

# DECISION

## Inter Relations

strategic communications  
– an independent report

# DECISION

DECISION BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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The following report on the work of Inter Relations was researched and compiled by DECISION business magazine and published in December 2004 as part of the Strategic Communications Showcase project.

The purpose was to identify and then validate the attributes, actual experience and performance of the firm. Its compilation took place over a four-month period.

The content was completely sourced and written from interviews undertaken by DECISION.

Inter Relations were not able to make any changes to the report, apart from the correction of any factual inaccuracies should they have occurred.

As a consequence the views expressed by those who have been interviewed are not necessarily those of the firm.



Larry Dillner  
Publisher

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## RESOURCE

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Established 1981.

**Jane Goring, founder/managing partner** – retail marketing, advertising and public relations for Harrods, then Harvey Nichols, followed by an international PR role for global brands including Ralph Lauren, DuPont, and Philip Morris.

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## SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF WORK

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For a retailer's summer sale, Inter Relations did something rather more than producing a preview invitation which was sent to the customer database and a sales leaflet to 64,000 homes in the catchment area. Research showed that the long-established store was associated with quality, but younger potential customers didn't realise that merchandise, particularly furniture ranges, would appeal to them. So Inter Relations arranged for low-cost 'barely legal' fly posting around the town to promote the sale. The store reported that takings were "significantly up", and that new customers had mentioned that the campaign had made them see the store in a different light.

Inter Relations' marketing support in the UK and Europe for an American company includes the organisation and project management of client forum events in Cologne and Munich, with Inter Relations also taking responsibility for identification of the venues, putting together the programme of events, and co-ordinating the guest list.

A nursery business, which had developed a farmshop and corporate entertainment facilities, needed to raise awareness of the diversity of activity among its customer base to encourage more cross-selling. Inter Relations organised a Customer Garden Party, an initiative appropriate to the style of the business, which captured the imagination of the people it was trying to influence.

Conceptual work, design and production of 'edu-tainment' material to keep children occupied in confined spaces, such as cars, restaurants, airplanes, for organisations including the AA, BBC, First Choice. Tesco, Stena, Whitbread is a niche specialism at Inter Relations.

Aware from research of the positive impression that it would make in the countries which represent the clients main markets, Inter Relations encouraged the company to successfully apply for The Queen's Award for Export Achievement, taking responsibility for the documentation and process.

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## REFERENCES - 1

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“Six Sigma is a rigorous and disciplined methodology that uses data and statistical analysis to measure and improve a company’s operational performance by identifying and eliminating ‘defects’ in manufacturing and service-related processes. It’s a vision and a philosophy, not just a quality system like TQM and ISO. We started with Inter Relations when we had a small presence in the UK servicing US corporations with operations in Europe. At that stage we weren’t desirous of any promotion to companies based in the UK and Europe, but as our requirements have changed, so Inter Relations have had the capability to grow with us. Jane Goring does an excellent job for us. She has an important role in organising and then managing our client forum events. Not only does she prepare the promotional literature, but she selects the venue, negotiates a rate on our behalf, and identifies the people who should be attending. What has happened now is that because she communicates extremely well, Jane has got involved in facilitating some of the sessions. Her company has also negotiated with a number of publishers which has enabled us to write a couple of chapters in books they were putting together. I would say Jane Goring and her company are tremendously professional, tremendously pro-active, and I would recommend her highly.”

Jack Finney, chief executive officer, Six Sigma Academy

“We’ve been working on graphic design with Inter Relations for about thirteen years. They have what I think is a rare quality. Where many marketing companies almost limit what they’re doing for a client in that they’re focused in a specific direction because, say, something might be in vogue, Inter Relations focus only on the client’s objectives and requirements. Because of that Inter Relations are able to explore the brief, rather than just interpret it. They have an open attitude. Inter Relations are prepared to present the client with an alternative view. They aren’t scared to challenge assumptions, but it’s not bravery for the sake of it.

