

# How to... engage the public sector

*An advertiser's guide brought to you  
by **PublicTechnology.net** - a Sift Media  
community*

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## *Why have we created an advertiser's guide to the public sector?*

For providers of products and services, reaching public sector professionals in the appropriate manner can be notoriously difficult at the best of times. Doing so in a climate of budget cuts and redundancies presents an even greater challenge.

That's why we've used our industry expertise, our publishing know-how and our experience of optimising advertising campaigns from creation to delivery (and beyond) to create this essential - and practical - guide for those looking to promote their brand with the public sector audience.

## *Editor's Overview: A Time of Change - and Opportunity*

By Gary Flood, Editor, PublicTechnology.net

As a nation, the UK's turnover – our Gross Domestic Product – hit £1.7 trillion at the end of 2010. Taking into account a jump caused by the 2009 bank bailouts from the taxpayer now being reversed by the Coalition, the state's share of that tends to hover around 40%. Whitehall dispenses vast amounts of money for the NHS, for welfare, for education and national defence. At the same time, our councils and emergency services also deploy sizeable budgets to light our streets, recycle our waste and protect our communities.

### **The UK Public sector is one of the largest parts of our national economy.**

Technology has always been key. Use of ICT to automate and improve administration in the UK HMG back office is a huge business. It's one that's always had its share of controversy – the media has never run short of tales of woe over this or that ambitious government IT project. But for every failed welfare system or over-budget pilot, there are many systems that do the job. One of our roles on PublicTechnology.net is to shine a light on such successes, while never allowing the failures to pass without lessons being learned.

To do this vital job, the UK public sector has to be economically active in its own right. It has to procure goods and services, hire large numbers of staff, produce results and deliver service back to us, the public.

There is investment out there. In fact – despite its waste and efficiency rhetoric, in some ways the present government

wants more. It wants more and more services to be sourced and delivered online ('born digital'). It wants as many of us as it can to be online to receive them (think of the work of national 'Digital Champion' Martha Lane Fox). And it believes a truly 21st century state will be dependent on properly utilized back-end automation and rationalization to get there.

If the last decade, then, was 'spend spend spend' when it came to public sector ICT, then this second decade of the century is all about 'change change change'. Leaders in the town hall and big government departments alike are being asked to do more with less, to take radical steps to save cost, and figure out innovative ways to preserve what is important by things like Cloud Computing, shared services, Public Service Networks and the like.

PublicTechnology.Net is the place the public sector ICT community - both buy and spend sides - come to for the most up-to-date information and analysis to enable informed decision-making.

Why? Because we deliver to this vital audience the kind of relevant news, informed comment, up-to-date analysis and helpful insight they need to guide them through this period of massive change.

PublicTechnology.net is a true community of public sector ICT professionals and suppliers. We celebrate and support the public sector through best practice examples as well as hold it to account for its shortcomings.

**When you want to address this world you need to be talking to us at [PublicTechnology.net](http://PublicTechnology.net).**



## *How to engage...*

With our audience insight and our experience of engaging a community of public sector professionals in a trusted environment, here are our 'Top Tips' for targeting IT and public sector decision makers:

### **Use compelling display**

On-site display advertising is perhaps considered a more 'traditional' form of new media advertising, but this format has continued to evolve and is now more interactive than ever before. The public sector audience is particularly engaged by vibrant and creative display solutions such as video MPUs.

### **Be a thought-leader**

The term 'thought-leadership' has been around for some time in B2B marketing, but is highly effective for positioning yourself as an industry expert and lends itself particularly well to online advertising. Offering useful jargon-busting guides, whitepapers and white label tools is a great way to inspire trust, foster confidence in your brand and demonstrate your expertise to those in the public sector.

### **Pick a hot topic**

As publishers, we've always believed 'content is king' when it comes to engaging readers, but this doesn't stop at our own editorial content. The importance of integrating relevant and insightful content when communicating with the public sector cannot be underestimated. Our expert editors are on hand to support client campaigns when producing everything from text on a landing page through to a full blown expert guide or whitepaper - we'll be happy to give you a steer on key areas of focus for the year.

### **Ensure relevancy**

Due to the increasing workload (partly through redundancies) the majority of public sector workers are time poor and as such are likely to access only the most relevant content. When it

comes to copy-writing we recommend considering not only the industry sector, but the job function and other audience specifics to optimise the degree of engagement.

### **Employ the power of visual tools**

Online advertising offers advertisers a wealth of tools to communicate with the public sector. Video roundtables and interviews are especially effective visual tools for engaging professional audiences – and the explosion in the use of smart phones and tablets for digesting this content on the move highlights the power of these tools even further. While live video can be tremendously engaging, the use of 'watch again' formats can truly optimise effectiveness.

### **Research and insight**

Whether you're breaking into the public sector for the first time or you wish to make sure you have a solid understanding of the audience and your place in the market, gaining insight from third party experts can really help to optimise (and even help to build the shape of) your campaign. Many Sift Media clients employ the services of analyst firm K2 Advisory as part of an end-to-end campaign, with increased success as a result.

### **Face-to-face events**

Complementing online activity with face-to-face interaction provides a platform for organisations to maximise lead nurturing in unique live environments. A recent survey of the PublicTechnology.net audience suggested 97% of members expect to attend a conference or seminar in the next 12 months, highlighting the potential for unique reach and engagement.

