



Category: Outstanding Independent Practitioner

Entrant: Nicola Davies Chart.PR, MCIPR

Company: Seaborn Communications

An overview of your experience, your commitment to professional development and how you contribute to the industry:

In June 2016 I became a Chartered Practitioner having previously been an Accredited Practitioner and studied for the CIPR Diploma with Birmingham City University.

As an independent practitioner taking part in the CIRP CPD programme is an invaluable tool in my personal development; ensuring skills are refreshed and expanded to include new developments and trends.

I became an independent practitioner in 2011 when I established Seaborn Communications.

I spent the previous eight years as External Relations Manager for the telecommunications industry trade body and before that as Community Affairs Manager for mobile network provider Orange. Earlier in my career I was a parliamentary researcher at Westminster and A-level politics teacher.

My clients are drawn from the energy, infrastructure development and asset management sectors and most recently the voluntary sector.

My work is always based on clear objectives and measured outcomes. I focus on crisis/issues management, public affairs strategy, stakeholder engagement and media relations.

I combine running my business with serving a Warwickshire County Councillor and as Vice Chair of Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel. As a Trustee of Warwick District Citizens Advice my professional skills were used to offer communications and stakeholder engagement advice supporting the supporting the organisation as it successfully pursued a merger with neighbouring Stratford upon Avon Citizens Advice in 2016/7.

I have contributed to widening knowledge of communications practice, messaging and campaign planning by training political candidates overseas on behalf of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. In 2015 alongside Baroness Liz Barker I worked with female local elections candidates in Morocco to build their skills and develop their campaigns ahead of elections under the new post Arab Spring constitution.

Outline your work-related achievements over the last three years, including your business objectives and/or plan:

I have succeeded in working with great clients such as Peter Brett Associates, Juwi Renewable Energies and South Hook Gas as well as KaarbonTech.

A new client in 2017 is the Restorative Justice charity Why me? In the first month of providing communications and media advice I secured publication of a Huffington Post blog and a feature interview with a victim ambassador on BBC Radio Five Live Daily with Emma Barnett.

I was delighted to be a finalist in the 2017 Excellence Awards and 2016 Midlands PRide Awards.

My business objective continues to be to grow my client base. I am proud that my clients are drawn from a combination of competitive pitches, recommendations and personal connections.

On a personal level enjoying work, finding challenge and achieving a home life balance is key.

Outline the biggest work-related challenge you've faced in the past three years, including details of what happened, how you overcame it and what you learnt from it:

The tough economic climate has heightened the need to demonstrate the value of PR strategy to clients. I have invested time in understanding the business or organisational objectives of my clients.

At times this has meant challenging assumptions and opening minds to the wider scope of public relations.

For example, a client may assume that issuing regular press releases and is the most effective way of conveying a message to a large audience. I have advised this may be a false success criteria if the audience being reaching is not that of the greatest significance to the client.

I have used stakeholder mapping to demonstrate audiences with the highest significance to the business/organisation and those which exert the greatest influence on achieving the desired outcome. I have used circulation and readership profile data to demonstrate publications which will reach the key audiences and emphasised features with strong visual and written content have greatest impact.

I have learnt to be bold in encouraging clients to pursue innovative strategies and to communication ways that reflect their brand/ temperament and objectives.

Personal reputation is hard won but easily lost and I take care to work to the highest standards. The professional recognition of gaining the CIPR Diploma and becoming a ChartPR has been invaluable in enhancing credibility with clients.

A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

The client brief was to take KaarbonTech – an innovative asset management software company - from newcomer to proven company with a strong reputation amongst key customer groups.

Campaign Objectives

- Establish a reputation for technological innovation and results (cost savings, greater efficiency, better maintained assets)
- Emerge as an respected award winning company with increased customer base

Strategy

- Evidence a track record amongst 200+ UK highways authorities
- Professionalise communications material; build credibility with consistent high quality content
- Deploy high quality video content featuring product users
- Reach target customer group through feature articles in credible publications
- Produce high calibre case studies featuring customer from target group
- Evaluate industry award opportunities

Tactics

- Refresh all website copy and include testimonials and embed videos to engage visitors
- Prepare high quality case studies featuring software users and cost/time saving data from customers
- Evidence the accuracy of data through partnership with Ordnance Survey
- Build credibility with a case study on Department of Transport Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme website
- Secure features in influential trade magazines, build twitter and LinkedIn presence focusing on followers and connections with business relevance rather than numbers
- Assess potential award opportunities with resonance amongst potential customer groups

Outputs

- New website launched featuring case studies
- You Tube views of over 12,000 for GullySMART and 8,000 for TreeSMART videos
- Two case studies published by Ordnance Survey
- Case study peer reviewed and published by the Department of Transport Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme
- Feature articles in 23 publications including Highways Magazine, The Surveyor, GeoConnexion, DrainTrader Magazine, ProArb, Essential Arb, Local Authority Plant and Vehicle Magazine
- Four high recognition industry award entries prepared and submitted in the following categories i) Best Use of Geospatial for Business Benefit, ii) Best Use of New Technology in the Highways Industry and iii) Excellence in Innovation.

Outcomes

- Two major industry award wins plus a shortlisting and high commendation in a further two
- KaarbonTech has seen growth each quarter
- Existing customer contracts extended
- New customers secured from highways sector and private sector companies.

Mark Entwistle, Managing Director of KaarbonTech:

“Nicola is great to work with and has been willing to invest time to understand our business objectives. She is professional and brings a breadth of experience that has delivered results.”

Budget

- Seaborn Communications: £14,000.00

Client wishes the fees for video production (White Heart MultiMedia) and website design (Obaidul Huq) to remain confidential.