

In Conversation with Jonas Palmqvist (Deputy CEO/COO, Prime PR)

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Why do you feel Prime has been so successful in recent years?

We are a very broad company, and we have many different employees from different backgrounds. There is a total of 120 employees working in Public Affairs, Sustainability, Public Communication, Marketing Communication, Design and United Minds.

Prime has a very heterogeneous team with backgrounds from management consulting, R&D, government commissions etc. We really try to get the different elements of the business to work together to achieve a broad perspective on communications.

Do you hire less people from a straight PR background?

More-or-less none. We have tried to grow our own PR consultants within the company. We have about 500 people trying to get into Prime each year. From around 250 applicants we have about 75 that come to our recruitment day and they do a lot of different tests, IQ, EQ etc.

From these 500, we are choosing ten to start in the company and they are going from the bottom up. After about three years they become really good consultants. It's really difficult to find really good people from other agencies, especially in a small market like the Nordic region.

Are you able to hold onto them after this phase?

Yes we are very stable, we have about 25 partners and most of us have been around for a very long time, I have been here for about 10 years.

How would you describe the ethos at Prime, in terms of what it's like to work in the office and the atmosphere?

It's very open, focused on results, very caring and with an open attitude. The focus lays on the value you create rather than the internal status or the time you are spending on work each day.

Is there time allocated outside of billable hours for experimenting and the like?

We don't care how you spend your time but you have to do a really good job.

Billing, volume of business and number of meetings of each employee are carefully compiled and followed up in personal Scorecards. On a unit level, we track the number of meetings and clients proposals in a Hotpipe. Last year we had over 5 000 client meetings, both organic and new business.

What do PR firms need to do in order to deliver more creative and award-winning work?

You have to move away from just doing campaigns to dealing with communications problems more in the style of a “trusted advisor”. That way you can develop a partnership.

You must also appreciate creativity and give over the time to work on creativity. You have to have a culture that encourages people from different backgrounds to work together; you can’t have the corporate communications part of the agency working in one area, public affairs another, marketing another. When they work together, then you create very good solutions.

Ashley Coates