

AMEC COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS AWARDS 2012 ENTRY

BEST USE OF COMMUNICATION MEASUREMENT: BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS

ENTERING COMPANY: 360^m (A SENTIA MEDIA COMPANY) CLIENT: DAIRY AUSTRALIA
CAMPAIGN: QUARTERLY ANALYSIS OF DAIRY AUSTRALIA & WIDER DAIRY INDUSTRY
ANALYST: MELISSA HAYES

OBJECTIVE/BRIEF

Dairy Australia is a national services body for the dairy industry that focuses on research and marketing. Dairy Australia (DA) is funded by levies paid by farmers, and its charter is to provide Australian dairy farmers with information so that they can adapt to a changing operating environment, and can achieve a profitable, sustainable future through research and innovation.

Dairy Australia initially set its analysis **budget** at A\$XXXX per quarter.

DA approached Sentia Media/360^m to obtain a broad view of how its activities are reported in the Australian press and broadcast media, and also to track coverage of issues affecting the wider dairy industry. In particular, DA was interested in discussion of moves in January 2011 by Australia's two main supermarket chains – Coles and Woolworths – to significantly reduce the price of their own brands of milk. The primary concern was that the retailers were engaging in unsustainable and predatory practices that would place undue pressure on the supply chain, by reducing farm gate prices, which could force dairy farmers (and therefore DA's levy payers) out of business. DA commissioned 360^m in March 2011 to analyse coverage, on a quarterly basis (beginning with the first quarter of 2011), to:

- (1) Measure** the effectiveness of the organisation's external communications strategy and spokespeople in communicating its role and the tangible benefits of its levy expenditure (such as the provision of practical information and investment in research & development) to dairy farmers, its levy payers.
- (2) Assess** the frequency and accuracy with which messages about the organisation and its activities are being conveyed, and the likely audience exposed to these messages.
- (3) Determine** the volume and proportion of media coverage that is being proactively generated by DA, which of the organisation's media releases are being picked up by the media and the common attributes of successful releases.
- (4) Identify** specific journalists, outlets or commentators who favourably or unfavourably report on DA, to aid the organisation to tailor its approach to journalists and strengthen its relationships with them.
- (5) Assess** the organisation's profile within dairy industry coverage in order to understand the issues that are affecting Dairy Australia's members so that DA may better represent them.

STRATEGY

Dairy Australia wanted to understand how its activities are reported in the Australian press and broadcast media, and by whom, and initially also wanted an overview of discussion of the effect of the "milk price wars" on its levy payers (**OBJECTIVES 1, 4 & 5**). In light of other industry issues being widely discussed in Australia at the time of the analysis – specifically the welfare of dairy and meat cattle, and the environmental impact of dairy and beef farming – the Managing Analyst for the project recommended that DA broaden the scope of the research to also include reporting on these contentious topics. This ensured that DA received in-depth analysis of media discussion of other prominent – and often contentious – industry-related topics (see **APPENDIX B, Example 1A**) (**OBJECTIVES 1 & 5**).

For the first report, 360^m analysed a sample of coverage from specific newspapers, and radio and television programs (determined in consultation with DA based on the locations of its stakeholders). Following the delivery of this report, the scope of the second report (covering May–July 2011) was then expanded to comprise analysis of all Australian press and broadcast media coverage (rather than the sample of coverage that was analysed for the first report) to give a wider context to the analysis.

EXECUTION/IMPLEMENTATION

360^m used the CARMA methodology to analyse the collected media coverage quantitatively and qualitatively (see **APPENDIX C**). All press coverage was analysed qualitatively in full (including for messages and the tone of the content), while, for budgetary reasons, only a sample of broadcast media reports were analysed in full, and summaries of all other broadcast reports were analysed quantitatively (for volume, issues and spokespeople, but excluding messages and tone).

