



### *Case 3*

**The client:** Belgium-based, multinational chemical company and PVC manufacturer.

**The challenge:** Defence and creation of a more positive image of PVC, a chlorous plastic, the production and use of which is sharply criticised by environmentalists.

**Our approach:** In order to gain support for the use of PVC, we looked for ways and means to draw attention to the obvious benefits of the material (it is cheap, uses relatively little fossile energy, is extremely flexible, can be recycled...). We looked for positive elements that could be useful for our communication campaign. Discussing this with company staff members provided us with lots of useful documents (ecologists have been attacking the PVC-manufacturers for years now and the industry has put in a great deal of energy in defending their product).

We developed fact sheets and position papers that could easily be read and were useful, both for business-to-business and for consumer communication.

Our communication strategy aimed at using these two channels. Through b-to-b communication we targeted the key customers of our client. Simultaneously, we had to address the average consumer, who, over the years has been brainwashed into believing that there "might be something wrong with PVC".

We now had a number of positive stories and good arguments in favour of PVC and started developing a communications plan, in order to successfully and effectively reach out to our target groups. We kept an eye on costs, as the available budgets, although important, were definitely not unlimited. We organised seminars for journalists, press conferences, lobbied at the national and at the increasingly important European level (EU Commission, EU Parliament), produced videos about the use of PVC in our daily lives, etc... Quite some energy went into internal communication, as we strongly believed that our client's own staff might be the best and cheapest advocates for the cause of PVC, provided they were consistently informed.

**The result:** Considering that this controversy involves thousands of companies worldwide and millions of consumers, it would be presumptuous to suggest that one single, geographically limited campaign would be enough to turn the tide. However, this campaign was successful in reaching the target groups. An opinion poll revealed that business partners were convinced and decided to stick to PVC, also for new products, rather than looking for substitutes. At least an important proportion of average consumers have been made aware that it is far from easy to find adequate substitutes for PVC. We provided the authorities with a set of clear, science-based documents, which they said they needed.

It was surprising to find so many useful (and true) PVC-related stories. One of our main challenges was to trace these stories and rework them for both of our main target groups.

**Do you have further questions, or would you like to exchange views with one of our team? Please feel free to contact us. We will be delighted to meet you.**