The Institution of Engineering and Technology

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Board of Trustees

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

(Paper by Christopher Knibb. If you have any questions on this paper before the meeting, please contact Christopher Knibb on 01438 767226 or by email cknibb@theiet.org)

1. Issue

This paper and an accompanying presentation provide an update on activities undertaken by the Corporate Communications team in 2021.

2. Timing

Board of Trustees meeting, 7 February 2022.

3. For Note

The Board of Trustees is invited to note this report.

4. Background

The IET's Corporate Communications team consists of several functions setting the professional standards and policies for staff communications, external communications and media relations, public affairs and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Any internal and external communication requirements are handled by the team, as well as the coordination of crisis communications.

5. Key Points

This report focuses on the Internal and External Communications and Public Affairs efforts in the past year. Our EDI activities will be reported to the Board of Trustees as part of another agenda item.

6. External Communications

6.1. Despite a very challenging year in both the staff and external communications landscapes, the team again secured substantial external coverage for the IET.

6.2. The team is responsible for the delivery of an organisational KPI, the Quality Coverage. This is a scoring system which attributes points on a scale of 0 to 6 for each piece of coverage received, dependant on its reach and relevance to our strategy. Our end-of-year position shows we achieved a total of 21,266 points globally against a target of 9,100 (subject to audit), an overperformance of 134%. This was a result of our targeted, bolder messaging linked to our societal challenges. In China, the year ended with an overachievement in Quality Coverage points of 17%, and in India, we narrowly missed our target, despite extremely challenging times with Covid.

Engineer a Better World

6.3. The team delivered its annual Engineer a Better World campaign in 2021 which included, for the first time ever, a completely virtual Open House Day. We launched our latest report on real STEM superheroes which was followed by the production of our own Super Realoes comic telling the story of the 'STEM Squad'. The final element – a competition - challenged children to design their own superhero gadget that can make a positive impact on the world. The winner will be announced in February on the BBC's One Show. The team was able to secure coverage on a primetime BBC programme by using our internal and external influencers.

Strategic Themes and Societal Challenges

6.4. For the second year running we ran a campaign focusing on two of our Strategic Themes – Healthy Lives and Sustainable Planet and Climate Change. This campaign continues to position the IET as a thought leader in these areas.

6.5. During 2021, we focussed on ensuring our Societal Challenges communications was more relevant to the public. We also worked hard with experts across the institution to find our Unique Selling Point and to make our messaging braver, ensuring also that we were promoting the right messages, at the right time.

6.6. This campaign also has a Quality Coverage KPI linked to it. The target in 2021 was 750 points, up from 500 points the year before, and was surpassed with the campaign achieving 2,096 points.

IET@150

6.7. There was significant PR activity during 2021, which supported our 150th-anniversary celebrations. Coverage included the crowning by the IET of the 15 most valuable inventions (Forbes), HM The Queen's message of congratulations (Mail Online, Evening Standard and Express) and Carol Vorderman's Honorary Fellowship (Mail Online, Daily Star, Hello! Magazine, The Sun and Mirror online). In addition, the gaming element of our Difference Makers campaign secured coverage in the Evening Standard and on Yahoo! News UK and Ireland.

6.8. Professor Danielle George featured on BBC World Service and BBC Radio 4 talking about our 150th anniversary and our fashion partnership prize resulted in 15 pieces of coverage, while our publishing competition with Chicken House and The Times secured nine pieces of coverage.

6.9. In total, media activity supporting our anniversary contributed 2,262 quality coverage points in 2021. A review of all our 150 activities and successes will be presented to the Board in the Spring when we present our IET@150 end-of-year impact report in March.

Social Media

6.10. The team continues to push the IET's messaging through our corporate social media channel, with our follower numbers increasing during 2021. We continue to evaluate our annual engagement rate across our corporate channels, compared to similar organisations (see Appendix A).

7. Staff Communications

7.1. The workload of the internal communications function has increased during the pandemic. With the formation of our Gold/Silver response efforts, we have increased our engagement with colleagues. We have also introduced virtual Town Hall meetings, which allow colleagues across the IET to get the latest news and updates from across the institution. These have been delivered in collaboration with iet.tv.

7.2. A new role was created in the team in 2021 to support the IET Strategy 2030 and eight change programmes that support its delivery and to focus on engaging with our colleagues.

7.3. In 2021, we measured internal comms satisfaction and engagement twice through two change readiness surveys. More than 78% of colleagues reported feeling more prepared for the various changes in the IET in the second survey, with 91.4% saying they engaged in our Town Hall sessions, 82% saying they regularly read our Change newsletter and 68% reporting they had used the New Ways of Working Intranet hub.

8. Public Affairs

8.1. Despite restrictions throughout most of 2021, the IET continued to engage with MPs and policymakers across Government and the devolved nations.

8.2. In May we ran a series of one-hour magazine shows to celebrate our 150th anniversary. Among the guests were Chi Onwurah MP, Stephen Metcalfe MP, Darren Jones MP, Jack Sargeant MS and Greg Clark, Chair of the Science and Technology Select Committee.

8.3. Our new Public Affairs strategy was published in October 2021 positioning the IET as a global thought leader for engineering and technology. In line with our 2030 strategy, we will advocate societal themes that affect us all. This long-term strategy addresses a broader international focus starting with India. We've seen our first success of working with the Indian government on policy, such as the IET being credited in the National Blockchain Strategy document that was released by the Ministry of Electronics and Communications

8.4. A new series of six thought leadership podcasts, called Engineering a Better World and produced by the IET and the House magazine, were launched in 2021.

8.5. Finally, an open letter was sent to the Prime Minister regarding the teaching of engineering in our schools. Together with over 150 world-leading engineers, STEM ambassadors, professional institutions and celebrities, we urged the Government to help tackle the UK's engineering skills shortage by embedding engineering into current primary school learning. Our first Parliamentary event since the start of the pandemic took place in December supporting our call to government.

9. Risk

There are no risk implications resulting from this report.

10. Resources

The resources are assigned to this function through the annual planning process.

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Appendix A