

IOIC Awards 2026: Skills.

Best AI Skills in Internal Communication

AI Academy. A learning experience packed with content that puts AI to work by Forty1, part of Inizio Engage

We transformed AI training from passive learning into a living, social content experience. Employees didn't just learn about AI, they learned with AI.

Facing a widening capability gap (over half of our team weren't using AI tools at all, despite 78% expressing a desire to do so) and a growing leadership need for clarity around AI, we created a nine-week, multi-path experience that reimaged internal learning content as interactive, immersive, collaborative and fun.

Using a host of emerging tech to 'walk the AI walk', we delivered rich, engaging content on a budget. Synthetic characters, voice cloning, AI-powered simulations, interactive avatars and GenAI image creation all worked hand in hand with a highly crafted and standout visual identity and tone of voice.

Tech plus human creativity grabbed attention and delivered big results. Active usage of AI tools trebled for key groups, confidence increased by 47% and perceived capability by 42%.

Accelerate, Augment, Redefine: Building Responsible AI Skills in Internal Communication at Network Rail by Kaleb Ells, Network Rail

Over this year, we have built and applied AI skills across Network Rail's Internal Communications function to strengthen how we target, tailor and accelerate internal communication for 40,000 employees. We approached AI as a communications capability, using a practical model – Accelerate → Augment → Redefine – to help colleagues assess where AI adds value, experiment safely and embed it into planning and delivery.

The programme combined four elements: clear guardrails and policy-aligned practice; purposeful use of approved tools; hands-on enablement through team sessions, shared resources and peer support; and measurement to prove value. We created an AI hub with communications-specific guidance, trained teams across the function, and developed bespoke tools including Alplyer, tone-of-voice agents, briefing assistants, frontline templates and data-analysis accelerators.

Outcomes include 60% frequent AI use across communications, around two hours saved per person per week, faster leadership approvals, more personalised employee communications, and an estimated £150,000 annualised ROI.

Roll out of Microsoft Copilot at Royal London by Royal London

Royal London's roll out of Microsoft Copilot marked a significant shift in how colleagues work, collaborate and build digital skills for the future. What began as the introduction of new technology was deliberately positioned as a cultural and behavioural transformation: one where communications played a central enabling role.

Following Microsoft's Early Access Programme, a phased and colleague-centric communications approach was developed to support a group-wide roll out in June 2025. This drove confidence, trust and helped with longer-term adoption.

Copilot was launched in a way that was accessible, trusted, empowering for colleagues and relevant to their everyday work. It positioned internal communications as a critical enabler of a transformational programme that made sure colleagues felt informed, supported and confident stepping into an AI enabled way of working.

The result was 87% active users in the organisation by December 2025 as well as improved productivity, stronger digital confidence and a culture increasingly open to experimentation and innovation. This brought Royal London closer to its ambition of being digital-first.

Best Design/Imagery

The road to Day one - Aviva acquires Direct Line Group by Aviva Integration Internal Communications Team

Aviva's acquisition of Direct Line Group (DLG) is a game changer for the UK insurance industry – a transformation that reshapes the market, not just the headlines. As a leading insurance, wealth and retirement business serving over 20m customers, Aviva is focused on becoming a capital light, growth driven organisation. Acquiring DLG boosts Aviva's scale, strengthens its competitive edge and creates exciting new opportunities for customers and colleagues.

This entry celebrates the design-led approach that brought this complex journey to life. Working hand-in-hand with the Integration Internal Communications team, a dedicated in-house Design Lead played a vital role in shaping how colleagues experienced the acquisition.

Through accessible design and purposeful visual storytelling, communication became a strategic tool - not just to inform, but to reassure, connect and inspire – making sure colleagues felt informed, included and ready for what came next.

Clarins - Transforming Internal Comms Through Design and Intentional Imagery by Clarins x Cocentric

Clarins UK transformed its internal communications platform into a visually coherent, brand/design-led digital experience aligned with its premium brand identity. Delivered by a two-person team supporting approximately 1,200 employees, Workvivo was built on a pre-launch visual framework prioritising hierarchy, consistency, and accessibility.

