

Panel: Hear from the IoIC Awards Judges – Transcript

Justine Stevenson

Excellent right. Hello, everybody! We'll make a start. We might have some people join us as we go along, but that's absolutely fine. I'm sure they'll be able to catch up as we go. So, thanks very much for joining this discussion about our IoIC awards. My name is Justine Stevenson, and I am. I have a day job as a director of internal Comms. But my role particularly today, is as the board director who's responsible for the IoIC awards. I was, gonna say, national awards. We'll come back to that in a little bit. and so, I preside over the awards and kind of have led on them for some years. Now most of the work is done by Rebecca at IoIC. She does all of the behind the scenes work to get all of the awards ready. But the most important people in this call today are our esteemed panel of judges, and we're delighted to welcome Will, Sandra, Sonia, and Claire. I will ask them to introduce themselves in just a minute.

They are part of our panel of judges and have very kindly offered to give a little bit of their wisdom and expertise today in terms of how to enter the awards. What makes a great entry? Some of the things that they're looking for. So, let's start, Claire. Would you like to just tell us who you are?

Claire Widd

Sure. Thanks, Justine. So, I'm Claire. I am head of marketing communications at UKAS. I've been working communications for about 15 years now, and I've had the privilege of judging the awards, I think, from 4 or 5 times now including the central and north awards, so very excited to be part of the panel today, because it's first of my favourite days of the year when we get to judge is the hardest. But it's my favourite.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. Thank you and will.

Will Fox

Hi! I'm Will I'm just like Justine, Board, director of the IoIC and in my day job I am the internal Communications manager at back of all. And you know I see you know, year-round, since I've been on the board, you know all the hard work that Justine and Rebecca do.

Will Fox

But you know I've been, I've judged, I think, 2 or 3 times, and you know, like Claire said, it's you know a very exhausting day kind of going through them and having discussions and kind of deliberation. Deliberating kind of you know what things are, and giving that feedback, but you know it is the most rewarding kind of part particularly of the year for me, as well.

Justine Stevenson

Thank you. And Sandra.

Sandra Lowman-Simpson

Hi, everybody. So, I'm Sandra and I'm a senior communications professional. Currently, I'm taking a short break to do some continuous learning and also move house before my next assignment. But I've worked in the industry for 14 years now with SMEs, global organisations within financial services, tech services, retail logistics, and also not for profit, and prior to that I had senior roles in the property industry, partnering with senior exec clients to optimise their facilities, management costs and evaluate performance, and also their commercial and real estate portfolios. So last year I was kindly awarded a fellowship with the Institute absolutely elated, and it was also my first time as a judge. So, I'm coming at it as a little bit of a I suppose a junior. But I'm looking forward to this year.

Justine Stevenson

Brilliant. Thank you. And last, but not least, Sonia.

Sonia Squires

Thanks, Justine, and similar to Sandra. I'm Sonia, but similar to Sandra. I was awarded fellowship last year and did my awards last year as well judged for the 1st time. So, we might have some similar experiences there. I am head of communications at Citizen Housing which are based in the West Midlands. So yeah, not for profit and lead on the internal and external communications team. So yeah, really, looking forward to the questions that are going to come through today.

Justine Stevenson

Wonderful. Thank you. And I think you can tell by that small insight into the experience that we have on the panel that we really do have very, very experienced communicators, experts in their field, really. And it's one of the things we really pride ourselves on in our judging is that you will get all of the entries that you submit, you will get absolute expertise looking at them, and not only will you have them marked in the traditional kind of, you know, numerical way. You will also get really deep insight and some comments about you know the work that you're submitting, and perhaps things that you might like to do in the future, which is one of the things that sets our awards apart. So, before I get too carried away. Let's have a little bit of a reminder of our awards. And I'll give a bit of an overview reminder of what they are, and then Rebecca is going to go through a little bit of the process just to remind you of what that looks like, and then. What we'll do is we? We've got a few questions that we know.

Generally, people would ask, but we'll open it up to you. So, you know we please do use this time to ask whatever questions will help you in putting those award submissions together. No stupid questions do obviously ask whatever you think you need to be successful in your entry? You may be somebody who's very used to this and has done lots of entries before you might be completely new to this. So, you know what? Whatever you want to ask us, please do so. The IoIC awards as a bit of a reminder of what it is, what we're talking about.

