

Justine Stevenson: Hello, and welcome as you're joining. So, we'll get going. We are recording the session, and we will share the recording. Rebecca's just confirmed in lots of places, so if, if people join and they're missing the very beginning of the session, then they will have an opportunity to, to find out what happened at the beginning. But just to... to say welcome, thank you very much for joining. I'm Justine Stevenson, so I am the awards chair for IoIC.

I have been looking after the awards for many years. I don't know how many, but many years, in various guises. I'm actually a previous IoIC board member, but in my day job, I am Director of Internal Comms, and Employee Engagement at AQA. Now, I always apologize at this point, because AQA is the exam board. Many of you will have sat our exams, and it probably gave you trauma. Apologies if that trauma has just been revisited. But I'll, be taking us through the session today. And I'm delighted that we have three of our judging panel who have joined us. I'll ask them to introduce themselves so that you have an idea of the expertise that you have in front of you. So, Ali, let's start with you.

Allison Cary: Hi everyone, thank you. So, I'm Alli Carey, I am head of internal and external communication at Voyage Care. We're a national, social care organisation specialising in care and support for people with complex needs, learning disabilities, autism, etc. I've worked in health and social care for 15 years. 9 years specialising in internal communications, coming up to 10 years this year. At Voyage Care, I'm really fortunate to lead a multi-award-winning team, including success at these awards, 6 years on the trot, from 2020 to now.

And I've served for a judge for the past 3 years, and it's something I get an incredible amount from. It's something that raises the bar for all of us, so I'm really passionate about, about awards, and specifically the IoIC awards as well, because the feedback that gets shared from the judges. So yeah, that's... that's me in a nutshell, and I'm going to hand back. Thank you.

Justine Stevenson: Thank you. And Shalini.

Shalini Gupta: Yeah, hi everyone. My name is Shalini Gupta. I'm the Head of Internal Communications for Arup's UK IMEA Business. Arup is a design consultancy architectural firm. Designing the Sydney Opera House is our claim to fame that helps people understand what we do in terms of large infrastructure projects. I've been here 4 years.

I worked in internal comms for over 20 years across, India, Dubai, and in London, most of my career in London, across financial services, telecoms, insurance, and now in the built environment. Pretty similar to Ali, I've been a judge, for the IoIC Awards, as well as I've seen

my team win awards, and myself, Leader of the Year, not too far back. It's been, I think, good to have been on both the sides over the last couple of years, and see the process of judging, and also, with my team, and seeing the other wins. I'm also a board member, IoIC board member, for the last year and a half. Yeah, so that's about me.

Justine Stevenson: Lovely, thank you. And Jarrod?

Jarrod Williams: Cool, thank you. So, yeah, my name's, Jarrod. I work for St. James's Place as head of digital, channels. Job title changes regularly, so I have to keep track of it. So St. James's Place, for those who don't know, we are the UK's largest wealth management firm, a FTSE 100, and we're also one of the homes to some of the UK's largest asset funds as well. So, I've been here for about 3 years, and predominantly in that time, I've focused on internal communications and channels.

But previous to that, I spent most of my career in not-for-profit housing associations, across a broad range of different disciplines, but, always, always in a homogenous role that included internal and external. And also, in my volunteer time, I volunteer with the Air Cadets and, lead a team of volunteers who look after the comms. For the air cadets as well, doing internal and external in that world.

This is only my... this will be my second-year judging, the IoIC, so I'm the newbie here, and got an intro to the process in the world last year, but as we were talking about earlier, have entered many an award in the past as well, and experienced both sides of the journey.

Justine Stevenson: Brilliant, thank you. So, I hope that gives you a little bit of a sense of, some of the people who will be judging our awards this year. They are part of, a larger panel, all are experienced internal communicators, people who know our industry really well, versed in what makes great communication. I'm very, very lucky to work with such a talented group of people in judging the awards. It's, it's fantastic that we are able to do that.

And I think this is... this is one of the real points about the IoIC Awards that does make us different from other awards. Not only are you getting that expertise in terms of ranking, all of the, entries that we get, but you're also getting really good feedback on all of those awards, so our awards will always have a numerical score for various, of the criteria, but you will also get some written feedback, which is... which helps to identify the things that the judges think have looked really good and have been done well, and some areas, some potential areas for improvement. And it's that bit that... that does really give some value back when you're entering awards. That what... whatever happens you will get some really high-quality feedback from, experts in the field.

