



Category: Consumer Relations Campaign

Company: Muckle Media

Entry title: People's Energy: Power to the People

Brief and objectives:

People's Energy was set up by Scottish couple David Pike and Karin Sode who wanted help to start a new, transparent energy company through crowdfunding.

Muckle Media was appointed with the brief of securing a minimum of £370,000 in pledges from as many consumers as possible.

Campaign objectives agreed with the client were:

- Raise awareness and understanding of People's Energy amongst a wide range of consumers
- Create a compelling and ongoing narrative around the People's Energy journey
- Raise over £370,000 of crowdfunding.

In line with its background and ethos, People's Energy had a vision of being owned by a large number of individual customers 'power to the people' rather than a smaller number of high-net worth organisations.

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

With a very limited budget and against a backdrop of low media interest in crowdfunding campaigns, the Muckle team knew that we had to deliver hard-hitting coverage that not only told David and Karin's story as the couple taking on the big six energy firms but prompted consumer action.

Research

Campaign planning was initially informed by competitor research which highlighted the issue that a number of customer-owned and more alternative energy firms already existed across the country.

Prior to our pilot we invested in regular news monitoring which uncovered that GB Energy, a small challenger brand, had just announced liquidation, impacting its 160,000 customers. Trust in established energy firms was therefore low.

To gauge consumer and media interest in People's Energy, Muckle ran a pilot project in November 2016 focussing solely on Scotland and set an initial target of securing £10,000. This focussed on a local media relations campaign which resulted in £18,000 of pledges which was 80% overfunding.

Planning

Key insights obtained from the research phase were incorporated into the strategy including:

- Demographics of pledgers showed slightly older generation and higher net worth individuals were most likely to pledge
- Print media were very relevant to this demographic and key to reaching the audience
- Those to the left wing were more likely to buy into the concept, so media targets leaning towards the left were likely to yield stronger results

- Social media was managed in house but we recommended tactics based on the insights above to maximise campaign impact.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

Although our pilot project had given us great insights and lessons learned, it also presented new challenges as part of the 'Power to the People' story had been told across Scottish national newspapers and was easily found through Google searches.

The funding target of £370,000 was also mammoth especially in the current economic climate of uncertainty. Our strategy was to deliver an exceptional volume and quality of coverage with a compelling narrative that drove consumer action.

Strategy

- Form the news agenda urging consumers to buy into a this new energy company and take on the big six, literally giving 'power to the people'
- Generate a positive story through upbeat images and optimistic copy and audiovisual content to mitigate the negativity around new energy companies
- Secure online coverage and content to help SEO the People's Energy website and the crowdfunding page
- Use natural company milestones (target achievement, securing of Ofgem license) to provide new media hooks for persistent and ongoing coverage.

Creativity and Innovation

We knew to get any media cut-through we had to have a strong narrative and a compelling case for consumers to take action. Media were inundated with crowdfunding campaigns and consumers saturated with calls to action – we had to stand out. We developed emotive human interest angles that would set the news agenda and drive consumer action which included:

- David (Pike) and Goliath – playing on David and Karin being a couple from a small village in Scotland looking to take on the big six
- Features and broadcast pitches on a change in the way people buy things towards customer ownership and the sharing economy
- Piggybacking on profit and price hike announcements from the big six energy firms.

To portray the green credentials of the energy firm and make David and Karin central to the story, we worked with the client to set up a shot of the couple in front of a set of wind turbines. This image was printed in 60% of print coverage and anchored the stories making them much more prominent and eye-catching.

Implementation of tactics:

- Creation of a number of different press releases that could be distributed in bursts including:

o National news release

o Scottish release (where David and Karin live)

o Sheffield release (where David was born)

o Business release

o Green release

o Follow up release on Ofgem licence

o Business story and energy / green pitches

- Interviews with David via AudioBoom to create audio assets to share with radio
- Media training David on key messages and broadcast interview techniques
- Creating full toolkit including photography, Q&A and audio to distribute to media.

Timings

- November 2016 – Pilot, Scottish press

- January 2017 – Embargoed media release to national print and broadcast, David positioned in London and Karin in Scotland to optimise availability for interviews
- February 2017 – Features and magazine pitches
- May 2017 – Update release, Ofgem licence being granted and business update.

Measurement and evaluation:

In line with initial objectives over £450,000 of crowdfunding has now been secured providing a return of investment of £43:£1

- Nearly 2,000 individuals have contributed to People's Energy crowdfunding
- Over 70,000 website views People's Energy website and crowdfunding page now feature as top two organic search positions in Google under People's Energy and Energy.

Crowdfunding

- More than 217 individual news items have appeared with a reach in excess of 30 million
- Broadcast coverage includes two pieces on Sky News, BBC Money Box, BBC Rip off Britain, BBC Scotland
- Print and online including 20 national titles.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

£10,500 of fees for agency time equating to 17.5 days. Muckle Media offers a blended day rate, £600 includes hours contributed by Account Directors, Managers and Executives, providing the greatest value to clients. Based upon crowdfunding pledge investments of £450,572 the campaign delivered a return of £43 in cash pledged for every £1 spent on PR.