

I'M PASSIONATE ABOUT GIVING A VOICE TO LOW-CARBON BUSINESS.

*Most marketing and PR companies don't have a very good reputation, do they? When **Joanna Watchman** launched **Content Communications** in 2009, she set out to create a marketing consultancy with a difference. She sat down with journalist **Nicola Martin** to explain...*



***Our USP
is simple:
we're
specialists.***





ALL MARKETING COMPANIES ARE BASICALLY THE SAME, RIGHT? JOANNA WATCHMAN DISAGREES. BEING A SECTOR SPECIALIST IS THE KEY TO HER SUCCESS, SHE SAYS.

“

We only work within our core markets – energy, technology and low-carbon business.

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SO...

SURELY MARKETING IS MARKETING?

Marketing a can of cola isn't the same as marketing solar photovoltaics. It sounds obvious, but it's forgotten a lot of the time. A good generalist agency can only do so much. In order to market a product – one that might be highly technical or aimed at the industrial market – you need to really know the sector and the market forces that are at work.

BUT YOU DON'T TURN WORK AWAY, DO YOU?!?

It's not about turning work away, it's about making sure the fit is right between us and the client. It's no good taking on a client that's a florist or a brewery – that's not where our expertise lies, so it's better to be honest about it. Once you start applying a one-size-fits-all approach, the account is doomed anyway. That's why we only work within our core markets – energy, technology and low-carbon business.



WHY DID YOU PICK THE ENERGY, TECHNOLOGY AND LOW-CARBON SECTORS?

That's where my background is – I've worked in those sectors for more than ten years now. I started out in process and automation, and it's been fascinating to watch the separate worlds of environmental technology and traditional industry merge over the last ten years.

WHAT ARE YOUR CLIENTS LIKE?

No one client is alike. We're lucky enough to work with some global market leaders, but it's just as exciting to help an SME develop from almost nothing. The thing that

unites our clients is that they're all passionate about energy, environment, technology. They read *BusinessGreen* and the *Engineer* and the *Guardian*. But they don't always have time to stay up with all the latest news. That's where we come in. We bridge the gaps in their knowledge.

WOULD YOU SAY YOU HAVE A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE THAN OTHER AGENCIES?

I do think there's a reason PR is not a well-liked industry. There are so many people who will take the fee and not think about the level of service they should be providing. You don't con clients with high fees and extras. We have a good reputation for doing the opposite. In fact, we provide our clients with a lot of 'freebie' extras – sharing useful information, providing news round-ups – just as a matter of course.

WHAT DO YOU OFFER THAT OTHER AGENCIES DON'T?

Our USP is very simple: we're specialists and we know our stuff. People think energy and low-carbon technology is the place to be, but the reality is that they're very

complex sectors that not everyone understands. We've won clients from other agencies because they haven't grasped what the market is all about.

GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT YOU PROVIDE.

Our bread and butter is providing good-quality long articles that give clients a voice and a 'personality' in the market. In the UK, there are trade and industry publications dedicated to everything from pumps to potatoes. But the economic downturn has hit the magazine industry hard, meaning there are fewer pages of editorial available. So what you offer the editor has to be better than everything else. By knowing the market, we write the top-end articles which get published.

IS IT JUST LONG ARTICLES YOU PROVIDE?

Not at all. The trick is to reuse that material. Once you have strong marketing material, you can rework it into scripts for web videos, copy for websites, content for e-newsletters. As a result, we can market our clients through a number of different 'channels'. Many clients even consider us as an extension of their own marketing department.



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WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF THE LOW-CARBON SECTOR?

The government has cut back a lot of funding streams, which means that companies in those sectors need to work harder to sell their products. You can't just market energy-efficient products on the basis that reducing CO₂ is good – you have to be ready to make the cold, hard business case for your products. What's the payback period? Can it be retrofit-installed?

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A FIRM LOOKING FOR MARKETING HELP?

Beware of the big pitch teams. Be very wary of the glitz and glamour. It's not always what you need with agencies. It may sound surprising, but many, many agencies don't know the market in which they are operating.



You have to be ready to make the business case for your products.



We work on the opposite approach. We demonstrate that we understand the market and work from there.

WHAT'S THE FUTURE FOR CONTENT COMMUNICATIONS?

Public relations will always be at the heart of our business, but it's not all that clients want from us. What I'm seeing more of is the need for market intelligence – specialist briefings on legislation, regulation and other market forces. That's our growth area, and it's great because we can really add value by providing this type of information. It's good to know where the company's going.