So, today is really about, is just giving a little bit of an overview from our perspective of what we're looking for when we're judging awards, some of the things that we look for, trying to

give you some hints and tips. But it's really for you as well. So, where you've got particular questions, that might be about the process but it might also be about content and how to construct a good, award entry, then do, do, put your hand up, put something into the chat. If something comes to you while we're speaking, don't be afraid to jump in and ask us a question. Pretty informal, we just want it to be as useful as possible to people who are thinking about entering.

So, firstly, I'll just give a very quick overview, of the classes, the awards, and, and a couple of the changes that we've made this year. So, we always, at the beginning of every awards process, we do a bit of a review of what are the classes, what are the categories, what have we got, what was popular in entries, what hasn't been, what do we need to help change so people know what they're doing.

We have 39 classes, so it's really comprehensive. There should be something for everyone. It comes across strategy, skills, channels, innovation, new ways of working, and then the people and team awards. All of that information is on the website, so you can look in and there's lots of detail about what the criteria are and what we would be looking for.

We have made some changes this year, particularly in response to AI. We started to see, particularly last year, it's... it was there to some extent, but particularly last year, started to see a lot of AI used in putting together submissions. Some of it done really well. Some of it, not quite so well. So, we've updated that. We don't expect people to not use AI. It's a key tool, it's very useful. So, we're fine that people are using it, but we do want it to be of good quality, so we've provided some guidance on how we expect AI to be used in entries.

And we've put in some new and refined some classes, so in strategy, best strategic alignment and strategy communication, so really looking at that bit about how do we align ourselves to business priorities and strategy. Best Leadership Communication Program, again, in the strategy category, and that's very much looking at how we're communicating with our leaders. A best listening programme, also in strategy, we, we've begun to see, some really quite innovative ways that people are listening, hurrah! And so, wanted to absolutely give that its place. And then in skills, a category specifically about how people have used those AI skills, again, we've given some advice on... on that.

So, and then I'll... Apologies if you can hear any banging in the background of our building. It feels somebody is trying to break in. Maybe, maybe they're upset with their exam results, I don't know, whatever's going on.

So, I'm gonna do a very, very quick run-through of the entry process, because it's, it's important. Thank you, Rebecca. So, it's... it's important that this, but it's a bit boring, and

it's not the thing that you've come for, so I'm just going to do a quick whizz through this, and then we'll get into asking questions of our panel.

Everything is done through the website. It's a very simple process. I can use it, which does mean that pretty much everyone should be able to use it. You need to purchase your entry, and there is clear instructions on how to do that. Then you'll get a link to be able to enter and upload all of your documents. There's lots of guidance, particularly on word count. Word count is one of those things, I mean it's a bit of a moot point, but let me tell you that these judges, sometimes the categories are big, and we have lots of entries to, to look at, so look at, crispness, pay attention to the word count, because... because otherwise that can count against you.

You can provide supporting material, there's some examples on the website, anything that you think will strengthen your entry and give us some good evidence for what you've been doing. The application form is in there. The deadlines are important, so it's 13th of February, early Valentine's present, for early bird entries, so if you want that discount it has...form entry has to be submitted by the 13th of February. We've got a little bit longer if you are going for a standard entry and you've got until the 17th of April.

Discounts are available, so if you're going to enter three, each entry is one purchase, single purchase, separate purchase, but if you're going to do three or more, you'll get a discount, and there is a 10% discount for not-for-profit or public sector entries.

You'll get the critique, as I said, and there is so much information. There is loads of guidance on the website, so I would really recommend, as you're putting together your entries, that you have a look at that.

So that's just a quick whizz through. You might have some questions on that, particularly when you've looked at the website, which we can always come back to.

But let's start with getting some input from our judges, and a little bit about their responses and their reactions to being judges, and the things that they've really, appreciated and found useful in the past. So, I'm gonna ask you all, to tell us a little bit about what makes you want to judge. And... and why? Why is it important to you that you are an IoC judge? And I'll start with you, Alli, if that's okay?

Allison Cary: Of course. So, as I alluded to when I introduced myself, I've been really fortunate to see firsthand the impact success in awards programs can have on my wider team. It's a really important point of development for me, that my team are able to pitch the things that they've been working on and see how they stack up against what's out there. And it also encourages us to learn and to drive for those outcomes as well. So, if you're doing a piece of work and thinking while you're doing it, well, if this is something we think

could be potentially ward-worthy. It makes you take a slightly different approach to it, so on all counts, I find it just raises the bar and raises the level a little bit.

