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**MRS Awards 2022**  
Business-to-Business Research  
**Winner**

**Opinium**  
**Canada Life**

Developing a pan-European brand  
purpose strategy

## Summary

Great-West Lifeco is comprised of three main businesses in Europe: Canada Life UK, Canada Life Europe and Irish Life. Despite separate brand visions, positioning and values aligned to individual market needs, all three share a common purpose – to build better futures.

In 2020-21, the organisation partnered with Opinium to support the activation of this ambition. The business needed to understand how they could be seen as more than simply a trusted provider, inspire their employees and connect in more meaningful and relevant ways with current and future customers to strengthen their market share.

This project demonstrates how applying an innovative approach to insight based on business-to-business stakeholder management and communication preferences maximises engagement and drives long-lasting business impact. By focusing on how senior stakeholders consume and process information Opinium could translate complex issues into compelling, recommendation-led insight that was tailored, actionable, commercially viable and were adopted at the highest level.

## Synopsis

### The challenge

Great-West Lifeco is comprised of three main businesses in Europe: Canada Life UK, Canada Life Europe and Irish Life. Despite separate brand visions, positioning and values aligned to individual market needs, all three share a common purpose – to build better futures.

In 2020-21, the organisation partnered with Opinium to support the activation of this ambition. The business needed to understand how they could be seen as more than simply a trusted provider, inspire their employees and connect in more meaningful and relevant ways with current and future customers to strengthen their market share.

### The research

Collaborating closely with Canada Life, Opinium designed a mixed mode programme of qualitative research to provide a clear understanding of the perceptions of Canada Life's brand and identity. Utilising online communities, focus groups, triads and in-depth video and voice interviews, Opinium explored the relevance and value of the business' Canadian provenance in a way that was both relevant and engaging for the brand's diverse stakeholder groups within each market.

However, whilst implementing an appropriate methodology was fundamental, the success of the research relied on Opinium's ability to identify and prioritise the key areas Canada Life could credibly own, and to then translate this into compelling, action-led deliverables which informed their future group, regional and country brand strategies. Opinium's approach was therefore to start by understanding not simply the 'problem', but what the outcome needed to deliver and the type of output most likely to drive change within the business.

### Designing with intent

Opinium began by conducting a series of in-depth interviews with key project stakeholders.

To facilitate this, Opinium conducted an exercise to understand how different types of messaging would be received and actioned by the business.

Once the preferred style of communication had been established, Opinium overlaid their proprietary B2B communication segmentation to identify the ideal form of content for each stakeholder. This ensured the Opinium team could be confident that our insight would be noticed, impactful and ultimately acted upon.

### Focusing on engagement

The qualitative fieldwork was designed by Opinium to maximise engagement, and therefore, insight, from diverse audience groups ranging from current and prospective customers to brokers, intermediaries, institutional investors, and employers to Canada Life employees.

For example, in the focus groups, IDIs and triads amongst brokers, intermediaries, and employers, Opinium incorporated a quantitative market mapping technique which had also been conducted with Canada Life stakeholders during the initial

phase. In the exercise, participants were presented with a range of potential areas for insurers to focus on. They were then asked to place these challenges on a rating scale of most to least important, explaining their rationale as they did so. The groups then were asked to overlay brand performance against each of these challenges, uncovering which brands have permission to credibly act and why.

By mirroring the tasks between the participants and the stakeholders, Opinium was able to draw powerful comparisons between the internal and external view, identify where there were perception gaps which needed to be addressed, and enable the stakeholders to instantly relate to the findings.

The Opinium team implemented regular 'contact calls' to ensure all stakeholders remained engaged with the research process and their input was continually translated into the study design.

#### **Embedding and activating the insight**

The programme of research was designed to focus on not just the insight, but how that insight could be best conveyed to maximise the action taken by Canada Life. Knowing the communication preferences of the key stakeholders enabled Opinium to garner interest and excitement throughout the delivery stages.

Initial reads of results were provided by Opinium for individuals and market teams ahead of the first de-brief. In addition, a teaser video was produced to encourage those who preferred visual communication to attend.

Tailored de-briefs with Q&A sessions were then delivered to the project sponsors, including the European CEO, management board, and individual market teams. These incorporated both voice, video, and clear examples of data visualisation to demonstrate market differences. Reports and de-briefs were provided in both English and German to ensure all stakeholders could engage equally with the findings.

Following de-briefs, stakeholders were set a short 'pre-task' to provide feedback on what they found interesting, challenging or did not understand. This feedback was then used by the Opinium team to inform strategy activation which focused on how the business could prioritise, adopt, and implement the key recommendations from the research.

#### **Why we should win this award**

This project demonstrates how applying an innovative approach to insight based on B2B stakeholder management and communication preferences maximises engagement and drives long-lasting business impact. By focusing on how senior stakeholders consume and process information Opinium could translate complex issues into compelling, recommendation-led insight that was tailored, actionable, commercially viable and adopted at the highest level.