

**AD**COMMUNICATIONS

Integrated media  
relations: the role of the  
independent trade  
media in effective B2B  
communications



When companies think of media relations, they usually think of 'PR'. Typically this is considered to be the generation, distribution and targeted placement of news, feature material and contributed editorial, and the long-term cultivation of positive relationships with key editors and freelance writers.

A company's main objective in undertaking a 'PR' programme would generally be to influence their stakeholders by means of credible editorial coverage in print and online publications. In today's multichannel marketing environment, media relations in its truest sense is far more complex and sophisticated than that.

Communications specialists now talk in terms of integrating communications activity across **four distinct categories of media**.

#### **Earned media**

- 'traditional' PR focussed on building relationships between clients and editors, analysts and influencers.

#### **Bought media**

- intelligent and creative use of commercial spend to build corporate and product brands, and to communicate effectively and measurably with defined target audiences.

#### **Shared media**

- using social platforms and live events to establish thought leadership, stimulate dialogue with stakeholders, develop corporate personality and glean valuable intelligence.

#### **Owned media**

- using the client's online presence(s) and own publications and collateral to reach stakeholders directly, unify communications, tell a cohesive and compelling story, and generate response.

This multi channel integration has always been the essence of our strategic approach for clients of AD Communications. For clients to optimise their Return on Marketing Investment, we work with them to plan holistically to use all categories of media, and to bring the different channels together with the right balance to achieve their goals.

#### **THE ROLE OF 'BOUGHT MEDIA'**

Leading publications in any sector are an important route to market for companies wanting to communicate with decision makers with the authority to research, specify and invest in their products and services. Recognised publishers understand their readers extremely well, and obtain regular feedback from them to understand the issues that they are dealing with and what they expect by way of content from the publication.

As a result, respected media brands are highly influential with business owners and managers. They turn to the editorial content for impartial guidance on the commercial and technological issues affecting them, and how to develop proactive business and investment strategies in response.

Online media are an influential daily source of news and community information, and an 'always-on' resource to check what's happening in a particular market. Online information can be readily viewed, shared and forwarded. It is consumed quickly and has a limited 'shelf-life'.

Printed titles offer more in-depth news analysis and feature content, and for that reason they are broadly shared within organisations, as well as being kept for future reference. Many readers feel that they have a regular 'relationship' with the editors and columnists whose articles they read in favourite magazines and web sites. These publications command significant respect among their readership.

Whether online or in print, quality editorial content commands reader loyalty that creates an effective platform for brands wanting to use the publications as a promotional vehicle.

Editorial coverage is just one piece of the communications jigsaw. Professionally published and audited media outlets - whether printed magazines or online publications - reach a known universe of decision makers, so using these media as a vehicle for branded communication delivers proven results.

### **THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRANDS**

Regardless of format, business-to-business publications offer clients a range of highly effective branding and promotional opportunities. Planned hand in hand with conventional and social media relations activity within an integrated marketing campaign, these can produce excellent and measurable results.

#### **Intelligence**

Advertising and editorial teams engage actively with a broad spectrum of players in their specialist market, picking up unique intelligence and insights which shape their content. These insights can in turn help agencies and their clients to define their own go-to-market strategies and messages.

#### **Reader data**

Publishers' controlled circulation data captures valuable information about each reader, from the role and purchasing responsibilities, to their areas of product interest. Subject to national data protection legislation, this data may be available to rent via a third party direct marketing service provider, for use in direct or telemarketing. Loose inserts can also be targeted to selected segments of the readership, for clients looking to target a regional audience, for example.

#### **Innovative advertising formats**

In addition to conventional run-of-paper advertising, brands looking to create impact for their campaigns have a range of exciting options such as cover wraps, belly bands, bound-in fold-outs, or special loose inserts, all of which have the capacity to command instant attention from the reader, and can be used to drive traffic to online media using crossmedia devices such as QR codes.