And I think it's a real privilege to be part of the awards on this side of the table, because you just get to see so much incredible practice. You are inspired... I'm inspired every single year by the different awards categories that I've worked on, and you're able to take that into your practice, obviously, and it's something that I'm able to share with my team. So really, I think it's... yes, it's a time commitment, but actually you get so much back from it, and having seen the impact it has for my team, it's something I'm really proud to be able to contribute to for others.

Justine Stevenson: Lovely, thank you. And Jarrod, what about you? As a newer judge, what is it that you get out of it?

Jarrod Williams: Yeah, I mean, some of it's already been mentioned, but I think what sets the IoIC different to maybe some award schemes elsewhere, is that there is a... it's one of the few awards where there's genuinely a centre of learning and improvement. So, the point we've already made around the feedback that's required from judges to be provided. In other awards that I've been part of, it's been can you give us the little paragraph we can put in the pamphlet that sits on the tables at the end, and that's all you really need to submit, and some scores. Whereas this, there is genuine care and push from the IoIC to make sure that every score has very clear reasons behind it, and that final critique is in depth for everyone. It shows where they can try again next year if they didn't quite hit the mark, or where the areas of improvement are, and I think that is relatively unique.

So that's the selfless side as well, being part of this seeing all these inspirational things going on in the community. The selfish side, of course, as well, I also get to see some amazing pieces of work from across the profession, and see what public sector are doing, people with limited resources, the financial institutions, people from other sectors, and get a broad mix, and ultimately go where am I positioned against this, and am I doing great? So I say, it's great to be part and judge. It's also great to see some of those entries come in and see the work that's going on across the community.

Justine Stevenson: Lovely, thank you. And Shalini?

Shalini Gupta: Yeah, I think Jarrod and Ali have said most of the things. I think the key for me is we often forget, as internal communicators, we promote good stories happening across the business, but we forget about self-promotion. So, I think the awards are such an important validation. I think as a country we don't self-promote. We think, oh gosh do we promote ourselves? But it's just so important, not just for ourselves for our teams. But also for the business and leaders, where every day we are working hard to, whether, you call it

the cliched a seat at the table or trying to prove the strategic value and intent of internal comms, and so on and so forth.

But as well as across the industry, when you go through entry writing, and I think the strengths that you treat through writing the narrative, and I've seen my team do that, starting from a point of doubt to, do we really think we should enter this? To having written the entry along with me and seeing themselves getting shortlisted and then winning or not winning in some cases. And I think that validation is hugely important, for us as internal communicators generally.

So, I think for those reasons, please, please, please do enter. If you're having any doubts about entering, it shows... the awards show the best of our profession. And it just not just raises the bar, but I think it just recognizes the good work that we really want to promote, more than just across our industry, but wider out there when you put it out on LinkedIn. And to your future employers, not a lot of us are thinking about that proactively, but then there are future employers, recruiters watching, what you're promoting on LinkedIn, so that is really important as well.

Justine Stevenson: Yeah, I completely echo that. I think as a judge, it is one of those things we are all passionate about the industry that we're in and we do want to see it improve, and I think being able to play, even if it's a tiny part, in helping people to 103

Justine Stevenson: be able to look objectively at their work, and improve where necessary, and celebrate where they absolutely should be celebrating. I think it's an... it is a tremendous privilege to be able to do that. So, thinking about some of the entries that we see, and some of the thought process that we go for. Obviously, when we're judging, we follow a set criteria. When we score, we... we give our... all of our judges quite a lot of guidance on how to... to go about ranking and scoring, lots of entries. But when you're looking at an entry, what are the things that really make them stand out for you? What are when you look at stuff, what is it that you're really looking for? And again, I'll start with you, Alli.

Allison Cary: For me, it's an entry that tells a really clear story. So, we're great, as Shalini said, we're great at telling stories, in our day-to-day work, and it's, it's an interesting challenge, actually to tell the story of your own work.

I think what I really look for are entries that frame the challenge really clearly. And then they go on to tell the story of their response, and they do that with clarity. It's not just what you did, it's why you did it, and also what impact that had. And I think that is one of the things that's sometimes not quite there with some entries. They're incredible entries. But they miss that... that key measurement, perspective. But that's... that's really what I'm looking

for. If someone can frame a challenge, tell me what they did about it, and then tell me what the result was, and those things are woven together really nicely. That makes a rounded entry.

So, it's not about having loads of supporting information, it's about actually telling that story in a really with clarity, and in a really efficient and targeted way that brings the judges into what you did and connects on a human level.

