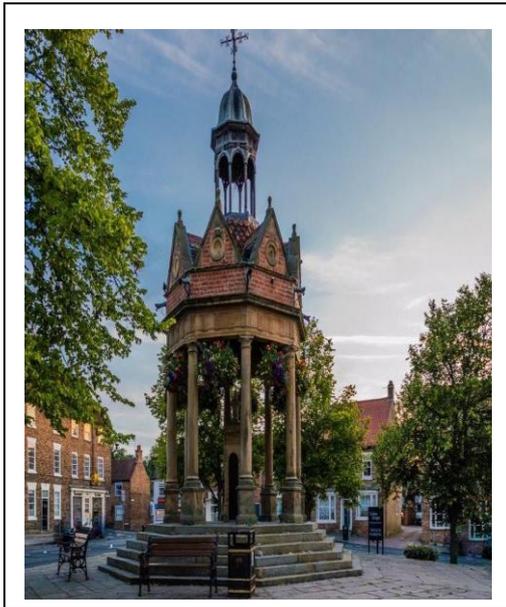


BOOST

A CASE STUDY FROM THE PILOTING PHASE IN UNITED KINGDOM



Case Study: Lower Ure News (LUN)

Lower Ure News is a voluntary and community group that was set up in January 2013 to provide a monthly local news service for the Boroughbridge and surrounding area. It has produced 30 editions (as of September 2015) of the magazine delivered every month to 2000 households and has developed a web site to create a multimedia platform. In the past the group has drawn on funding from the local government but under current conditions this has now been withdrawn.

The group is trying to raise funding from a mix of sources including public funding and also private sector advertising and sponsorship. It aims, however, not simply to survive but to thrive by offering employment opportunities within the community.

There are all kinds of competition from commercial local newspapers to free advertising driven magazines delivered door to door to the local parish (church) newsletters. All of these represent competition for the advertising pound. What is required is a trained and systematic approach to selling but one which is aware of and accommodates the voluntary nature of the organisation.

The team also feel that there may be opportunities to partner likeminded media such as other volunteer groups and churches in both community reporting and revenue generation.

Key Issues

It is a small team of 4 with different and complementary skills but they are under growing pressure for resources. The most pressing and immediate needs are for expertise in:

- advertising and sponsorship
- community reporting

How BOOST helped

MRS has in-house skills in developing and delivering courses and support in community reporting across various media. These courses are primarily f2f but also draw on online resources and require a commitment by learners to undertake their own learning paths.

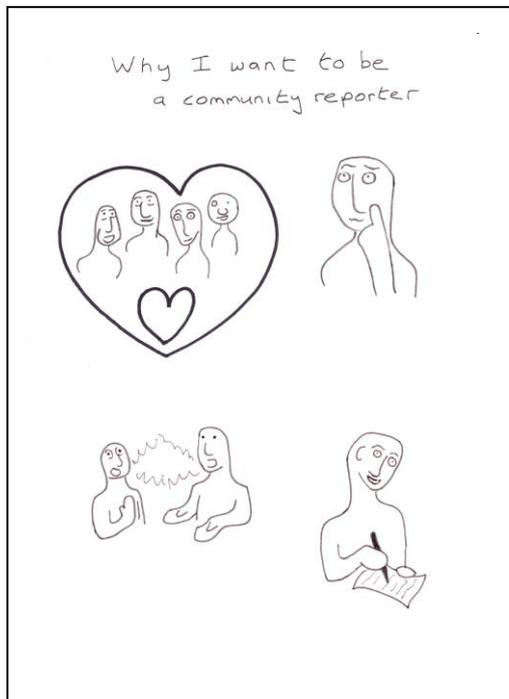
There is also in-house expertise in media advertising and sales from the identification of prospects to creating and making presentations and support literature and customer relationship management systems.

All of these resources were used by the LUN team.

Tandemonium



Cover story July 2015



Community reporting

The key to community reporting is to tell a story. How the news and features are consumed in print, web, radio, video & social media are delivery and technical issues but impact rests on the story not the medium.

The focus of the community reporting sessions was on storytelling. The learners also developed skills in customizing the story to different media and cross-referencing the platforms. The LUN newspaper was then developed and published by them on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and the LUN web site (<http://lowerurenews.co.uk/> with links to all).

Advertising and sales

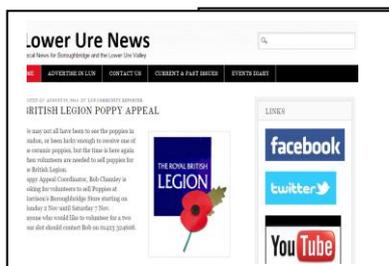
One reporter also undertook learning in selling advertising and sponsorship. She is now cascading that training to others. The learning covered the development of sound local demographic and business data: the creation of an advertising ratecard (lowerurenews.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/LUNratecard2015.pdf): sales techniques and customer relationship management. The team also responded to 2 tenders for public sector funding designed to assist hyperlocal media. The outcomes of these bids are still awaited.

How it worked

The BOOST methodology (ISOM) was the fundamental platform for the learning process. LUN and MRS engaged in a number of discussions to identify and agree the key issues, the learning needs and the resources required.

As a member of the Institute of Community Reporters, MRS had particular skills sets. The learning followed these tried and tested courses which were customized by LUN and MRS to suit the needs of the local community and the resources and personalities of the learners.. The f2f components were essential with 3 formal session and numerous small group and even 1:1 meet ups. The group also used online resources with frequent skype, email, text and telcon advice sessions. The group particularly liked the Progress section of the BOOST platform.

Who said it was easy?!



Conclusion

“Didn’t think I could do it... but a real thrill to see my story in print”, “we have a chance to stop being reliant on public funding which is a dicey game nowadays”, “I was not sure about Facebook but even oldies like me use it.”

The newspaper is now covering costs and on its way to sustainability, and, perhaps, even job creation. More distributors have been recruited and the local school is considering starting a junior “cub reporter” section. As ever, it will continue to be hard work but the team now has skills and the means to cascade and transfer that expertise.