

PR Interview with Colin Long, MD, The White Room



Colin Long, managing director

Date:06/09/2011

Author: Laura Monks [laura@dwpub.com]

What areas of PR does The White Room specialise in and how does it blend its three distinct disciplines, marketing, PR and photography?

The White Room is a specialist homes and interiors marketing agency that offers brand positioning, marketing, PR and photography all under one roof. The business has worked within these specific areas for over 10 years now and has evolved due to the changing needs of clients' marketing objectives. We work for international and local clients, undertaking one-off commissioned projects as well as retaining ongoing strategic campaigns.

The industry is extremely visually led so a brand's image needs to reflect aspects of the style of publications to secure inclusion for a client. The White Room's approach is to go back to basics with clients and start with a blank canvas. Our focus on creativity remains absolute, backed by a strategic approach and a focus on tangible results.

The White Room is unique in the sense that we offer an in-house creative and marketing department in addition to our own photo house. We work with clients to shape and build their brand image and identity to meet their marketing objectives through website and brochure development, advertising campaigns as well as general marketing support.

What is special about The White Room's approach to PR?

We approach PR with honesty. Before taking on a campaign we evaluate what would be the potential PR coverage for that client. It's nice to win a large account, but it's important to be realistic and establish whether or not you can generate enough PR exposure to give them a good return on their investment. Because we are experts in our sector and know what can be achieved, we propose a fee that reflects this as ultimately we want to assist with the growth of their business.

How do you ensure your clients get the right coverage in the press?

It is important that the client understands what is achievable and we don't mislead them into thinking they will get into every publication. We know from the start where they will get PR and we then work with them to secure further coverage. This won't happen overnight and we are able to establish what the media are looking for and evolve the campaign to suit this.

About clients

Tell us about one of your clients you are working with at the moment. What campaign do you have planned?

Our main objective was to reposition the iconic Topps Tiles brand as an innovative, contemporary brand, stocking a huge range of tiles at affordable prices. It had experienced image misconceptions in the past, and lacked the recognition and attention it deserved within the lifestyle and interiors sector.

With an effective marketing campaign incorporating new room set photography and a successful ongoing repositioning within the market, through lifestyle and home interiors PR, the brand is now being acknowledged for its high quality yet affordable variation of products as well as its excellent personal customer service, strengthened with the wider marketing campaign, such as consistent new brochure design using new room set photography.

Since working with The White Room, the brand has featured in various magazines through a lifestyle and interiors PR campaign. This media coverage reflects the credibility Topps Tiles has gained.

Is there a potential client you'd love to work for?

Habitat, which has played a major part in shaping the UK's interiors market and still has great brand recognition. Having grown up with Habitat, I would love the opportunity to be involved in the repositioning of the brand, so it will be interesting to see how this shapes up. I like a challenge, getting great PR still gives me a buzz, but being involved with the marketing and repositioning of a brand from the start is very fulfilling.

What is the best coverage you've achieved for a client?

Topps Tiles' inclusion within the May issue of The World Of Interiors was one of the best pieces of coverage we've achieved for this brand. This was a true representation of how our work with Topps Tiles has led to their image, reputation and credibility being transformed within the homes and interiors media. It also illustrates that even the elite of the interiors press perceive our client positively.

Topps Tiles is now highly sourced in tile features, makeovers and news stories in every homes and interiors publication and the brand is now being acknowledged for its high quality and affordable variation of products as well as excellent customer service. Changing the perception of the brand is an ongoing process however, Topps Tiles' reputation is constantly growing and the inclusion within The World of Interiors successfully supports the altered perception of the brand.

About you

How useful do you find social media?

Blogs and social media are a great way of engaging long term communication between the user and the company. In terms of ROI, it's a cost effective tool that can influence and it's a good platform for news - blogs are central to this concept.

Do you attend networking events? If so, which are you attending soon?

We attend relevant industry trade shows to keep up with trends, meet the press and keep in touch with the industry itself. We attend press and journalist networking events and awards dinners with clients, which provides us with valuable insight into the industry.

What is the best bit of business advice you've ever been given?

Never underestimate your smaller clients, they grow.