The analyst divided the research matrix into distinct categories to capture messaging on DA's research and innovation activities, education and information campaigns (**OBJECTIVES 1 & 2**), as well as to gauge the favourability towards DA and the industry in relation to milk pricing, animal welfare and the environment (**OBJECTIVE 5**). The charts and tables in the analysis reports also separated the data into Tier 1 (national and metropolitan) and Tier 2 (regional and rural) media, to provide DA with further information about the location and type of audience it reached through its communication activities (**Example 1B**) (**OBJECTIVE 2**). In addition, 360^m provided charts showing the volume of coverage of Dairy Australia and the industry in each state and territory (**Example 4A**), giving information about the location of reports (**OBJECTIVE 2**) and enabling a comparison of DA's coverage with that of the wider industry (**OBJECTIVE 5**).

After the Managing Analyst recommended that DA broaden the scope of the research to also include reporting on animal welfare and environmental impacts, **DA revised its initial budget upwards to A\$XXXX per quarter**, beginning with May–July 2011, **to enable analysis of this increased volume of coverage**. For budgetary reasons, DA declined to conduct analysis of online news or social media coverage.

CONCLUSIONS

Media discussion of Dairy Australia during the January–March 2011 period was found to be largely positive (74.4% of the fully analysed reports), with a high prevalence of favourable messaging about the company's provision of practical information to dairy farmers and its focus on research and development (**Example 1B**) (**OBJECTIVES 1 & 2**).

Using the charts that showed the messages conveyed in Tier 1 (national & metropolitan) and Tier 2 (regional & rural) media, DA was able to easily identify the prominence of its messages, and particularly to assess the effectiveness of its communication in its traditional target of regional and rural media outlets (**OBJECTIVE 2**).

DA was surprised to learn that a high proportion of coverage of the organisation (about two-thirds during the January–April and May–July periods) was not proactively driven by DA (**Example 2A**), but was either spontaneously reported news or was generated by other government, research and industry bodies. In addition, 360^m found that DA's media releases were fairly long, which appeared to be affecting their use by the media, and advised that the provision of abridged versions may encourage wider reporting of DA's research and information. Following this, in August–October the proportion of coverage that was proactively generated by DA rose from 33.7% to 51.8% (**Examples 2A & 2B**). In addition, the proportion of total press coverage that was favourable rose to 88.9% in August–October from 74.4% in the first analysis period (**Example 3**) (**OBJECTIVE 3**).

Another notable key finding was that about two-thirds of all analysed press coverage of DA was not attributed to a particular journalist, which revealed that the organisation's objective to strengthen its relationship with individual journalists may not directly lead to wider or more favourable reporting on DA (**Examples 4B & 4C**). Instead, 360^m suggested that fostering relationships with specific media outlets, particularly in rural and regional areas, would be more beneficial (**OBJECTIVE 4**).

ACTIONS

- > Dairy Australia uses the analysis by 360^m, particularly some of the conclusions and suggestions in the reports, to **assist in its planning and development of strategies** to address possible issues, particularly negative ones, that arise.
- > The analysis reports are also used to **inform Dairy Australia's board** of the media coverage received, what stories appear to resonate with what media, and the bearing of this on its future communications strategy.
- > The report helps support Dairy Australia's media strategy and helps **educate the board and the wider organisation** about the importance of being transparent and providing a continual stream of news that highlights the benefit and value of the levy.

*The analyst listened to our needs and was very thorough in completing the brief to provide what we needed – so there were no questions left unanswered. A clear and detailed summary was provided along with many charts, which made it easy to see what our opportunities/strengths and weaknesses were. There was plenty of material to compare our coverage with that of the general industry to understand what the media picked up on and were keen to cover. Hence we know for future reference how we can tap into current issues being covered and ensure that the facts are being presented. (**OBJECTIVE 5**)*

The analysis also highlighted how important it is to have a strong relationship with the media. It was heartening to see the pick-up of our messages – I didn't expect such a strong/high use of messages from our media releases.

Felicity Gallagher, External Communications Manager, Dairy Australia

For more comments, see **Appendix A**