

SIPA UK AWARDS 2009

Best New Launch of the Year

Celebrate your company's diversity and success by entering SIPA UK's industry awards. These will be presented to publishers or other information providers who have demonstrated excellence in their work in the calendar year January – December 2008.

To enable the judges to make valid comparisons between entries you must:

- Use the correct entry form for each category
- Take care to provide supporting information that demonstrates excellence in each of the criteria

Your details

Name of person submitting the entry	Emma Rogers
Your job title	Managing Director
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Details of the person/team being nominated

Name of person or team being nominated	Optimus Education books team (Racheal Tillbrook to collect the award)
Their job title	Books Marketing Manager
Department	Marketing Department

If nominating a team, please provide name and job title of all nominated team members below

Giles Flitney – Editorial and Production
 Claudia Conway – Editorial
 Tom Kington – Design and Production
 Racheal Tillbrook – Marketing Manager
 Meg Ward – Online Marketing

Best New Launch of the Year – nomination criteria

Launching is without doubt the most demanding skill of all. It is the moment for a team to stand up and be counted. To win you will have to be exceptionally good. This may be a conference, newsletter, online information product, or other significant revenue generating service.

Your entry must demonstrate excellence in the following areas:

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1. Originality in the marketplace and competitive differentiation

Product: Primary Assemblies for SEAL

Price: £59.00 plus £6.50 p&p

Target market: Primary Schools

In the summer of 2007, the Government announced £13.7m of funding for the development of the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme in schools. The programme was taken up enthusiastically. As a business, we have identified that the best way to take advantage of opportunities where school funding becomes available is to: a) launch a conference on the topic (in this case, it was the Secondary SEAL event which took place in November 2007 and was entered in last year's Best New Launch SIPA Awards, receiving a highly commended acknowledgement), b) publish topic-specific books and reports and eventually (when the market is more established), c) launch subscription products.

So, in summer 2007 when pre-conference marketing indicated that SEAL was going to be a strong topic, we immediately started exploring opportunities to extend our SEAL publishing portfolio / identify quick wins for the books business around the SEAL agenda. One of our product ranges is ready-made assembly materials for schools. We already had a successful assembly subscription product (the *Primary Assembly File*), which provides ready-made assembly materials around broad themes to primary schools. On occasion, we have also published themed assembly books, although they had not previously had great success. The themes of the SEAL programme sat very easily with what we were already trying to do with the subscription product (the aspects are "Self Awareness", "Managing Feelings", "Motivation" "Empathy" and "Social Skills").

The premise is simple – we do the work so you don't have to – although materials can be adapted or personalised as required. There are many providers of assembly materials in the education market. The competitive differentiation of this product – *Primary Assemblies for SEAL* – was that it provided a specific range of assembly materials for discussing and implementing the SEAL agenda in schools. At a time where there was pressure to do so for primary schools, this was a relatively easy way of schools showing inspectors that they were tackling the agenda. Other than materials provided free by the government (which are often viewed with scepticism), there were no SEAL-specific assembly resources to purchase at this time.

So, what this product did successfully was be the first to exploit this particular agenda for assembly materials. The *Primary Assemblies for SEAL* publication was commissioned in summer 2007. Materials were submitted at the end of 2007 allowing for an April 2008 publication, only 5 months after the November conference went ahead.

Whilst this was perhaps not a hugely innovative product in terms of delivery or scope, it did prove (to us at least) that sometimes it's the simplest of ideas that can reap the biggest rewards.

An introduction, contents and example assemblies can be found in the supporting material.

2. Clear objectives and targets

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Key objectives – our main objective was to create a quick-to-market book product that could be launched as soon as possible after the successful SEAL conference. Usually, from commissioning to publication an Optimus Education book product would take minimum one year to produce – often significantly longer. In this case, we managed to reduce this time to just 8 months. We wanted to take maximum advantage of the funding around SEAL and get to the market before our competitors had a chance to respond.

Sales targets – pre-pub sales forecast £12,390; full-year sales forecast £35,692 (Apr-November 2008). We were expecting to sell somewhere in the region of 500 units during 2008 – at time of forecasting, we would have been predicting around a further 1,000 units in 2009.

Achievements:

1. Publication date April 2008 (on target)
2. Actual sales achieved – pre-pub of £84,643; full-year sales of £166,387
 - Became by far the best-selling book product we had ever had in the Optimus Education portfolio – the revenue equates to 2,540 units, which meant we also had to reprint within the first 6 months of selling as original print run was only 1,500 units.
 - Market penetration of over 11% by November 2008 (we often only expect to reach 7.5% market penetration over the lifetime of a product in primary schools as much of the market is not a target for our high-value resources due to small size / limited budget)
 - Over-exceeded sales targets by £130,695 (see chart below)

Sales in 2008 financial year	Target	Actual	> Target
Sales forecast (pre-publication)	£12,390	£84,643	£72,253
Sales forecast (full-year)	£35,692	£166,387	£130,695

3. Profitability – taking into account all marketing, production and fulfilment costs, the title contributed gross profit of nearly £95k during the year – see below. It's difficult to estimate net profit by book title, due to the large number of products going through the team, but to produce and market the book would have taken a small proportion (5% max) of four people's time, leaving considerable net contribution.

