

Promoting Research Impact

Joined up MarComms to
promote the impact of
research to the media, public
and influencers

Alistair Jarvis

**Director of Communications and Marketing
University of Birmingham**

Overview

- Why is communicating our research impact a strategic priority for the University of Birmingham?
- What have we done to enhance our research reputation?
 - 1) A joined up MarComms approach
 - 2) Birmingham Heroes reputational/positional marketing campaign
 - 3) Enhancing our media relations approach (...and case study about our Invisibility Cloak)
 - 4) Engaging policy influencers

Why has communicating our research impact become a strategic priority?

- New 5yr strategic framework with the ambitious goal of becoming a leading global university
- Lack of focus on promoting the impact of our research, despite many internationally leading academics
- A stable high quality brand but ‘under selling’
- So we considered ‘what do we want people to think about us?’

What do we want people to think about us?

- Encourages enquiry and **provokes thought, debate, action and change**
- Challenges convention, is ambitious and bold
- **Creates global impact through our research**
- Offers an inspirational student experience
- **Engaged, locally, nationally and globally**
- A leading global university

What are we doing to enhance our research reputation?

- Being bolder about our research quality and impact to enhance our reputation
- Emphasising the societal impact
- Prioritising and being more selective
- A joined up approach for maximum impact

Three key actions:

- Launch 'Birmingham Heroes' campaign
- Improve the media profile of our research
- Develop public affairs activities to engage with influencers

Birmingham Heroes Campaign

- ❑ To be a leading global university we have to raise our profile and enhance our reputation to match our ambition
- ❑ Major 2yr positional marketing campaign, 2010-2011
- ❑ **Aims of the campaign:**
 - Enhance the profile and reputation of the University (not directly recruitment focused)
 - Highlight our leading academics and research strengths
 - Communicate complex research simply and accessibly
 - Demonstrate how the research that takes place at Birmingham impacts on the lives of people in the UK and globally

Birmingham Heroes - Key Advertising channels

- Outdoor
 - London Underground Stations
 - Midlands Trains Network
 - Major Train stations
 - Birmingham Outdoor Billboard Advertising
 - Birmingham Airport
- Press
 - Parliamentary House Magazine
 - Modern Government Magazine
 - Virgin Trains Hotline Magazine
 - Times of India
- Online
 - University web site and social media

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Professor Gurdyel Besra
Professor Noni Franklin-Tong
Dr Robin May

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More than just a marketing campaign

- Maximise the impact of the campaign by linking up with other external activities
 - Media relations to showcase Heroes
 - Heroes video for new website launch
 - Highlight Heroes to international recruitment agents
 - Heroes for schools visits for prospective applicants
 - Promoted Heroes to opinion formers through the Birmingham (policy) Brief, policy events and our research magazine - more later about this
- Strong link to University strategy, research impact strategy and international strategy

Improving the media profile of our research

- A focus on promoting research with impact
- Prioritising the big stories – ‘all hands on deck’
- Press officers focused on research areas – health, social affairs, arts/culture, science and technology – and an international media specialist
- Relationship building with and between academics and journalists

Improving the media profile of our research

- Increasing broadcast alongside press
- More comment and opinion alongside news
- Emphasis on national and international
- Our success – coverage of £30million advertising equivalent in 2010 for £300,000 outlay (on track for over £40m in 2011)
- An example of how this approach delivered results – The invisibility cloak

The Invisibility Cloak - the results


- Lengthy articles with images in many UK national newspapers – Telegraph, Sun, Daily Mail, Mirror, Independent and full page in Guardian
- Over 200 print articles
- Widespread international coverage
- Interviews on all major UK TV news bulletins BBC, Sky, Ch4, ITN and dozens of radio interviews

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Influencing opinion formers

- To be a leading global university we must be influential – promoting research impact to decisions makers and influencers
- A programme of activities
 - Birmingham Select Dinners
 - Birmingham Policy Briefs
 - Supporting academics to engage with policy makers
 - Policy events (political conferences)
 - Great hall lectures and debates
 - Political visits

Conclusions

- Be confident and bold
- Prioritise
- Emphasise societal impact of research
- Use a mix of channels to target different audiences – media, advertising, digital, events
- A joined up approach for maximum impact

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a.jarvis@bham.ac.uk