

## CASE STUDY



### INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

The co-working space industry is an emerging industry that rents real estate in the form of office space to businesses and startups. In terms of international growth, co-working spaces are booming, and the industry has grown exponentially since 2010. The number of co-working spaces worldwide in 2018 doubled from 2015's total, and market researchers project that there will be 21,306 co-working spaces worldwide by the end of 2019. The industry is expected to grow almost 43 percent between this year and 2022.

### THE CLIENT

UCommune or 优客工场 is a Beijing-based global co-working space provider founded in 2015 by Chinese entrepreneur Mao Daqing, with operations in more than 160 locations in 35 cities across the globe,

making the company the second-largest co-working space provider in the world. The company began life as UrWork, adopting the name UCommune following a highly publicized legal wrangle with rival WeWork over naming rights.

Even in the infancy of our partnership with UCommune, the then-named UrWork's legal tussle with US-based co-working space provider WeWork represented a considerable challenge. In recent decades, Chinese industry has struggled to rid itself of the 'copycat' label, as Chinese products across various sectors have often been perceived as mere imitations of their Western counterparts. In this light, the lawsuit launched by WeWork was the closest we have come to a public relations crisis. This called for some serious PR know-how, and we were the ones to step up to the plate.



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## OUR SOLUTION

Our chief objective was one of shaping perceptions and restoring reputations; particularly in overseas markets, where public perception of the then-named UrWork was not the most favourable. By employing a three-pronged, multi-faceted approach comprising marketing, PR, and social media, we worked to re-orient UrWork – now dubbed UCommune – in the eyes of external stakeholders, portraying the company as a product of Chinese innovation and ingenuity, and not a mere copy of a Western idea. Targeted at Chinese businesspeople in the US market, our integrated campaign was centered on one fundamental message: that UCommune is a world-class co-working space provider, independently conceived, built, and developed in China; with 'home-grown' being a key word, in order to dispel the 'copycat' label. At IDEA Communications, we're intimately aware of the influence of a compelling message and the value of a strong narrative – the hallmarks of effective brand communication.

Having developed and elucidated a clear message, we worked tirelessly to strategize and execute a robust integrated campaign which encompassed a global public relations strategy, improved corporate communications, and aggressive digital marketing. Our public relations strategy involved relent-

less pitching and relationship-building with key Tier 1 media titles across the world, as well as ensuring the dissemination of a coherent message both domestically and internationally. Our corporate communications plan entailed the implementation of an internal communication system and key messaging strategy. Finally, our digital marketing efforts included the development of social media calendars – with daily posts to ensure maximum engagement with target audiences – across multiple platforms, aimed at community engagement and building global awareness through photos, videos, and other interactive content.

We look back on our campaign with great pride, having generated US\$50million in PR value for UCommune as of November 2018. In addition, our aggressive global media outreach was instrumental in building invaluable relationships with key figures in numerous international media titles, including (amongst others) CNBC, Wall Street Journal, South China Morning Post, Forbes, Financial Times, and more. Last but not least, UCommune's sustained success and growth well into 2019 – as evidenced by their planned Initial Public Offering (IPO) to be held in Hong Kong – is testament to our success as their foremost media and communications partner.



**Marketing**



**Public Relation**



**Social Media**

## TESTIMONIALS

"Helena has played an instrumental role in UCommune's global expansion, and successfully positioned us as the top Chinese co-working space provider in both regional and international markets," said Mao Daqing, founder and Chairman of UCommune, former head of Capitaland China and former President of Vanke China. "Drawing on her vast experience in China, Sweden, and the UK, she also provided valuable insights that helped us shape and refine our go-to-market strategy."

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