

# ALLOTT & ASSOCIATES LTD

Public Relations and Marketing Consultants

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## SMART PR WORK CAN HELP BEAT A RECESSION

**Now that official figures have confirmed that the UK is in a recession, thoughts have turned on how to survive the great economic downturn. Smart marketing can beat the first economic crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Harsh economic conditions present the packaging industry with a variety of problems and quite often the marketing budget is the first casualty of the fall-out from a recession as companies seek to tighten their belts in response to falling business and consumer confidence.

Changes happen much faster during a recession, when businesses panic directors can often make knee-jerk reactions, which might offer a quick-fix but does nothing for their future prospects by cutting off a line of communication with customers and potential customers alike.

Maintaining marketing activities during an economic downturn can sustain business and provide an important competitive edge. While economic pressures adds to the obstacles faced by the packaging industry, which already has to cope with the many initiatives introduced to reduce its impact on the environment, tough times can also provide opportunities for those willing to take a leap of faith by budgeting for the future.

There are always winners and losers when the economy goes into a freefall, but if a business is correctly positioned and maintains a positive PR campaign, such as promoting future expansion plans, new contracts or services, then the chances are that this will receive great media coverage, due to a dearth of positive competitor stories.

Using editorial to publicise good news is ideal, especially as editors and journalists are always desperate for upbeat messages during a recession, so it is highly likely to receive extensive coverage. This exposure will also reassure target markets that your company is around and still successfully trading positively.

Case studies are another good tool for getting the word out that it's business as usual. Publicising a first-class service you have provided for a customer has a knock-on effect, as people always monitor their competitors and if they see them investing with you, they are likely to replicate .

Many companies will of course survive the recession and they will be looking for partners to do business with, especially if their existing suppliers are struggling, when the economy bounces back. If your name is off the radar it puts your business at a disadvantage.

New markets will also emerge and the oxygen of publicity will be vital to maintaining an advantage over industry rivals looking to penetrate these sectors. Generating awareness is key to standing out from the crowd, and an innovative marketing campaign can make a positive impact on potential clients.

For instance, safe manufacturers, sewing machine makers, cobblers and pizza companies are all sectors doing well as Britons made do and mend rather than spend. At first sight these companies may seem insignificant for those involved in packaging, however, take a look at the bigger picture and the knock-on consequences for the supply chain can be considerable.

Safe makers could clamour for more locks and packaging, the greater use of sewing machines and cobblers will place pressure on thread, dye and other materials manufacturers, leading to increased packaging and direct mail volumes, while pizza makers will need extra bakery products, tomatoes and cardboard. Once existing stocks become exhausted, these companies will quickly need to find alternative suppliers, which is where the investment in earlier PR driven publicity comes into its own.

Surviving a recession is nearly also about product diversity, not price because volumes nearly always fall, as witnessed so dramatically by the airline industry. Many of the airlines who competed solely on reduced prices have already disappeared. However, some airlines covering more exotic routes and special services are holding their own. The key to their survival and your own is niche marketing - put simply, the advantages of your own products over the alternatives.

For maximum effect, press releases should be used to coincide with other marketing such as a direct-mail campaign, exhibition or the arrival of a newsletter, as the marketing impact can often be double or even triple of doing these activities as stand-alone events.

Direct mail volumes normally fall a few months after a recession has started to bite so targeting a particular market with a direct mail shot – usually publicising earlier endorsements, taken from case studies etc – can have a far greater impact in attracting new customers.

Distributing newsletters is another cost-effective method for keeping the market informed of your brand and reminding them of your recent accomplishments by using previous editorial.

During a recession it is also a good time to keep your website and literature up-to-date. Cutting back on these tasks can be a false economy. In today's digital age the first point of contact for many potential customers is a business's website and it does not create a good impression if the electronic portal showcasing your company has obviously not been maintained.

Introducing an effective marketing strategy to position a company and its product in the relevant marketplace takes planning and will benefit from the help of an experienced PR and marketing agency like Allott & Associates Ltd.

Your own company's messages, objectives and target audience must clearly be communicated. Allott & Associates not only specialises in the packaging sector, but for the best possible results, also offers a full range of marketing support services such as design, research, direct-mail and consulting.

Effective marketing strategies helps fuel growth during healthier economic times, and can also maintain important lines of communication during a recession as a cost-effective means of keeping brand names in the market place.

Ultimately it is a mix of the company's product, ingenuity and also its ability to diversify – as well as good PR and marketing - which will decide if it can weather the stormy waters of the current economic downturn.

Properly managed and effective PR strategy is the most cost effective way for an organisation to withstand the financial and competitive challenges of a recession, enabling it to emerge intact - perhaps even healthier - when brighter economic times return.

**ENDS**

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