

People



IoIC  
Awards  
2025

## Best Internal Communications Newcomer

### ***Samantha Linning, BDP (Building Design Partnership)***

Samantha Linning has served as the Internal Communications Manager at BDP for nearly three years, transforming the function into a strategic asset.

As BDP's first dedicated internal communications specialist, she has worked closely with senior stakeholders to produce internal publications, develop communication plans for key campaigns and align messaging with business priorities. In doing so, she has taken the business function under one purview, unifying previously disparate efforts.

Her approach is underpinned by rigorous research, grassroots feedback and a using all available data, to ensuring ongoing improvement. Drawing on her digital marketing background and enhanced by a Distinction in the IoIC Level 6 Advanced Diploma, Samantha has introduced initiatives that have boosted employee engagement and refined communication practices.

She strives to produce work based on thoughtful strategies, strengthens internal communications and meets evolving organisational needs.

### ***Lianne Moulder, Admiral Group PLC***

Lianne is a rising star in internal communications, having transitioned from a technical role in 2022. She has successfully built two specialist communication areas within Admiral, while prioritising self-development to ground herself in internal communications best practices from the outset. Her dedication to achieving functional objectives through her communications, bolstered by a data-driven approach, has led to visible shifts in how her function operates with a 'one-function' mindset, supported by both quantitative and qualitative metrics. Lianne is more than just a newcomer; she is a dynamic force, exemplifying the impact you can make in an internal communications career.

### ***Katie Queen, Nucleus Financial***

Katie has quickly become a cornerstone of Nucleus's internal communications function. Her curiosity, drive to learn, and genuine love for storytelling are evident in everything she does. Whether mastering new platforms like HubSpot and SharePoint, supporting others with writing guidance, or leading inclusion campaigns - Katie brings a contagious energy that lifts those around her. She collaborates closely with the Head of Internal Communications, learning and contributing in equal measure, and continually seeks out opportunities to enhance how the business communicates internally.

Katie sees internal communication as a tool for connection, belonging, and driving purpose. Her vision is to champion a more inclusive and engaging employee experience, ensuring every voice is heard and valued. With strong foundations in place and an appetite for continued growth, Katie is well on her way



to becoming a future leader in IC - one who will continue to challenge the status quo, innovate, and shape the future of the profession.

***Nathan Ruff, TUI UK&I***

Nathan Ruff joined TUI UK&I's Internal Communications & Engagement team in 2022 and has since become a standout force in the profession. In just over two years, Nathan has grown from a graduate apprentice to a trusted, creative, and strategic internal communicator – helping to deliver some of the most engaging campaigns of the year. From leading high-impact moments like our Luton Town FC partnership and Davina McCall Town Hall, to scaling our flagship eCoffee programme, Nathan has consistently driven connection, pride and participation across a dispersed colleague base. His drive to learn, improve and lead with heart has not only earned him a promotion but a reputation for being authentic, dependable and inspiring. Nathan continually delivers great internal comms and for someone early in their career, he's making waves and showing us all that his potential is limitless!

## Internal Communication Manager of the Year

### ***Ranjani Dhanabalakrishnan, St Giles Trust***

After the pandemic, St Giles Trust tripled in size. Many of its staff bring firsthand experience of poverty, homelessness or the criminal justice system — lived experience that shapes how the charity works.

But traditional internal communications weren't landing. Emails were missed. Key updates got lost. To fix it, St Giles created a new internal communications role — a team of one: Ranjani. She made sure information was clear, accessible, and easy to engage with.

More broadly, she acts as a go-between, linking the executive to the needs and challenges of the highly diverse staff.

### ***Hester Lonergan, Cooper Parry***

In 2024, Cooper Parry grew from 1150 to over 1600 people. The business needed more robust ways of communicating in place to make sure colleagues could go on the rapid change journey with confidence and clarity.

Hester was hired for her reputation as an exceptional senior IC manager, with a strong background in content operations, channel management and high-performing storytelling. And she didn't disappoint. With a clear objective to operationalise the internal comms function for scale and engagement, Hester transformed the firm's comms approach. She built top-notch, scalable solutions, making the absolute most of existing channels and whipping content into shape with best-in-class editorial support and constant focus on managing volume. And all of this with industry-leading engagement.

