

# AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS 2020**



# Best Long-Term Campaign



## Campaign

Pointy from Startup to Success

## Description of Campaign

Pointy is an Irish Startup that launched in 2016. 150Bond executed an international media campaign that communicated the value of Pointy's technology to multiple stakeholders including prospective investors and customers that enabled it to be in over one percent of all US stores and be sold for \$160million+ in 2020.

150BOND

## Public Relations Consultant

150Bond



## Client

Pointy

## Background to the Campaign

Pointy was launched in 2016 by Mark Cummins and Charles Bibby. As large eCommerce giants like Amazon encroached on sales of brick-and-mortar shops, Pointy's goal was to make it easier for consumers to find the product that they might be looking for in a local shop.

The company's device made it effortless for a retailer to get their entire inventory online and attract customers to their brick-and-mortar location. Retailers simply plugged in a Pointy device, and the complete contents of their store was displayed online automatically.

The company needed a media campaign to achieve multiple goals in changing its perception internationally and in Ireland such as:

1. Building trust with as many brick-and-mortar stores as possible in the US, UK and Ireland and communicating how Pointy's technology would assist them combat large eCommerce giants and gain footfall.

2. Attract potential technology investors and partners to enable this growth by highlighting the value of their technology and the potential growth of brick-and-mortar businesses despite eCommerce giants and how Pointy's technology could assist this growth.
3. In Ireland, present Pointy as one of the foremost technology companies to assist in hiring top talent.
4. Finally, showcasing to consumers how using the Pointy platform would help them find the product they were looking for from a local store rather than having to order and wait for it to come from an online supplier.

At the start of their engagement with 150Bond (the company's sole Irish and international PR advisory firm) in 2017 Pointy had limited seed funding of 1.2million dollars, less than 20 staff and appeared in some national press such as JOE's CapitalB podcast, Fora.ie and Irish Central with hardly any international media coverage (which was vital to Pointy as the US market was the main growth market for them).

Additionally, trust had to be created between Pointy and traditional "Mom and Pop" stores as there were multiple examples of startups and large tech companies at the time in the US proclaiming the onset of the "Retail Apocalypse" and hoping to "kill the local store."

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## Statement of Objectives

150Bond designed an ambitious international and Irish media campaign that would:

1. **Internationalise and grow the reach of the story:** Internationalise the story of Pointy by taking it from minimal Irish placements to being in multiple top tier outlets.
2. **Social proof the company for stakeholders:** Establish through international media visibility, social-proofing and trust that would enable exponential growth of business through acquisition of new partners for integrations and gaining the trust of brick-and-mortar stores.
3. **Satisfy investors:** Target business, trade, and tech media with noted editorial integrity to ensure investors are satisfied with extensive media placement.
4. **Take care of and align interests:** Balance all the interests of the various stakeholders Pointy had or was hoping to engage with.
5. **Assist with employer brand:** Make Pointy an attractive company to work for in Ireland. Some of the funds raised were to aid in hiring top talent which Pointy faced tough competition from multinationals for.

The overall goal of the campaign was to position and internationalise Pointy in such a way that communications and PR would assist in helping the company achieve actual valuable business success.

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## Programme Planning and Strategy

The campaign, over 3 years, is structured under several headings to ensure Pointy's objectives, as outlined above, were achieved in a compelling manner for press and stakeholders.

### Development of a compelling narrative

Through messaging sessions, we created a narrative that aligned the interests of all stakeholders – prospective investors, stores, and press.

- **Challenging consensus:** We used research to debunk the hyperbole of the "Retail Apocalypse". The US added net 3,115 stores in 2017 and although eCommerce was growing, it only accounted for 28% of growth. We wished to show press, investors, and partners that traditional retail was going through transition but was still a growth area.
- **Winning over brick-and-mortar stores:** In tandem with the above message we challenged the narrative of Silicon Valley tech startups like Bodega and Robotmart who had been proclaiming they wanted "to kill the local Bodega". We wanted to show stores that despite being a tech startup, we were "on their side". We highlighted the advantages to local stores – friendliness, domain knowledge and convenience. Case study articles done with a store that used Pointy such as the 2018 Bloomberg article "A \$500 Device Helps a Mom and Pop Toy Store Find Shoppers on Google" were typical of this.
- **David versus Goliath narrative for press:** We created a narrative that interested the press by telling the story of Pointy helping the local shop against Amazon. Pointy assisted stores by giving them the same toolkit as Amazon



to compete in an era of eCommerce. This narrative was in the Bloomberg article and other placings too such as July 2018's TechCrunch article "Pointy raises \$12M Series B to help brick-and-mortar retailers fight Amazon" and 2019's Forbes piece "Anti-Amazon Artillery: Pointy Announces New Ways To Turn Search Into Store Visits".

All these messages permeated announcements between 2017 and early 2020 and provided a compelling narrative that aligned all stakeholder's interests and brought Pointy from an unknown Irish startup to a company driving the global conversation on brick-and-mortar stores versus eCommerce.