Justine Stevenson: Lovely, thank you. And Shalni, what about you? What are you looking for when you're looking at entries?

Shalini Gupta: Yeah, I think, as well as what Ali has said, definitely a storytelling approach, so there's a clear beginning, there's a clear problem statement in terms of what actually needed to be addressed and... or fixed, and what needed to change, and what were your objectives in terms of doing that, as well as smart objectives, I think, not vague ambitions.

So, people often think about, oh, we, once we've delivered a campaign. So, we've delivered an approach, and we talk about metrics towards the end in terms of the performance of it but they often forget about what your objectives or ambitions were to start with. So, think about very smart objectives through and through. And then connect them to clear outcomes.

I also quite like to see in the entries, given we're living in a world where things are moving, so quickly, and we're having to flex and adapt our plans. I quite to see last year when I was judging in entries where people have actually flexed their plans. Whether they were campaigns midway through, and something happened, either geopolitical, that impacted their business.

So, I think that sense of understanding of the external environment, because I think as internal communicators, we can't just be very insular nowadays, you've got to be looking outwards as well. How people have, for certain campaigns, worked in an integrated approach, either with their PR teams or the social media teams. So, I think that sometimes gives that little oomph to an entry, to say that they've thought about it holistically. And it doesn't apply for every entry that you work in an internal, externally integrated approach, but I think in certain cases, there is an opportunity to have think about where they've actually done that, to really stand out from some other really good entries.

Justine Stevenson: Excellent, thank you. And Jarrod, what about yourself? Are you... what are you looking for when you pick up an entry?

Jarrod Williams: Yeah, I mean, it's the one that everyone has started with here, but I absolutely would call out the idea of that golden thread through purpose, plan, delivery,

impact, the measurement. And I'll be honest, some of the ones where maybe we looked at them and went, look, this can't win, is because they lacked that golden thread. They maybe touched lightly on an objective or skirted around some measurement. I think you've got to start with a credible challenge, what is the purpose of this campaign that you've run, or this initiative, or the channel? Why... why? The whole why statement thing, why does it exist? Is it low trust? Is it a safety risk in your organisation? Is it a cyber campaign? Is it a cultural challenge? What is the thing that made that piece of work exist?

Then showing the evidence around your thinking around that, any insight you've done, the listening, going through into the execution. And quite often, we get a lot of people who really, really pile in on the execution - look at this amazing, huge event we run that's really flashy, and that's what it's all about in the order entry. But again, when we're lacking the purpose up front and the insight that you've done and then the measurement afterwards. That starts to pale in significance, because we have to scrutinize this, and we go, well "an amazing event, and God, it must be nice to be there, but has it achieved the thing it was set out to achieve in the first place?" Then go back to that measurement. Do they loop around the objectives?

I'll use events as a great example. When I've judged event awards, people will say at the very start, our objective is to engage our colleagues in our values. And at the end, the measurement is 80% of people thought our bacon sandwiches were nice. And we don't have that loop. Where is the connection there? And it seems such an obvious thing, but sometimes that little connection is the big missing piece for me.

Justine Stevenson: And you always get feedback about the food, right?

Jarrod Williams: Yes, exactly, that's what I meant.

Justine Stevenson: Everyone has a comment on the food.

Allison Cary: And the temperature of the room, don't forget that.

Justine Stevenson: Oh, yeah, very good, very good, yeah. All of those really vital, important internal comms objectives. Yeah, and I would... I would add to that, I think, absolutely, those are really good points. I think one of those... one of the things we often get is, people will say I can't... I haven't got any of these really hard measures. So, we will always say sometimes it's not possible, particularly if you're looking at an ongoing campaign or something, but what we would expect is something which is at least indicative of how you would intend to measure this? How would you go about actually showing that what you've done is worth it? Because at the end of the day, particularly in this day and age, it is really important to be able to demonstrate the worth of what we do.

Fortunately, things have moved on these days, but one of the things we used to get was actually endemic in a lot of things. People would regard, measurement as being, oh the CEO told me he loved it. And we'd be excellent. That's... that's brilliant. You can use some anecdotal evidence, of course you can, but the CEO loving it is never going to be the thing which actually shows that you've achieved the objectives, unless you went in into your piece of work specifically with the objective that said, I wanted the CEO to love it. If you did, then, then that's... that would be... that would be an interesting entry. I would be, be very interested in judging that one.

Think, think broadly and creatively about how you demonstrate that achievement against the objectives that you've set yourself, and be really proud in looking at all of those different ways that you can actually demonstrate you've had an impact.