Philip La Roche, LR Design

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## REFERENCES - 2

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“We had been using a fairly high profile PR company but there was a question mark about their charges in relation to what we were getting. The other factor was that we adopted a marketing campaign which they had recommended and it was very poorly received by the trade. Inter Relations came in and listened to what we said about the industry in which we worked. They listened and went away and did their own research; they talked to people, they got a very hands-on reaction to our products and services. And then they came back with this punchy but very simple series of activities that really re-awakened our market's understanding of what we were all about.

“A great example was when I set up a greenfield operation for a Swiss company, and Inter Relations came on board to help us launch. It involved a brand that had been known in the UK, but the Swiss group was going to relaunch it. Inter Relations tackled that so well that in fact the parent company in Switzerland took them on board to do all of their international marketing.

“There’s no shortage of creativity in agencies, by and large. But it’s a question of attention to detail and whether they can actually understand your business, not only in terms of products but also the market's perception of the products and your positioning in the market. The fact that Inter Relations get behind that right from the word go, to us was a very important element. As far as I was concerned they were like a department of the company.”

Tony Clark, managing director, Kopex International

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## REFERENCES – 3

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“We didn’t have marketing or PR support before Inter Relations came on board. I was initially very sceptical about PR companies, but when I worked out that we’d been in business for over seventy years and when we issued a press release no one would print it, I thought it was time to listen up. After we engaged the services of Inter Relations, we found that when we had something to announce it got printed! They also gave us several options for a unique brochure, and we went with the most avant-garde one. That’s also generated a great deal of interest and made us regarded as a different company to do business with.

“Inter Relations work very closely with the company to understand our objectives, and that determines what they will be producing for us, rather than them taking a generic approach to PR. They will also make subjective and objective observations about the business and then draw them to our attention so that at least we have the conversation, which is useful. There is an advantage in having somebody with your best interests at heart casting an independent eye over your company. I’m not a genius but I’m not an idiot either and it’s nice to have somebody else’s opinion, outside of the industry.

“I’m not sceptical about PR anymore – it has subsequently made us a lot of money! We now retain Inter Relations full-time. We’ve got a worldwide sales conference next week, the first one we’ve had since we started in 1932 and they’ll be in attendance, which shows how much we value them as part of our organisation.”

Christopher Whiteside, managing director, AJ Walter Aviation

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## REFERENCES - 4

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“My role within Britannia is to implement all on-board services. In conjunction with our retail team Inter Relations have created a new giveaway product for children. When we started the project last year Inter Relations were one of the companies that we invited in to show us their ideas and designs. We’d used a number of sales promotion companies over the years who’d given us, effectively, the same style of product, usually a magazine-based fun book. We felt it was time for a change.

“I felt I really wanted to break away from the traditional idea of a colouring book with a couple of pencils stuck on the front. Inter Relations’ introductory letter and their pitch, demonstrated to me that they were creative, they’d worked with children before, and education was key to their product, which was also very important to me. They’d put some real thought into it, and it was clear they knew what children wanted – they’d done their research. The artwork was presented in a very professional way, delivered to deadline, and to budget – a very strict budget!

“Inter Relations also did a lot of research about Britannia as a company, so they understood where we were coming from with our objectives. The branding was always clear and concise, which of course is extremely important to us.

“The giveaway product they came up with was a children’s playmat. They incorporated one of our retail products, a teddy bear, into the design, so that it’s like a board game, with the teddy bear as a character. It’s so different from what had always been done in the past, and it’s working really well. You get such commitment from Inter Relations; for example, they came to our crew training day to talk about the product.”

Clare McCoubrey, in-flight service manager, Britannia Airways

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## REFERENCES - 5

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“We are corporate financiers, implementing medium to large financial projects. We essentially organise funding for business strategies. We carry out research and analysis on the client’s strategy, determine the funding required, and then go and find the finance to help the client achieve their objectives. Inter Relations come in on the packaging to present the business to the investors in a clean, understandable way. Inter Relations will also look at whether the business is marketing itself effectively. Their work extends beyond PR; they’re very effective as facilitators. We got involved with a law firm to improve their focus, structure, recruitment and marketing to transform them into a corporate practice. Inter Relations drafted and presented the advertising, identified the best periodicals, and looked at the communications strategy as well.

