

PRCA Awards 2007

Entered by: Weber Shandwick

Project Title: Raising Awareness of SAS Ireland
among the Business Community

Client: SAS Ireland

Category: A. Corporate Communications/
Business-to-Business

A. The Brief

SAS is the largest privately owned software company in the world. It is a leading technology company specialising in business intelligence (BI) software and services. Business intelligence assists organisations and companies make more informed business decisions by analysing data, extracting information and predicting trends. For example BI is used in customer loyalty cards so retailers can analyse and predict the purchasing trends of their shoppers. It can inform a bank which customers may move to another lender or how fraud can be prevented; or it can show a marketer the impact a marketing campaign has had on the overall business. BI offers benefits to all sectors of business from manufacturing, retailing and finance through to the public sector. Most organisations and businesses have vast amounts of data and the amount is doubling every 18 months. BI extracts relevant, useful information from this data that enables businesses to make strategic, innovative decisions to drive business efficiency and profitability.

SAS worldwide has been specialising in business intelligence since 1976 and has had a small office in Ireland of 10 staff since 1998. In other European markets, SAS is the market leader in BI. However in Ireland, SAS has had a relatively low profile among the business community. Where SAS Ireland was known, it was seen as a statistical modelling technology company and not a leader in the BI field. Its sales staff had difficulties gaining access to key decision makers in Government departments and private industry due to a lack of understanding of what SAS does and confusion with its name. They were often asked whether they were from the airline or the hotel – no one knew of SAS the software company.

By September 2006, SAS worldwide faced a new challenge. A number of global IT companies (i.e., Oracle, SAP, Cognos, Business Objects) had diversified into the BI arena and were aggressively positioning their companies as specialists in BI. Whilst not such a serious issue in other markets where SAS had a strong profile, this was a major issue for SAS in Ireland. This new business opportunity identified by the other global companies was driven in some ways by European research that showed BI was seen as the number one priority for IT Directors across all business sectors going forward. It was thus critical that SAS Ireland maximised the opportunities this offered and secured its space in the market as the only software company who specialised in BI alone.

Whilst SAS had employed PR consultants on a project basis in the past it had no agency in 2006. SAS identified the need to raise its profile and to create understanding in the business community of its unique expertise in BI. After a competitive tender process Weber Shandwick was appointed its PR consultants in October 2006 with a six month contract.

Our brief was to rapidly devise and implement a PR campaign that would communicate to the Irish business community SAS's expertise in BI. We were tasked with positioning SAS in Ireland as an authority on BI in what is an increasingly contested and competitive space. Our challenge was not just to communicate SAS's offering to IT Directors but to position BI as a wider business tool, highlighting its benefits to non technical experts. Our aim was to explain to CEOs, finance directors, marketing managers, healthcare professionals, as well as IT Directors, the wide-ranging business benefits that can be derived from this software across every sector.

SAS was experimenting as such with PR and initially tasked the agency to show the benefits of PR within six months, and if deemed successful, SAS would consider a longer term commitment to PR.

B. Statement of Objectives

In tandem with SAS, Weber Shandwick set out objectives:

- Create recognition of SAS Ireland as an authority and leading provider of business intelligence software and services.
- Explain and create an understanding of business intelligence, communicate its benefits and its relevance to a wide range of businesses and the public sector.
- Seek to position SAS as an expert in fraud solutions.
- Devise opportunities through business, technology and trade media channels to send key messages about SAS Ireland's offering to defined business sectors.
- Raise the profile of SAS Ireland's key personnel and position them as experts in the business intelligence area. This was to in turn assist them leverage sales opportunities.
- Fundamentally, to quickly gain a media profile for SAS and ownership of the BI space.

