

The logo for the CIPR Pride Awards 2019 Gold Winner. It features the text "CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019" in white on a black background, followed by "GOLD WINNER" in large, multi-colored letters (pink, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

Category: Outstanding Independent Practitioner

Entrant name: Michael Lavery MCIPR

Company: Brand & Reputation

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

A CIPR member for 18 years, Michael won the region's inaugural IPR Young Communicator of the Year Award in 2001, is a long-standing member of the education & skills group, has spoken at UK CIPR events and written for Profile magazine. The teams Michael has led have claimed 14 x CIPR Pride awards and 4 x Excellence award nominations. He has strongly endorsed CIPR membership and engagement to all of the comms staff he has led throughout his career.

At ALCAZAR, Michael led comms strategy for a diverse portfolio of clients including Scott USA and Beamish Museum. He received the 'Young Communicator' award while at GENTLE PERSUASION where clients included Enron, NHS, LG-Philips and One NorthEast where he played a central role in the development of the Regional Image Strategy on which the iconic Passionate People, Passionate Places campaign was formed. He delivered significant national and international coverage for his clients including in the FT, on BBC Breakfast and in Ideal Home and GQ magazines.

From 2003, as Head of Communications at £3b retail group REG VARDY PLC, he built a team of 12, leading Internal Comms strategy for c.6,000 staff, Customer Comms with c.800,000 customers and Investor Relation with the Group's shareholders, plus CSR on behalf of the VARDY FOUNDATION.

As Director of Communications at DURHAM UNIVERSITY from 2005, Michael 's team delivered unprecedented national and international coverage (Wall St Journal, Nature, New York Times, Panorama, Dispatches) and coordinated world-exclusive media projects including the loan of the Lindisfarne Gospels and the visits of international royals and Oscar-winning A-lister Russell Crowe. He relaunched staff, student and alumni comms programmes, established a new Public Affairs unit and strategy and was a frequent University spokesperson. Michael was an adviser to the House of Lords - and Lord Sainsbury – on the public communication of science, chaired the 1994 Group and Russell Group Comms Directors groups, and attended the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. His Durham University Team won a number of CIPR Awards during this time, including 'In-house Media Relations Team of the Year".

In 2011, as Executive Director (External Relations) at TEESSIDE UNIVERSITY, he led a team of 60+ staff across comms, marketing, student recruitment, events, alumni relations and community & culture. He raised Teesside's national and international research profile through targeted, hard-news media relations, winning yet more CIPR Awards for various comms campaigns and publications plus the national 'Comms & Marketing Department of the Year' at the UK Education Marketing Awards 2015. Michael led the rebranding of the University, the relaunch of the Business School, the acquisition of TATE+ gallery mima, and the region's bid for UK City of Culture 2025. He became a global trustee for the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and was an adviser to the House of Lords on the reputation of UK higher education.

He has spoken at education marcomms conferences in Europe, USA and Asia and is a mentor to a number of young communications professionals.

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

In 2017, Michael established his own consultancy – BRAND & REPUTATION LTD - where his comms clients span national and international markets in education, arts, healthcare, charity and private sectors. His focus is to deliver high-level marcomms and brand audit, review and strategy development - working with Exec and Board level contacts.

Michael's aim was for the practice to achieve a fee income of £250,000 in year one and to establish a diverse national client base. Clients included the universities of Oxford and UCL, Audi UK and Deutsche Bank, and the NHS. The annual fee target was exceeded by 32%.

Michael's growing reputation resulted in further business growth, nationally and internationally, in 2018 plus some high-profile associate consultancy roles with renowned firms McKinsey (UK) and Lipman Hearne (US). 2018 clients included Manchester and MIT universities, Cancer Research UK and Costa Coffee.

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:

A high-profile and politically-charged project to build a world-class site in London was labouring due to a lack of a clear and compelling narrative to engage a range of stakeholders.

Michael was appointed by a tripartite of a hospital to lead a complex programme of stakeholder consultations with eminent NHS executives & NEDs and charity trustees to develop a common narrative that would inform public consultations, media engagement, political lobbying and staff and patient comms. This was an intense 4-month project.

Through solid relationship-building, a drive for clarity and storytelling and a transparent and empowering process of messaging development and testing, Michael led a highly successful programme of consultation, copywriting and comms planning which resulted in planning permission being awarded and the £150m fundraising campaign target being achieved in

2018. A memorable learning point was the importance of understanding complex subject matter to build consensus and confidence and not compromising in pursuit of a distinctive and emotive story.

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

An intensive and coordinated programme of issues management and crisis communications was required by a major UK University following a national exposure.

With a modest, 'fees-only' budget over 3 months, significant work was required to give a voice to the key constituents in a highly-charged University community - including trade unions, staff, students, alumni and governors – and to bring appropriate transparency and context to a complex process.

I managed all internal comms to those constituent groups, filtered all media enquiries, supported the governance review report and briefed senior execs and governors to effectively mitigate the significant risk of further reputational damage.

Balanced and positive coverage of the governance review and the recommended process, fiscal and cultural shift was successfully delivered on platforms including regional press, BBC Online and the Times Higher Education magazine.