#### **E-marketing**

Many publishers are willing to send a limited number of controlled direct marketing items to their circulation data, and to segment this geographically, by sector or by job title to suit the client's objectives. This can be a cost effective way for clients to reach a highly targeted and relevant database, and publishers can offer sophisticated analysis of open rates and click-throughs. By integrating calls to action and driving recipients to relevant branded online content, this type of direct marketing can support clients' own data acquisition strategy over time.

### **Sponsored content**

Some publishers designate certain regular editorial features as being suitable for sponsorship. This creates an opportunity for branding in connection with a favourite item in the editorial template, and can be extremely effective if the connection between the corporate or product brand is visibly relevant to the content. (A mainstream media example of this would be sponsorship of TV weather reports by cold remedy brands during winter and antihistamine brands during hayfever season.) It may also be possible to propose contributed content to be published under the company brand, for example a technical advice column or FAQ.

### **Research**

Many publishers undertake their own research among their readership around key business and technology issues, both for the purposes of acquiring market intelligence and to support their editorial content. This may take the form of electronic or telephone surveys, focus groups or in-depth round table discussions. It is often possible for clients to sponsor these research initiatives, which may take the form of visible branding on a survey, inclusion of questions pertinent to the client, or branded coverage of a round table on a topic pertinent to a client's own campaign objectives.

### **Web advertising**

Many industry publishers now offer content-rich web sites which are well-regarded and attract significant and measurable visitor traffic. Well planned online advertising in the form of banners, buttons and 'breadcrumbs' can be highly effective in driving measurable traffic to client sites and microsites.

### **Video content**

Video content - from executive interviews to video case studies and technical tutorials - is playing a growing role in B2B web sites, and is attracting increasing traffic volumes. Many publishers offer opportunities to buy prominent placement of contributed video content, to pay for video 'advertorial', or to secure branded sponsorship of the publisher's own video footage.

### **Online events**

Publishers web sites are increasingly being used as an interactive platform for discussion and education in the form of webinars, while publisher-owned Twitter feeds are now seen to be hosting sponsored Twitter discussion threads on topics of interest to particular brand owners. Many publishers are willing to work with clients to promote and deliver hosted webinars moderated by an editor. These can subsequently be edited for delivery via the client's web site.

### **Live events**

Publishers often host their own educational and networking events around topical issues, with opportunities for brands to participate as sponsors or to provide expert speakers, branded content or relevant branded items and collateral for inclusion in delegate packs. In the context of a broad promotional package, sponsorship of a relevant media-owned industry award may provide a high profile platform to build brand awareness with a specific target audience.

Likewise, publishers can be effective partners in helping brands to create their own content-led customer and prospect events, offering expert guidance regarding the programme, providing recognised editors or commentators as event moderators, and marketing the event to a known universe of prospects, with the added credibility that comes from a recognised business media brand.

## **HOW AD COMMUNICATIONS CAN HELP**

We handle many of our clients' commercial media interests, leveraging our media relationships to deliver anything from negotiating and fulfilling a fully integrated commercial, editorial and promotional campaign, to working with in-house or third party advertising teams to offer strategic advice on how to leverage media investment.

This means that our relationships with the most influential media are conducted at publisher level, giving us intelligence and insight that goes far beyond the news and feature pages of the magazine or web site. Since the late 90's we have partnered with respected publishers in our sectors to harness this broad spectrum of promotional opportunities, using the full scope of the publisher's products, contacts and intellectual property.

Based on your objectives and available budget, we will be happy to work with you and the relevant publishers to research a range of initiatives to suit your needs.

From there, we can develop and fulfil a tailored programme of integrated media activity that takes advantage of today's rich media mix to help you achieve your goals.

For more information about how to work creatively with your commercial media spend to achieve tangible results for your business, contact Helen Tolino at [htolino@adcomms.co.uk](mailto:htolino@adcomms.co.uk) or call her on + 44 (0) 1372 464470.

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