

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS** **2021**



PRCA Agency of the Year

1 to 10 Employees



Members of the team at Alice PR & Events.



Agency
Alice PR & Events

Citation

The judges noted that the winning agency: –

“... focused on delivering with a purpose for their clients through creative, forward-thinking and award-winning campaigns; and on recruiting and retaining a strong staff by focusing on their wellbeing and contributing to the public relations profession. It was also financially resilient with ambitious commercial targets.”

About Alice PR

Since Alice began in 2015, we have grown to a staff of nine and won over 300 contracts. We have enhanced our core team by recruiting four high-profile Associate Directors and two consultants. We have established strategic partnerships, including joining Pomilio Blumm's Ultra-European Network, which has a presence in 67 countries.

With offices in Dublin and Belfast, we work with clients throughout the island of Ireland and beyond. We deliver 'PR with a purpose', working on projects that excite us and issues we care about.

Objectives & Performance

At the beginning of 2020, our goal was to achieve similar levels of growth to previous years. We knew some client accounts were not operating profitably; and we were conscious our staff-team was working long hours and adopting an 'always on' mindset.

Key objectives, therefore, were to:

- Retain existing high-value clients.
- Attract at least three new high-value retainers.
- Become more analytical about clients' profitability and suitability to working with us.
- Become more productive as an organisation, ensuring better work/life balance.

We had a busy start to 2020 with the General Election, meaning we met financial targets in the first two months. Then, in March, Covid-19 struck.

Alice always had a flexible working model, so we were well-placed to adapt quickly and had a seamless transition to remote working. We moved rapidly to support clients with online service-provision and to streamline our own expenditure.

We experienced a sharp decline in business in the initial months of the pandemic. We had won a number of events contracts, and these were all cancelled or indefinitely postponed.

Our priority during this period was to keep all staff employed. We focused heavily on business development and internal capacity-building.

This quickly paid dividends and, by the end of June, business had significantly picked up. In July, we recruited Sorcha MacMahon, a new fulltime Account Executive. In October, Niamh Breathnach and Katie Morris – both of whom had worked with us previously and left to travel – re-joined Alice.

We won 58 contracts from Q2 to year-end. 15 of these were either 12-month retainers or contracts of significant value.

We finished 2020 with an expanded team and in a more profitable position than at any other time. We were able to award well-deserved promotions and pay-rises, and implement a new company pension scheme.

Following consultation with all staff, we have decided to move permanently to a hybrid model of working, with staff working remotely for the majority of each week – even after offices fully re-open. As a result, we moved our Dublin office to a new premises in Rathmines.

Achievements

- 15% growth in turnover. This was less than projected in January 2020, but we consider it – and the recruitment of new team-members – a huge achievement, given the challenges of Covid-19.
- Expanded retainer client-base and increased monthly income.
- Won first all-island retainer (with Community Finance Ireland), a significant milestone in building our reputation in NI.
- Cut monthly expenditure by 14%; finished 2020 with a comfortable cash reserve.
- Adapted rapidly to online service provision, delivering multiple events, political briefings, launches and training sessions – with immediate effect from March 2020.
- Developed new CRM system for client billing and profitability analysis.

- Made time management, digital detoxing and resilience a core focus in 2020; and recruited new team-members to meet demand for our services. There was a notable improvement in time management over the year, with people working in a more balanced fashion.
- Won 'PR Agency of the Year' at 2021 Icons of Whisky Ireland Awards. Unknown to us, we were nominated for this by our client, Drinks Ireland|Irish Whiskey.
- Won 'Best PR Event' at 2020 Awards for Excellence in PR; commended in the 'PRCA Agency of the Year' category.

Education and Training

We encourage all staff to take 2 hours per week for education and training. The focus is agreed in advance with management and costs are covered by Alice PR.

During 2020, staff engaged in 257.5 hours of CPD, including:

- Bespoke resilience training at team-planning day.
- Facilitation Skills training for four team-members.
- Participation in several PRII and PRCA webinars.
- Completion of a range of online courses, covering topics such as project management and digital analytics.

Staff are encouraged to share their knowledge with the rest of the team; and we delivered eight 'lunch and learns' during 2020.

Most recently, one colleague has completed the PRII Certificate in PR Account Management; two others have completed courses with the UK PRCA; and our Account Director, Emily Brennan, has completed a 'Future Leaders' programme.

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