“A good example of Inter Relations’ approach was a major publicity event we set up for this law firm. Inter Relations managed the whole process. They broke from the standard cocktail party format: the invitations for example communicated the firm's new image in a really different, stunning way, using a ‘kit’ of plastic cards which, when pieced together, created the invitation. Inter Relations went through the database of all the clients in great detail to make sure the invitations were effectively targeted. Inter Relations arranged the event itself: beautiful presentation, unique food, amazing entertainment – it all created a vibrant ambience. I remember that 150 people turned up, which for this kind of event was incredible.”

Gerard Walsh, Corporate Oxygen

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## REFERENCES – 6

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“Inter Relations are really there for the strategic issues, our positioning, branding, market penetration; it’s not about random press coverage. Any successful business can find itself bogged down by the volume of work, an indication of its success of course, but it can be at the expense of keeping ahead of the competition in terms of perceptions in the marketplace. What we have done with Inter Relations is to put in a plan to develop and position the brand and the partners. When you live the brand every day, you really do need an objective view to achieve this. I don’t want us to be marketing ourselves like every other law firm, and having an outside consultancy means we have a fresh perspective and can evaluate ideas coming out of other service industries.”

Mark O'Halloran, partner, stevensdrake

“We have a farm, and from that we have developed a number of businesses including a farm shop, plant centre, and fishing lakes run on a membership basis. Inter Relations help us with marketing, publicity activities, arranging advertising, editorials in newspapers, and organising communication with around 4,500 loyalty card holders on our database. We hadn’t used a public relations agency before. Over the years we had tried doing it ourselves, with varying degrees of success, depending on our enthusiasm for it. As we got bigger it became more and more time-consuming, and we didn’t have the professionalism that a PR agency can bring.

“The initiatives which have been most successful for us have been projects which we have really made the effort to get behind. I’m thinking particularly of an open evening we held in the spring for our loyalty card members, an evening garden party. Inter Relations were the prime movers, the idea came from them, they set the agenda, and managed it all. But because we got right behind it and did a lot of work ourselves it was hugely successful. That’s an important message: to just buy a marketing company to do something, I don’t believe is sufficient. It’s got to be a two-way process. It’s more effective if the customers can recognise the soul behind the marketing. Inter Relations also came up with a new idea for us to communicate with customers. We now have a gardening article every week in the local paper. It doesn’t cost anything. Inter Relations helps us write it and organises getting it into the paper.”

Francis Hallows, partner, Priory Farm

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## REFERENCES - 7

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“We produce and supply printed products for projects Inter Relations are implementing for their clients. We work with them to build up the concept, and I would describe them as a very creative company. They come up with an idea and we discuss whether it will work or not as a prototype, we then make the prototype and from there we really work together. Inter Relations are totally efficient. You get plenty of marketing consultancies who think they understand printing but essentially don't give you what you need to produce a quality result. What we get from an Inter Relations brief is exactly what is required: they don't give you problems with digital files, the timing is all worked out, they actually think about the appropriate paper stock, for instance. Their professionalism means you end up with a great job.”

Andrew Coppe, managing director, A & R Associates

“We have a department store in the village of Cranleigh and use Inter Relations to produce our promotional material. This is a business that's 117 years old – transforming it into a more modern one is an extremely sensitive process and it's a testimony to Inter Relations that we've managed to bring the business so effectively into the 21st century. We don't want to lose existing loyal customers but we do want to update our image to attract new ones. Inter Relations' creativity and understanding of our marketplace has been crucial in the changes that we've made and how they have been communicated.

“Inter Relations are effectively our advertising and PR department. They work with us to select the right products from the huge range we sell, put them on the page, create a story, and attract customers to come to us – and it's got to be a pretty good reason for people to drive past towns with big shopping centres to come to Cranleigh, but people do. An in-house advertising department can become rather staid; but Inter Relations come in from outside with continually changing ideas, seeing different ways to do things.”

Richard Womack, managing director, Manns of Cranleigh

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