

Demonstrate your commitment to professional development and your career growth

I arrived at PR having taken a rather unorthodox route. I trained as a dancer originally but having grown tired of treading the boards, I turned to writing as my creative output. Despite my lack of 'formal' training I've worked for some incredible organisations, including the Wales Millennium Centre, Landsec, Vimto, Lone Design Club, Mobu and premium skincare brand Mesoa. This diverse portfolio of clients has allowed for me to gain experience in delivering integrated campaigns and media relations across several industries such as arts and culture, hospitality, healthcare, leisure, and retail.

I am dedicated and passionate about PR, and relentlessly push myself to develop - attending industry lead events, webinars and CPD opportunities. I am also currently studying for my CIPR Professional PR Diploma.

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

In the last two years I have worked in managerial roles for two very different companies. The first was Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust (MTLT) managed by Merthyr Tydfil County Council where I took the reins of their marketing and communications department. Having steered them through a company re-brand and structure, I developed their new 5-year strategic marketing and communications strategy, finessing their approach to digital marketing, using my knowledge of social media platforms and social advertising, to maximise campaign delivery, method and evaluation.

As Events Manager for St David's Shopping Centre, Wales' largest shopping centre, I researched, planned and delivered a bold and comprehensive content strategy primarily derived from creative campaigns and communications projects. My strategy was delivered working with several key stakeholders across the city, such as FOR Cardiff (Cardiff's business improvement district), Cardiff City Council, Welsh Assembly Government and the Arts Council Wales. My content strategy complemented the wider St David's marketing strategy.

What influenced my approach to both strategies was my focus on inclusion and diversity. In order to for our customers to be successfully engaged, our branding and communications must be inclusive, accessible and equal. Every day, campaigns are launched that aren't designed to be inclusive of people of all abilities, such as those with sight, hearing, speech and cognitive impairments.

I embedded accessibility standards at the core of each strategy. For the most part, the necessary changes to ways of working were relatively straightforward. The more challenging aspect was ingraining new behaviours, so it became as natural as hitting spell check when drafting a document. That required comprehensive commitment and buy-in from colleagues.

I am proud to have continued this work at Grasshopper Communications where I refined and developed their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy of which the framework influences their community engagement. I have also been accepted onto the PRCA's LGBT Group to champion inclusivity within the workplace on a national level.

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Provide an outline of a work-related challenge you have faced in the last 12 months, including details of what happened, how you overcame it and what you learnt from it

Due to COVID-19, I was made redundant from my role as Events Manager, which is not ideal with two children. Not to be downbeat, I created and launched www.damiankerlin.com, a personal brand blogging LGBTQI+ content, with a dose of lifestyle and parenting on the side. This, alongside a following of over 5,000 on Instagram, I have worked with Adoption UK, The Ivy Cardiff, Owlet Express Publishers, and City to Sea's #RefillRevolution campaign (to name a few!) and written for online publications Gays with Kids, Daddi Life, Gay Community News and The Everyday Magazine.

I used this as an opportunity to tailor my writing technique to different audiences, honing my craft while building on my portfolio which ultimately supported my successful appointment at Grasshopper Communications as Account Manager. I am currently leading on the agency's digital content and delivering multi-channel campaigns, such as managing the Welsh Government backed Optimised Retrofit project dissemination campaign.

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Provide an outline of a piece of work you have delivered or contributed to in the last 12 months that you are particularly proud of including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget.

Wanting to bow out of my role as Events Manager at St David's Shopping Centre in style, I oversaw the launch of the 'Mini Welsh Legends' campaign to celebrate St David's Day in all its Welsh glory. With a modest budget of £5,000 we built our strategy around:

- Consumer habits of target audiences
- Evaluations of similar length campaigns – what worked well?

The objectives were to:

- Increase footfall and dwell time in the mall
- Grow our online and social following
- Raise the profile of the centre and its in-house activities
- Raise money for charity as part of our social value commitment

We created five Welsh legends have been made from Lego and have been sold to raise money for charities across Wales. The figures included Gareth Bale, Gareth 'Alfie' Thomas, Ruth Jones as Nessa from the television show 'Gavin and Stacey', Sir Tom Jones and Dame Shirley Bassey. Fifty of each mini-figure was created and made available to buy on St David's Day from the St David's shopping centre in Cardiff. Customers could get their hands on the Lego pieces by making a minimum £5 donation with all proceeds being donated to five charities. The charities benefiting from the limited-edition collection are Velindre, Pride Cymru, Ty Hafan, Valley's Kids and Noah's Ark.

As well as missed calls from Shirley Bassey's PA and taking the figures on a tour of South Wales, we made national news, had Dame Shirley and Tom supporting us on their social media and had requests for the figures from across the world.

The results of which were:

- Creative 'on location' photos of the Legends helped the campaign secure over 90 pieces of national media coverage across the UK on TV, radio, print and online

- 2.3 million reach on social media, resulting in thousands of engagements and new followers
- Centre footfall was up nearly 17% YoY; our Lego store saw +165% YoY growth in sales and website visits were up 54% YoY
- The mini-figures received celebrity endorsement from the legends themselves, who in turn made personal donations to the charitable cause
- Queues snaked through the mall and out of the centre, as hundreds of customers queued from 6 am for their chance to get their hands on one of the figures
- The Mini Welsh Legends sold out in under 40 minutes, raising over £2,500 for charity

Who would have thought a little idea we came up with for St David's Day could turn out to be so incredible!