So, thinking, about potential winners, we've all judged, classes where we've picked a winner and we've been able to see often it is quite clear from the beginning. Sometimes it's harder and you do more of that work. So, is there, is there a top piece of advice that you could give people when they're sitting there, and I'm sure some of these, these guys are sat their pen poised, waiting to put together that entry. What's your top piece of advice when you start, start thinking about a potential winner? Jarrod, I'm going to start with you, give you a chance to go first this time.

Jarrod Williams: Yeah, I will reiterate previous point to some extent, that the idea of getting the objectives and the measurement relationship right is absolutely key, for me, certainly. So, being specific about why you set out to do this, defining what success is going to look at the start, I mean, literally, we sometimes get to the end, and we go back and go, so now I've got the final section, now I've got the top section, do those...does that story... as we said earlier, it's a story to tell. Does that story loop back around, or have we gone off on a different piece? And there's nothing to say, as was mentioned earlier, if the journey goes off differently, and we have to start moving the goalposts, or changing how we measure, that is completely fine.

Quite often, what we see in some of the awards is well-delivered activity, really interesting, innovative tactics, and some measurement, but that's what sets it aside from being a middle of the ground to the winning, is that link back. And what I will actually say as well, I made a note here, because it was mentioned earlier, the supporting material.

Justine Stevenson: Sometimes, I've seen some amazing pieces of work.

Jarrod Williams: in the supporting material, but as a judge, I'm looking at your entry first and foremost.

Justine Stevenson: Yep.

Jarrod Williams: That needs to tell me the story, your supporting statement, your extra stuff that gives me flavour, helps me contextualize, maybe, if I don't know your organisation. So don't hide things away outside of your entry, would be another thing.

Justine Stevenson: Excellent advice, thank you. Alli?

Allison Cary: I think... It's hard... I think it's really hard to isolate it to one main piece of advice. I think my one watchword, really, would be clarity, and just really challenging yourself, reading it back and thinking, is what I'm saying here clear? I think it's really easy, particularly if... I mean, I work in a really heavily regulated industry, there's a lot of jargon. Don't assume that the judge is going to understand that. So, challenge yourself over jargon. If you're in a sector with lots of specific language, make sure you're not automatically reverting to type and sticking with that. Make sure you're explaining things, a little glossary or something, if there are some terms you need to repeatedly use. So that... that would be one aspect to it.

And then I think... I actually spoke to my team and said obviously we've had some success in the awards, what do you think has been a feature of that success, and they said that they felt that we're always, good at saying why. So why did it matter? Not what happened, but why did it matter?

And just going back to the measurement point for a second, you might not have lots of specific numbers and things to throw at an entry, and that's okay. It's about outcomes, really, anyway. As internal communicators, we should never be stopping at the outputs. They tell us part of the story, but actually it's our job to bring all those things together. So, the approach we always take when we're doing our measurement is we set out, maybe in three bullet points, the key things that we're aiming for at the start of the entry. And then we address the, the measurement in... and we break it down in the same way. So, we're saying, these are the things we told you that we're aiming for, and that's how we've broken down our results and our measurement, and we do that in the entry. And that enables you then to think, well, what numbers do I have to back up that point? If I don't have numbers, what else can I do? What other streams of information can I triangulate to build a picture?

So, you might have a direction of travel, you might have behaviours in the organisation that are starting to change, or anecdotal feedback that is more positive around a certain work stream. But then it's finding other things that triangulate that and back it up, even when you don't have something that's cut and dried, because, , some of these pieces of work are never finished. So, it's just finding a way to capture the impact of your work for the organisation, and so I think it's clarity, but it's also just really thinking about your audience.

Justine Stevenson: Really good. Thank you. And Shalini, what's your top piece of advice?

Shalini Gupta: I think it's trying to say everything is not a good thing, because I think we love our work so much when it comes to writing down our own story, we're such excitable people as internal communicators, because we love storytelling, we want to tell everything about the work. Is this just... it's not... it's thinking about not a long list of tactics but having prioritisation in terms of what is it that you've prioritised specifically? Why did this matter? How did you specifically approach it? And thinking about the so what, so what changed in terms of outcomes?

And the specific impact. I think two other things are quite key as part of not trying to say everything, is really thinking about the learnings as well as part of the exercise. Sometimes as a judge if you're talking about, I've done measurement throughout, and I've done listening exercise throughout. I want to see you as the winner, to become the winner, is having listened, have you learned? Have you done things differently? So sometimes I think that makes one entry stand out from the other, just because they've thought through listening in its true sense of words, for example.