C. Programmes Planning and Strategy

PLANNING

Audiences:

A number of planning sessions were arranged between Weber Shandwick and SAS Ireland. An element of these involved selecting the key audiences for SAS's communications activities and assessment of news potential and feature materials. The audiences selected were married to SAS's business targets in terms of sectors and channels to those sectors. In the main the financial services and the public sector were seen as key sales targets for SAS. Key audiences were identified as follows:

- Irish businesses/enterprises in both the public and private sectors to include:
 - IT Directors (key purchasing decision makers)
 - Marketing Directors (key influencers)
 - Finance Directors (key influencers)
 - Risk Officers in Financial Services companies (key influencers)
- Media
 - National news, business and technology
 - Technology trade media
 - Vertical media - specifically health, accountancy, marketing

Key messages:

A number of core messages were identified as follows:

- SAS Ireland is the leader in business intelligence software and services.
- Business intelligence helps organisations and companies to make better decisions faster, by analysing data, extracting information and predicting trends.
- SAS Ireland provides bespoke business intelligence solutions for a broad range of different business sectors.
- Business intelligence enables companies and organisations to implement innovative strategies and compete successfully, efficiently and effectively.

STRATEGY

Approach:

Our role was to design communications approaches to ensure a comprehensive, extensive programme of PR activity would be delivered which would be heavily weighted on achieving media coverage as a priority in order to maximise awareness of SAS Ireland quickly. The approach aimed to communicate through national, trade and vertical media, the key messages to selected business audiences. We aimed to secure extensive coverage in business and technology media publications so we could reach the IT decision makers across all sectors.

Simultaneously, our challenge was to bring to life the benefits that can be derived from BI to CEOs, financial officers, marketers and healthcare professionals. We needed to highlight and showcase to these audiences, who are not technology professionals, how BI can bring tangible benefits to their businesses so that they would support IT Directors potential BI investment recommendations. We wanted to show that BI was a fundamental business tool for competitive success – rather than just a technology bolt on.

Our advice to SAS was that we would need to draw on practical examples of how BI works in various business settings – thus we would draw on specific real life case studies of BI in practice to assist create understanding. So a programme of research was required to identify suitable materials and match these to appropriate media outlets – all fundamentally striving to communicate with a broad business audience as well as IT experts.

A three pronged strategy was devised and a detailed, specific action plan was drafted with three core areas:

- Corporate positioning in national media
- Vertical and Trade profiling
- Targeted Events

Some of the key activities are outlined:

Corporate Positioning

One-to-one meetings/interviews with key media: Weber Shandwick wanted the key technology media as a priority to become familiar with SAS and to instantly seek its views on BI related issues. Weber Shandwick organised a series of one-to-one meetings for Michael Kearney, Country Manager SAS Ireland, John Farrelly and Paul Power, Client Directors, with key technology and business media – for each occasion we supplied detailed briefing documents on specific aspects of BI striving to give each journalist a difference angle. Between October and December 2006 they met with seven key journalists; John Collins, *Irish Times*; Brian Skelly, *Sunday Business Post*, Conor Brophy, *Sunday Tribune*; Che Golden, *IT's Monday*; Gordon Smith, *Siliconrepublic and Knowledge Ireland*; Simon Walsh and Dermot Corrigan, *Sunday Business Post*. Subsequent interviews were secured in the journalist's media outlets. Each of these meetings resulted in interviews highlighting SAS's BI solutions for an extensive range of issues including performance management, risk management and compliance, reducing fraud and financial losses and customer relationship management. The result was positive, quality, targeted coverage where SAS was positioned as an authority on BI to the business community. (See appendix 2).

Weber Shandwick also organised telephone interviews with other business and technology journalists. Coverage resulting from these interviews appeared in the *Sunday Business Post*, *ITs Monday* and *ComputerScope* among other media outlets. (see appendix 2)

Corporate releases: To counteract a lack of news of customer wins during the initial months of Weber Shandwick working with SAS Ireland, Weber Shandwick utilised US generated corporate releases to maintain SAS presence in the business media. WS assessed each press release's relevance for the Irish market, edited and tailored them so as to be of maximum interest to the Irish media. Corporate releases were covered by business and technology media including *Irish Independent*, *Irish Examiner*, *ComputerScope* and *Irishdev.com*. (See appendix 2)

Between October and March '06 inclusive, Weber Shandwick secured 35 media reports including 14 business interview profiling pieces in **national** media for SAS Ireland. (Total number of media reports across all media secured was 68 with 31 interview profiling pieces).