The project introduced branded banners, icon-led navigation, structured post formats, and mobile-first layouts, ensuring strategic, cultural, and functional messaging was clearly distinguished. Governance reduced active Spaces from over 200 to 69, improving clarity and ownership. Adoption exceeded 90% within two months and active usage has remained consistently high. The platform now delivers a modern internal experience that reinforces brand premiumness while improving usability and operational efficiency.

This project demonstrates that premium design has positively influenced engagement, belonging, and brand connection both internally and externally.

The Makers by ITV and 44 Communications

To mark ITV's 70th anniversary, The Makers brought a new colleague recognition programme to life – one that linked the company's heritage with its future. Built around the purpose Making What Matters, it recognised colleagues whose work embodied ITV's new values and behaviours. To land it in a crowded internal communications calendar, a standout design was required to support the campaign's aims. Within four weeks, we achieved 777 nominations (versus a target of 200) and over 70% of colleagues said the campaign made them proud to work at ITV. Beyond numbers, The Makers

brand helped connect 70 years of storytelling to a renewed sense of purpose – reminding everyone at ITV that Making What Matters starts with the people who make it happen.

The LEGO Group's Colleague Experience Brand by The LEGO Group & Interbrand

As the LEGO Group has grown by 74% since 2017 to over 33,000 colleagues, internal communications became increasingly fragmented, with more than 15 inconsistent internal brands competing for attention. This created confusion and failed to present a clear, engaging picture of the colleague experience. To address this, the Colleague Engagement team partnered with Interbrand to develop a single, cohesive brand platform for the LEGO colleague experience, anchored in the People Promise: Succeed and Grow Together.

Launched in March 2025, the platform unifies all people-related communications through a core theme and three distinctive subthemes – Develop, Enable and Inspire – supported by practical tools including a brand cookbook, templates, training and a central brand hub. The new approach has driven consistency, clarity and engagement across campaigns and resources, contributing to strong colleague feedback and improved awareness of the People Promise, while supporting sustained high motivation and satisfaction scores.

Best Feature/Writing

The R2-D2 to our Luke Skywalker by Aviva IWR Internal Communications Team

Aviva set out to announce an industry first, AI-supported underwriting tool designed to remove repetitive tasks and free their underwriters to focus on the decisions that really matter. Instead of a technical update, Jessica Storey, Senior Internal Communications Manager and shadow author of the feature, transformed the moment into a story colleagues could instantly connect with. Framed through the lens of Star Wars, the article introduced the capability as “the R2 D2 to our Luke Skywalker underwriters” – using the analogy to create familiarity with an unknown technology through one of the most famous Gen AI characters in popular culture.

Jessica delivered a bold, human and memorable narrative that demystified AI, celebrated the people behind the innovation, and sparked excitement across the business. The result was more than engagement; it was a moment of pride for Aviva’s leadership position in AI innovation.

Best Storytelling

Moments that Changed Me by Aviva Group Campaigns Team

What if one story could change how our colleagues see our senior leaders?

Moments that changed me is a bold storytelling series that invited leaders across the UK, Ireland and Canada to share the experiences, challenges and moments that shaped who they are today. It asked for honesty over polish, and for many leaders, it was the first time they had spoken so openly at work. The impact was immediate. Colleagues connected not with job titles, but with people - their memories, identities and turning points.

These stories sparked conversations across teams, encouraged reflection and created a level of openness we hadn't reached through traditional leadership visibility.

What began as a small, brave experiment quickly became a trusted format. Starting in one area and soon scaling across Aviva, we invited leaders from every part of the business to take part.

Colleagues didn't just listen - they related. One story sparked another, as people across the business shared their own moments and found connection where distance once existed.

A Vital Spark: How storytelling powered a shipbuilding transformation by BAE Systems Naval Ships Communications Team

In 2025, BAE Systems Naval Ships prepared to open a transformational new shipbuilding hall in Glasgow, an enormous facility that would fundamentally change how complex warships are built and become the daily workplace for hundreds of employees. Central to the future of shipbuilding in Scotland, its scale, capability and strategic importance made it essential that colleagues understood not only what the facility would do, but why it mattered.