## *...and things to avoid:*

### **'One chance to view' events**

The live streaming of webinars and video can be a great way of engaging the public sector, but the time pressure on people in this industry can mean that 'watch again' formats are more effective. Public sector workers can also suffer from higher security firewalls and lower bandwidth, both of which also highlight the value of 'watch again' formats.

### **Paid-for events**

Lack of time is already an issue when generating event attendance and the increased tightening of budgets can significantly add to this challenge.

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## Community Insight

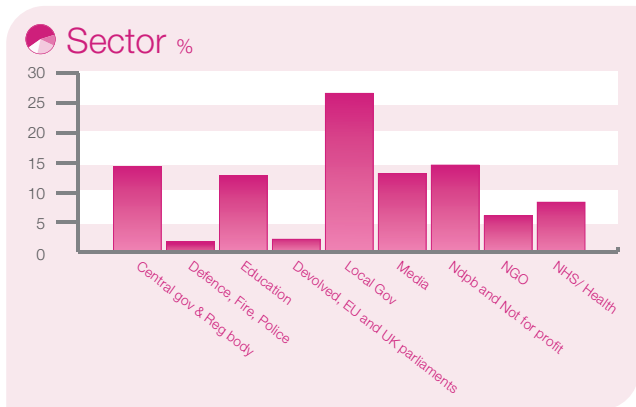
The PublicTechnology.net community mirrors the diversity of the public sector audience with key decision makers from central and local government, education, the NHS and other sectors – each facing the current industry challenges and each using PublicTechnology.net to stay up-to-date with the latest news and analysis.

With 22,000 fully profiled members registered to access the PublicTechnology.net community online and by email, we understand our audience, their role in the sector and their professional interests. With additional site visitors contributing to the half a million page views each month, we have a unique reach into this audience.

## What do they want?

According to a 2011 survey of PublicTechnology.net subscribers, they want:

- ▶ Practical content, including 'how to' guides, best practice, case studies (i.e. content which helps them to do their jobs better and more efficiently)
- ▶ Local government, G-Cloud and e-Government were identified as the most important topics of the moment. With Enterprise and innovation, education and mobile and remote working close behind
- ▶ Members are tech-savvy, with many keen to access the site on mobiles and tablets this year – 35% already digest content in this manner
- ▶ 64% of respondents will use Twitter and social media to keep up-to-date with public sector news and opinion this year
- ▶ Events remain popular despite budget cuts, with 78% of public sector workers expecting to attend a conference or networking event this year



### Key statistics

Unique visitors per month	115,000
Unique page views per month	533,000
Profiled members	22,000
Email bulletin recipients	13,000

### What this means to advertisers...

The results of this survey highlight the opportunities to advertisers for quality engagement in the public sector – whether it's thought-leadership through sponsored guides or the use of innovative campaigns integrating social media.

The responses also indicate a shift to the digestion of content on the move via smartphones and tablets.

Despite this growth in online access and the use of social media, real-life events continue to be extremely popular in this sector, with almost 80% due to attend a conference this year.

All of this highlights the potential for public sector campaigns that are fully integrated across multiple touch points.

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## Sift Media and the Public Sector

Sift Media is one of the UK's leading online publishers, connecting with over half a million business professionals through information, insight and innovation. To our advertisers we offer unique engagement solutions from industry analysis, thought-leadership and brand exposure to lead generation and live events.

In 2009 Sift Media acquired the PublicTechnology.net portfolio and the UK Public Sector Digital Awards (previously known as the e-Government Awards) and in so doing brought our unique online experience and expertise to bear in the public sector.

Established in 2003, PublicTechnology.net has long been the most-read online public sector news and information network in the UK. Under Sift Media's management, the site was significantly enhanced, both in form and content. While the site itself received a design overhaul, so too the editorial strategy was beefed up, climaxing this year in the appointment of public sector ICT veteran journalist Gary Flood as editor.

In keeping with the fast-changing circumstances of the UK public sector marketplace, PublicTechnology.net offers the more comprehensive - and challenging - news and analysis coverage of a vitally important sector of the national economy. Reflecting this period of change and transition, our annual awards programme has also undergone a transformation. Supported by the Cabinet Office, the UK Public Sector Digital Awards recognise all that is excellent in public sector ICT.

## What next?

We've highlighted the challenges of reaching the public sector audience, given an industry overview with specific insight into our own community, raised some top tips for engagement (and even pointed out some pitfalls).

Why not contact the Public Technology team to discuss your objectives?

### Case study



Download  
the case  
study via the  
Sift Media site

### Media pack



Download  
the full media  
pack via the  
Sift Media site

### Contact us

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## UK Public Sector DIGITAL AWARDS 2011

### Recognising outstanding innovation in public sector technology

The UK Public Sector Digital Awards are the most closely watched public sector technology awards. They provide a unique benchmark of quality in eleven categories, covering current IT innovation and best practice technology implementation at all levels of government and across the third sector.

For more details of these annual awards go to  
[www.ukpublicsectordigitalawards.co.uk](http://www.ukpublicsectordigitalawards.co.uk)

### The sift<sup>®</sup> media portfolio

AccountingWEB.co.uk  
BusinessZone.co.uk  
UK Business Forums

BusinessCloud9  
HRzone.co.uk  
MyCustomer.com

TrainingZone.co.uk  
TrainingZone Live  
Business Cloud Summit

PublicTechnology.net  
The Pitch  
Software Satisfaction Awards