

ENGAGING DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS CONFERENCE

Leadership & Advocacy in Communications

Esther Kuku · Director of Communications and Engagement · Resuscitation Council UK

Influence · Advocate · Lead

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

“

The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values and agenda of an entire generation.

— Steve Jobs

“

Communications practitioners are not just messengers — we are architects of understanding and agents of change.

— CIPR

Today we will cover:

Influencing policy · Leadership credibility · EDI in practice · Evaluation & metrics · Storytelling

How we show up matters.



Credibility & Trust

Understand the difference between relationship and performance currency. This is essential to building trust in your organisation.



Knowledgeable Presence

Turn up prepared. Know the political landscape, sector trends and internal priorities. Your confidence in the room signals that comms is strategic, not administrative.



Your Voice & Visibility

Advocate for the function. Speak at SLT. Present to the Board. Write the narrative for your department before others write it for you. Visibility creates influence.

Bringing leaders with you. Building relationships that amplify.

Senior Leaders as Champions

- Your CEO and trustees should be advocates for your work — not just approvers of it.
- Brief them before the meeting, not in the meeting. No surprises.
- Frame comms strategy in their language: risk, impact, mission.
- Make them feel visible. Their advocacy opens doors you can't open alone.
- Invest time in all the relationships — there is currency in connections and small moments.

The Power of Partnership

- No organisation changes the world alone. Strategic alliances multiply your reach and credibility.
- Identify partners who share your mission, not just your audience.
- Co-created campaigns carry more weight — and share the risk.
- Partnerships can unlock access to communities, platforms and politicians.
- Be a generous partner: give credit, share data, celebrate joint wins.

What was considered best practice three years ago may have already moved on.

Not a specialism.

EDI underpins everything PR and comms professionals do — from crisis management to campaign development. It is not a bolt-on topic for a specialist team.

Know your audience.

The PR profession serves audiences from every background. Effective communications require practitioners to have a sound, current understanding of the communities they serve.

Embed, don't add.

EDI thinking must be built into strategy from day one — in your brief, your channels, your spokespeople, your imagery, and how you measure success.

If we want communications that resonate with diverse communities — EDI must be second nature, not an afterthought.

Build your measurement framework before you build your campaign.

Be data-driven

- Write your comms plan with the Board and Trustees in mind — they speak the language of evidence.
- Set KPIs at the start. If it's not in the brief, it won't be in the budget.
- Use data to demonstrate reach, engagement, behaviour change and ROI.
- Dashboard your results quarterly — make performance visible to leadership.
- Evaluation isn't the end of the campaign. It's the start of the next one.

The power of human story

Data tells the scale.

Stories make it real.

Both together is a winning advocacy strategy.

A statistic opens a door.

A human story walks through it.

When presenting to politicians, trustees or media — lead with the person, support with the evidence.

Targeted. Timely. Constituency-led.

01

Map your stakeholders

Know who has the power to influence the decision you need made. Politicians, civil servants, regulators, arm's-length bodies — build the map before you build the campaign.

02

Be constituency-led

In the current political landscape, politicians respond to local impact. Frame your ask in terms of their constituents — not national statistics.

03

Turn challenges into opportunity

Political disruption creates openings. A policy reset is a chance to be first through the door with a compelling, evidence-based case.

04

Be visible, consistent & patient

Policy change is slow. Show up regularly, build relationships before you need them, and position your organisation as a trusted expert voice.

Know your audience

- Different audiences need different messages, channels and messengers.
- Segment ruthlessly. A letter to every MP wastes everyone's time.
- Research what your audience already believes — meet them there before you move them.
- The media agenda shifts constantly. Time your asks to the news cycle.
- Remember: decision-makers are often not your direct audience. Target those who influence them.

Changing the game for cardiac health — Brentford FC & RCUK

The story

Heart of West London (HoWL) is a long-term partnership and commitment bringing together key players in the cardiac health world. Our ambition is to increase awareness of cardiac health issues and ensure that everyone has the skills to save a life.

Partners:

- Brentford Football Club Community Sports Trust (BFCST)
- Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK)
- Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY)
- Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospitals Charity (RBH)
- London Ambulance Service (LAS)
- AKA Day

HoWL objectives

1

Awareness

Use our platform and collective voice to raise awareness of cardiac health.