So, we're 70 years of internal communication excellence. Obviously, we've been doing this for quite a long time. in various formats. It is one of those one of those things that has evolved as we've gone along as we've evolved as a profession, and we've become more professional and knowledgeable about what we do. So have our awards.

So, we have now 38 classes, to enter what we try to do, we and we do a little bit of a scrub every year, just to look at what the costs are and what we need to reflect. What we try to do is give you an opportunity to show off any of the work that you do, and we know that the world of an internal communicator can be many and varied, and there may be many things that you get yourself involved in. So, we have various categories, and within that different classes which we hope will give everybody an opportunity to showcase some of their work.

And when we talk about the process, we talk about it a little bit more. But if you've got any sort of like oh, I don't really know where this fits, and you've got any sort of you know questions about what you, what your thing is and where it goes. Then we're always on hand to be able to give you a bit of advice and support, and what we try to do always is to make sure that your entry goes into the class where we think it will be most successful, where, if we're judging it against others that are likely to be in that class where it's most likely to be successful.

A few changes for this year, the 1st one, as I slightly alluded to earlier, they are no longer national awards. They always used to be called the national awards to sort of differentiate between as Claire said, you know that we have sometimes in the past have regional awards, but we have increasingly found over the last few years that we have a lot of international representation. Actually, lots of people from different parts of the world are wanting to enter our awards. So we wanted to make sure that it was very clear that the awards are open to anybody, and you might be working in a global team, and you might have some work from another part of your organisation in a different country or territory, please that. Don't that let that stop you from thinking you can enter.

3 new classes like, I say, we always do a little bit of a review every time that we launch them to make sure that they're relevant, actually relevant to the profession, but also things that people will be doing in their work. So, strategy development is a new class and that's very much looking. You know, we're looking at our more strategic view. Often, we have focused on those more tactical things we're really wanting to open things up. So, people can show where they're really working on their strategy development Community management in channels. Because again, increasingly, we recognise that there are lots of different ways that people are running communities. So, we have put in a category for that. And then most innovative content creation in our innovation category. Now for all of these, there is a lot of detail on the website. So, you will get a little bit of a summary of what the award actually is, but also a little bit of from our perspective, what we think. That means like, I say, if you've got any questions on that particularly relating to something which is your personal entry. Then we can. We can look through that with you and have a discussion about where it best fit.

And then the skills category. We've changed that to be clearer and better. Reflect what we do every day, and like. I say, you know, our roles do evolve, and whereas before we might well have been showed off the skills that we have in a certain way, they're not always relevant anymore. So, we have, we sort of tidied that up a little bit and changed some of the descriptors so that it's much clearer about actually, what do we do?

So that's in a nutshell. That's our awards. Obviously, if you've got any further questions on any of that, then we can come to those later. But the bit I think that we that is, everybody wants to know a little bit a bit about is the process, and to make sure that they are getting the process right? So, Rebecca is just gonna give a little bit of an oversight and reminder of what we're looking for in terms of the process.

Rebecca Nicholls

Thank you, Justine. So, you've looked at all of those classes, and you decided you want to enter. So how do you do that. So, the entry process has 4 steps. So, the first one is you need to purchase your entry slash entries, because in order to see the form you need to have purchased that can be on an invoice that can be on a credit card. I don't necessarily need money today. But you need to purchase, and then you will receive a link via email, a link on your invoice. And when you log into your website account there'll be the ability to fill in your entry form. But then, what we recommend to do step 2 and 3 before you complete your entry form.

So, every entry needs an entry statement, and I put here, and I'll send these slides around to everybody that's registered. You can go to the how to enter on our website, and it gives you guidance for that entry statement which is slightly different for people in teams versus strategy skills, channels, and innovation. And it has the titles of what we're looking for, what the judges are looking for, the word counts, and some prompts to think about what you might like to say in your entry. And then last year we introduced an executive summary as well. We very often get asked by people, why did somebody win? And sometimes it's great, and we can share that. And we have loads of case studies on our website. But sometimes it's difficult because people have submitted confidential things.

So, what we're asking for is a very short executive summary of what your entry is all about, and that is something that we then use publicly when we have our awards dinner, and when we announce the winners so that people can see what that entry was all about. Then, as part of your entry, you might also have supporting materials. Again, on the website, you can see a selection, but it could be a PDF of the magazine. It could be a screenshot of your intranet. You can put them as part of the entry statement. That's a question I often get. So, some people will do an entry statement. That is a PDF. Full of that evidence. Some people want to attach evidence separately, either is fine, and there's guidance of how much supporting materials you can do.