## **Roadmap of Announcements**

We then developed a roadmap of news announcements following the establishment of objectives and development of messaging to showcase the growth and sustainability of the business. This included but were not limited to:

- Pointy's Series A announcement in 2017 (covered by Forbes, Wall Street Journal, TechCrunch, Business Insider, Irish Times, Irish Independent and others).
- Announcements such as Pointy's new job announcement and office opening (covered by Irish Independent, Irish Times, RTE and others.) Partnerships with major companies like Square, Lightspeed, Stripe and Google (covered by TechCrunch, Business Insider, and others) to their Series B announcement in 2018 (covered by Fortune, VentureBeat & TechCrunch).
- Passing business milestones like reaching 15,000 stores in the US in 2019 – Yahoo Finance and Forbes.

## **Thought-leadership (Features, Op-eds, and conferences)**

When there were no news announcements, 150Bond endeavoured to ensure that Pointy maintained high visibility with placements and thought leadership such as:

- Television features: CEO Mark Cummins appeared on television segments with his Pointy device on CNBC and BBC Business News as a featured startup and on new US business channel Cheddar.
- Online Features: Pointy was also featured in December 2017 in the New York Times in a piece entitled "Irish start-up helps local shops compete with online giants."
- Trade Press: We also featured in key trade publications as well as large international outlets: Convenience Store in December 2017 "Capturing Local Customers" and MarTech Advisor "The technology helps local businesses compete with big e-commerce retailers."
- Op-eds: Mark Cummins contributed to securing Op-eds in key trade such as Retail Touchpoints "Using Digital to Drive Footfall: The Power Of Getting The Basics Right" and AdAge "When local stores are digital too."
- Conferences: Mark Cummins appeared at key conferences on the main stage such as eTail West and Web Summit in 2018.

## **Strategic Placements**

Over the course of long campaigns, business priorities change, and key press placements are needed to assist strategic goals.

In summer 2018, stores no longer needed the Pointy device to access Pointy's platform due to new product improvements. We secured pieces that focused on payments and new integrations with Yahoo Finance and PYMNTS, and on a partnership with Google in Business Insider and TechCrunch.

## **Irish brand recruitment**

As Pointy was an Irish startup growing internationally from Dublin it was important that all the above announcements were reflected in Irish press.

We ran specific campaigns too to ensure staff were attracted to Pointy as one the best Irish tech companies to work for, so Pointy could hire talent to fuel growth.

In May 2018 we announced 25 jobs and Pointy's new office; we ran a live podcast of the Irish Independent's popular business podcast with Adrian Weckler interviewing Mark Cummins and Charles Bibby at the new office. This was attended by members of the press, Ireland's main business associations, retailers, and investors. Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe was invited to attend and gave an important endorsement of Pointy which was valuable to prospective future employees and retailers. The announcement was covered by 18 outlets including RTE, Newstalk, Irish Times, Silicon Republic, Irish Independent and others.

The combination of Ministerial endorsement, live podcast, and stakeholder engagement differentiated this announcement from other Irish jobs announcements that may have had more vacancies.

We also highlighted the promising talent working at Pointy and the room for growth at the company with our nomination of marketing lead Caroline Brady as a member of the prestigious 30 under 30 in the Business Post in 2018 and 2019 and product lead Hugh Doyle in the Irish Independent's equivalent list in 2018.

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## Measurement

By any measurement, the PR campaign was a success and had a tangible effect of bringing Pointy from an unknown Irish startup to the conclusion of the company's successful sale to Google for over 160million in early 2020.

### **Press and growing the press reach and internationalisation of the story:**

- At the commencement of the engagement Pointy was an Irish startup that had previously 6 placements in Irish press in 2016.
- In 2017, this rose to 147 online placements for a media reach estimated by SimilarWeb of over 195 million.
- In 2019 and including the 2020 acquisition this rose to 416 for a reach of 1,572,082,113.
- The quality of coverage included international publications like CNBC, Bloomberg, New York Times, Reuters, TechCrunch, Business Insider and Forbes to name a few.
- WIRED named Pointy in its list of "Europe's 100 Hottest Startups" in 2019.

### **Social proof the company for stakeholders and aligning their interests:**

- Pointy secured a Series A round in 2017 and a 19 million Series B round from noted investors.
- Pointy secured more partners to expand their capability with major companies like Google, Square, Lightspeed and Clover.
- Employer brand in Ireland – Pointy's coverage in Ireland ensured staff grew from 25 to 130 in Ireland by the start of 2020. Mark Cummins and Charles Bibby were named as the prestigious Irish Times Business People of the Month in February 2020.

### **Profound business effect through assistance of PR:**

- Pointy ended up working with more than 1 percent of all stores in the US, working with 15,000 across all 50 states by 2020.
- The press campaign and strategic placements were cited by the CEO Mark Cummins as being helpful to assisting the sale to Google, mentioning that "150Bond definitely helped us get to where we got, no question."
- The Currency noted in their analysis of the sale of Pointy that "Pointy was for the last three years one of the highest profile Irish startups. 150Bond ensured that Pointy was now featuring not just in the Irish media but also in The New York Times, BBC, Bloomberg, CNBC and Forbes."

KANTAR

PARAGON



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