

Perceptions

Bradley O'Mahoney Public Relations

Issue No 4

Perceptions is the solutions newsletter for PR and marketing professionals from Bradley O'Mahoney Public Relations. In our fourth issue, we offer more for less when it comes to brainstorming, examine why advertising and PR don't always mix, provide IPR advice on choosing a PR firm and look at how to communicate effectively with your most important asset – staff.

Flying high with new business

Raising awareness for a company specialising in airline ground handling services and ringing the changes for a new telecomms service are just two of the new projects being handled by Bradley O'Mahoney PR.

Newcastle Airport-based Groundstar, which provides passenger and baggage handling services to airlines including Air 2000, BA, Go and Virgin, has hired Bradley O'Mahoney to raise its profile in the trade and regional press and develop sponsorship opportunities.

Meanwhile Talk, a new telecomms service which uses an electronic smart box connected to telephones to significantly reduce phone bills, has called in Bradley O'Mahoney PR to promote its benefits to North East consumers. Work involves consumer field trials - currently underway - which will be followed by regional press activity.

Senior consultant Andy Bruce said: "Clients are turning to Bradley O'Mahoney because of our ability to understand their needs and design strategic programmes, which can be measured against clearly identified objectives."

Bradley O'Mahoney has also been contracted by tea makers Ringtons to brew up a series of Millennium events across the North of England and the Midlands. This involves organising a series of parties for staff and customers at



Bradley O'Mahoney PR's Tony Bradley (left) and Andy Bruce (centre) with Groundstar's Tim Anderson

hotels in Leeds, Newcastle and Nottingham - all supported by spin-off PR in the local press.

Other new business includes managing the official opening of a manufacturing facility for Wallsend automotive components maker

Freudenberg and providing strategic communications advice on the next phase of activity on the New Tyne Crossing. This includes managing an on-going community relations programme and preparing a new web-site.

Our Mission

To become an indispensable partner to our customers by supplying innovative solutions to their communications needs; adding value to their business; and helping them to achieve their goals.

Tooling up for campaign success

Continuing our regular focus on measurement and evaluation – an important issue among clients looking for a return on their PR investment – we spotlight the PR Research and Evaluation Toolkit.

The Toolkit, sponsored by the Institute of Public Relations and supported by the industry trade magazine PR Week, shows where research and evaluation slot into the five fundamentals of a campaign. These are audit, objectives, strategy and planning, measurement and evaluation and results.

Measurement and evaluation, the Toolkit reveals, should be carried out in several phases or on a continual basis. This will identify if a campaign is on track or the objectives or strategy should be reviewed.

It points out that a review of results against objectives highlights what can be fed back into the planning process. It will also show what worked and what did not and what could be re-used in future campaigns.

More information from Daniel O'Mahoney, Bradley O'Mahoney PR on 0191 281 8833.



Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA) vice chairman Adrian Wheeler (left), PR Week editor Kate Nicholas (centre) and IPR vice president Philip Dewhurst launch the PR Research and Evaluation Toolkit

A professional practice

Newcastle-based Bradley O'Mahoney Public Relations is the region's leading public relations firm, specialising in business-to-business, consumer, corporate and marketing communications support for regional, national and international organisations.

The firm employs a number of consultants who have considerable experience of designing communications programmes and projects for a diverse range of clients spanning the corporate, consumer, service, manufacturing and industrial sectors.

These include English Partnerships, the Express Group, Newcastle City Council, The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Beck & Pollitzer Engineering, Ove Arup, Egger, BKR Haines Watts, Federal Signal and New Century Inns.

From strategic thinking to tactical implementation, Bradley O'Mahoney offers a comprehensive range of communications services which include media relations, sponsorship planning, corporate identity, seminars, multi media, advertising, newsletters and publications, online services, print and production.

Inside out: communicating with staff

From poster campaigns and house journals to briefings and internal web sites, communicating effectively with employees is a valuable public relations investment.

It can motivate employees and build morale and team spirit, increase knowledge and understanding of customers and their needs, facilitate two-way communications, explain and discuss company activity, reinforce the corporate values and increase personal and team performance levels. All of which adds value to your bottom line. However to be effective any internal communications programme must have some fundamentals. It must be...

- Managed at a strategic level to ensure the message transmitted is clear, consistent and motivational
- Well co-ordinated to ensure staff are not overwhelmed with unnecessary information in memos, e-mails, and information sheets that could have been condensed
- Monitored and evaluated to ensure the message is received as intended.

In other words, what you say, how you say it and how it is received must be planned carefully. To decide what form an internal communications programme would take and how best to implement it, we recommend that a comprehensive communications audit be carried out.

