

AMEC Global Communication Effectiveness Awards 2013 Entry Form

Category: Best use of a research, measurement and evaluation programme by a PR consultancy, private or public or not-for-profit sector in-house communications team

Entering Company Name: MSLGROUP

Client: Shriners Hospitals for Children

Campaign title: n/a

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Objective/Brief:

Non-profit suffers from shrinking endowment and turns to Public Relations to raise awareness with donors and healthcare providers. Shriners Hospitals for Children (Shriners) is a network of 22 specialized pediatric hospitals in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, providing advanced care for children. Specialized areas include orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and relies on the generosity of donors. Historically, there was no cost for the provided care. All costs were covered by a massive endowment raised by Shriners International, a fraternal organization devoted to raising funds for the network of hospitals. But this model soon changed, due to the changing healthcare landscape and shrinking endowment. Hence, Shriners need for a communications partner to raise its profile with donors and healthcare providers for patient referrals. Shriners' objectives were to raise awareness of its network of specialized medical centers, increasing the understanding of the care provided and likelihood to donate. Its public relations objectives were to 1) build national awareness to increase earned national media as well as increase local and professional media strategically; 2) amplify local hospitals' efforts to increase national and regional media coverage; clinical excellence focus; and call for donations; and 3) continue developing human interest stories that showcase clinical excellence and research.

Strategy:

MSLGROUP leveraged its campaign planning and evaluation process, Verité, to build a strategy and measurement plan that would meet Shriners' objective:

Phase 1 (Illuminate): audit the media landscape to understand what will achieve the desired objective by understanding the following:

- Determine absolute volume and share of voice (SOV)
- Identify messages for category, competitors, and Shriners

Phase 2 (Program Development): Leverage learning from the Illuminate Phase to:

- Establish strategy, tactics, key performance indicator (KPI), and goal
- Set goals to measure campaign against in order to track how efforts delivered against client's objective

Phase 3 (In-Market Measurement): Launch and measure the campaign while in-market

- Optimize the campaign against the agreed upon KPI and goal, where applicable

Phase 4 (Post Evaluation): Determine success of campaign

- Leverage quantitative and qualitative techniques to establish success of campaign
- Recommend which practices we should leverage moving forward

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Execution/Implementation:

MSLGROUP set up a search query that framed the competitive environment: key hospitals of interests by name and specialty as well as select cities to filter the data by each hospital and city. We leveraged an automated approach to pulling the data and filtering it accordingly. Additionally, we included analysts to review a sample of the coverage pulled daily in order to ensure the media coverage met the search criteria and was relevant to the objective. Furthermore, we isolated the coverage to a one year audit to establish the baseline coverage and explore by month in order to identify seasonal peaks.

Volume of Coverage: used total impressions as well as total placements to determine absolute volume of coverage available for the hospital category overall, by specialty, city, Shriners hospital by city, and Shriners' key competitors. Total coverage would establish maximum threshold and size of the prize to consider for goal-setting.

Share of Voice (SOV): SOV determined Shriners' historical positioning as well as which outlet delivered the greatest coverage for the category, Shriners overall, and by hospital which informs where to focus our pitches. SOV by tier and outlet identified those that are cluttered versus opportunity for breakthrough. Competitors' SOV was only used to provide context, not by which to measure. Additionally, SOV by placements was used to inform us of which journalists or influencers have the greatest reach for the category to prioritize our efforts when pitching news.

Message: leveraged analysts to review articles and determine topic areas central to hospital coverage. Popular topics were noted as category messages. News hooks that focused too closely on category messages were flagged as stories that would lack break-through. Conversely, we used that insight to identify opportunity areas that Shriners could focus on in order to break through clutter and garner greater pick up.

In-Market Evaluation: Optimized media efforts where possible, i.e. refined where we pitched news stories to those journalists or influencers who were more successful in helping Shriners meet its goal.

Post-Evaluation: Provided explanation on how we performed. If we surpassed or under-performed from goal, we explained whether the variance between our goal and actual performance was mathematically or statistically different. Mathematically different may not be impactful (which means it may not imply that we under-performed). Thus, we leveraged a z-test to determine a statistical difference at a 90% confidence. Also, we provided qualitative analysis on what helped meet or fail at delivering against the goal.

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Conclusions:

Category coverage represented 104 million impressions. Shriners' share was less than a quarter. National media was not the popular tier for hospital coverage. The size of the prize for top tier coverage ranged from 2% - 16%. Shriners' share was on the low end, at 5%. On a category evaluation, most coverage (79%) was in newspapers. Although research was a contributing factor to spikes in category coverage, most (56%) of the coverage was about fundraising and donations. Coverage on specialty treatment was an even smaller share of category messaging, 15%. Furthermore, coverage within the Shriners' network fluctuated by city, highlighting where strategic media relations needed to be refined.

MSLGROUP recommended that Shriners focus efforts on national coverage in order to meet the objective of establishing national awareness. National coverage would heighten Shriners' awareness levels; thereby, increasing its reach from current levels. With a baseline metric of 22% share of voice, we set a goal to grow by at least 50% moving from 22% SOV to 33% SOV. Additionally, we recommended targeted and regional outlets in order to establish strategic media partnerships that would support specific hospitals in the Shriners' network. By focusing on Shriners' specialty treatment and the experiences it offered patients, we could pitch Shriners' story in a less cluttered environment that focused on the personal experiences that Shriners would share rather than the typical fundraising messages that dominated the category.

In the first six months of launching in-market, Shriners received 245 million impressions. Shriners' stories not only bolstered the category coverage by 100% but it more than doubled its share of voice, surpassing the 33% goal at a 90% confidence! By focusing on garnering national coverage (e.g. Wall Street Journal, Fox, ABC, NBC, etc.), Shriners was not only able to stand apart from its competitors but also to increase its awareness levels exponentially. Although MSLGROUP was not specifically charged with driving donations, the successful PR efforts generated a halo effect which positively impacted Shriners' business outcome, with donations growing by 73% in the same time period.

Client Quote: *"In case I forgot to say it, thank you so very much! We have not had this kind of attention in many, many years."* **Director of Public and Community Relations, Shriners.**