Profitability of Primary SEAL Assemblies (sales made in 2008 financial year)

Unit price (incl. p&p)	£65.50
Quantity sold	2540
Revenue	£166,370.00
Marketing cost (unit)	£18.01
Fulfilment (unit)	£4.75
1st print	
Production cost (unit)	£6.71
Quantity sold	1500

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GP 1st print (unit)	£36.03
2nd print	
Production cost	£4.05
Quantity sold	1040
GP 2nd print (unit)	£38.69
Total GP	£94,282.60

3. Effective meeting of customer needs

At the time of commissioning, 60% of primaries were engaged with the SEAL programme, with the number rising considerably more by the time of publication.

The following is an edited extract taken from the introduction of the product, as written by the two authors – Gerald Haigh and Jane West – and highlighted to show how we address the needs of the customer within the product and the individual assemblies:

The programme called social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) is now used in the majority of primary schools. Our aim here is to complement and support the programme with a bank of assemblies that illustrate the five 'aspects' – self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. They are divided into 'themes' under the same headings as those used by the programme itself – New beginnings, Getting on and falling out, Say no to bullying, Going for goals, Good to be me, Relationships and Changes. However, they can also be delivered independently of the SEAL programme if desired. The aspects aren't given undue emphasis. Sometimes the message is implicit, sometimes it's spelled out. In each case it's the story that matters.

The assemblies themselves remain true to the familiar straightforward *Primary Assembly File* style. They can be delivered with little or no preparation if that's necessary, or they can be the focus of as much preparatory and follow-up work as seems appropriate.

It's important to remember that, although they can be used as classroom resources, these are primarily school assemblies, to be delivered by one person to a large mixed-age, mixed-ability audience. For that reason the stories tend not to have subtle or interwoven plots with lots of characters. Simple, predominantly family or school settings are used, against which familiar dilemmas, problems and joyful events are played out.

Worth emphasising, too, is that they're written to be read aloud. The reader isn't, for example, expected to perform a large chunk of speech before being sure who the speaker is. That's why you find lots of examples of this sort of thing – 'Why,' said Thomas, 'I was sure that...' – which works much better read aloud than it looks on the page.

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We find that the continuous prose of the written-out assembly is a valuable source of confidence, ready to come to the rescue if the assembly leader needs help. However, we encourage you to use them how you wish. There are lots of opportunities for participation by children. Sometimes we've spelled this out, other times it's implicit in the material. Assembly leaders vary in the way they want to have children out to the front with them. Nothing we've provided here should get in the way of individual approaches. So, here are our SEAL assemblies. Make them your own. Please enjoy them and transmit that enjoyment to the children.

Gerald Haigh and Jane West
Authors

4. Teamwork in delivering the objectives

The education books team are well placed to achieve objectives. We meet each month to discuss, develop and sign-off new publishing projects at the contract and into production stages. All teams are involved with decision-making around new product development – conferences, editorial and marketing. Timelines and contributions are detailed below.

August 2007 – conference team reported extremely high response to pre-publication marketing materials for the November 2007 Secondary SEAL conference. This enabled the books commissioning team to respond quickly and approach the editors of the *Primary Assembly File* subscription product to see if they were interested in producing a SEAL-themed assembly book. They responded positively with a suggestion to repackage old assemblies that covered SEAL themes as a book production.

September 2007 – previous attempts at repackaging assembly materials had not been successful, so the commissioning editor worked with the authors to come up with a reworked proposal of brand new materials. At this point, the marketing team looked into projected sales figures and contributed to the proposal in terms of pricing suggestions and anticipated marketing spend. The production team looked into costing the project and then it was taken back to the Board for sign off, which also happened in September. After this, authors were contracted by the commissioning editor and the editorial team worked with the authors to ensure as fast a submission as possible.

November/December 2007 – materials were submitted and accepted by the editorial team and passed for production.

January 2008 – pre-publication marketing began. The first DM campaign had a 3.4% response rate (extremely high for us) and 172 orders. It was at this point that we realised we were on to a winner (in fact, as mentioned previously, this ended up being the fastest book we had ever sold in Optimus Education's history) and quickly increased investment in marketing, allowing us to bring in nearly £85k pre-publication sales against a target of £12,390. Over the course of the year, a further 23 direct mail campaigns and 28 online marketing campaigns were launched for the product, bringing in a total £166,387. Supporting documents attached. For this product, the successful communication between conference, editorial and marketing teams was essential in making the most of a 'hot' topic in the shortest possible time frame.