This year, Hester proved that she's best in class when it comes to internal comms.

### ***Lucy Pearce, AXA***

Lucy has brought the global internal communications from zero to pivotal. Joining the business in May, she quite literally put comms on the agenda from day one. Lucy influenced and persuaded senior leaders that a strong internal identity would act as a foundation for purposeful and inclusive comms, to power the delivery of strategic business objectives. The result was a successful campaign to launch a new name, purpose, ambition, strategy and behaviours. This involved colleague workshops, coaching leaders on storytelling and leading a project group to work at pace to deliver to tight deadlines. Lucy cut through the jargon to craft one consistent narrative and come up with a simple and memorable way to present the strategy. It launched with a global event in December, achieving near 100% satisfaction from colleagues surveyed. One C-suite member said: "It's quite incredible how much we've achieved and Lucy deserves all of the credit for leading us through it."

## Internal Communication Leader of the Year

### ***Shalini Gupta, ARUP***

Shalini Gupta stepped into 2024 as Head of Internal Communications for Arup's UKIMEA region, ready to lead through one of the most pivotal years in the firm's journey. With a new regional strategy, incoming Chair, and structural changes underway, Shalini recognised the need for clarity, connection, and consistency more than ever.

She led her team in launching The Big 5 – a bold, purpose-led narrative that brought the strategy to life through inclusive storytelling and authentic voices. Shalini embedded listening at the heart of the comms rhythm, empowered her growing team, and ensured that thousands of colleagues not only understood the 'why' behind the strategy, but felt inspired to help deliver it.

Her leadership repositioned internal communications as a strategic enabler of business success. Recognised by the Board and across the profession, Shalini continues to shape impact both within Arup and through her roles on the IoIC and Asian Comms Network Boards.

### ***Candy Hall, TUI UK&I***

In a year marked by transformation, TUI UK&I's Internal Communications Senior Manager, Candy Hall, has redefined what great communication leadership looks like. Leading a small but mighty team of four, Candy has elevated internal communications from a delivery function to a strategic driver of engagement, clarity, and culture across a diverse workforce of 10,000+ colleagues. Against a backdrop of major leadership changes, shifting structures, and evolving colleague expectations, she has championed innovation, built trust with senior leaders, and created meaningful, people-first campaigns that cut through and connect. From reimagining Town Halls and festive campaigns to influencing global strategy and investing in her team's development, Candy's work has made internal comms a credible force in shaping business success. Her blend of strategic thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence has not only delivered measurable results – it's fostered a renewed sense of purpose, pride, and possibility across the organisation.

### ***Sharn Kleiss, Gallagher Communication***

Sharn Kleiss doesn't lead a comms team—she leads a conversation that shapes the internal communication profession globally. As the driving force behind Gallagher's State of the Sector report, she curates insight from thousands of practitioners and turns it into clear, actionable direction for the industry. In 2024 alone, her work reached thousands of professionals through events, roundtables, webinars, podcasts, and conferences, while her engaging presentation style and thought-provoking commentary earned widespread praise.

Beyond events, Sharn fostered community and collaboration through steering groups, focus groups and practitioner discussions, ensuring diverse voices help shape the sector's most influential data set. Her work empowers comms leaders to challenge convention, benchmark performance, and influence strategic decision-making. Without managing a team, Sharn has become a catalyst for change—capturing

the pulse of the profession, elevating its impact, and helping IC practitioners find both clarity and confidence in complex times.

***Caroline Macdonald, Nucleus Financial***

Caroline's leadership in internal communications has been transformative during a year of significant change at Nucleus. She expertly guided the integration of Curtis Banks, the acquisition of Third Financial, and the development of a new retail pension platform, all while maintaining employee engagement with clear and consistent messaging. Caroline partnered closely with the CEO to craft a narrative that aligned with the company's growth strategy, embedding values and vision through regular communication channels such as the CEO's blog, town halls, and roadshows.

Her strategic oversight of the company's digital overhaul, including the launch of the "Main Stage" intranet, revolutionised internal communications, driving a £70k annual saving while significantly improving employee experience. With an impressive 75% overall engagement score, Caroline's efforts have directly influenced key areas such as values, strategy, and inclusion. Her leadership has not only driven communication excellence but also contributed to a culture of trust, collaboration, and growth at Nucleus.