

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

Anglia, Thames and Chiltern

Category:

26. Outstanding Young Communicator

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

Norwich City Council

Entry title:

James Hyde - Outstanding Young Communicator

Entry

Demonstrate your commitment to professional development and your career growth:

I spent my early working years undertaking a wide range of roles, to broaden my skill set and gain important experience. These included coordinating community engagement for a Premier League football club, and coordinating digital media and community engagement for a global sports networking company. The latter was an unpaid internship, which provided me with invaluable contacts, opportunities and experience that I would not have gained otherwise.

My first role within a communications team was as Communications Assistant at Norfolk County Council in 2017. After a period of temporary promotion in that role, I moved to Norwich City Council in 2019 to lead communications on two major projects: one of which being our insourcing of an annual £24m worth of services, and the other leading communications support for our award-winning environmental work.

I have also sought to develop my skills outside my day job, prompting me to become a CIPR member in 2018 (following my shortlisting for Outstanding Young Communicator at the East Anglia Pride Awards), and then join the CIPR East Anglia committee as social media lead in 2019, a position I held until April 2021. Through my role, I hosted the monthly Norfolk Connect networking event, which aims to bring together local comms professionals. I have completed three consecutive cycles of CPD, and thus became an accredited practitioner in 2019.

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

I moved on from Norfolk County Council after managing communications around the council's domestic abuse training session for hairdressers and beauty therapists. This was featured on the Victoria Derbyshire Show, and the online BBC News homepage, reaching around 2 million people - and went on to win 'Best Event' at the Anglian CIPRide Awards in 2019.

Since then, I have been the communications lead for Norwich City Council's ambitious service insourcing programme. This is a multi-year project to bring back an annual £24m of services with a combined workforce of over 400 employees into council control.

This major undertaking, which has received national coverage in the Municipal Journal as well as extensive local media interest, has required me to not only manage a regular flow of communications activities through the transition stage, but also lead on creating branding and communications strategy and principles for our new wholly-owned company which will provide these services – Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL). I have created an integrated long-term internal and external communications strategy for this project to engage a wide range of stakeholders including partners, staff, councillors, trade unions and the media.

I have also played a key role in delivering effective communications across the region during the Covid pandemic, having led communications support for the Norwich Community Response Hub which coordinated over 500 volunteers. I also served as a communications workstream lead for the Norfolk Local Resilience Forum in the early weeks of national lockdown.

As the council's communications lead for events and culture, my promotion of our highly-praised Christmas video featuring Stephen Fry and Olivia Colman led to the video reaching over a million people across our social media accounts alone, alongside blanket local and regional media coverage.

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

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

The task of leading communications support on our insourcing of £24m worth of services has been challenging in every sense, but our decision to form a wholly-owned limited company to provide these new services has had major implications for my communications portfolio.

This necessitated me creating a new branding and communications strategy for the company, which has been carefully mediated between the council and NCSL and is designed to accurately represent the relationship between both parties.

This close but distanced relationship has made it imperative that all stakeholders understand what is happening with the transfer and how it affects them, which is why I have released a regular newsletter to clarify progress, alongside creating Q&A platforms and intranet resources. I will continue to be providing these internal communications until the second stage of the project in April 2022.

The decision not to employ staff on council T&Cs has also generated a protracted trade union-led pay dispute, which has been played out publicly and necessitated careful proactive and reactive media relations from my team.

Leading the communications support on such a high-profile initiative has been a step up in responsibility for me, but the breadth, complexity and seniority of this project has certainly prepared me to take on similarly complicated challenges in the future.

Supporting Information