FINALIST 2014
B2B AWARDS

Simply Business

Category number: 4

Category name: Best public relations campaign

Programme/initiative name: The changing face of the UK High Street

Agency: Seven Hills

Brand or client: Simply Business

Word count: 1000

Summary

'The Changing Face of the UK High Street' delivered excellent results for Simply Business, positioning the company as small business expert with unique insight into SMEs. This wasn't an expensive, highly engineered, budget busting campaign, just a clever exploitation of customer insights and the current news agenda.

It generated excellent coverage and captured our target audience's attention, creating significant discussion around the realities of the British high street. From coverage in national media, to tweets from influential bloggers, this was a campaign unique enough to register interest across the board.

The budget wasn't big but it delivered big returns, agency and in-house expertise shaping a cost-effective campaign. It brought in leads, built the brand and gave the company exposure to millions. It gave us a number of firsts too - including coverage on ITV's Daybreak.

Connecting to your audience can be a challenge when you're competing against bigger brands but *'The Changing Face of the UK High-street'* succeeded. It propelled us into SMEs consciousness and brought the business real results, ingenuity from Simply Business and Seven Hills combining to create a distinctive campaign.

[183 words]

About the client company

Simply Business is the UK's favourite business insurance broker.

Launched in 2005, we provide an online brokerage service that delivers tailored SME policies. With over 250,000 UK businesses on our books we've grown significantly in recent years, revenues growing from £4.2 million in 2006, to £22.9 million in 2012.

Strategy

After initial discussions with Seven Hills we formulated the following strategy -

Tap into rich customer insight

With over 250,000 customers and thousands of businesses quoted every week, Simply Business has a unique insight into the UK's SME landscape. So, after deliberation we chose to put our focus specifically on our shop customers, examining the state of the British high street an approach we believed could be fruitful.

Leverage the popular appeal of independent shops and the 'Made in Britain' ethos

Driving this decision to focus specifically on shops were initiatives like The Mary Portas report. This put independent shops and retailers at the heart of the British high street, so we used this and the Made in Britain initiative to the campaign's advantage, aligning our insights with these agendas and linking to them where appropriate.

Develop collateral to suit a variety of media channels

To create the most successful campaign possible we ensured all aspects worked across a range of media channels. Stakeholders were involved from the campaign's inception and we made sure that PR, content, social media and SEO teams worked in unison.

Objectives of the campaign

The '*Changing face of the UK High Street'* was driven by three objectives, namely to -

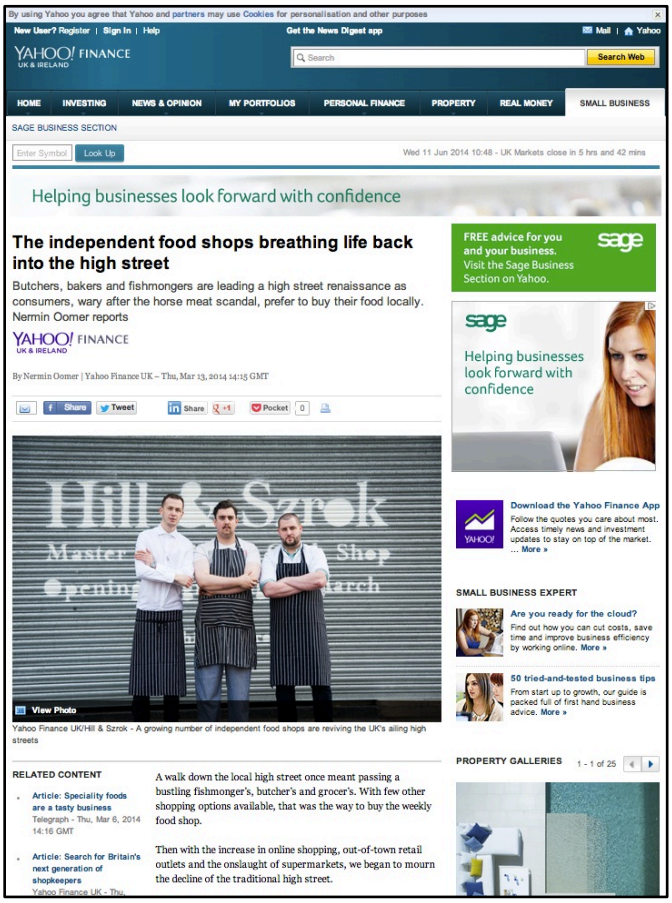
- Position Simply Business as a 'champion' of independent retailers and an authority on SME issues
- Increase brand awareness amongst prospective customers
- Drive traffic to the website and deliver new business leads



Simply Business Coverage on ITV's Daybreak – promoting the brand to over one million people

The target audience

Independent shops and retailers were the predominant target of the campaign, however with the broader objective to increase brand awareness Seven Hills targeted broader press too.