CSR Initiative: SAS Ireland made a donation of €70,000 and provided a range of software to Trinity College's 'Trinity Access Programmes' (TAP). TAP is a series of innovative activities designed to address education disadvantage and target students who might not have previously considered participating in third level education. Weber Shandwick identified two objectives for this initiative. Firstly, to use the opportunity to develop relationships with Government and secondly, to achieve media coverage. Weber Shandwick organised a photocall to announce the donation. In order to maximise media pick-up a closed photocall was organised for Saturday 9th December 06. Minister of State Tom Kitt T.D. agreed to attend the photocall and officially launch the donation. A press release and a selection of creative photographs incorporating an eye-catching robot were issued the following day. Coverage was secured on the business pages of the *Irish Independent* business pages and *Evening Herald* as well as *Public Sector Times* and *City Wide News North* (See appendix 2).

Vertical and Trade Profiling

Key business sectors that have successfully used BI internationally were considered for case studies and targeting in the Irish market by SAS. Our goal was to communicate to non-technology experts across this broad range of business sectors how BI worked and how it could assist them with their business goals. We researched and identified case studies and articles which brought to life the advantages that BI could bring to particular business sectors. Using examples and case studies we aimed to communicate that BI was not a tool exclusive to the IT realm but that it was an essential business device of relevance to all businesses. Weber Shandwick selected vertical media channels to facilitate SAS Ireland communicating directly with specific business sectors. This strategy complemented communications SAS Ireland had established with business audiences through industry seminars and briefings.

Weber Shandwick drafted and edited a series of feature articles using SAS produced research, white papers and case studies. Each article was developed with a particular vertical publication in mind, written in the style of that publication and catering for the needs of the readership. They were bylined by SAS personnel (See appendix 4). Eight, one to two full page feature articles were successfully placed in the following magazines (See appendix 2):

- 'The Fraudsters Innovative, Industrious and Nefarious!' By Michael Kearney ***Accountancy Ireland***, December 06 issue
- 'Call for Businesses to apply Intelligence to Information', ***Knowledge Ireland***, November/December 06
- 'Could this IT approach to costs save Irish Hospitals?' ***Irish Medical Times***, 16th February 07
- 'Insurers Reducing Fraud Through Data Mining' ***Irish Broker***, March 07.
- 'Measure of Success', ***Irish Marketing Journal***, March 07
- 'Performance Management, Use your Information to Support Success' By Paul Power, ***Accountancy Ireland***, April 07 issue

- 'The Predictive Retailer' *Shelflife*, April 07 issue
- 'Pharmaceutical Industry, Heal Thyself', *Irish Pharmacy Journal*, April 07 issue

Due to long lead in times other articles placed in trade magazines during the six month period are appearing in forthcoming issues.

Targeted Events

In order to communicate directly with the business community and the company's defined target audiences Weber Shandwick and SAS Ireland identified a number of events to host or sponsor during the six month period. These spanned the finance, healthcare and public service sectors – key business targets for SAS. SAS Ireland hosted a Financial Fraud Briefing (Nov 06); a Fraud in the Public Sector Seminar (Jan 07) and sponsored a Private Healthcare Conference (March 07). Each secured SAS speakers who outlined specific industry examples of BI in action as appropriate to the business audience and attracted large attendances of key business targets i.e. CEOs, CFOs and IT Directors. We provide details of two such events:

Financial Fraud Event: In line with SAS's objective of carving a position as being a financial fraud expert, Weber Shandwick suggested that a financial fraud seminar be hosted. An executive briefing on detecting and preventing fraud was undertaken in November 06. The event was aimed at risk officers and financial directors across the business sectors mainly finance/accountancy/banking. It was attended by 35 key decision makers. The key speaker was Peter Dorrington, Strategy Manager and Head of Fraud Solutions SAS UK and Ireland - an expert on identity fraud, IT Security and the impact of crime/legislation on businesses. Weber Shandwick used the event as a platform to increase SAS's profile in key news and business media.

