

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS 2020**



Best Issues-Led Campaign



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Campaign

LinkedIn Fertility@Work

Description of Campaign

Discussions about fertility topics like miscarriage or IVF are a taboo subject in offices. LinkedIn wanted to bring about change so people can feel comfortable having these conversations and provide a platform for Irish workers to spark a debate amongst its active community.



Public Relations Consultant

Edelman



Client

LinkedIn

Background to the Campaign

"It was after my third miscarriage that I realised I had to break my silence and talk to my manager about what was happening in my life" – Lisa Finnegan, LinkedIn

Families in Ireland are formed in many ways, whether it is a single parent, a couple trying to conceive, an adoption, or a same-sex couple that needs assistance. Regardless of an individual's background and circumstances, workers can be put under a financial and physical toll in the process of starting a family.

Despite this, fertility is seen as a taboo subject in the workplace, with research commissioned by LinkedIn showing that nearly two thirds of Irish professionals would not discuss difficulties conceiving with their employer. Leveraging its position as the leading platform for discussion by professionals, LinkedIn crafted a campaign that would spark debate amongst its active community, helping to lift the stigma about the subject and raise awareness about what other organisations can do to support colleagues on their own fertility journey.

It also complemented a fertility assistance programme that LinkedIn had put in place to help its own employees with adoption and fertility costs, which established credibility for LinkedIn on the topic and also would position the company as a progressive employer.

When the programme was discussed internally, LinkedIn's Senior HR Director EMEA & LATAM Lisa Finnegan spoke of her own personal fertility journey which involved IVF and miscarriage. Recognising Lisa's deeply personal story and how impactful it was, we recognised how it would resonate with a much broader audience, positioning her as the spark for the conversation on LinkedIn and to speak with media about the subject.

Statement of Objectives

As part of the planning stage of the campaign, the following objectives were put in place:

- Showcase that LinkedIn is the leading platform for discussion and debate around workplace issues, and drive conversation on the platform.
- Encourage members on the platform to share their experiences to help lift the stigma about fertility in the workplace.
- Raise awareness about what other organisations can do to support colleagues on their fertility journey
- Raise internal awareness about the supports LinkedIn has in place for its employees, while also publicising the fertility assistance programme externally.

In terms of evaluating whether the campaign was successful, we had a variety of measures in place to gauge success.

Engagement on LinkedIn could be measured by interaction with content and posts published on the platform. In addition, conversation and engagement with content posted on other social platforms would be measured.

In terms of media coverage, the number of articles would be the primary measure, but given the sensitive nature of Lisa Finnegan's personal story, it was agreed to confine interview opportunities to top tier outlets.

Programme Planning and Strategy

Fertility is typically a taboo subject in society, let alone the workplace. We were very fortunate that Lisa Finnegan was willing to open up about her own personal fertility journey and talk about her personal experience of IVF and miscarriage, and how that impacted on her professional life. As it is a subject that is rarely discussed, as highlighted by research commissioned by LinkedIn, we knew that having Lisa tell her story and set out what changes need to take place in the workplace would spark a conversation on LinkedIn, in media and on other social channels.

We needed to be mindful, however, that having Lisa tell her own story would have its own emotional and mental toll on her, so we needed to utilise her sparingly. In addition, we needed to ensure that we recognised that fertility affects people from all backgrounds, so we also wanted to ensure that the campaign would reflect these different experiences.

As a result, we took a multi-pronged approach which would involve:

- Starting the campaign by prompting the conversation on LinkedIn and driving it with additional collateral.
- Creating content that would broaden the subject to ensure it spoke to the different types of fertility challenges that people may face.
- Seeking opportunities for Lisa to tell her story as widely as possible, but ensuring that she was used sparingly.

At the core was Lisa's personal story as her powerful personal testimony would help the campaign resonate for several reasons:

- Having a senior leader at LinkedIn discuss their own fertility journey and advocate how workplaces need to adapt would naturally spark a conversation on the platform, lend itself to in-depth discussions with media and encourage LinkedIn members, employees and audiences on other channels to open up about their own experiences.

- In terms of the broader fertility discussion, we also knew that Lisa would also provide the authenticity for LinkedIn to speak about the subject, which would not naturally be associated with the world's largest online professional network.

Separate bursts of activity were planned with:

- An initial opportunity for Lisa to tell her story to internal and external audiences via LinkedIn.
- Broader media outreach to drive a discussion about fertility in the workplace.
- An internal communications campaign to raise awareness of the fertility assistance programme.

