

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 Young Communicator

Entrant name: Chris Fairbairn ACIPR

Company: Holyrood PR

Demonstrate your commitment to professional development and your career growth:

Over two years my career has advanced speedily into senior management. Since June 2018, as Account Director, I have supported and led a team of nine talented professionals.

After five years in PR, I am working to ambitious targets to enhance my professional development, entirely intertwined with developing the skills of my team.

This includes:

- Completing CPD for third successive year (applied for MCIPR status) – every team member completed latest CPD cycle
- Working towards 2019/2020 CPD with targets relating to advanced management skills
- Regular listener of For Immediate Release and PRMoment podcasts
- Implementation of six-month objectives for entire team, reviewed quarterly and reflecting diverse agency roles
- Fast-track business management, joining agency's founding directors on senior management team (SMT)
- Upgrading month-long intern scheme to a six-month Scottish Living Wage Internship (led to recruitment of newest Account Executive)
- Pivoting our popular "intern" scheme into a more structured, one-month graduate programme
- Significant increase in team training, networking and event attendance
- Leading on PR measurement and evaluation, resulting in enhanced reporting for range of projects, in keeping with Barcelona principles and client outcomes

- Driving a PESO mindset, leading to our in-house video service enjoying its most profitable year.

Outline your work-related achievements over the last two years and how they contribute to the wider industry:

I spend less time on day-to-day client delivery and more time shaping campaigns by guiding team members, with a relentless focus on their development, while meeting client objectives.

Highlights:

- Record client media coverage over 12 months, culminating in January 2019 with more than 1,000 significant items
- Responsible for overseeing agency's 26 long-term accounts (up from 23 in June 2018) and frequent project work
- Driven expansion of in-house video team, with recruitment of second videographer
- Appointing a full-time digital AE and developed new digital strategy encouraging team-wide digital activity
- Personally delivered £70K of new business in past year.

Despite these successes, after years of incremental agency growth I knew sweeping change was required to go further. In January 2019, I persuaded the directors to adopt a radical approach to future growth and have been intimately involved in delivery, including:

- Developing an ambitious five-year plan to double agency size
- Month-long staff consultation to achieve buy-in
- Vital efficiency improvements - testing and deploying new project management software and new business CRM software
- Introducing nine-day working fortnight, (extra 24 days off annually per employee), boosting workplace wellness and staff retention (launches August 1)
- Securing additional 350 sq ft of office space, to allow refurb and expansion
- Implementing structured approach to new business, already delivering success.

Public relations goes beyond a job for me. I am passionate about the sector and enabling and encouraging others to confidently embrace its challenges.

All my achievements bring potential benefit to the sector, as they are deeply rooted in three vital aspects of PR success:

- Carefully agreeing client objectives
- Long-term planning to deliver best results on the right platforms

- Measuring and demonstrating results to educate clients and the business community to the value of PR.

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

My biggest challenge has been drastically improving staff retention while building a close-knit and high-achieving team, continuing to exceed client objectives.

While PR agencies are characterised by staff turnover of 20%, my appointment to Account Director followed a turbulent 12-months, with the departure of seven staff from an 11-strong team. While the reasons were varied, the result was potentially debilitating.

As the most senior remaining team member, I played a key role in the restructure, hastening my promotion to Account Director, when I took on further responsibilities.

Since then I have led a careful rebuilding, bringing in committed, enthusiastic and personable professionals aligned with our agency vision and purpose.

Delivering stability took huge effort and unrelenting focus on soft skills, from team workload scheduling and managing client expectations, through to small cultural changes around reward and recognition. As a result, the team has bonded professionally, personally and socially, with a raft of promotions and advancements accompanying rapid development.

Crucially, this gives us the springboard for the more ambitious changes we are rolling out this year, with hopes the nine-day fortnight and major office refurbishment will prove vital elements in long-term staff retention and agency expansion.

Professionally, June 2017-19 afforded me seismic learnings and is a period I reflect on with pride. The business weathered a crisis, while growing in revenue and headcount.

Personally, the period has also been seismic, with my wedding in July 2017 followed by the birth of my son in October 2018.

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

Skyrora is a small but ambitious rocket developer at the cutting edge of the space race, anticipating creation of a UK spaceport. It is a client I pitched for, won and have directed activity on.

Our early, successful work with Skyrora was awareness and credential building.

However, a major campaign was planned and delivered when the firm recovered Black Arrow, the only UK rocket to reach space. Its rusted remains lay at an Australian outback crash site for 40 years before being returned to Scotland.

Objectives:

- Attract three qualified rocket payload enquiries
- Secure stakeholder attention, including MSPs and industry figures
- Deliver 100 items of UK-wide media coverage, driving website traffic
- Boost the firm's digital presence.

Rationale/research/planning:

- Met with senior Skyrora figures to:
 - Fully understand links between Black Arrow and Skyrora's technologies
 - Appreciate the UK's little-known space history and future as a launch nation.

Strategy and tactics:

- Crafted key messages
- Created video for multimedia pitching
- Identified and engaged key media, creating high quality opportunities
- Targeted relevant influencers to attend unveiling event and maintain momentum throughout launch week
- Sourced a Black Arrow celebrity backer in Helen Sharman, Britain's first astronaut
- Organised a school art competition with selected works displayed alongside Black Arrow.

Implementation:

- Pre-unveiling: Secured four-minute slot on BBC's The One Show featuring interview with Skyrora's Lead Engineer. Issued story about school art competition
- Unveiling: Media launch attended by TV, print, radio, MSPs, Black Arrow engineers and space influencers. Produced news video of the event
- Follow up/post: Media release on success, including Helen Sharman support.

Results:

- Six new approaches about possible payloads, worth potential £40-50 million
- One in three contacts at industry conferences citing awareness directly via PR
- 534 items of coverage of Black Arrow, including BBC, Telegraph, Times, Daily Mail, ITV, talkRADIO

- Created 39,790,914 opportunities to see (OTS) across traditional, social and digital media
- Invited to 2019 Royal International Air Tattoo
- Four MSPs and two MPs requested to visit Skyrora's offices
- Quoted by influencers including BBC tech presenter Robin Ince, Gadget Show presenter Dallas Campbell, celebrity scientist Professor Brian Cox
- Delivered 21,400 visits to website, 45% increase in LinkedIn followers and 44% increase in Facebook followers.

Budget:

- £4526 (exc VAT), creating 8792 OTS for every £1 spent.