

AMEC Communication Effectiveness Awards 2012

Best Use of Communication Management: Multi-market Activity (Page 1)

Company Name: The Gorkana Group

Client/Campaign: National Grid, A Clear Line-of-Sight

Objective/Brief:

National Grid is an international electricity and gas company that plays a vital role in delivering energy to millions of people across Great Britain and the United States. The company's modus operandi is rooted in the principles of engineering; the leadership team is used to being held accountable and measuring for continuous improvement. National Grid uses the principle of a Balanced Scorecard to align business activities to the corporate vision and business strategy, improve internal communications, and monitor performance against strategic goals.

To feed into the Balanced Scorecard, every department has team and individual objectives aligned with National Grid's 'Line-of-Sight', which links back to the corporate direction. Historically, the communications team was not aligned with the Balanced Scorecard principle. Gorkana Group was briefed to address this with the following objectives:

- Develop the **Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) which tie into National Grid's vision and strategy to allow PR to report alongside the rest of the business
- Create a system that allows learnings to be taken from the KPIs to **fine tune performance** and assess where priorities and resources should be focused

Strategy:

In contrast to the process of creating a PR-centric evaluation programme, a series of consultative workshops were led by Gorkana to build measurement around the wider corporate strategy and reporting structure.

An immediate challenge presented itself in the US and UK market differences. In the US National Grid's business model covers infrastructure, generation and retail. In UK the company only operates as an infrastructure provider. Gorkana provided a consultative top down approach, taking into account the different media and regulatory environments that impact the business, and ultimately PR.

From the solid base of the corporate strategy, the team mapped the communications strategy, objectives and tactics to recommend the right sample, metrics and KPIs to use. The measurement metrics were then aligned with National Grid's 2011/12 'Line of Sight' approach, demonstrating a clear link between each stage and allowing integration with the businesses Balanced Scorecard approach.

Gorkana ensured that the measurement would enable the PR team to fine tune ongoing media strategy. The KPIs were chosen to strike the right balance between being broad enough for board reporting but transparent enough to inform ongoing tweaks and changes in tactics to facilitate continuous improvement.

The result is a programme that understands US and UK idiosyncrasies, is used to inform the team's day to day activities and by the board to show how PR is moving the needle for the business.

Execution/Implementation:

Gorkana ran data tests across the previous two years' data to understand the impact of seasonality and market changes. Media content was heavily segmented in order to identify and isolate key external factors impacting National Grid coverage and potential metrics. The findings were used to recommend measures which were both relevant and transparent. This benchmarking exercise enabled the setting of achievable 'norm' and 'stretch' targets for the teams.

A visually engaging two tier reporting format was recommended. This has the primary function of providing detailed data and contextual information for the multi-market communications team. Secondly, the information is condensed in to high-level KPIs and macro charts for sharing across the business and including in the integrated scorecard. Scorecard information is provided quarterly, though drivers of the KPIs are reported monthly to enable National Grid to alter tactics on a more meaningful timescale.

The National Grid communications team uses this intelligence to understand which aspects of communications strategy and tactics are working, as well as identifying areas of opportunity or resource wastage e.g. where overachievement is consistent and efforts are not affecting results further.

AMEC Communication Effectiveness Awards 2012

Best Use of Communication Management: Multi-market Activity (Page 2)

Company Name: The Gorkana Group

Client/Campaign: National Grid, A Clear Line-of-Sight

Execution/Implementation (cont'd):

The target is to outperform all metrics to give an indication of success across each media relations objective, which in turn feeds into the corporate vision and 'Line-of-Sight' strategy. On a micro level there is a need to establish which part of the communications mix works well, and what does not. By aligning measurement to the business objectives, Gorkana has provided National Grid with key learnings that lead to changes of strategy, including:

- Digital media is now seen as a key area, whereas previously not viewed as such by the business. The media relations team now have specific targets and have affected an increase in digital activity in 2011. Facebook and Twitter are used to connect directly with customers. This has enabled the business to have quicker reaction times and to interact with customers following gas incidents, water pipes bursting, etc. The Gorkana Group's work educated the business to drive this change in strategy – this is now tracked against the milestones.
- Broadcast efforts have been boosted following Gorkana evidence on the power of popular programming and the pick-up received for interesting documentaries, such as The Secret Life of the National Grid on the BBC. Gorkana demonstrated the number of people reached by this coverage and the way it filtered into national press and online media. National Grid has taken the action to increase relations with networks such as the BBC and work with them to produce interesting and educational content. The measurement changed the business' opinion of what National Grid can do and other areas it can work in; the wider business is now more receptive to this type of creative approach.

On a macro level, the Head of Comms reviews the KPIs each quarter with the CEO. The performance achievements of the Head of Comms and the wider comms team are tied to the defined KPIs.

Conclusions:

Taking a top down approach National Grid and Gorkana Group have developed a programme that is aligned with the company vision and business strategy, as well as the day-to-day aspects of the communications team role.

National Grid has been able to better plan and contextualise communications effectiveness within the PR team. This has enabled the team to focus on the areas of greatest weakness and strength, placing resource where it makes the most benefit e.g. facility visits, networking events, interviews.

As Clive Hawkins, National Grid's Head of Global Media Relations, has witnessed: *"Reputation is key. The evaluation underpins this by providing tangible data, which the business is used to receiving from other departments—such as engineering—so this report proves essential and perfect for National Grid."* The communications team is represented for the first time in the organisation's balanced scorecard. It provides empirical evidence to better demonstrate communications impact within the business.

Careful KPI setting and measurement has led to an increase in the threshold targets year on year for many metrics and a better understanding of the factors in place for those that have not shown significant improvement, not least those that are due to factors outside of the media relations team's ability to control or predict.

Clive Hawkins, National Grid's Head of Global Media Relations: *"Gorkana's measurement programme has become a seamless extension of the National Grid media relations function. This is not about delivering a nice, glossy report that simply sits on the shelf or stays in an inbox, this is very much a strategic, aligned and accurate measurement of our global media programme in support of key business objectives. Their reports have been integrated into our media activities at every level, and receive high exposure within our business. Gorkana's analysis is invaluable in helping shape communications at the very highest level."*