And then, once you're ready, come to the application form, and it asks for various details and all of those things to be uploaded. But the great thing about the application form is, you can start it and come back to it. So, if you're seeking approval or somebody needs to check it, you know your entry statement. You can fill in most of it and then come back to it. All that we ask is that you need to submit it by the time of the deadlines. So, there's currently early bird, which is running, which means you can enter a discounted price that ends at midnight on the well, 23:59 on the 23rd of February, and then standard entry ends on the 25th of April.

There's a discount for 3 or more entries, and it doesn't need to be the same piece of work. So, if you want to enter best Internet, best strategy development and best team, that's fine, that's 3 entries, and that will get you a discount. And then there's also 10% discount for any, not for profit, public sector freelance entries. As Justine said, all entrants, regardless of whether you are shortlisted or not, will receive a judge's critique which gives you your score, but also, more importantly, it highlights what the judges appreciated. It's almost a bit of mini consultation. So, what did you? What was great about the entry, and what would they have liked to have seen more of, and we get often. Then we often find that people who have got that feed that into next year's and we actually had winners last year that didn't win the year before, because they'd factored in what the judges said, which is always really nice to see. There are loads of tips on how to enter. Not just word, count, but what judges are looking for, how to do it. Things to think about on the website.

But if you need any further advice, and, as Justine said, if you have got an entry, and you think I just don't know where this best sits, then just drop awards@ioic.org.uk a line, and that's me, and I'll pick it up, and either I'll be able to have a look at it, or I'll confirm with Justine, and then we'll be able to let you know where we think it best sits. And, as Justine said, there's no silly questions, there's just questions you don't know the answers to. So please feel free to email and ask.

I'm now going to hand back to Justine and our lovely judges.

Justine Stevenson

Excellent. Thank you so much. Yeah, so hopefully, you've got sort of like the overview there. But do go and have a look at some more of the details. But let's get to this, the more interesting bit. And this is, this is the bit about how do we? How can we help you to write a great entry?

So, I'm going to start off. I've got a few questions for our judges, so I will ask a few of those, but please stick your hand up, stick anything in the chat, you know this is an open session for you to really get the most out of what it is that you want to know, to write a great entry. So, let's just start with some, Claire. If I come to you first? Can you just tell us a little bit about why you like judging these awards? What is it that makes you want to do it for now several years?

Claire Widd

I'll be totally honest. It is the hardest day that I have in my entire year, and I keep coming back for more, because it's humbling. Actually, if I look at the awards, I've judged the entrance that I've seen in the time you see a phenomenal breadth of work. You see, projects, campaigns, channels that really are making a difference to organisations that have impacts far reaching employees. But the level of you know, creativity that comes with those. I've sat back sometimes and gone. Whoa! I would have never even thought of that. But the creativity. We've all worked in teams where you're working on a shoestring. We've all had that gift where we've gone. How much budget have you given me?

And I think I really like seeing that. And I really like seeing those stories come through because it just blows me away every year. I always dread it a little bit. Oh, my gosh! How am I going to make this decision? But I really love it because I love learning how other organisations are doing it, and it gives me food for thought as well when I apply it to my own day to day. So that's why I keep coming back for more. You're probably going to have to shake me off with a stick. Justine.

Justine Stevenson

Never, not at all. Thank you. Will, coming to you. Obviously, we follow a set criteria when we are judging, we want to have some kind of consistency, and how we look at things. Never possible to be completely consistent because we're all individuals. But we do have a set criteria so. But tell us a little bit about what is it that you're looking for when you're judging an entry.

Will Fox

I think for me, it really comes down to two things, the why and the impact. So, because we just receive kind of you know the nomination and whatever is, provided you know where we don't have the context to that. So, it's really understanding. Okay, well, what are you doing? Why are you doing? What are the objectives behind? Be it a campaign or channel, or an event, or what

you're doing with a magazine?

