

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:** Lisa Preston MCIPR

**Company:** Amplify PR

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

I have nearly 20 years' experience of working in communications. As a student, I ran the university's radio station. After my degree, I did a Postgraduate Diploma in Broadcast Journalism. As a journalist, I worked in commercial radio before BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and then regional TV, at BBC Look North.

My first PR job was Press Officer at the University of Southampton in 2003. I had further roles in higher education ending as Head of Communications and Marketing at the University of Winchester in 2015.

There, I led the PR of 'The Search for King Alfred the Great' an archaeological dig that was a BBC2 documentary. Winning Regional Campaign of the Year at the 2014 CIPR PRide Awards and Best PR/Advocacy Campaign at the 2014 Heist Awards. It was also shortlisted for two PR Moment Awards in 2015.

In November 2018, I won Outstanding Independent Practitioner in the CIPR PRide Awards in the South of England and Channel Islands. I am shortlisted in the same category in the CIPR Excellence Awards 2019 and Freelancer/Consultant of the Year in the PRCA DARE Awards 2019; winners TBA.

I have always committed time to my professional development, undertaking CIM qualifications and CIPR/PRCA workshops. I keep up-to-date by reading blogs and trade magazines. I follow industry podcasts and sign-up for webinars. I am a CIPR Accredited Practitioner and established member of the CIPR Wessex/South of England freelancers' network.

I work hard to contribute to the industry. I have done several free workshops and keynote talks about skills training for businesses. I blog twice per month about PR aimed at helping SMEs. I also provided PR training and mentoring for entrepreneurs at the University of Southampton.

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

I began as an independent practitioner and set-up Amplify PR in July 2015. My vision is to help businesses amplify their brand and reach more customers. I provide a highly-dedicated content-driven PR service to SMEs and the education sector in Hampshire and elsewhere.

Business objectives:

- Generate 120 days of consultancy each year
- Achieve monthly net profit target and grow turnover by 10% each year
- Develop a client ratio, 80% retained and 20% ad-hoc by end of 2019
- Deliver robust marketing to build brand reputation and attract new business
- Commit to no more than 40 hours per week; and play every weekend.

I am very proud of the clients that I have been privileged to work with including:

- Winchester Science Centre & Planetarium, an educational charity and visitor attraction
- Softbox Systems, temperature-controlled packaging for the global pharmaceutical industry
- Brush-Baby, Winchester-based manufacturer of dental care products for babies and children
- Brace Orthopaedic, Newcastle-based distributor of orthopaedic braces and supports
- OrthoConnections, an online networking platform for the global orthopaedics industry  
- Tata Communications, global telecommunications
- Ronald McDonald House Charities, supporting families with children in hospital.

I have maintained links with the universities of Southampton and Winchester doing consultancy and I also work with others in the education sector.

Referral marketing is a key part of my success. 70% of my business is a recommendation by a client or through business networking.

I re-positioned Amplify PR in 2017 and introduced service packages and published my fees, offering greater transparency. Combined with the free consultation, I attract 2-4 leads per quarter that result in new business.

I have built a collective of trusted freelance associates who work with me on a flexible basis. Clients have me as their Account Manager (not a junior associate) and support from a team of experienced specialists. We do this without huge overheads, providing a cost-effective service.

**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:**

My biggest work-related challenge was Brexit when I lost two clients and about 60% of my income. Both clients traded overseas and following the referendum decided to reduce their costs to compensate for the sharp decline in sterling.

To overcome this, I developed my LinkedIn presence, exhibited at B2B expos, and did more networking. I re-designed my website, improved my SEO and appeal among my target audience.

What I learnt was that continual marketing is essential; cannot assume you will retain clients and attract more. I am also more conscious of the risk of having clients who represent a large share of my income.

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

Winchester Science Centre & Planetarium Launch of Explorer:Space in July 2018.

Brief:

Support the in-house marketing team and lead on PR to launch Explorer:Space.

Objectives:

- Launch Explorer:Space and raise awareness of it as a new exhibition
- Increase summer holiday 2018 visitor figures
- Showcase Explorer:Space to schools and support the new school trip package.

Strategy and tactics:

Primary audience – children and their families across the South of England and schools in Hampshire. Branding focused on children and their experience onboard Explorer:Space. Engaged a NASA astronaut to do a media/VIP launch; Michael Foale CBE, the most experienced British-born astronaut in the history of human spaceflight.

A 3-part launch day: a schools event, a media/VIP launch and a ticketed evening event.

Led on:

- News releases announcing the opening including the media/VIP launch and evening event
- Media launch: Journalists had exclusive access to Explorer:Space, press conference, speeches and media interviews/photos. Damage limitation: Sky News, BBC South and ITV Meridian (covering also for Good Morning Britain) were diverted due to an 85-acre gorse fire in the New Forest. Secured a live Skype interview with Sky News and got BBC and ITV to agree to receive video footage

- Secured FOC editorial in Winchester/Hampshire magazines
- Engaged several family/travel bloggers to review in return for a free family ticket
- Managed competitions to win tickets in the media.

Wider campaign included:

- Branding inspired by sci-fi and kids' comics, featured children who won a competition to find the 'face of Explorer:Space'
- Paid advertising
- Social media promotion
- Competitions to win tickets on social media
- E-newsletters, printed leaflets, third-party online listings and onsite promotion
- Public outreach at Farnborough International Airshow.

Outcomes:

Being mainly an indoor attraction, footfall is higher during the winter and on rainy days. With Explorer:Space, the Science Centre exceeded its target footfall by more than 1,500 visitors and had its second-highest footfall (20,540) in August in six years, just shy of figures for a very wet 2017.