And also, I think it's one thing trying not to say everything is once you've thought about impact and outcomes is at some good entries, really outstanding entries, talk about the next steps of campaigns, so comms hasn't finished at the end of the campaign what next? Is it... if it was part of a strategy pillar storytelling, what's your next plan? So, I guess it's just thinking, I think out of the box, whilst also not trying to say everything is... there's a balance there.

Justine Stevenson: Yeah, I think that's great advice. And I think, I mean, I would say some practical things. Stick to the word count. That's always, helpful, if you do that, because it... partly because it makes it fair, but also partly because it does really encourage you to boil that down into the key things that really do matter. We sometimes...more is too much, and you can lose that clarity that, Alli was talking about earlier, really being able to dial in. So, I'd say from a practical point of view, that's important. It might sound a bit trite, but it is important.

And... and I think also it's a little bit ... we've already said. Allowing some of that personality, of the team and the organisation to come through really does then help. But we don't know most of the organisations in much detail at all when we're judging. We might know a brand, but we don't really know the organisation, so really allowing some of that personality to come through, it does help those entries to stand out a little bit.

I'm conscious that we've spoken a lot. I do have a couple of... couple more questions for the team, but I just wanted to give us an opportunity here for... for you guys to ask any questions that you've got at the moment. I see we've got one in the chat, clarification on

eligibility. So, do you need to currently be in that role, or could you enter something from a previous organisation? What we'd say is, no, you don't have to currently be in that role, but you have to be able to... you have to be in a position to be able to share that work, so it can't be confidential or related to an organisation that you no longer can represent.

So, we will ask everybody to provide a small summary, which would go into... if that, entry was successful, we would then make that public. So, it does need to be something that you can talk about, from a personal perspective and relates to a piece of work that, you would... wouldn't be uncomfortable with if we made that public. And sometimes we get people wanting to enter an agency or whatever, being... wanting to enter on behalf of a client, that's absolutely fine, but obviously the client has to be happy with that. They have to agree with it, and they have to be prepared that some of that information may become public. So, I hope that helps. Do... do say if it... if you want a bit more clarity.

This is a good question from Rebecca. So, in terms of, and we'll ask the panel, in terms of supporting documents, what have you seen in previous applications that's been really impactful?

I'll give you a second to think about that. This just reminds me, I've been doing the awards so long, I used to do it back in the day when we would get things physically sent in. And some of the things that got sent in were, it would be that we would be getting the t-shirts, and the caps, and the mouse mats, and the mugs, and everything that are done, and they'd all come in a massive box. We're not in that era anymore, so you can send a photo of the mug and the mouse mat and the cap, but we don't need the physical object.

So, so any, any thoughts on anything in particular in supporting documents that you've seen that's been particularly impactful?

Jarrod Williams: I mentioned earlier just about things that add a flavour. I don't potentially, certainly not internally, know the organisation. So, things that help bring that to life more for me. Again, I'm judging on that word counted award entry when I'm confident in the entry, or I know enough about what you've done, I will look to the supporting paper to go, right, so let's look at the... to your point there, Justine, let's look at the mugs. So if the mugs are the key tactic, let's see... let's see the picture of that... that mug and why... why that was important.

And... and thinking about some of the ones that really stood out...yes, they were really well designed, but that's not what we're judging, but I had ones where the campaign materials were in there, so rather than trying to take up the award entry, telling me the script of the video, or the content of the tactics, that went into the supporting material. There, I can see the photos from the town hall and the... and whatnot. So yeah, that surprises me, it's really

just things that give a flavour of all that good stuff you've just mentioned in the... in the main body.

Allison Cary: Yeah, and I think relevance to the award category as well, so if you're entering multiple different categories make sure you're tailoring your supporting information. I think that's particularly true of campaign-related, and more, more limited, categories that are very specific. Obviously, if you're entering a team category, then, again, to Jarrod's point, that flavour of who the team is, that... that can come through more strongly on supporting information. I don't... I don't think that the supporting information as a judge is what I... is what I come away with and remember most. It's... it's the entry itself, and how... and how that made me feel, and how that took me... brought me under the hood, if you, a little bit, of what the work was. So, it's helpful to have it to deepen understanding, but it's not necessarily something that's going to have the greatest impact on my feelings about the entry.

Justine Stevenson: Lovely, thank you. I think, from my perspective, I agree, I think it isn't the key thing, but those things that do bring it to life, so particularly in internal communications, when we can have images of the people in the organisation, and... and those sorts of things, where it feels personal, and where it actually brings, some of that colour. Those are... tend to be the ones that are most impactful.