And you know for us then to go. Okay, we can actually join the dots by reading this document and not having to guess ourselves and spend more time thinking about that, because we've got so many amazing entrants to go through that we don't have that time to kind of think, okay, what does A plus B equal and I think then that comes down, I guess, to the other end of the, you know, nomination. And it's really understanding the outcomes and the impact. And it's not just, you know, looking at, yes, we had 40% engagement. But it's providing that context around those outtakes as well. So that is 40% good for you. Is it great for you? Is it just a standard Tuesday for you? So that we can understand? Actually, actually, this really helped move the needle for you with those objectives. And then what actually helped change behaviours and the real outcomes of that that entry? You know. I think for me, those 2 things. Those 2 elements are the ones that really make. You know, those really great entries really shine.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. Thank you. And Sandra coming to you. If you were to give one top piece of advice to people who are thinking about entering some of their work for the awards. What would that be?

Sandra Lowman-Simpson

I think it would be use your data that you collect in the organisation to demonstrate the impact that you're having on the agenda for that organisation, and that you're having those conversations. Really important in terms of showing us the breadth and diversity of the thought. In the entry, and how you've helped the organisation shift as a result of the activities that you've taken in internal communications.

Justine Stevenson

Awesome. Thank you. And, Sonia, actually the same question to you. Have you got any sort of, you know one top tip that you would give, perhaps.

Sonia Squires

I guess, for me follow that criteria, so that criteria is there for a reason. And when I was doing it last year, it was really evident, those that taken the time to think, you know, in terms of right being clear on the purpose, planning, execution, and measurement and those that are just perhaps ignored that, or hadn't really looked into it. It's a bit like an exam paper, you know. Let's be really clear on what question that you're trying to answer. And just, I guess, tick those boxes, and give that evidence on those key parts.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. Thank you. So, we have one question, Maria. Someone new to award entries am I able to enter, based on a fixed time contract I've had in the communication space this past year, and the answer is, yes. We are we want to see any great work that has been done in internal communication. I guess part of your question there is around, you know, being able to show like ongoing impact. And that kind of thing. And you know, if you're not necessarily in the organisation when you've landed things, how might you show that? So, I think there are a couple of tips of things that I've seen, and judges think about.

Whether or not you may have seen some other examples. I think there are ways of being able to show some of the impact that you've had which might not be your traditional. You know I can show a year-on-year engagement score entry increase. So, there are creative ways that you can look at showing an impact. But also, one of the other things that you can do if you don't have necessarily. Quite a lot of, you know really detailed measurement is that you can at least show how you would intend to measure.

So that's quite an important thing, certainly, in some ongoing campaigns. What we say to people is, if you don't have all of that evidence that you would like or is not available to you for certain reasons, and it might be because you're not in that in that space anymore, then actually, at least show us how you would go about that. Show us a little bit about intent and show us a little bit about your thought process as to what you might be able to measure.

Don't know if any of our judges have any other thoughts on that.

Claire Widd

Yeah, I completely agree with what you're saying, Justine. And actually, I love looking at the data in entries. It's a real, it's a real sweet spot that I just. I pour over the numbers. But sometimes it's easy to forget that you can get your data in different places and in different ways. And when we talk about data, we're not just talking about hard numbers. But actually, there's, you know, qualitative data. And you know, there's also those short-term measurements that you can take. So, what's your baseline where you started? Are you on a projected path that you can illustrate the impact you know, from before you joined the impact you've had while you're there and where, you know, the business thinks it's going. So, it's definitely around being open to looking for different sources of information, because chances are we're probably doing it ourselves, anyway. And it's amazing what story you can tell when you do look away from the normal channels that we would look at.

Justine Stevenson

Awesome. I yeah, I agree. And sometimes, you know, we move away from. You know, we don't like anecdotal evidence. Anecdotal evidence can support an entry if all you're gonna do is the CEO told me it was a great piece of work. It's probably not going to be a winner. However, it can amplify some of that other data that you've got, Sandra. I see you've come off mute, so you might well have some words of wisdom.

Sandra Lowman-Simpson

No, I was just going to say, absolutely, Claire, I'm the same. I feed on data. And I think you know in the world we're in now where AI is becoming so much more prevalent. You know how we work with the organisation, and it's thinking and the commercial element, I think, is quite key in terms of the entries that come through.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. Thank you.

Elodie has asked. I assume each category is broken down by questions to answer and the short answer is yes.

So, when you go in and you have a look on the website at all of the information there, there are guidelines as to what we're looking for. So, you know, there are things. Tell us what the context is. Tell us how you planned these things. Tell us what the impact was those kinds of things. So, there's not specific exam questions. I work in Aqa, we provide exams like GCSEs and A level. So, I always think about it in terms of exams. It's not quite like that. We won't ask you to write an essay on the on the Renaissance period.