Named after Janet Harvey, a pioneering World War II electrician, the hall presented a rare opportunity to connect people to this change through storytelling. Working to tight timescales and limited budget, our communications team adopted a narrative led approach that brought together past, present and future. By using Janet's story to humanise a complex industrial facility, we created connection, pride and engagement to transform a building into a shared symbol of purpose and progress.

The Difference Makers: Storytelling that reconnected 4,000 colleagues with purpose by Internal Communications team, Clarion Housing Group

In 2025, Clarion Housing Group marked its 125th anniversary while delivering a major transformation programme, Connect. With more than 4,000 colleagues working across diverse frontline and office-based roles, many reported wanting to feel more connected to Clarion's purpose and to better understand the impact of their work. To meet this need, the Internal Communications & Engagement team placed storytelling at the heart of the anniversary year and the 2025 Roadshows.

A suite of powerful stories—told through films, a photography-led book, live podcast conversations, colleague case studies and surprise recognition moments—created emotional resonance and made complex change simple and human. The refreshed “live magazine” Roadshow format brought these stories to life, supported by a new network of 60 Anniversary Activators.

The approach delivered outstanding results: record Roadshow attendance, strong understanding of Connect, and overwhelming feedback that colleagues felt inspired, valued and proud of the difference they make.

Reflections: stories of Remembrance, sacrifice and legacy by Defence Equipment and Support

For Remembrance 2025, a small team of 2 videographers, 1 photographer, and 1 internal communications specialist pulled off a never seen before approach to the annual campaign. With conflict continuing in Europe, and potential threats feeling closer than ever – bringing home the true impact of war seemed poignant this Armistice Day.

Collaborating with the Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) Padre, veterans network and serving personnel, the campaign was shaped around encapsulating the true experience of those that have dedicated themselves to fight for our country.

Modernising the normal approach, our colleagues that participated in the video told their stories from the battlefield. Explaining the highs and lows, laughing together and crying together as their stories unfolded on camera. Each decision was made to bring rawness and vulnerability to the conversation, capturing the attention and emotions of our audience. The experience for all involved or watching was one to never forget.

DOME LIFT 2 at Hinkley Point C nuclear power station by EDF Energy and 44 Communications

For more than 10 years, our team at 44 Communications has worked with Hinkley Point C (HPC) to bring the story of Europe’s largest construction project to life. It’s a site where more than 15,000 people are building two new nuclear reactors on the Somerset coast.

In summer 2025, HPC prepared to deliver one of its most significant engineering milestones – installing the enormous steel dome that forms the roof of the second reactor. Larger than the dome of St Paul’s Cathedral, this structure was more than an engineering achievement; it was a powerful symbol of progress, teamwork and national significance.

Our role was to capture and amplify that moment for a diverse, hard to reach workforce, creating content that built excitement, celebrated a collaborative achievement and strengthened a shared sense of purpose.

Through a special edition of our monthly newspaper The Point, immersive on the day reporting, and close collaboration with HPC’s onsite comms team, we delivered storytelling that united the project around a historic moment.

Breakthrough Stories by Lloyds Banking Group

Breakthrough Stories is Lloyds Banking Group's flagship storytelling series, created to bring one of the UK's largest financial services transformations to life at a critical moment for colleagues.

As the Group entered a pivotal phase of its five year strategy, Breakthrough Stories shifted the focus from effort to impact - celebrating the moments where years of investment in technology, data, skills and collaboration began to unlock real, visible breakthroughs for customers, colleagues and businesses.

Through bold creative execution and human centred storytelling, the series shows what we can do now that we couldn't before: from data driven insight platforms and market leading digital propositions to landmark contract wins made possible by true cross team collaboration. Each story connects strategy to everyday work, helping colleagues recognise their role in progress.

By turning complex transformation into compelling proof points, Breakthrough Stories build belief, momentum and pride - reinforcing Lloyds Banking Group's purpose to help Britain prosper.