Initial activity

It was important for her first outing that Lisa would be able to tell her story in her own words, at her own pace and in an environment that was comfortable for her, without being restricted by a time limit due to an upcoming ad break or to a few quotes as part of a feature. So we used the LinkedIn platform itself for Lisa to write a publisher post – We have to talk about fertility at work – with the editorial freedom to talk about her experience of IVF and three miscarriages, how this affected her work performance and how Irish workplaces need to adapt to the reality of what many of their employees will suffer in silence through. Her publisher post would form the foundation of a multi-channel strategy for this campaign, which saw activity across national media, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

While we wanted to hold back on widespread media activity at this stage, we sought out one media opportunity with the Irish Times to coincide with the publisher post going live and secured a half page feature interview in the paper's business supplement as part of the World at Work section.

Broader media outreach

We were very fortunate that Lisa Finnegan was willing to speak to her own experience – and the response she had on the platform could not have been more supportive. Her LinkedIn post encouraged others to open up on LinkedIn, but to take the conversation further and ensure that we were able to illustrate the full spectrum of people's fertility journeys, research was commissioned to highlight the public's attitudes on the topic and to also ensure we could speak to the experience of audiences like the LGBTQ+ community.

The research, which surveyed Irish professionals and also workers with fertility issues, highlighted a range of issues relating to why people do not feel comfortable discussing the challenges associated with trying to have a child with their employer, the lack of HR policies to support people pursuing IVF or adoption, and the potential resentment that can fester due to the lack of HR structures and understanding for co-workers struggling to conceive.

The research findings led to a second wave of activity with a series of embargoed print interviews, which were staggered being mindful to Lisa Finnegan, appearing on the day that the embargo lifted with feature coverage appearing in the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Examiner* and *Irish Daily Mail*, along with articles in the *Irish Mirror* and lifestyle publications SHEmazing, Mummypages and Rollercoaster.ie.

In addition, Lisa Finnegan embarked on a series of broadcast interviews over the following weeks, with interviews on RTÉ Radio One's Today with Sean O'Rourke, Today FM's The Last Word and RTÉ 2FM Jennifer Zamparelli Show, along with an extended video interview with Her.ie.

Internal communications

From an internal perspective, the fertility assistance programme was promoted through an initial launch and company-wide communication through a suite of channels such as email and digital screens across LinkedIn's EMEA & LATAM HQ in Dublin. Recognising that an audience needs to hear a piece of information four to six times for it to resonate, LinkedIn's HR Business Managers were tasked to ensure that it was discussed at all company, staff and team meetings by relevant managers in order to ensure that the benefit and associated services were communicated to all employees.

From a cultural perspective, having a senior leader within LinkedIn openly talk about her own experience and advocate for the new programme was critical to helping more employees feel comfortable opening up about their own fertility journey, assisting to boost its take-up. As Lisa set out in her publisher post, to break through these barriers built over many generations, our support for would-be parents cannot be unspoken – if it is to be heard by those that need to hear it, then it must be visible and it must be loud.

The launch and subsequent internal conversation has led to the development of training for all managers at LinkedIn to help them understand how to manage conversations about fertility with their team, whether it is how to help someone who has suffered a miscarriage or what supports and flexibility someone embarking on IVF treatment will need.

Measurement

The campaign was grounded in starting a discussion about fertility on LinkedIn and watching that conversation expand into other mediums.

On LinkedIn, the campaign has been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

It generated the following engagement on LinkedIn:

- 264,283 Impressions.
- 82,041 video views with 3,520 video completions and 2,778 engagements.

In other mediums it generated the following results:

Media activity

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| • RTÉ Today with Sean O'Rourke – radio interview. | https://bit.ly/3f97e01 |
| • Today FM The Last Word – radio interview. | |
| • RTÉ 2FM Jennifer Zamparelli Show – radio interview. | |
| • Her.ie – video interview. | https://bit.ly/2Dic3pE |
| • The Irish Examiner – print feature interview. | https://bit.ly/2ZWQEtm |
| • The Irish Independent – print feature interview. | https://bit.ly/31ZdWC0 |
| • The Irish Times – print feature interview. | https://bit.ly/3eeepTx |
| • Irish Daily Mail – print feature interview. | |
| • The Irish Daily Mirror – print article. | |
| • MummyPages – online article. | https://bit.ly/2OahHwh |
| • Rollercoaster.ie – online article. | https://bit.ly/2W2cJ9a |
| • SHEmazing – online article. | https://bit.ly/3feQ5Sz |

Facebook

- Over 990,000 impressions, 44,000 video thru plays and 150 engagements. 133 clicked the link on the posts.
- Engagement rate of 2.55%, well-above the 1.76% average engagement rate.

Twitter

- Over 3,100 impressions.

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