However, we will give you that guidance as to what we are looking for in those in that that bit, you know, and there is some advice on. What will help us then be able to judge whether that's good. So, some of that stuff will come naturally. Some of it. You might have to think a little bit about how you want to express that. We give word counts for a reason. I think you know one. There is a one there is, you know, our judges work very hard in the judging process and more can definitely be less. When you've got a lot of entries to look at. But also, it is that that kind of test of being able to communicate what your entry is actually about in in a succinct format.

Sonia Squires

That's what I was just going to mention then, just because you're talking about almost what's great. But then, also what to avoid. And I think from my experience last year, I think some people perhaps forgot that. You know, this is almost that Comms piece as well. And we're all Comms professionals, aren't we? So, it's absolutely the sum that were really lengthy.

And it perhaps could have been much more succinct. Because you're right. We're looking at so much so, I guess. Remember. Have that at the forefront as well. You know this is your opportunity to communicate and influence around. Why yours is an award-winning bit. So perhaps less is more.

Will Fox

And I think just going off what Sonia was saying. I think for me, and you're looking at the entries I was looking at last year. It's you know. It doesn't need to be kind of all singing, all dancing format, with all the all those you know, flashing lights and videos and things. But you know, even if it's just a simple thing, we're all busy and overworked. But it's even just, you know, if it's a simple word document. That's fine. But you know, just think about your subheadings making things bold. So, it's easy for us, just like what we do for our own day jobs, you know, make it easier for us to read and understand and, you know, make it where you can, and you know, be a word, be it in power. PDFs, with graphics and things that you know, showing the data side of things, make it appealing and stand out, and something that that you're proud of, and that will capture our eyes and our attention because they're the things that we'll you know we'll spend more time on, rather than trying to decipher a big block of text that takes a long time to read and comprehend.

Justine Stevenson

Thank you. I remember back in the day when we used to receive all of the entries on paper in huge, you know boxes and things, and we used to ship them out and all sorts of things. Those were the days when people used to like to send us, merch. So, you would get a campaign category, and you'd get the cap and the T-shirt and the mug and the mouse mat, and it was a bit a bit like we'll hang there. It was kind of like I can't really wade through all of this stuff to find out what's going on.

It all looks beautiful, and you know we take turns in trying the cap on and seeing whether the mug worked, but all of that felt like it was just a you know, it was it was a little bit extraneous. Actually, what we really wanted to dive into was the what did you do? And how did you actually make sure that that was something worth doing?

So, Danielle would like to a little bit about supporting materials? Group multiple things under one file if it's to demonstrate different ways of reaching a specific audience. Absolutely. Yes, I think it. And this again is one of the is a balance. So, particularly if you're looking in some of the categories which might be some of the strategy categories. I don't know whether any of the judges on the strategy categories last year. Some of them are quite big, I mean, you know, if you're looking at a yearlong strategy, particularly if it's ongoing, then there's a lot to say, right? So, when we, when we say, you know, supporting materials, they can be really useful visuals in particular people like to, you know, provide quite a lot of that visual kind of stimulus things that they've done.

But and you are able to group multiple things. And I like, I think, what you know you're saying, you might have a different version of different things because they are for a different audience. So absolutely you, you can do that. There are. I think it's the maximum of 3 files in supporting. But obviously, if you wanted to have, you know 4 quadrants on a page. If you were putting that in your supporting materials, then you could do that. But just taking on board what the what the judges have said. You know we still need that clarity and be able to see that clarity of thought in in what you were doing so absolutely can demonstrate that you've done, how you've thought about different stakeholders, different audiences with the different visuals or the different things that you've done. But just make sure that that doesn't cloud the clarity of the message.

Okay, are there any more questions? You're very welcome to ask it live, and it's some of these are so odd, in a way, in that we're a bunch of communicators and usually can't shut us up and then it comes to the ask a question. Oh. Alright! I'll give you a bit of time to think. I've got a few more questions that that I'll ask the panel that I think hopefully will help. So, I think we we've talked a little bit about, you know top tips and things that you do. I wonder if obviously, naming no names. I wonder if there's a particular entry that you can think about that? You've judged either maybe last year, or previously, that stood out for you. What was it that you that you really that really resonated with you. That really made you think. Yeah, I can see why this this is worthy of either shortlisting or putting through. I'll start with you, Claire.

