

Driving business to the Independent Garage Association

When the Independent Garage Association (IGA) wanted to grow its membership by eight per cent, it recognised that PR and marketing was an integral way of reaching businesses in its market, and contacted Bridge PR & Media Services for an intensive three-month campaign.

The Independent Garage Association is the largest and most prominent representative body in the UK independent garage sector. It acts as the voice of the industry in matters arising in the UK Government and Europe regarding legislative and regulatory issues. The Association had just unveiled the independent sector's first ever Car Repair Plan and was involved in some very high profile matters regarding access to technical information for independent technicians. With a higher membership, the independent garage sector would increase its voice when campaigning and lobbying within the regulatory framework both in the UK and in Europe. This is why the IGA felt that the time was right to really reach out to the independent garage sector in an attempt to grow its membership even further.



Putting the wheels in motion: When looking to grow its membership, the IGA contacted Bridge PR who put the wheels in motion for an intensive three-month PR and marketing campaign.

At a glance

Objectives:

- To increase membership of the IGA by eight per cent
- Demonstrate some of the work the IGA is doing at national and European level for the independent garage trade
- Promote the benefits of IGA membership to thousands of independent garages nationwide
- Position the IGA as the voice of the independent garage industry

Challenges:

- Reaching independent garages both offline and online
- Overcoming industry stereotypes of independent garages as less professional than their main dealer counterparts

Results and benefits:

- Over £20,000 of trade press coverage
- Consistent visibility through low cost, high impact advertising
- Encouraging IGA ambassador members to step forward
- Successful direct mailing campaign to independent garages
- Widespread on message marketing throughout a three month campaign
- Open rate of 1,680 for a digital newsletter sent to 8,000 prospects

Going the extra mile with direct mail

Bridge was the obvious PR partner of choice for the IGA. The company had worked within the UK aftermarket for the last twenty years and understood the industry well. Bridge had also worked with the IGA in the year prior to this campaign, helping gain significant consumer awareness of its public brand, Trust My Garage.

Following extensive discussions with the IGA, a strategic three-month campaign was planned and executed, bringing together a number of different marketing channels. The key to this campaign was getting the IGA seen directly by independent garages and so we engaged with our mailing partners Jigsaw CCS to plan a direct marketing campaign. The IGA already had a good datalist of targets, which listed 13,600 UK independent garages so the task was to reach these people in a creative and engaging way. A simple letter would likely be thrown away, so what would grab the attention of independent garage owners and help to push the IGA brand in front of their eyes?

Everybody appreciates a free gift in the post, but in order to keep mailing costs down, it was important not to send anything too large or fragile. The campaign required something that was practical for garage owners, and which would adhere to standard postage costs, particularly as we were sending 13,600. Every garage owner and technician likes to have a tea break, so it was decided that a coaster was an appropriate free gift to send out. Jigsaw managed to source a coaster that was in fitting with the IGA's industry, made up of 99.5% recycled materials, including tyres. The coaster was round and visually looked like a speedometer, with the IGA message and strapline, 'We go the extra mile.'



Adding mileage: A direct mailing campaign gave the IGA added mileage in its overall PR and marketing strategy.

Accompanying the coaster was a formal letter from Stuart James, IGA Director, inviting independent garages to join its movement to raise standards in the independent garage sector, and level the playing field between independent garages and their franchised counterparts. The letter also detailed some of the positive steps that the IGA has taken on behalf of its members, such as helping members apply for greater access to manufacturer technical information, and representing the sector on the Apprentice Trailblazer programme.

This direct marketing campaign would get the IGA brand in front of independent garages but the next challenge was to maintain consistency of its brand presence. The media was the best way to do this.

Bridge identified three key publications for the Independent Garage Association to advertise within. These were *Professional Motor Mechanic (PMM)*, which is distributed directly to independent garages via motor factors, *CAT Magazine*, which has long been the magazine of choice for the independent garage trade, and *Aftermarket. MOT Planner* and *MOT magazine* were also identified as key publications for advertising.



Real life stories: The IGA's advertising campaign was focused around real-life testimonials from members.