Articles in Yahoo Finance and This is Money, delivering some of the most significant coverage

Media, channels or techniques used

Using our unique customer data, Simply Business researched and released a series of stories to show the reality of the British high street. We looked at a spectrum of shops and retail issues, including the diverse and often surprising inspiration for entrepreneurship, the changing profile of start-up owners and the popularity and success of different trades. The findings illustrated:

• A 30% rise in the number of independent food retailers across the UK

• A revival amongst Independent supermarkets, with a 65% rise from 2012 to 2013

• A 31% increase in the number of bakeries

• A 28% rise in the number of independent fishmongers

To support these insights we developed shop case studies sourced through Simply Business's 250,000 strong customer network. These gave the findings a face and voice and brought them to life.

Each story was cut, tailored and packaged to create compelling and relevant news angles for a range of media (national, regional and vertical). Each was carefully timed and orchestrated to illustrate a topical trend or issue.

Digital amplification

Working closely with content, social media and SEO teams, the PR team amplified the campaign online through blog posts, features and video on the Simply Business Knowledge Centre.

Each insight story was also seeded to key blogs and websites and incorporated into Simply Business' on-going social media outreach on sites including Twitter and Facebook.

Timescales of the campaign

Simply Business data collation

W/C 17th February

Seven Hills data analysis

W/C 24th February

Phase one: initial press release distributed by Seven Hills

W/C 3rd March

The story was sold in across national and regional titles for a fortnight, alongside considered targeting of the business and retail press. Elsewhere, broadcast media was targeted including ITV's Daybreak.

Phase two: drafted release and comment to coincide with National Butcher's Week

W/C 24th March

Reporting/analysis

W/C 7th April

Coverage continued for over a month after the initial press release was distributed, with it slowing down early April. Around this time Seven Hills and us began to take stock, and measure the effectiveness of the campaign.

Budgets

These details were provided to judges in the original submission but are commercially sensitive and therefore confidential.

Results

The ‘Changing Face of the UK High Street’ campaign propelled Simply Business into the mainstream news agenda with seminal pieces of coverage including a full page news story in The Telegraph, a report on ITV Daybreak and news pieces in The Daily Mail, Sky News, Yahoo News and many regional and trade publications.

Delivering on campaign objectives:

From the outset of the campaign we established carefully considered objectives, driving traffic to the Simply Business website and delivering new business leads a key aim. It generated excellent returns, resulting in:

• 260 additional quote requests in 2 weeks

• A 48 per cent increase in website visits in the first two weeks of the campaign

• A total of 116 online links to Simply Business’s website from 84 domains. This further boosted traffic and generated branded anchor text links to the domain

Elsewhere, we set out to increase brand awareness of Simply Business and to increase coverage in mainstream news media. Again returns were impressive as reflected by:

• 32 secured pieces of coverage across national, regional, trade and broadcast media outlets

• A readership / circulation of 21,422,851 and the added reach of approximate 1 million people via the Daybreak coverage

• An AVE coverage value of £42, 633 (excluding the Daybreak coverage)

The overriding objective was To position Simply Business as a ‘champion independent shops and retailers’ and through the coverage we’re confident that we achieved this. Everything secured was positive and contained a brand mention while almost 80% contained a spokesperson quote, providing commentary on what more can be done to support small businesses.

Excellent results they reflect the ingenuity of our marketing team and PR agency.

Client testimonial

'The Changing Face of the UK High Street campaign made a real impact. It resulted in some fantastic coverage, created a buzz internally and transformed the way Simply Business is viewed in the marketplace'. **Jasper Martens – Head of Marketing and Communications.**

[1000 words]

Supporting material supplied

Links to top coverage

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLrtOvK9ScE&list=UU0Y6THbQdrSKDsXzdOWmSC

http://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/the-independent-food-shops-breathing-life-back-into-the-high-street-141547853.html

http://realbusiness.co.uk/article/25888-independent-food-stores-reclaiming-the-high-street-from-major-supermarkets

http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/smallbusiness/article-2573750/New-figures-SURGE-High-Street-shops-despite.html

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/foodanddrinknews/10695982/Celebrity-chefs-boost-business-for-traditional-butchers.html

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/smallbusiness/article-2573750/New-figures-SURGE-High-Street-shops-despite.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

Notable Twitter activity

https://twitter.com/RealBread/status/441530904109125632

https://twitter.com/NFRN_Online/status/441517638733533184

https://twitter.com/Fry_Magazine/status/441474886201266176

Submission ends