Claire Widd

So, I have one, and every year it still comes into my mind just because of how impactful it was. And it was a really simple concept, and it was led by this organisation's employees, and it was around who they were as an organisation and what their culture meant to them. And the premise was really simple. They went out. All of their people asked their people to share what it meant, but they did it in a way that also reflected where those people were. So, you had local dialects. You had local phrases. Rebecca's probably smiling. She might be able to remember it. But it was just really simple, but the results for the organisation was significant.

And I think for me, that shows the power of obviously having your people involved in the work that you're doing. But what I was able to see all the way through their entry was where their objectives had come from, where their objectives were taking them. So, they'd really taken time to think about, okay, right? This is what we need to do. But how do we get there?

But they tied their story together all the way through. So, to go back to some of the points at the start of this session, you know, thinking about your entry with a beginning, a middle, and an end the middle. Sometimes it's easy to get lost, because it's easy to get lost in the details, and you think? Oh, but we did that, and we had this over here. But actually, I could follow that thread all the way through the entry, and then the supporting assets were really really simple. It was a video. It was a link to how they'd applied it to different channels, so I could see visually what that looked like.

Which for me is great, because, you know, to Will's point about being able to see that context and how it's moving the needle. I didn't have to try and jump into the organisation what it felt like. So, every year that one still sticks in my mind, I think it went on to win a couple of awards that year. But yeah, that's my favourite. I've seen so far.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. Thank you. And Sonia, have you got one that sticks in your mind?

Sonia Squires

Yes, there was this one, I mean, I wish I could share it. Because then I started following this organisation on LinkedIn because it was amazing. So, I did. I can give the category. It was around the events one I judged last year, and everything they really considered what said earlier around actually answering and demonstrating each of those 4 areas. It was so strong. But also, it really there were brilliant examples around how they'd involved colleagues. It wasn't, just, you know, stating it. The examples really brought it to life, but also going beyond that internal piece and showing how the impact that they could bring around joining up the dots, so that linkage with external comms as well, and sort of the brand and reputation it went beyond what was asked for within the remit. So that was sort of the cherry on top. And again, it was just so clear and concise, you know, as I said it was the first time I did it last year and it there is there was a lot to get through, and I think when people are really clear with their nominations.

It's brilliant, you know. It's really easy to understand, and you're sort of immersed into it straight away. So again, I can't emphasise that enough about that clarity piece is really critical. And you're right, Justine, what's brilliant about it? And you know for us as judges, it does take up that time, you know, pulling together that summary. But I was just looking at the ones from last year that I did, and it sort of really brought a smile to my face where the strengths were which has covered all of those parts, and being able to get that information can be so helpful as well to help organisations progress with where they're at now. But yeah, that will always bring a smile to my face.

Justine Stevenson

And Will have you got one?

Will Fox

Yes, I mean I think it was one that you know it last year. You know it. It didn't win, but it was something that, you know, still stays with me kind of like. You know what Claire and Sonia said, they had everything, you know, but they were authentic and honest in terms of the you know, the struggles and the things I had to overcome that you know, they said, look, and I guess it goes

back to that first question we had around. You know, a fixed term contract that you know, they said, look, these are our objectives. This is what we did, but then they kind of through that they integrated kind of the pride of their team. And you know, saying, well, actually, we had, you know, 2 people unexpectedly go off so. And you know, we all know what it's like with workloads. But they said, well, we had to completely pivot. So, this is why things have ended like this. And you know it wasn't, you know, the highest impact. But you know, it helped me to really understand. And it really kind of blew my mind away that, you know. Not only were they doing this, but it was just humbling that, you know. Okay, they've been authentic in their nomination and are putting across. You know, these are the challenges that we got through, but we got over them, and we're still really proud of what we did. And I think it's some things like that that really helped to add that this extra sparkle to the nominations. You know, it's great to see the numbers and the impact that some of those things to give us an extra context of what did you overcome. It helps us to understand that full picture kind of before and after, as well.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. And I and I think that I was just thinking of a couple of things as you're saying that I think there is there is that bit about it is a test of our skill. And so also think clearly about how you are going to construct your entry. Who is going to look at that for you, you know, who is going to do a kind of a proofread always good, but who is actually going to look at that with fresh eyes, and actually say, You know, ask them, can I? Can you tell the story from this? Can you actually work your way through it. And the other bit there will, with what you were saying that the entry you referenced that didn't win. But I think that's also important to remember is actually, you know, there is a winner of classes. And awards, after all, right, there's always going to be a winner in classes.