I always remember one that I saw a few years ago now, and it was to do with a campaign about new uniforms. It was for an airline, and it was a great entry. It wasn't a winning entry, but it was a great entry, and one of the good things about the supporting information, they didn't just show us pictures of the new uniforms and what have you, but their people. And so their people were showing off the uniform and talking about them. It was... it was very much... it felt very internal. So, for me, that... that did have quite a lot of impact. I still remember that one now.

Do we have any questions? Is anyone brave enough to put their hand up and say... Oh, no, no questions. Okay, so I'm just gonna... I'm gonna come back to the panel. We've, I'm... I'm gonna ask you... this will be the last question to you, really. But do you have a favourite award class? Is there... is there one of the classes that you really, or the categories that you really enjoy? And... and if so, what are those, and what do you about them? 237

I'll give you time to think. For me, the innovation ones. I think they are, they're the ones that have given me most inspiration as an internal communicator. I've obviously been around for a while. I've done lots of things. It's really lovely when you see new things and new ways that people are doing stuff, so I love looking at the innovation ones. They give me a lot of joy.

Shalini, let's start with you. Have you got a favourite?

Shalini Gupta: I have an absolute clear favourite, and I have judged, this over a few years. I don't know if I'll get it again this year or not. It's the best newcomer entries. I really looking through those entries, and I think they capture exactly the essence of the #IChoseIC campaign which I'm quite... I've been an ambassador for several years off, and quite, quite passionate about. And I think they really... these entries really show why people choose internal comms intentionally, and often, a lot of these people come from very different backgrounds within the same organisation, whether they've been part of a different part of the business, or from elsewhere, and then making a foray into internal comms.

The learning mindset, I think that comes through, the curiosity, the sense of responsibility, I think, about the power of internal comms and shaping how people can be aligned on a common purpose is really, really good. The passion comes through in those entries, I think. And I think it's also good to see the focus on the impact over activity at such an early stage, because when people come in from different, a different part of the business, or a different background, they really work on it in terms of really looking at the impact, building relationships over just tactics.

And I think what it demonstrates to me, generally, is that great internal comms isn't about tenure. It's not about how long you've been in the industry. It's really about taking your role seriously. Yeah. So, I love judging those, intrigues, yeah.

Justine Stevenson: Lovely, thank you. Alli, what about you? Do you have a favourite?

Allison Cary: I do, but just to pick up on Shalini's point as well, I've not been fortunate enough to judge, newcomer yet, not that that's a hint in any way for this.

Justine Stevenson: Okay, well.

Allison Cary: But I have, at the awards, been sat, probably most times been sat with a Newcomer of the Year, which is really interesting. And it is amazing to see them win, when they do it means it's so meaningful to them. So I think maybe when budgets are stretched and things, that's a category that people wouldn't necessarily prioritise, but do think about that, where you've got exceptional newcomers in your organisations, because my favourite category is the team categories, and again, that's because I've seen it from my side of things and know how impactful it is. So, I judged a team category for the first time, I think, last year, and really loved seeing... just, again, seeing how well the teams work, getting that personality across, and seeing that human side of... of teams that are facing different challenges, and how they're, dealing with them, and how they're coming with new innovations and how they're pushing on.

But yeah, those human categories are really warm ones to judge, because there's so much exceptional practice, but also, it's so meaningful to those teams and to those individuals.

I've been fortunate enough myself to be a finalist for Leader of the Year as well, and it feels great, so they're lovely ones to join.

Justine Stevenson: Lovely, thank you. And Jarrod, do you have a favourite?

Jarrod Williams: Yeah, well, as I said at the top of the call, I'm the newbie here, so I haven't been across many. In fact, last year we had so many entries in one particular category, that was my sole focus. So, I spent a lot of time going through that, so I think, more wider, firstly, to pick up on Alli's point, as already been mentioned, I think anyone will always go, what the great ones to look at are the team and the person, because of how much it might mean to someone, and the impact that that award entry.

Not to detract from all the strategy and the campaign and channels and all those ones, but those ones that relate to people and teams, the stories, again, that you get in them, they're great. And it's the thing where you're thinking, oh what, have we done anything that's award-winning this year? Is that campaign really that great? I mean my team, my team put it in, they do great work every day. Well, there you go straight away, that you've got a great team that's doing great work every day, and it's not necessarily always about, as we said, the big wins, the big, showy objective. Sometimes having a team that is great across the board who do great things, or a newcomer, someone that's jumped into the industry and is really grabbing hold and trying to make a difference. They're not... they don't have to be changing the world, but they're making a difference. That's important. I think...

