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Using News Trends to Launch New Insurance Products in a Regional Market

The Company

A mature, successful health insurance company was launching several new consumer-directed health insurance products in a regional market.

Strategic Issues

With healthcare costs rising, many employers are no longer providing the comprehensive employee health plans that they once did. With more employees not covered at work, the Bush Administration began promoting new consumer-driven health plans.

The company’s target audiences were brokers, sales staff, and those consumers who were self-insured, self-employed, early retirees (age 50-64), and young adults no longer covered by their parents’ plans and not yet covered by an employer’s plan.

The new products were complex as they could be purchased through brokers or directly from the insurer. Both brokers and consumers needed considerable education about the new products and how they worked.

The company, although well-known and possessing considerable brand equity, did not have a major presence in this new market, yet still wanted to be viewed as a market leader for these new plans.

The company had not previously used public relations to support product launches.

The Tactical Solution

To reach the dual audiences of brokers and consumers and to achieve the desired leadership positioning, Scott Public Relations (SPR) created a campaign that capitalized on the “buzz” about these new products coming out of Washington. The campaign included consumer, insurance trade and broker trade press coverage. Messages were built around education on these new products, and the health and financial benefits they offered consumers not covered by group plans.

SPR’s tactics included offering exclusive coverage of the new products to a well-known reporter in the company’s region who wrote columns and hosted a TV show on financial planning. To heighten the news value of the story, the pitch was timed to coincide with the government’s announcement of the specifics of new regulations.

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SPR created a competitive analysis of similar plans to provide this journalist with the complete information needed to write a balanced story, and also provided a knowledgeable company executive to give the in-depth explanation of the new products and their benefits.

A pre-product launch media tour introduced this spokesperson to key media as a resource on health insurance issues. A piece entitled “10 Tips to Look for in New Insurance Options” was created for chamber of commerce newsletters and to educate the media about this topic.

Placements were secured in *National Underwriter Life & Health*, *AHIP Solutions Smart Brief*, *Insurance NewsNet*, *Insurance Networking News Update*, *Managed Care Week* and *Galen Institute’s Consumer Choice Matters Newsletter*. This initial coverage was followed by meetings with key trade and business press and stories targeted to media throughout the region.

To reach the broker community, a bylined article was written for *Agent’s Sales Journal*. The carrier’s sales force used this coverage to open doors and strengthen relationships with brokers. Finally, speaking engagements were secured at broker meetings and events.

Results

A media “double play” was scored in the region’s largest print and television outlets. The above-referenced partnering reporter wrote both a column featuring the company spokesperson as the expert resource and did a television story citing the company’s products as new and innovative.

The resulting press coverage and speaking events created a significant upswing in visits to the company’s website and calls to brokers, as well as positioning the insurer as an innovator and leader in this market.

The company CEO cited media coverage at a management meeting as having boosted sales and internal staff’s morale, as well as sales themselves; thereby validating PR as a support to sales and marketing. And the bottom line: sales of the new individual plan products exceeded expectations.

Scott Public Relations...

“A Step Ahead” is a publication of Scott Public Relations (www.scottpublicrelations.com) a public relations firm specializing in business-to-business communication for firms in health care, insurance and technology. Scott Public Relations helps its clients, ranging from Fortune 100 firms to start-up companies, stay “A Step Ahead” in their marketing programs and in their industries.

For More Information

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Can Media Coverage Put Your New Products on the Map?

Yes, if:

- The news is timely.
- The news impacts many people.
- You have clients and/or third parties/end-users who are willing to share how the product or situation positively impacted them.

If the answer is “yes,” then developing a robust media relations strategy could be the key to accelerating your company’s profile in the market and increasing the number of consumer hits to your website.