2

Education

Equip our community with CPR and defibrillation skills. Every minute without CPR drops survival by up to 10%.

3

Prevention

Free cardiac screenings in the community with Cardiac Risk in the Young.

4

Research

Match-funding up to £100k for ground-breaking sports cardiology research.

5

Support

Support anyone affected by poor cardiac health and build a community of lifesavers.

38% of UK adults have never undertaken any form of CPR training. HoWL is changing that.

Why do we care?

For Robert, for west London, for every beating heart.

Close to our heart

In November 2018, we lost our Technical Director Robert Rowan, aged 28, to an undiagnosed heart condition. We campaign in his honour.

Brentford: a cardiac hotspot

Our community sits in a cardiac hotspot — higher incidence of cardiac arrests, lower bystander CPR rates and lower access to defibrillators. Our diverse community is also disproportionately affected.

1 in 4

deaths in the UK are from heart & circulatory disease

160,000

deaths each year — one every three minutes

30%

of heart & circulatory deaths are premature

80%

of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happen at home

2X

CPR can more than double survival chances

1 in 2

UK adults would not feel confident to help a family member in cardiac arrest

The impact so far — two years of HoWL

CPR Training

500+

people trained March–Nov 2024

Cardiac Screenings

364

total screenings since HoWL (2022)

Fundraising

£60,000

raised for ground-breaking research

CPQR Code Awareness — shirt front on two televised fixtures

v Chelsea (H) · 19 Oct 2022

1,753,793

global TV audience

276,000

UK TV audience

v Manchester City (H) · 5 Feb 2024

3,217,943

global TV audience

980,100

UK TV audience

6,805 total scans of CPQR code · Now a permanent feature on the Women's first team shirts · 7 grassroots teams adopted the code

Storytelling, advocacy and key lessons

Thousands of Stories content

'The Pressure' — Thomas Frank wore a heart rate monitor during a Premier League game against West Ham to show how his heart reacts under pressure.

'The Moment' — life-long fan Raymond Harris suffered a cardiac arrest at the Gtech Community Stadium. Steward Jake Mead-Baker gave him life-saving CPR. This award-winning content series brought the mission to life with real human stories.

“

Over the past year, we have seen significant engagement with the partnership on matchdays, across our social channels, and with grassroots teams; helping us to reach new audiences with our life-saving message.

Dr James Cant, CEO, Resuscitation Council UK

Key lessons from HoWL

- The right partner gives you credibility with communities you haven't yet reached.
- Sport is a powerful platform — use cultural relevance to land a serious public health message.
- Human stories + data = winning advocacy. Raymond Harris's story reached more people than any statistic.
- Long-term commitment matters. HoWL isn't a campaign — it's a movement.

Key lesson: The right partner gives you credibility with communities you haven't yet reached.

The story

The belief that healthcare is about more than treating illness. It's also about helping our communities to thrive.

As an anchor institution, MSEFT committed to five principles:

1. Creating inclusive job opportunities.
2. Encouraging suppliers to invest in local communities.
3. Opening up land and buildings for community use.
4. Protecting our environment.
5. Leading and working in partnership with others.

Impact & advocacy lessons

358 local work placements facilitated since April 2019

160 completed apprenticeships

436 ongoing apprenticeships

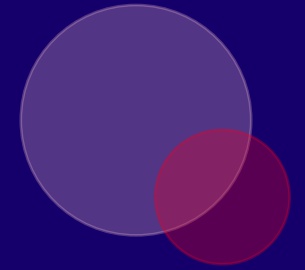
714 people visited the Southend anchor web page in first 2 months

15 young people recruited as hospital ward clerks via Kickstart

"My confidence has grown — I'm now thinking about careers I never considered before."

Key lesson: In large institutions, internal advocacy is just as important as external communications.

Lead with purpose. Advocate with evidence. Show up with credibility.



01 Leadership starts with how you show up — understand relationship vs performance currency.

02 Bring your CEO, trustees and SLT on the journey — invest in all the relationships.

03 EDI is not a specialism. It is the foundation of effective communications.

04 Build your metrics in at the start. Be data-driven. Tell human stories.

05 Know your audience, be targeted and be constituency-led with politicians.

Let's connect. Let's keep this conversation going.