However shortlisted entries are. Also, they're rewarded an award of excellence because they are excellent, so that you might not win the class. But you might win an award of excellence which is a demonstration of the great work that you've done. You will also get all of that, you know. Kind of the critique stuff. It's the classic things, but like interviews, you know, you can only beat the competition that's there on the day. Sometimes somebody might well have knocked it out he park, and it just so happens that it was in the year that you entered that class. But don't, don't you know, feel that it's only that kind of the winner that is demonstrating excellence. We do also have awards of excellence which are really, you know, people really should feel good about having one of those, Sandra, do you have one that sticks out in your mind?

Sandra Lowman-Simpson

Yes, I think it's because it was a very, very small team of 3. And it was grass roots communication. Basically traditional. Going back to where we all started before. You know the rise of AI and technology and all that, that fantastic stuff, and what they did was they used the voice of the employees, in order to support their entry. And it was almost like, and I don't want to belittle it at all, because it was just amazing. And I think it's going to stick with me for a long time. But it was almost like going back to fairy liquid bottles and toilet rolls in order to create something amazing. And that's what was so powerful. In the judging of the entry and I think that they did win their category. I was absolutely elated for them, and you know you saw it when they went up on stage it was. I think they imagined that they were up against all the big guns, and they weren't going to be able to achieve it.

And I think, what I want to say is, you know, it doesn't matter how big or how small you are. Even if you are a sole communicator, give it a go and get an entry forward, because you know, there is this fear sometimes that you can be overshadowed by the big corporates. And that's not the case. Communications is communications, and if it's done well, then it's worth being awarded.

Justine Stevenson

Yeah, that's a really great message. Thank you. It yeah. It does not have to be the flashiest. It does not have to be the biggest budget, though those are the things that you know we don't consider. We, what we're looking at is that that clarity of what you're trying to do. I think I'm just thinking a little bit about some of the entries that I've seen in the past, and there are a couple of example. One of them was its gonna sound a little bit weird in this day and age, it was a few years ago, but it was about an employee survey, and they'd had trouble getting people to fill in the employee survey. So, what they did this the company very low. Budget very. Did it themselves. All user generated was and in a global company is they did a campaign with Michael Bubl 's "just haven't met you yet" song in the background.

They voiced it and had big sort of, you know, kind of cartoon cut out, you know, quote marks and things, and they videoed themselves around the world with their lip syncing to just haven't met you yet with some quotes on their quote boards to talk to people about why they should enter the survey. They were able then to show that they had been able, since following the campaign, that they've been able to get high participation rates. It was so simple it cost absolutely nothing, apart from a little bit of editing time, and yet the creativity that they'd shown in looking for a different approach. And it was quite funny watching all of these various people around the world trying to lip sync to Michael Bubl .

It just showed a real sort of like touch of creativity which felt a little bit different. That was one that that stuck in my mind. And then there was another one a couple of years ago, which was based on it was based on the series, you know, like come and look at my crib and it was I and I, because I know them, I can tell you it was for Virgin Atlantic, and the great thing about it was, it was basically someone showing you around my crib. It was showing you around a plane, and it was for the employees who don't always get on the plane didn't necessarily.

But what was great about it was, it felt, really authentic to the virgin culture. So, the virgin culture is quite light-hearted. It is quite that, you know. It has that thing about it. And what it felt was it was really authentic. To them it was. It was amusing, it was light-hearted, it was informational, and they were able to show them that for particularly if they had reps who didn't use their planes regularly, but we're trying to sell flights, and what have you, it really gave them something that they were able to engage with having somebody, just, you know, go around with an iPhone showing you what the plane was going to look like was not going to have the same impact. They were able to show that they tapped into the culture of the company, and something that was actually going to resonate with their employees, so that that for me was a real was a highlight, because it was just fun but it felt very much them and they were able to demonstrate that.

So, I think Mary's asked me a couple of questions about difference between the early bird and standard entries. I suspect you might want to know them. The amounts. I don't know that, but I expect Rebecca either does or can point you in the right direction. There is a monetary difference, so there is a is a is a budget consideration. If you can enter early. And I think we'll be able to point you in the right direction for that.