Creating evergreen content

On behalf of the IGA, Bridge booked a series of full and half page advertisements for these publications, to run across three months. We worked with the magazines to create an advertising package, which also included digital advertisements on their respective websites.

The design plan for these adverts was to keep them simple but effective, and to use IGA ambassadors to demonstrate with one simple strapline, the benefits of being a member. For campaign consistency, these continued the key message of going the extra mile for independent garages and explained how the IGA helped a member's garage thrive. Using a real life case study and displaying a short quote from the members gave the IGA lots of credibility, because it was coming directly from IGA ambassadors. And because these advertisements were not dated or time sensitive, they have become evergreen content that the IGA can continue to reuse in future campaigns.

This only covered three key publications in an industry where there is a sparse number of different media outlets. In order to cover all grounds, and to further tell stories of the IGA working behalf of the independent garage sector, a press release campaign was planned and executed.

Utilising its experience of working in the aftermarket sector and its existing relationships with editors in this industry, Bridge was able to achieve substantial coverage in respected print and digital titles.

Four different news stories were crafted, and focused on some of the key issues the Independent Garage Association was campaigning against on behalf of its members, to demonstrate to prospective members the high levels of support they would receive from the IGA. A series of news stories focused on the real issues affecting independent garages, such as eCall, technical training, and customer retention.

The coverage for the IGA was widespread, and according to the Advertising Cost Equivalent metric, was in excess of £20,000. More impressive was the wide range of national trade publications that published IGA content, with such publications as *Garage Wire*, *Tyrepress*, *Autoscene*, *Bodyshop Magazine*, *Telematics Wire*, and the publications where advertising had been placed, all running IGA material. Even publications that focus more on the franchise market, such as AM Online, and Motor Trade News, ran IGA content, demonstrating the respect shown towards the work being done for independent garages.

GW Tuned To: eCall threat highlighted by IGA

IGA
INDEPENDENT GARAGE ASSOCIATION

Is your business ready for eCall?

Mandatory adoption of eCall systems on all new vehicles comes into effect from October 2015. For drivers and vehicle owners, this means enhanced safety benefits. For independent garages, it is **another potential threat to your business.**

Why?
eCall is an in-vehicle system which automatically dials the emergency services and sends them vehicle details and location information in the event of a serious accident. It operates through telematics hardware installed in the vehicle itself and utilises software apps and an active mobile contract to help the vehicle manufacturer gain privileged contact with a vehicle owner.



It allows the vehicle manufacturer to gain knowledge of any potential maintenance issue with a vehicle and provide a solution to the driver before they have to take their vehicle to a garage. **This threatens to take your independent garage completely out of the maintenance and repair loop.**

As well as following the key trends and messages of the overall campaign, this social content also praised successful IGA members who had won awards or been recognised by the industry. This showed the close relationship between the IGA and its members and the work that the association is doing for the independent garage sector as a whole in the UK.

Following this campaign, Bridge PR & Media Services successfully raised awareness of the Independent Garage Association to the UK independent garage sector, through a number of different marketing channels. And by complementing the IGA's own in-house sales work, this campaign aided lead generation and resulted in new business enquiries.

Terry Gibson, Operations Manager at the IGA comments:

“This is the second campaign we have run with Bridge PR & Media Services and once again the team demonstrated competence, commitment and ‘On Message’ creativity to our complete satisfaction. We look forward to working with Bridge again in the future.”

Driving online adoption: At a time when garage use of the email and the Internet was increasing, the IGA saw e-marketing as key to reaching its audience.

Embracing digital media

As the independent garage trade begins to embrace the online world, it was important that this basis was covered for the IGA. One of the fastest growing and developing online publications for this sector is Garage Wire, which has been built upon a strong network of independent garages. By utilising this network, the IGA could tap into some of the UK's independent garages that had not yet joined the Association and demonstrate to them, through a series of e-shots with Garage Wire, why now was the best time to join.

From a datalist of 8,000 independent garages, a steady open rate of around 1,680 was achieved, with click rates averaging 64 on each one. As part of a strategic campaign, Bridge also worked with the IGA to help maintain consistent content across all of its social media channels. Twitter and Facebook were utilised to share the advert images, published press material and encourage sharing of IGA content.