

CASE STUDY

'Question-time' Conference Call with the UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change



BACKGROUND

38 Degrees is a people powered campaigning organisation. Operating mainly online, its mission is to provide the public with simple, yet powerful ways to take action on the issues that matter to them most. Its goal is to organise and facilitate real progress by empowering ordinary people to be part of the political process. It does this by creating communities of like-minded people and offering them channels through which to voice their concerns to influential decision makers.

38 Degrees has grown quickly both in size and its ability to influence. In 6-months it has built a loyal following of 60,000 members and is well known in political circles. Climate change is a major concern for a large proportion of its membership and over the last 6-months, it has focused on building a wave of pressure on MPs to meet their 10/10 commitments.

THE CHALLENGE

The United Nations Climate Change talks of December 2009 in Copenhagen represented an ideal opportunity for 38 Degrees to influence the Government in the UK. 38 Degrees raised the idea of a call between their membership and Labour's Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Miliband and he agreed. With the climate change talks so close the call would provide a unique opportunity for the Government Minister to hear the voice of the public just before he went off to the negotiations.

Such an undertaking presented concerns. The quality of the call was paramount. Any technical hiccups could easily

undermine 38 Degree's credibility with both its members and the Minister and seriously affect its ability to host something like this again. The close management of the Q&A session was also paramount. 10 people had been chosen from 38 Degrees' membership to ask questions on the call and it was imperative that 38 Degrees were in full control in the unlikely event that someone should overstep the mark and become abusive.

In addition, 38 Degree's membership represents a broad range of people from many different walks of life. A conference call was unlikely to be a standard

experience for all. The challenge was how to ensure that getting on the call was simple enough for everyone. To cap it all 38 Degrees only had one week to make the call a reality.

“The conference call with Ed Milliband represented a landmark in the way that the public interacts with politicians in the UK. This was a very big deal and we couldn’t afford for anything to go wrong,” said Hannah Loughsbrough, Campaign Director, 38 Degrees. “We needed a company that could act swiftly, understood the complexities of high profile conference calls and had the technical capabilities to help us achieve our goals.”

THE SOLUTION

38 Degrees were aware of Premiere Global because of its involvement in the WWF One in Five Challenge, a campaign that helps companies achieve a 20% reduction in business related flying. Premiere Global’s green ethos fitted well with 38 Degrees.

Of equal importance was the company’s success running tailored, high profile calls for blue-chip organisations that clearly showed it had the experience and technical skills to pull off the call with the Cabinet Minister.

“Conversations with Premiere Global were constructive from the get go. They clearly shared our excitement for the event and were never fazed by the task at hand. As far as they were concerned it was all in a day’s work. We would keep coming up with what we thought were challenges and they always had a simple fix,” said Hannah Loughsbrough.

Pre-call:

- An event manager was appointed who planned the event with 38 Degrees from start to finish
- Potential problems were highlighted early and solutions developed
- Premiere Global took time to find out exactly what 38 degrees wanted to achieve and tailored a solution that would deliver these goals
- The dial-in procedure was broken down into simple instructions that could be emailed to 38 Degrees' membership and easily followed
- A number of iterations of the call number were created to ensure that there was enough flexibility to handle any number of people dialling in
- A clear code of conduct was developed to draw a line between what was considered appropriate and a cut off point concerning undesirable language or behaviour

The Call:

- The event manager ensured that the technology was working properly and the speakers were fully briefed
- An operator was in contact with Hannah throughout the call to make sure and problems could be dealt with immediately
- The conference system put 38 Degrees in full control of the Q&A and included the ability to immediately cut off anyone who broke the guidelines

Post-call:

- A recording of the call was made available on the 38 Degrees website for anyone interested in hearing what had happened on it



“Our priority was to have the kind of conversation that would make Ed go to Copenhagen and get the deal that we wanted on climate. This meant having a constructive conversation about the issues and not getting into anything personally offensive. Premiere Global gave us the confidence that this would be achieved,”
said Hannah Loughsbrough,
Campaign Director, 38 Degrees.

THE RESULT

- 310 people dialled in for the hour long call
- 1000s more listened to it as it was streamed live over the Internet
- The Q&A went smoothly and a last minute reshuffle of the questions was handled without a hitch
- Both 38 Degrees and the No. 10 PR office were very impressed with the customer service, account management and call management
- The event was organised in a week at a fraction of the cost and environmental impact of a physical event

The success of the event was a result of the close relationship between Premiere Global and 38 Degrees. This in turn was due to the professional execution before, during and after the call and the confidence this created.

“We are delighted with the call. We would never have been able to arrange a face-to-face event that delivered the same impact in the time available to us. Working with Premiere Global has meant that we have been able to include all of our members from around the UK in the experience, with very little impact to the environment. We have strengthened our relationship with the Government and look forward to running similar events in the future,” concluded Hannah Loughsborough, Campaign Director, 38 Degrees.

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