This provides a picture of how information currently flows around the company and feedback on where employees feel there is a lack of perception of the corporate values. Based on the audit, a tailor made communications programme would be prepared, using tactics designed to communicate messages to the right audiences at the right time.

For your internal audit, contact Bradley O'Mahoney consultant Hilary Burn on 0191 281 8833.



Why advertising and PR don't always mix

Ruptions in the region's marketing community have focused attention on the relative merits of using advertising agencies offering PR services or opting for specialist PR expertise. Here Richard Simpson, a senior consultant at Bradley O'Mahoney, offers his view.

There is a world of difference between the type of PR service provided by advertising agencies and that provided by independent PR consultancies. The difference is fundamental, and has its roots in the perspectives of the two disciplines.

Advertising is largely about selling. The mindset that creates a successful advertising practitioner becomes very limiting when applied to public relations, creating the view that PR is just a different way of doing advertising. Clients perceive an article in the newspaper generated from a press release as "free advertising".

For some companies, this basic requirement is sufficient. But in this environment, public relations is the poor relation to advertising - a bolt on service used to crank out anything and everything on the client to boost those precious column inches.

It doesn't have to be like this, but experience suggests that advertising and PR do not make good bedfellows. PR is a revolving door in advertising agencies.

The irony is that public relations is now really coming of age, particularly in the North East. A relatively young profession,



Richard Simpson believes PR is in the ascendancy over advertising

its practitioners have been quick to embrace new ways of working promulgated by organisations such as the Institute of Public Relations.

Bonafide PR consultants are becoming better qualified, working to ever-stricter codes of practice and embarking on CPD schemes mirroring those followed by the other professions.

The complexity of business relationships and the increasing need to establish corporate values as well as specific product or service benefits have put public relations into the Boardroom.

Public relations is about advising on, and formulating, communications strategies in line with corporate objectives. It is about influence, awareness and creating understanding - not directly selling.

This highlights a crucial difference between advertising and PR. An advertising agency will have internal resources - human and technical - which need to be constantly working and generating income. The PR division will usually have no choice but to use the resources of the agency regardless of the cost or value to the client.

When those resources are under-utilised there will be a temptation to persuade clients that they need more advertising/brochures/newsletters/corporate videos/photography when they patently do not.

Independent PR consultancies tend not to be weighed down like this. Most buy in services based on an analysis of the customer's need, not the consultancy's. Furthermore, in most forward-thinking organisations, the PR adviser sits at the right hand of the chairman or chief executive - not tucked away somewhere in the hierarchy under 'marketing'.

Until advertising grasps the strategic potential of public relations it will continue to offer a pale imitation.

The truth is that, as we move into the 21st Century, PR is in the ascendancy. Advertising agencies can either see this as an opportunity or continue to undersell a service which offers them tremendous potential. If they are to make the most of that potential they need to change their mindset.

PR in Action

Nexus calls in experienced hands

Top skills, experience, tactical awareness, strength-in-depth and versatility – they are what every football manager wants from his players.

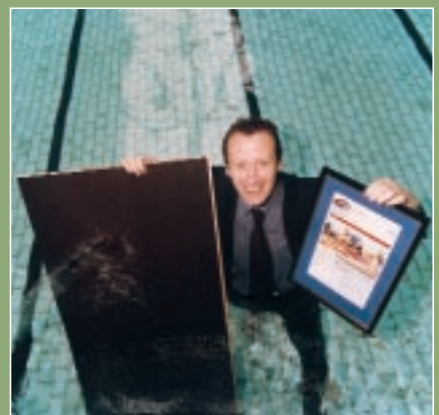
They are also the attributes Nexus recognised in the Bradley O'Mahoney team when it called in the consultancy at the last minute to produce a sponsored page a day in the Morning News, a newspaper given away on the Tyneside Metro system.