And the only thing I was gonna say is just a personal affection. I like shiny things. So very much you just mentioned, Justine, anything that's fresh thinking applied to an old problem, or a new tool, a new way of doing things, something that tries something new to answer those age-old problems that we've all got, I always find that interesting, too.

Justine Stevenson: Brilliant, thank you very much.

We have had a question about video content. Yes, we do, accept, video content, and a couple of the categories, particularly around intranet and in some of the innovation categories, we do actively encourage video content, the one thing I would say is keep it short. We... I mean, there is a size limit, anyway, on what we can accept, but also as with all of the work that you would do anyway, capturing people's attention, we know that it becomes increasing... attention spans become increasingly, smaller. So, video content is good, but it has to be targeted, it has to be relevant, and it does have to be good. So, but absolutely, yes, we can. And actively would like to see some video content in some of them. And I think, I say, it's... the advice on the website will tell you where particularly we, suggest that there is, room for some video.

So, I can't see any more questions.

Jarrod Williams: So, here at SJP, we block things Google Drive, which is awkward sometimes, because that's how we lolC as well, do stuff, but that's also a flag, is just to make sure that particularly people put video entries and go, here's a link off to X platform, and making sure that is accessible to the judges in advance, because again, we're generally time-bound, we can't chase you up for weeks to try and get access. As a admin point.

Justine Stevenson: No, it's a really good point, yeah. Anything that you are sharing, videos, any documents you have to have to make sure that they are still available, set the timeline longer, because we will be judging these, in June time, so that it needs to be accessible, because as Jarrod says this is... we are calling on people's, valuable time.

On entries for best event, is it best to cover all objectives and elements, or to focus in on a few key ones? It's a... it's a really good question, Lucy. I mean, it depends a little bit. It's quite difficult to give a simple answer to that question. But... most successful entries will have crisp objectives and be able to show that those have been met. So, if you've got very wide-ranging objectives, in an event, then one, I would say that's going to be very difficult for you to show that all of those have been met, but also it would have been very difficult for you to meet them. So, I would focus on, on that clarity that we've talked about all the way through, that golden thread, the key things that you were trying to achieve, and did you do them?

If there are, , other elements, particularly an event, because they do... you do tend to have multiple things in an event, if you do want to show a breadth of work, then that's where some supporting information can come in and you can show perhaps some videos, or a little bit of testimony, or a little bit of some photographs of the other bits and pieces that you did. But, but really... Looking at honing that down and being very clear. Usually I would, if I'm being given a brief for something, I wouldn't want to be given a whole raft of objectives that I'm to achieve in one piece of work. I would want to be really challenging about the key ones on that. 95

Shalini Gupta: Depth beats the breadth, I would say, on that.

Justine Stevenson: Great. Yeah, definitely.

Yep, Rebecca's answered about, the... the platforms that we can... Accept on.

Okay, so I think, if there are no more questions, firstly, enormous thanks to Shalini, Alison, and Jarrod. Thanks for giving up your time, thanks for...personally for me, thanks for judging. But thanks for giving your expertise and help to people to, to help improve, some of the entries.

Thank you all for joining. Some of you saying how it has been useful. It's great. I'm really glad, really look forward to seeing your entries, and... and seeing, you be able to demonstrate what you've done.

As a reminder, all of the information is on the website. There is a load of it. Go to the IoIC, and under awards, you will find all of the, the stuff that you need. And if nothing else, if you get shortlisted, then you might well want to come to the dinner. The awards dinner, which, will be in September, and is always a wonderful night.

We talked earlier about favourite, categories and why we those categories. One of the most enormous privileges for me is on that awards night, is that I, with Jen Sproul, our CEO of IoIC gets to announce the award winners, it is the most life-affirming evening of my entire year. It is wonderful to see people be able to celebrate winning, celebrate, their... their... achievements in being shortlisted, which effectively is winning also, to get on the shortlist is... is winning. But to see people take pride in our industry, and what we do in it is just wonderful. So, get those entries together, get them in, 13th of February if you want early bird, 17th of April if you need to be longer, and then we and our other panel of judges will be looking at those later in the year, and hopefully you'll be successful, and we will see you at the dinner in September.

Justine Stevenson: So, thank you very much. Thank you, Rebecca, for hosting. Great to see you all, and, and good luck.