

# Case Study

## Plastic Card Services

PCS gets its green card  
(Industry award winner)



### 1. Objectives

- Increase awareness of PCS in regional business and trade media
- Position PCS as a marketing leader, an innovator in 'green' card products and a facilitator of change within the print industry
- Drive business leads

### 2. Planning

Plastic card production has often been criticised for its impact on the environment. After researching the market, Souter identified that, although there were a number of 'green' cards available, none combined the biodegradable (bio) materials and responsible print processes that PCS used.

The Souter team proposed that the strategy focused on a combination of reputation management, media relations activity and business profile-raising in order to achieve the desired objectives.

#### **Reputation management**

It was essential to avoid any 'greenwashing' with the campaign, particularly as there is a lot of scepticism around plastic and the environment. From the start, Souter advised PCS to put sustainability and environmental responsibility at the heart of the business's wider commercial and operational strategies.

Part of this was a commitment to convert 50% of its business to 'bio' within five years.

#### **Media Relations**

The campaign was to lead with PCS's first biodegradable card contract, which was for a loyalty scheme card with Denmark's largest retailer, Coop Danmark. Coop Danmark wanted to consider alternative methods and materials to conventional card manufacturing that had a lesser impact on the environment. However, the card needed to perform as a traditional card and be commercially viable.

Over two million cards were produced and sent to every household in Denmark. This was Europe's first loyalty card scheme manufactured with biodegradable polymers and new waterless print technology, which provided a strong hook for target press and gave PCS an international profiling platform.

Another main focus for media relations was PCS's first UK commission for the card with the Ice loyalty scheme, an initiative which aims to encourage people to shop more sustainably and get rewarded for choosing 'green' goods and services. The fact that the card was produced using more eco-friendly processes, complemented the purpose of the Ice scheme and underlined PCS's environmental pledge.

A pipeline of product and business stories was then created to showcase new contracts, business developments and community initiatives so that there was an ongoing stream of good news.

### **Business profile**

The Plastic Card Services (PCS) brand was not that well-known in the region so Souter recommended a number of profile-raising activities to complement the media relations work.

Awards were seen as a major influence, particularly within the print media, with readers of the publication being one of PCS's biggest target groups.

Souter also liaised with the UKTI who were hosting a conference on business with the Nordic regions which the Prime Minister was speaking at.

## 3. Implementation

- Souter worked closely with PCS management on integrating green policies into wider business strategy, with specific environmental targets.
- There was no suitable photography so Souter arranged for a 'prop' to be produced, a 'large' version of the bio card to use for the bio card launch and set up a photoshoot at the office for this and other general shots.
- Souter created a news story on PCS's first contract – *'Europe's first biodegradable schemes manufactured with both green materials and processes'*.
- The first UK green card commission with sustainable loyalty scheme, Ice, gave Souter further opportunities to tell the bio story.
- A pipeline of other stories included a donation of 5000 biodegradable cards to the local community initiative, Love Local Life, which provides discounted goods and services to local people and keeps trade close to home; and the expansion of PCS's premises to allow it to increase capacity and extend its sustainable print services offering.
- Interviews were secured with trade and business press to speak about the Coop Denmark deal (EN for Business) and what the future is for plastics (Print Business).
- A case study on PCS's work with Coop Denmark was requested as a great example of best practice by the UKTI, which was given to the Prime Minister's Office.
- Souter drafted an award submission for the 'Best Direct Mail' category at the Design & Print Awards 2011 for the Coop DenmarkPlus Loyalty card.

## 4. Results

- 26 pieces of positive regional business news coverage
- 19 pieces of positive print media coverage
- Total opportunities to see – (based on circulations/audience) – 4 million
- Winner of 'Best Direct Mail' category at the Design & Print Awards 2011

- Coop Danmark press release uploaded to the UKTI website and used as reference material at the Nordic regions conference
- Two leads worth £29,000 were generated as a direct result of coverage

## 5. Feedback

*After working with Souter we have generated leads and business from editorial generated by them. This was exactly what we wanted in support of our sales drive. Since the beginning of the year we have seen unprecedented growth in our business and Souter PR is undoubtedly making a contribution to that.*

***Rob Nicholls, Managing Director, PCS***