Nexus called on Bradley O'Mahoney's writing skills

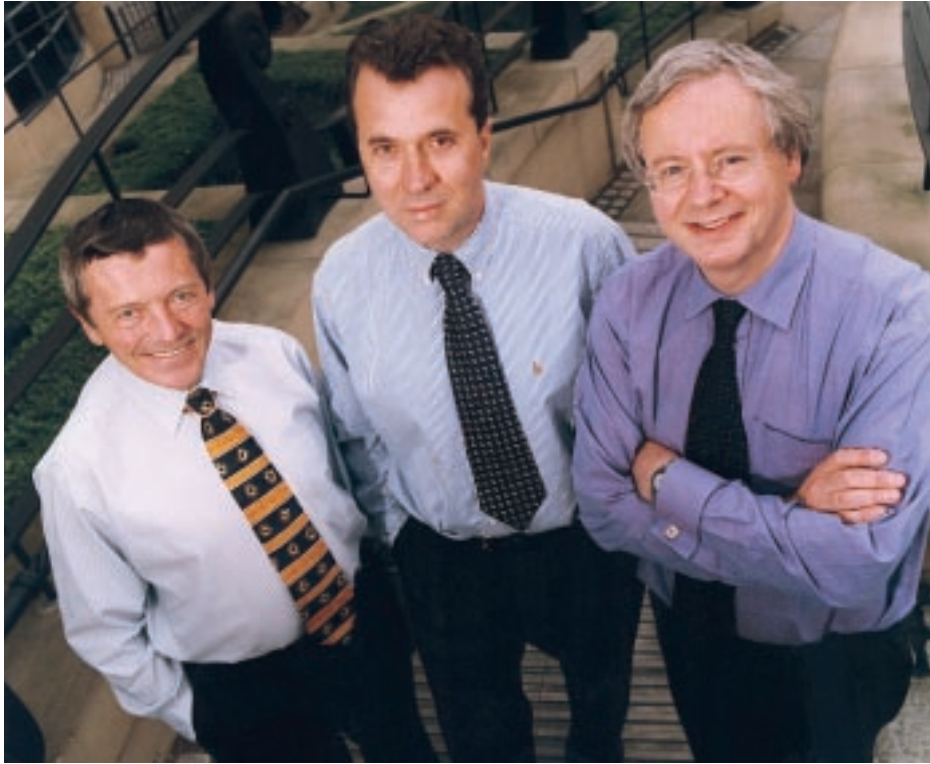
Nexus represents the Tyne & Wear Passenger Transport Authority and co-ordinates public transport across the county.

Over a five month period, Bradley O'Mahoney's super strike force of Geoff White and Richard Simpson, both with considerable newspaper experience, produced a daily page for Nexus. This required major effort and skill in terms of news gathering, writing, page design and delivery – a job well done and achieved without missing a single deadline!



Making a (front page) splash...a creative photograph is an essential element of PR and can add to media impact. Here, for instance, photography has been used to promote a water-resistant building product for Bradley O'Mahoney's client, Egger (UK) Ltd.

For they're all jolly good fellows...



Bradley O'Mahoney partner Tony Bradley has been made a Fellow of the Institute of Public Relations (FIPR). One of only a handful of FIPRs in the North East, Tony's fellowship recognises his outstanding contribution to developing professional public relations services in the region. Also honoured with fellowships were Tony's IPR colleagues Lindsay Williams, public affairs manager for Procter & Gamble, and newly appointed director of The Sponsors Club David Faulkner, who was previously corporate affairs director for Northern Electric. In a further move, Tony has become the first regional appointee to the IPR's professional practices committee which resolves complaints against practitioners.

*FIPR fellowships for
(l-r) Lindsay Williams,
Tony Bradley and
David Faulkner*



Let the creative juices flow

You know the scenario. You're called to attend yet another onerous brainstorming session to dream up the next big thing. Oh dear, what a drag! But take heart...properly

structured and managed creative sessions can be fun and rewarding.

So here's just a few thoughts on getting the best from creative brainstorming...

- Brainstorming can waste huge amounts of time if it's done in the wrong way. Put a structure on the session and set a clear objective to ensure the issue at hand is tackled.
- Keep the sessions brief - no more than 30 minutes. Identify someone to jot down the ideas and assign a driver to push the meeting along.
- Don't evaluate your ideas during the brainstorming session (do that afterwards). Rather use the session as a tool to generate ideas.
- Bring in as many different people as practically possible. Everyone will have something different to contribute. Also, include people from outside your organisation who may have specialist knowledge - a fresh view is always welcome.

■ Create an environment where staff feel free to express their views without fear of being laughed at or recriminations. Get the group's creative juices flowing through an informal dress style, providing a comfortable surrounding and playing music.

■ Three person brainstorming sessions have proven successful. An odd number helps lively debate and is never even handed. Perhaps bring in somebody who is unrelated to the issue under debate. You can be too close to a problem!

■ A word of warning. It's not always necessary to be too creative. Off the wall ideas can be great but they may not be necessary and might actually detract from your brand values. Whatever approach you take, there's no doubt creative brainstorming sessions can be stimulating and very valuable, and should be an essential element of any marketing campaign. But remember that you're likely to get more out of them by introducing some form of structure and keeping the sessions relevant, tight and flowing. Happy thoughts!

Marie is just the business

Marie Jones has been promoted from office manager at Bradley O'Mahoney to business development manager.

She will be co-ordinating all the firm's new business sales and marketing activities including newsletters, corporate hospitality, presentations and web-site development.



Marie Jones, Business Development Manager