

Excellence Awards - 2021 Entry  
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Entry ID: 9583

### Third Party Authorization

*Are you entering on behalf of, or in association with, any third party?:* No

### Basic Information

*Category:* 30. Specialist PR Consultancy of the Year

### Entry Information

*Entrant company name:* Copper Consultancy

*Entry title:*

Infrastructure communications specialists with people at our heart

### Entry

*Number of employees and annual fee income:*

Number of employees: 46  
Revenue in 2020: £4.78 million

*Business objectives and analysis of performance against budget over the last two years:*

Founded 25 years ago, Copper is a specialist infrastructure communications consultancy, operating from London, Bristol and Birmingham. We devise and deliver communications strategies that protect and enhance the reputations of organisations operating in often challenging political, social and highly competitive environments.

In 2018, Copper embarked on a five-year plan with the aim of growing from a revenue base of £2.94 million to beyond £5 million, requiring 20% growth year on year. The core purpose was to guarantee the business' long-term sustainability; retain our niche position as infrastructure specialists while offering new services; and attract and retain the best employees, providing growth and development opportunities.

With an average 27.5% growth over the last two years, Copper is on the path to achieving this:

- 2018 revenue: £2.94 million.

- 2019 revenue: £3.69 million (target £3.40 million) – 25.5% growth.
  - 2020 revenue: £4.78 million (target £4.34 million) – 29.5% growth.
  - 2021 target: £5.28 million
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#### *A brief overview of business / team strategy:*

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To support our growth plan, we restructured our management team around three practice areas (economic development, infrastructure and construction). Practice directors were appointed, each with individual financial and business development targets and teams. All three exceeded growth targets last year.

To grow into new sectors and evolve our proposition, we invested in a renewable energy director and a construction director, both of whom support key accounts and mentor teams to develop wider sector expertise. We also established a creative services team, offering graphic and digital design in house.

To improve corporate intelligence and understanding of the infrastructure sector, especially investment trends and policy, we hired an infrastructure analyst who helps set the future direction of the business. We also invested in a CRM system to track contacts and bring insight to marketing and new business activity as we grow.

In 2018, Copper opened an office in the Midlands to support increasing regional demand. Our work to establish ourselves there has included growing our base from one initial client to five and building the team to eight people. This helped us win work in northern England and Scotland in 2020, including with HS2, Highways England and National Grid. This partnership approach to business development activity has been successful for the whole business, with us co-hosting 10 events (virtually) in 2020 with 39 organisations.

Our team strategy: recruit and retain the best staff

Copper is a people-focused employer, where everyone has the opportunity to flourish. Our people strategy was developed with input from employee surveys and workshops to understand what matters to them. This identified three priorities (financial, career progression and lifestyle) around which we built 'Copper for You', a benefits and career development package launched in 2020.

Key highlights:

- Bonus scheme.
- Quarterly 'Cultural Champion' award.
- Employee introduction incentives.
- Life and health insurance.
- Increased pension contributions.
- Fitness fund, mindfulness sessions and volunteering time.
- 'Design your life' coaching and mentoring.
- 'Copper introduces...' guest speaker programme, bringing thought leaders from different backgrounds to discuss their careers and perspectives.
- Lunch and Learn programme.

We also reviewed our appraisal programme, using a skills matrix to demonstrate a clear progress path.

Our team has increased from 31 members in January 2020 to 46 in February 2021, with a 90% retention rate in 2020. We promoted 14 people across all levels in 2020.

To continually improve our EDI approach, drive awareness and encourage new talent into the communications industry, we established:

- an EDI Charter, which staff and suppliers sign up to, supported by an independent EDI advisor.
- an EDI network within Copper, sponsored by a board member to lead initiatives.

We also invested in our IT infrastructure, including cloud-based servers and phone systems, to support flexible working.

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*A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:*

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We pride ourselves on our commitment to clients, people and stakeholders. We have a track record of building long-term relationships with clients and using our collective sector knowledge and networks to create value that goes beyond day-to-day delivery.

Commitment to our industry

- 'Attitudes' – a series of free reports funded by us to help the infrastructure industry understand public perceptions, overcome challenges and meet customer expectations.
- Membership of professional networks in communications and infrastructure, including the Major Projects Association, National Infrastructure Planning Association, Renewables UK, PRCA and CIPR membership.
- Lessons learnt programme between clients to encourage knowledge transfer.
- Events with clients and partners to share best practice and understand industry issues.

Commitment to our people

- £500 personal training fund.
- Team and individual training.
- Membership of professional bodies supporting team members' areas of interest.
- 'Copper introduces' and lunch and learn programme.

Commitment to our clients

- Annual client satisfaction surveys: 100% of clients stating that Copper delivered or over-delivered against objectives in 2020 and 100% of clients stating they were satisfied or very satisfied with our quality of work.
  - Long-term relationships with clients (e.g. we are the longest standing agency on National Grid's communications framework, having worked with them for 25 years).
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*A summary of recent outstanding achievements, including client list growth / retention:*

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- Exceeded revenue targets for last two years.
  - Established 40 new projects, representing 28% of annual turnover (January 2020 – February 2021).
  - 56% of fee income from new clients (January 2020 – February 2021).
  - Maintained client satisfaction while growing rapidly and onboarding new staff.
  - Expanded into new sectors and geographies.
  - Maintained 100% success record supporting clients through planning processes.
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*A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:*

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Brief and objectives

- Deliver a communications campaign that builds support for London Resort (a next generation entertainment resort) in the local area.
- Deliver an entirely digital, legally compliant consultation to support the planning process.
- Meet the programme commitment to investors by submitting the planning application in 2020.

#### Outputs

- Reached more than 120,000 people using press, paid-for print and digital advertising, partnership promotion and direct mail.
- 27,000 web visits during the consultation period.
- Over 800 attendees at 20 public webinars.
- Answered over 1,000 questions from members of the public during consultation.
- 1,200 public consultation responses – 65% increase on the project’s 2015 consultation.

#### Outcomes

- Legally compliant consultation accepted for consideration by the Planning Inspectorate.
- Met the investor commitment, submitting the planning application in December 2020.
- Generated advocacy for the project – 65% of people agreed it will benefit the local area.

Budget: £150,000

### Supporting Information

*Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):*

CIPRExcellenceAward-supportinginformation-CopperConsultancy.pdf

*Campaign image (if entering individual/team awards, upload headshot/team photo here):*

Provided

*Company logo:*

Provided

*Please write a 30 word entry summary in the third person:*

Specialist infrastructure communications consultancy, Copper has grown rapidly over the last two years, following an ambitious five-year plan. Copper's approach is centred on commitment to its clients, people and stakeholders.