



AMEC Communication Effectiveness Awards 2009

Law Society Courts Solicitors

Company Name: Media Measurement Ltd (MML)

Client/Campaign: The Law Society (TLS)

Category: Best Use of Media Evaluation: Not-for-Profit

Objective/Brief:

The Law Society (TLS) is the representative body for solicitors in England and Wales and aims to support, protect and promote solicitors. The PR Team works to publicise TLS's representative and law reform activities to solicitors, as well as promote solicitors' services to consumers. TLS used to act as both regulator and representative body, but following the Clementi's Review recommendations, it split these two functions. A key element of the PR Team's focus during 2008 became educating the public about the role change and their new regulatory lobbying capabilities. The change in role also increased the debate as to whether TLS should continue to exist or be replaced by another solicitor-run organisation, adding more pressure to the PR Team's role.

In 2008 MML tendered for the business and was chosen above three other companies due to the detailed message-based evaluation and 95% repeatability of its analysis.

The overall aim of the PR Team was to:

Help secure the future existence of TLS by positively communicating its activities.

Three specific objectives were evaluated:-

- 1. Decrease TLS's regulatory coverage, in favour of representative coverage, plus minimise any adverse coverage relating to the role change.***
- 2. Increase consumer and regional coverage, in order to promote solicitors' services to the public.***
- 3. Change the internal Governing Body's attitude towards PR and the resourcing of such activity.***

Strategy:

The PR Team was tasked with decreasing regulatory coverage during 2008 and to ensure that a higher proportion of coverage focused on their representative function. TLS used a combination of channels to inform people about the role change including press interviews, briefings, placed articles and press releases. Specific journalists that were well known contacts were also approached with stories. Previously TLS had requested that any representation coverage be treated as positive, and any regulation coverage as factual but the MML Account Manager explained the benefits of tracking tone objectively from the reader's point of view and how this would be the methodology necessary to identify adverse coverage. TLS agreed and this major change in tone methodology enabled MML to highlight any threats to TLS's reputation.

The majority of TLS's coverage had historically appeared in the trade press. This, along with fact that the national newspapers were reducing their legal content, meant that TLS had to find other platforms to promote solicitors' services to consumers. In order to increase the visibility to the public, TLS aimed to increase its previous minimal coverage in consumer, regional and online outlets. Head of Press, Melissa Davis, travelled to meet the News Editors of leading daily regional newspapers to pitch campaign stories. It was also important for TLS to track whether different consumer groups were being reached. MML suggested breaking down the consumer, online and trade outlets into different subject areas to be tracked over time.

Historically, TLS's Governing Body of Council Members were unconvinced about the benefits that PR could offer. For TLS to show the success of its PR activity and fight for more resources, it needed MML to provide detailed and objective statistics that could be used to demonstrate it was achieving its objectives. TLS also publishes the weekly law magazine, the Gazette, which reports on issues affecting solicitors. Although owned by TLS, it did not control the editorial policy. Therefore, the PR Team wanted to monitor its coverage in the Gazette to highlight the impact that it was having on TLS's reputation. MML suggested that the Gazette be reported upon separately so that the tone and content of the coverage could be compared to the external media coverage.

Execution/Implementation:

MML devised a detailed message brief for the purpose of contextual analysis. The individual messages were grouped into themes including **Representation** and **Regulation** so that the content share of voice could be reported upon ([Appendix 1](#)). Tone of the regulatory and representative references to TLS were also reported upon to enable counteractive or supportive press releases to be issued. Message tables by tone and share of voice provided TLS with a method of cross-tracking the most popular stories. ([Appendix 2](#)). Tables referencing the journalists who reported most beneficially and adversely were included in the reports in order for TLS to target journalists more accurately. The evaluation also highlighted those journalists that were incorrectly reporting their new role so that TLS could target them.

