

## Basic Information

*Region (Check Region):*

Midlands

*Category:*

27. Independent PR Practitioner of the Year

## Entry Information

*Entrant company name:*

FCM PR & Communications

*Entry title:*

Karen McElroy - FCM PR & Communications

## Entry

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

My career in PR and Communications has spanned over 25 years and I'm proud to have been a CIPR member most of this time, completing the CIPR Certificate and Diploma and CPD in recent years.

For over a decade I worked for a global brewer in internal and external communications roles. In 2005, requiring flexibility in my life to bring up my family, I decided to set up FCM PR & Communications offering businesses freelance PR and Communications services.

The FCM mission is dual purpose: to provide flexible, highly skilled PR and communications resources to clients; and provide opportunities for independent professionals, who wish to work flexibly.

In September 2019 I was selected at interview to participate in the fully funded Keele University Innovation Leadership programme.

More recently I was selected as a Council Member for Burton & District Chamber of Commerce. In this role my aim is to bring to the forefront the importance of PR and communications and represent the PR industry in this high-profile local role.

I regularly attend learning webinars and business networking. I am interested in diversity and inclusion, joining Derby's Finest, a business group for women.

*Outline your work-related achievements over the last 2 years, including your business objectives and/or plan:*

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In 2019, with clients really valuing our flexible support, and an ambition to grow the business now the family had grown, I took the strategic decision to increase the associate team to 12 talented independent professionals and embark on a proactive new business programme. Key assignments include:

During the pandemic, I stepped in to support the Molson Coors Beverage Company's Corporate Affairs team to implement their coronavirus pandemic communications sensitively and swiftly, in addition to handling the communication of projects including an incoming TUPE transfer and onsite lateral flow testing.

Managing the profile and reputation of Fleur Robinson, Burton Albion Commercial Director, as a female leader in the world of football which culminated in managing messaging and social media around Fleur's appointment as CEO of Wrexham AFC, owned by Hollywood stars.

The National Forest Adventure Farm was hard hit by the pandemic but by working flexibly we have continued to promote the wonderful and safe outdoor versions of the traditional events that ran during the summer, Halloween and Christmas. Extensive positive regional coverage (inc. TV and radio) was secured.

Client references:

Kate Macnamara, Corporate Affairs Director, Molson Coors Beverage Company:  
Karen has provided outstanding support as we have navigated our way through the coronavirus pandemic. She is always proactive, consistently delivers high quality results and is considered a trusted advisor by many leaders within our business.

Fleur Robinson, Wrexham Football Club (ex-Burton Albion):  
I have worked with Karen to manage my increasing profile and reputation as a female leader in the world of football, culminating in my recent appointment as CEO of Wrexham AFC. Karen has created some fantastic profile opportunities which have helped towards my selection to appointments such as BTEC Ambassador and FA Council Member.

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*Provide an outline of a work-related challenge you have faced in the last 2 years, including details of what happened, how you overcame it and what you learnt from it:*

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My biggest challenge was an 'opportunity' to work at short notice on a highly confidential company restructure. Whilst I was retained to deliver a different freelance project work for this business, I was asked to move immediately into a confidential role to support the C-suite on rolling out the restructure across the organisation, which was anticipated in total to take up to six months.

The brief was to govern and own the communications plan and content for all elements of the change process.

At the initial outset of the project, I was the sole communicator on the team working closely with the Managing Director, HR Director and Project Director to develop a communication strategy, including objectives, audiences, content, channels and evaluation.

Whilst I am experienced in the field of change communication, working directly with the most senior people within the organisation with no communication peers for support or

consultation was overwhelming.

My personal challenge was to step up to the table in unfamiliar surroundings and I did this by immediately building relationships with the team and consulting, shaping and sharing plans.

Once the initial announcement was made to confirm the business was embarking on a company restructure, this allowed me to canvas for bringing in additional communication support.

I learnt that I need to fully embrace the confidence that C-suite directors put in me, giving best advice and explaining the need to involve the right specialist resource for the project in hand.

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*Provide an outline of a piece of work you have delivered in the last 2 years that you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:*

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#### Brief

In April 2021, Willshee's officially opened a new recycling facility in Swadlincote. The brief was to manage the communications with all stakeholders, with a particular focus on securing media coverage.

#### Objectives

- Work with the leadership team to create a successful launch programme for the new facility to reach all stakeholders, mindful of covid restrictions in place.
- For existing and prospective customers to understand the benefits of the new recycling facility and how it will help them to reduce their environmental impact.
- Achieve positive media coverage, including regional TV, using an extensive range of visual materials, including drone footage.

#### Strategy

With covid restrictions in place and a traditional opening with tours unable to take place, our strategy focussed heavily on capturing the essence of the new facility in film and photography. This provided great insight into the facility, helping us to tell a visual story and provide media with great footage which was used extensively.

#### Tactics

- Creation of strong, relevant key messages to demonstrate the continued growth of Willshee's, investment in latest recycling technology, creation of jobs and commitment to support businesses to meet government targets of zero avoidable waste by 2025.
- Creation of digital imagery (including time lapse, drone, and photography) to provide a strong representation of the new facility.
- Distribution of a press release to target media to secure media interview and editorial opportunities.
- Social media posts.

#### Outcomes

- 15 pieces of coverage including Central East Midlands and West Midlands news; 5.37million online readership; 24.6k estimated coverage reviews; 56 social shares; printed circulation 50.1k, broadcast reach estimated 5.6m adults.

- Numerous sales leads.

Budget  
£2,970 +VAT – fees

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## Supporting Information

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

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Provided

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