they are currently using digital communications for business development and identifying opportunities to really stand out as a leader in the sector with audiences online and off.

The campaign was carefully planned around deadlines for business critical tender processes and targets were set against upcoming tender opportunities. We were involved in senior management team meetings to input into the overall marketing/comms plan for the year.

## Measurement and evaluation

We evaluated the campaign based solely on the impact on generating new business. The key outputs and outcomes were:

- Content produced has been used in PPQ and tender submissions, resulting in HFC being contracted on to frameworks and individual project awards involving programmes of work in the aggregate exceeding **£100 million**.
- The Gwersyllt blog received **7,000** hits over the 12 months it was live and the same format has now been implemented on any HFC projects with a community relations element to ensure that residents and stakeholders are engaged in the project. It was **highly commended** by HFC's client Wrexham Council, who regularly used it as a channel to communicate with the Gwersyllt community, saving them cost and time that more traditional communication methods would have afforded.
- After launching into Yorkshire as a relatively 'unknown' brand, HFC won its first individual project redeveloping a retail/residential site in Leeds to the value of **£2m** and has been

appointed to three major frameworks with programmes of work exceeding **£10million** in each case.

**Budget and cost effectiveness**

*“Engage Comms has saved us time and money and given us a competitive edge in the tender process, which is critical to our business. As a result, the return on investment they deliver is almost off the scale!”*

**Peter Walthall, Chief Executive, Harry Fairclough Construction**