

Prova PR
PRide Awards 2009
Corporate and Business Communications

Varta Consumer Batteries
Charging ahead with the Batteries Directive

Objective

As an unknown brand in Britain, battery manufacturer Varta was a big player in Europe but had no UK distributors. The company identified that a new piece of legislation was due to come into force to govern the collection and recycling of batteries and that it could raise the brand's profile by leading the debate in the media.

Prova was enlisted to boost Varta's profile in the retail trade press by exploiting the Batteries Directive over a six month period. Prova's objectives were to:

- Highlight the key messages of the Batteries Directive to the retail press as well as in the environmental, business, national and consumer media
- Raise the profile of Varta and its products among retailers
- Encourage new business leads and secure UK suppliers

Planning

Having worked on other legislative-led projects such as the WEEE and ELV Directive, Prova knew that understanding the legislation would be key to the success of the project. So with only six months to raise Varta's profile, the Prova team quickly delved into the world of batteries and the directive, attending conferences, visiting recycling plants and networking with environmental organisations such as Defra to become experts on the topic. Prova then had a clear understanding on how the directive would impact battery manufacturers, retailers and consumers. This was vital when selling in the story to journalists.

The Prova team then gathered all of this information and identified several angles that could be exploited, as well as other, more creative opportunities.

Implementation

After having gathered and absorbed everything there was to know on the Batteries Directive, Prova took to the phones and called journalists from key retail publications to see if they were aware of the legislation and its implications. Not one journalist had heard of it, despite it being a three-year-old European directive.

Prova then set about selling in and writing articles that would educate retailers on the directive and what the implications would be. Each retail magazine had battery features coming up for Christmas, so this was exploited and coverage

was achieved in each one – alongside the market leaders such as Duracell and Energizer. It was the first time the likes of The Grocer and Forecourt Trader had mentioned Varta.

After the initial educational features, Prova initiated many new debates such as the problems with competing compliance schemes and the possible shift to 'batteries not included', which sustained the media's interest over the long-term and resulted in regular coverage in the retail press.

A large number of journalist interviews were set up with Varta's vice-president which led to quotes being used within wider household goods features and journalists quickly realised that Varta was the battery manufacturer to contact if they had any questions on the Batteries Directive. None of Varta's competitors were talking about this so our position was very strong.

Prova then identified that Varta should be pushing its rechargeable range as this was in keeping with the environmental messages of the directive. Prova did this by utilising innovative sponsorship and competition opportunities.

Business and environmental publications were also targeted and substantial coverage was achieved in these areas.

Creativity – what makes the campaign stand out?

Prova explored many different approaches to position Varta as an expert on the legislation including joining forces with battery recycler G&P Batteries to strengthen the message. Prova utilised its relationship with G&P to develop a campaign in which Batt-Boxes (battery collection boxes) were created and given to various retailers along with a detailed PR toolbox and consumer leaflet for retailers to create their own PR.

Prova was also instrumental in securing and co-ordinating an innovative sponsorship deal with Wales Rally GB in which Varta supplied all 4,500 marshals with a wind-up Dynamo Light torch. This saved over 36,000 batteries from going into landfill which supported the environmental message we were projecting surrounding the Batteries Directive and the rally's own environmental commitments. This sponsorship led to Prova setting up competitions with The Sun and Varta is now sponsoring British Rally Champion Guy Wilks – not to mention excellent coverage spanning retail, regional and consumer.

Results

The results are extremely strong for a six month campaign:

- Opportunities to see amounted to over 40 million
- A total of 61 press cuttings were achieved
- Trade coverage spanned retail, electronic, environmental, photography and business – as well as national, regional and consumer

- Varta has since secured several new business leads with the likes of Sainsbury's, Boots, Amazon, Clas Ohlson, CDG and Netto.
- Key journalists now come directly to us for information on the wider batteries market