

Grapevine embraces 2013 with gusto

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Grapevine is looking forward to another exciting and challenging year ahead with existing and new clients. The advances in technology that are revolutionising the communication industry are continually setting Grapevine new goals to embrace, so as to offer our clients' optimum exposure.

In terms of trends, we believe that the topic of traditional and social media and how they are complementary will cease to be debated, and that the two will merge, requiring PR agencies to offer a holistic approach to communication. Social media will continue to gain momentum and value with more businesses adding social media to their communication platforms.

While we wish you all a prosperous and successful 2013, we take this moment to share a selection of our highlights in 2012.

Mid-July saw Grapevine involved in the launch of the first digital and interactive version of educational textbooks, which was made available on tablets for learners. Our client, Maramedia Publishing, recognised that the convergence of technology and content is an extremely powerful educational tool and that learner retention increases exponentially when there is an interactive component. Their school manuals were launched at Liliesleaf Farm, Rivonia, on 18 July with representatives from the general news media in attendance.

Last year Grapevine was appointed to partner Steyn City, South Africa's largest residential development to date, comprising over 2 000 acres north of the Jukskei River and offering South Africans a unique lifestyle. The year culminated in a massive first - Steyn City delivered over 8 000 Christmas gifts to eight preparatory schools in Diepsloot, bringing Christmas cheer to the local children, some of whom had never experienced Christmas before. Grapevine secured coverage on SABC's prime TV news slots across all three channels.

Our existing client, Ciro Beverage Solutions (Ciro) continued to lead the industry and inspire local media with new products and technologies which were showcased at various events. Our highlight for this client was securing pre-publicity for their experiential Coffee Innovations Carousel in February 2012 and then maintaining the hype and coverage, which continued to filter in five months after the event.

Grapevine also proved its ability to target publications not targeted before, for example *Engineering News*, thereby reaching new markets and bringing the brand to trade media normally in receipt of a press release.

Lexmark International underwent some major changes in 2012 including a shift to laser products and the acquisition of technology and software organisations to offer just more than printers. Grapevine enjoyed a successful product launch in June 2012, which achieved a 100% turnout from the media.

XLink Communications is currently the largest carrier of electronic funds transfer (EFT) services across the GSM network with 56 500 XLink communicator devices deployed nationally at over 37 800 retail clients, providing EFT communication services for over 200 million transactions per year. In 2012 Grapevine expanded XLink's PR campaign to include social media and through the successful management and growth of XLink's Twitter account, created an effective new communications platform for the telecoms company. Grapevine has been reappointed for 2013.

Eden Life Weight Loss Clinic appeared in major print media and on broadcast platforms, including feature articles in *Business Day's* health pages, SAfm and *You* magazine, with celebrity Robert Whitehead from *Isidingo* fame. The clinic also featured in the latest *Good Housekeeping*, *Bona* and *Fair Lady* in the January and February editions of this year.

Zinto, a company that develops talented entrepreneurs so that they can start their own businesses, tasked Grapevine with a campaign to create awareness about sneaker craftsmen, Eish-Hade, and how private businesses can partner with entrepreneurs and drive job creation.

Grapevine secured publicity in business and news media, which resulted in the story being covered by the *LA Times*. Zinto reported an influx of orders from Kenya, Mozambique and Namibia and requests from Los Angeles. There was also interest from private investors who wanted to inject capital into Eish-Hade's business to assist them with purchasing new machinery.

Grapevine then maintained the hype and coverage to the point where our client asked us to discontinue any additional PR until Eish-Hade had received the funding needed to acquire three more machines and produce at least 100 pairs of shoes per month, as the demand had become greater than the supply. Now that's a first!

Grapevine also proved its ability to target publications outside their normal B2B market, thereby reaching new markets and introducing the Zinto brand to new target audiences.

As a boutique agency, Grapevine offers a personalised service to every client which results in its ability to secure repeat business. Last year a number of former clients, including XLink Communications and SASSETA, renewed their contracts. With only a few days into the working year, we have already seen renewed interest from another three former clients.

At the beginning of 2012, Grapevine was selected as the South African representative for PR Boutiques International and the first member on the continent. With its head office in New York, USA, PR Boutiques International is a global network of public relations companies with world-class skills and experience in all market sectors. The network screens and selects the best small agencies worldwide to become members. This membership has enabled Grapevine to share knowledge on an international platform and to seek input for client campaigns where needed.

The year 2012 also saw Grapevine embrace social media. We launched Twitter and Facebook accounts to enhance our media relations and we now offer social media services to our clients. This has proved highly successful and is now an established part of our business.

The latter part of the year saw Grapevine's managing director complete her work portfolio of evidence of the past 18 years and achieve the highest internationally recognised accreditation certification for PR practitioners, called the APR (Accredited in Public Relations), *cum laude*. As a result, she was encouraged to share her expertise with Prisa in the future.

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