Weber Shandwick succeeded in securing an exclusive in-depth interview for Peter Dorrington guaranteeing the *Irish Times* Friday Business Supplement (two thirds of a page (See appendix 2). In addition, to coincide with the publication of the *Irish Times* article, Weber Shandwick issued a pre-prepared press release on the Friday morning which had further data (not used in the *Irish Times* interview) on fraud. It focused on the cost of fraud to the Irish economy and new trends that are emerging internationally. This press release was issued to national news and business media. On foot of the release Weber Shandwick lined up further interviews with Peter Dorrington with the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Examiner*.

Substantial media coverage was generated. Coverage was received across **all** national titles on Saturday 11th November including a front page story in the *Irish Examiner* as well as both news and business pages in the *Irish Independent*. Subsequently, a half page interview with Mr Dorrington was secured in the *Sunday Business Post* (see appendix 2) as well as coverage in *Business & Finance* magazine and online news websites including *Ireland online*, *electricnews.net* and *sbpost.com*.

SAS/Irish Bankers Federation Event: The growing level of coverage being achieved in mainstream business media started having an influence on some key target audiences of SAS. The banking sector was one such audience. SAS Ireland approached the Irish Bankers Federation to seek to hold a Financial Crime Seminar for its members. It resulted in this seminar being co-hosted by SAS Ireland, IBF and Irish Payment Services Organisation (IPSO) resulting in direct business-to-business communication with the leading Irish bankers. Media coverage was specifically avoided in agreement with IBF as it didn't want to highlight problems of fraud in the banking sector; however SAS's broader objective of meeting and communications with key prospects was achieved. SAS had two speakers at this half day event that provided practical examples of how BI software can assist banks spot fraud and identify potential fraudulent transactions.

D. The Measurement Stage

- SAS Ireland sales team reported 'doors opening' for them in the public and private sectors (specifically financial services) that they could never breach before. Several meetings were secured with Principal Officers and Assistant Principal Officers in Government Departments in the six month period.
- On average it takes approximately six months for a SAS deal to be secured from start to finish, SAS Ireland has now achieved a strong pipeline of new business which is in current negotiation. It concluded a major deal with a leading Irish financial institution at the end of March 07. SAS Ireland attributes this success to the high profile the company gained in the autumn of 2006.
- SAS Ireland is positioned as a fraud expert. There has been strong interest from the financial sector about SAS's fraud and identity theft BI solutions.
- SAS Ireland's sales team state that people now know who they are when they call – they don't have to explain they are not the airline or hotel chain. Key business targets have heard of SAS and its BI offering.
- SAS expanded its team from 10 staff to 14 during the six months to cater for new business leads.
- Positive media coverage for SAS Ireland containing key messages on BI was achieved during the six month period it included:
 - 36 national news and business articles in national newspapers
 - 8 business features spanning the public sector, medical, marketing, financial and insurance sectors.
 - 24 technology trade articles/features
(These figures include 7 double page, 6 full page and 3 half page spreads.)
- SAS Ireland, a very small office for SAS globally is now being hailed as an example of how to profile its offering to target audiences. It is being used as an example to other countries of how to maximise SAS global information and case studies for media coverage. SAS Ireland will be presenting its approach at the next SAS PR Global Forum.
- Micheal Kearney, Country Manager of SAS is being invited to speak at various industry conferences about BI – within six months of his appointment he is known as the expert in the BI space.
- Micheal Kearney states that Weber Shandwick achieved in three months alone more media coverage for SAS Ireland than the company had achieved in total over the past three years.
- Weber Shandwick signed a one year monthly retainer contract with SAS Ireland at the end of March 2007.

E. Budget

The cost of the six-month programme of activity amounted to approximately €25,000 including consultancy fees, photography and administration costs such as fax, courier and postage.

F. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Media coverage matrix

Appendix 2 – Sample media coverage

Appendix 3 – Sample press releases

Appendix 4 - Weber Shandwick draft features placed in vertical/trade media

Appendix 5 – PR plan matrix