To assess the PR Department's success in promoting solicitors to consumers, MML split the coverage into different media types and reported on such metrics as the number of items ([Appendix 3](#)) and tone ([Appendix 4](#)). MML tracked individual media type coverage with a minimum of 12 months retrospective data so that TLS could identify the successful (and not so successful) activity ([Appendix 4](#)). This enabled TLS to amend unsuccessful strategies throughout the year. TLS also wanted to know whether its coverage was reaching different target audiences. In response, MML devised an innovative approach of breaking down the classic media types, consumer, online and trade, into genre classifications (e.g. Leisure Interests, Computing) ([Appendix 5](#)).

A series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) was devised, based on TLS's targets, which compared the PR Team's performance each quarter against a rolling average ([Appendix 6](#)). This translated the PR Team's activities into impactful statistics that were easily understood by the Governing Body. MML also suggested using one-page Report Cards to present the key metrics of TLS's campaigns. The Report Card was then tailored to meet the specific requirements for each campaign. The Gazette was reported upon separately and the tonal coverage compared to external outlets. It was important that the Gazette's content was analysed as objectively as an external outlet, in order for the subsequent data to be accepted by TLS's Governing Body.

Conclusion:

1) MML's evaluation showed that during 2008 TLS's regulation coverage decreased from 21% to 17% of articles over the year, whereas representation coverage increased by 22% over the year. This evidence proved the success of the PR Team's objective to change the media's focus on TLS. The minimising of adverse coverage relating to the role change was not as successful, with MML finding a consistent proportion of negative comment. As a result of this evidence TLS changed its strategy from concentrating on increasing beneficial representation coverage and instead to tackling the adverse comment by launching a regulation campaign to lobby the new regulatory body. This resulted in a shift of reporting from concentrating on the historic controversy over TLS's role change to focusing on the positive regulatory lobbying TLS was leading. MML also identified the journalists who were producing the most adverse and/or beneficial content, which TLS used to identify who to target its interaction with. TLS also used the evaluation to identify the media commentators who were successfully communicating the change in role and those that required further education. The results of the evaluation, which indicated the success in educating readers about the role change ([Appendix 1](#)), were supported by TLS's own attitudinal research with solicitors, using a questionnaire, which showed that their understanding of the role change had improved.

2) MML's media type tracking indicated that TLS had successfully increased coverage which reached consumers via the regional press by 14% during 2008, although coverage in the consumer press remained consistently low, at less than 1% each quarter. In response TLS arranged for feature writing and networking training for the PR Team to improve the level of consumer coverage generated. By splitting the media types into different classifications, MML demonstrated that while the majority of coverage appeared in legal publications, TLS was also communicating its messages to different audiences, such as the government and public services sector ([Appendix 5](#)). Through MML's method of tracking media type volumes over time, TLS was also able to identify the PR activities that had caused peaks and therefore been most successful ([Appendix 4](#)). The evidence showed that the regional press trips had caused a peak in local coverage so the strategy was developed by sending TLS' President, Paul Marsh, to meet with regional newspapers and regional law firms. Through the detailed media type tracking TLS also identified that online coverage had increased by 16% during 2008 and saw the potential for further development in the social media arena, by using bloggers connected to TLS. MML will continue to evaluate TLS' PR activity during 2009.

3) MML's objective reporting of the PR Team's performance enabled the Head of Press to present its achievements to TLS's Governing Body each quarter. This resulted in a positive change of attitude towards the press function and an increase in resources, enabling two new members of staff to be employed over the course of 2008. When the evaluation was reinstated there were claims that the PR Team had not evaluated its activity objectively but this attitude changed when MML's methodology was explained. Presenting objective evaluation findings to the Council Members' meeting each quarter enabled the PR Team to statistically prove the benefits of PR. The intelligence from the Reports now feeds into TLS's wider business objectives. MML's evaluation of TLS's Gazette has raised internal awareness of how detrimental the coverage can be to TLS's media reputation and the PR department now has editorial control of the magazine. Head of Press, Melissa Davies, said; *"MML's detailed evaluation has enabled me to increase the internal profile of the press office and its achievements from Director and Council Member level to Law Society staff and the profession. It has allowed me to increase my team with two new members and to set valuable objectives and KPIs - particularly in regard to the effectiveness and continuation of consumer campaigns. I find the strategic and planning benefits of such high quality objective analysis to be invaluable and this is a key area for budget allocation for 2009."*