Any other questions from anyone.

Okay? Well, while you're just doing a last thing, I'm gonna prep the judges on the for this question. I'm gonna ask you about your favourite class or category of entries and I'll ask you that in just a second. So hopefully. We've been able to give you a bit of a flavour of what judges are looking for. I think you know the passion for these awards, and the judging that goes into it, I think, has come over in spades. Oh, Elodie, you'd like to ask a question to go away. Yeah.

Elodie Barron

Yeah, is that okay? I just thought you busier to speak. So, Rebecca, at the start, talk about the different step, broadly. We know we want to enter some categories, but we still need to do the work in the, you know, in the background to submit our entry. Is it still worth purchasing the entry? Now, shall I wait that we've got more to submit? And we can start actually filling the form.

Rebecca Nicholls

It, it would depend. If you can submit by the 28th of February, then it's worth purchasing now. But if you can't, then no, because it then wouldn't count as early bird, and it would go to standard. So, it depends if you if you can do them by the end of Feb, then yes.

Purchase now, but if you think you need more time in the April deadline is probably more realistic than purchase. The standard.

Elodie Barron

Okay, okay, that's helpful. Thank you.

Justine Stevenson

But do you know, you don't have to have all of the information ready now, if you do think you could do it by the end of February. Then you could start the process now and then go back to the draft and fill it in afterwards. It doesn't all have to be ready all at the same time.

Elodie Barron

Okay.

Justine Stevenson

So, I think, yeah. The passion of our judges, I think, has come over from what they've shared with us. And they are obviously a superstar select panel but one of a larger panel, some of a larger panel. Who give up their time to judge the awards for which we are very, very grateful, because, as we say, that's a big differentiator for us. So, thank you very much to them for joining this, but also for judging. Thank you to you for joining this. We hope it's been useful.

If there are other things that come to you afterwards, then awards@ioic.org.uk is your place to go, because then then you can do this thing so as a little bit of a sign off, I'll just do a quick round. So, Claire, what's your favourite in the awards.

Claire Widd

My favourite is channels, because I find a lot of them do get very technical, and I love “nerding” strategies that have been put in place, particularly around Internet. Yeah, channel is my favourite.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. Thank you and Will?

Will Fox

I was gonna say channels. So, I think you know, only because you know one of them, I came into a new job and like, oh, yes, that's one that I was I know about. But I think for me it's, you know, a lot of the campaigns that you know when they show kind of the impact, and that you know where they've changed the needle, seen some of those amazing ones. And, as Sandra said, they don't need to be fancy they can be really basic. But seeing that that basic campaigns can massively change needles for me, some of those entries. Yeah, just have been really memorable.

Justine Stevenson

Lovely. Thank you. And Sandra.

Sandra Lowman-Simpson

For me. It's teams. Whether you're a team of one. You've still got a network of peers around you, so it's fantastic to see how people sort of leverage the connections they've got. And if you're a team that's bigger than one, then, you know, it's lovely to see how the team works together, because ultimately, we are a fantastic tribe and you know, we all support each other wherever we are on the planet. And for me. Teams is the one.

Justine Stevenson

Brilliant. Thank you. And last, but not least, again, Sonia.

Sonia Squires

Thank you. And so, mine would be the strategy one. But around, particularly around the employee voice, I think you know. Talk about this a lot where I am. But around, you know, communication isn't just that one way. And I think something like that around, how do we actually get in the voices and work with colleagues the organisation. So hopefully, I can put my name down for that, Rebecca, for.

Justine Stevenson

I'm putting in a marker, but the weather. Awesome. Thank you. And just to reiterate what Sandra just said that I have the immense privilege of presenting the awards on the awards dinner. It's wonderful to give an award to anybody. It is a fantastic privilege to do it. But, when you are able to do that with the team who've won, and to see the joy on their faces as they come up. It's

amazing. It is amazing. So, it's the people ones are brilliant. They're all brilliant. I love them. But the people ones in particular. Okay, thanks. Danielle, who can't come off mute. Sorry about that has asked a couple of questions. I can respond to those in the text for you, but on the word count and the background section, we'll answer those for you in the chat, but otherwise, I think if there's no more questions, we will finish. But thank you so much to the panel. Thank you for joining and really look forward to seeing your entries.

Sonia Squires

Thank you.

Justine Stevenson

Thank you, everyone. Thank you. Bye.