

HOW INDUSTRIAL PR IS KEEPING UP WITH MARKETING TRENDS

– THE RISE OF BLOGGING AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE INDUSTRIAL MARKETPLACE

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How things have changed in the past few years! When I started in industrial PR some 30 plus years ago it was the norm to write a short piece and send it with a black and white photo to perhaps a dozen journals – who may perhaps find space for it amongst their longer features often crafted by the editor/s themselves. There were few journals printing a limited number of feature articles and no specifically “product” journals as we later came to know them.

Consequently success in PR was a greatly to do with having connections with editors and the ability to “place” articles – by dint of pulling on ties of friendship or budget – which very much favoured the bigger companies or the PR agents who derived from that publishing environment.

Then along came cheaper printing processes which made it possible to print in colour throughout - coupled with the idea of product focus journals - containing a mass of short informative articles together with “bingo cards” which allowed readers to enquire or request a brochure/rep visit in relation to any specific item in a publication and so for all of us to measure interest in our editorial. This being achieved as the card was sent first to the publisher and then on to the company involved to deal with the enquiry. Naturally this relied on the postal service – so by the time the customer got a response something like a week had often passed.

Then along came a couple of recessions and the advent of the internet, the changing role of editors and rise of Google et al. Latterly of course we have seen the ascendancy of Social Media – blogs, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube etc. and wondered how appropriate is all this mainstream “chatteratiii” stuff to us engineers and to our engineer customers?

As a PR agency operating through this time of change in the industrial market place we have carefully monitored these trends – we were one of the first on the industrial scene to put our clients’ stories on the Internet and so to drag them kicking and screaming into what they now acknowledge to be their main source of qualified enquiries.

So please excuse a sense of déjà vu around blogging and social media – some years ago we specifically took on a project to monitor our client webprofiles every month for 2 years and were interested to observe these channels as they rose in importance for industrial B2B companies, so that recently, now confident of our own understanding and ability, we once again sought to take

clients down a new path – this time I am delighted to say they were prepared to follow almost instantly.

Not that these clients had a poor presence on the net – far from it, given the success of our many years of PR on their behalf – but they could see and indeed have found, that they could get an even better profile with the addition of blogging and social media activities as part of their on-going promotion and SEO activities, thereby increasing their profiles by close to 80%. Thus capitalising on their present success – leveraging their growth and to some extent “future-proofing” themselves for the next time the markets take a dive.

I am pleased to report that their faith was well placed as results to date can testify. The early adopters have been and gone, the B2C companies have moved ahead and integrated all their internet media - now is the time for industrial SMEs to get involved – although if you haven't even got your PR sorted perhaps that would be a good place to start first!