

Quest PR

CIPR Pride Awards 2014 Yorkshire & Lincolnshire

Category 27: Outstanding Small Consultancy

Survival of the Fittest: Quest's Climb Back

Our corporate mission

This submission encapsulates how Quest PR - an established, multi award winning agency - has survived and thrived following a deep recession in which its SME clients dropped off in droves.

Against this brutal backdrop where the validity of traditional PR was being challenged - Quest adapted and innovated by devising and implementing a strategy centred on learning how to integrate social media with traditional and digital PR.

The aim was to deliver 'joined up' campaigns via Quest's unique 'Tell them, tell them you've told them – and tell them again' formula' (see enclosures) while continuing to guarantee coverage, which:

- maximised impact across multiple platforms
- provided more 'bang for buck' for SMEs
- turbocharged clients' business plans

Across 2009-2012 Quest spearheaded its own social media and video seminars, sought out speaking opportunities, produced top tips videos, client interview videos – practicing what it preached as an agency at the forefront of integrated delivery.

Turning the corner in December 2013 and poised for 40% growth in 2014, Quest is thriving as a leading B2B UK agency which positions its clients as industry experts and guarantees levels of coverage (guarantees in place since 2007).

Listed 27 in Prolific North's Top 50 PR agencies, our mission is to expand by consistently punching above our weight.

Date of incorporation

2002

Number of employees

Five

Business objectives against budget

With the recession halting previous double digit growth, Quest's objectives were to:

1. Sustain turnover and keep positive cashflow

Outcomes achieved against the toughest challenges the agency had ever encountered:

- £248k turnover year ended December 2013; 2012: £232k from £256k in 2011 - profitability of £43k, £30k and £33k respectively
- June 2014 six month income up 23% from 2013 at £154k with 30% profit
- Quest on course for 40% growth for 2014 year end

2. Secure integrated campaigns

Outcome: 2014:11 integrated campaigns; 2011: one

3. Elevate Quest as B2B specialist positioning clients as industry experts via integrated campaigns

Outcome: Clients appear regularly across broadcast and print media nationally and internationally - attracting more clients to Quest.

4. Objective: Attract and develop top talent

Outcome: Across qualifying period recruited Carol Arthur as Senior Account Director, two part time account managers and an account executive.

5. Objective: Set 2011 - to double the number of retained accounts

Outcome: May 2014 billed **£29k** monthly fees from **18** retained clients and two projects
May 2011 billed **£13k** fees from **seven** retained clients and projects.

Overview of business / team strategy

Founded by former Sky TV and BBC reporter Sharon Cain, Quest's tenacious turnaround strategy included creating and delivering £500 monthly retained packages with coverage guarantees for smaller businesses. (Four accounts secured in Q4 2013).

Internal and external investment in team development (liP accredited in 2011) is a key priority and includes psychometric testing, coaching, 1-2-1s, regular business updates.

CSR commitment exceeds 250 hours across past last 18 months for PR projects, trusteeships (Open Country, Involve Yorkshire & Humber and Leeds Mind), charity runs.

Outstanding achievements include:

- Instrumental role compiling citation for OBE (acknowledged by client) for Lesley Batchelor, director general of the Institute of Export awarded OBE (May 2014)
- World first 'Woof to Wash' dog activated washing machine (see below)

- Coffee machine manufacturer's global recognition during 2013 50th anniversary (Fracino named alongside Mini and JaguarLandRover as one of 'Five Super Brit Brands taking over the world in 2014) Securing 50% account budget increase
- Praised by influencers Tom Riordan, CEO Leeds City Council/ Rachel Reeves MP for consummate professionalism in implementing the sensitive, high-profile 'Bring Elsa Home' integrated campaign following Elsa Salama's abduction in Egypt.(please do not publicise)
- Keeping largest client following its 2011 merger with a larger firm and increasing budget by 50% from £3,250 to £4,833
- Celebrating Quest's 10th anniversary with a party attended by MP Andrew Jones
- Nine retained clients and two projects won since January 2013 including UK Export Finance, a division of the Treasury and the Government's Export Credit Agency – all from word of mouth
- Listed 27 in Prolific North's top 50 PR Agencies (2013-2014)
- Prolific North's 2014 Best Small Agency awards finalist
- Acrkill Media's Best Small Company Award (May 2014)

Campaign

Woof to Wash: World First Dog Bark Activated Washing Machine

Aim: To differentiate and elevate laundry provider JTM Service as industry expert and innovator.

Strategy and tactics

- Harnessed 'out of the box' thinking, focused on issues (not products) across JTM's social housing, care, disability sectors. Emphasised JTM's expertise in innovation and CSR ethos
- Created the 'WOW' - partnering JTM with Support Dogs charity, launched and implemented integrated PR and social media campaign (including videos with calls to action to donate) reinforcing potential for wide-ranging disabled people
- Media trained client

Outputs

- 108 pieces of coverage November-December 2013 reaching 40 million plus across international, national broadcast, print digital and trade - and almost 70,000 YouTube views

Outcomes include:

- Transforming an uncertain future and £60k bank balance (May 31,2013) to £465k unprecedented bank balance (December 31 2013)
- Above includes 15 corporates signed up giving £50k donations (3 corporates previous year)
- Support Dogs signed up for BBC documentary and for Drontal pet hero campaign
- Woof to Wash demonstrated at Crufts (generating extra £6k donations/ sponsorships)
- Invited to exhibit at Venturefest 2014, gave demonstration at dinner attended by Yorkshire's influencers and business leaders

- JTM elevated from competitors as innovator – opening more doors, bringing higher quality leads

Budget: within retainer, Quest also gave 13 days pro bono

Client endorsements

We hired Quest to differentiate ourselves in the market place. Your management of the 'Woof to Wash' product raised our profile as innovators in the laundry industry – earning us recognition as one of the top ten innovators of 2014.

Further coverage of our CSR activity and continuous innovation has continued to build momentum. Our elevated profile has undoubtedly helped us to secure some of our recent service contacts and PR will be at the forefront of our marketing activity.

John Middleton, MD JTM Service

Our best external investment was hiring Quest PR in 2001. Our 50th anniversary brought a flood of national and international media interviews, we've won eight prestigious awards since January 2103 - and we're named as one of 'Five Super Brit Brands taking over the world in 2014. **Adrian Maxwell, Fracino MD**

What makes Quest PR special as an employer

IIP accredited, we strive to put the team first:

“Sharon's ethics, ethos, passion and ambition for Quest are great motivators. Team spirit is strong and you feel valued and supported. Achievements big and small are appreciated and rewarded.” **Carol Arthur**

“Working at Quest is something I am very proud of, as a team we all strive to achieve the same goals for our clients under Sharon's leadership. Having started at Quest with no PR background I've developed my skills and work across all areas of the business. Everyone in the team is made to feel welcome and appreciated - we thrive on Sharon's tenacity and passion to drive the business forward, a passion which all share.” **Helen Flannery**

(More in enclosures)