

**CIPR Pride Awards 2011**  
**Category 19: Outstanding In-House Public Relations Team**  
**Title: Essex Communications**  
**Organisation: Essex County Council**

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Since September 2009, Essex Communications has delivered a full account managed service for clients in Essex County Council (ECC) and beyond. Services include PR, marketing, design, campaign management, events, lobbying, brand management and publications.

**Mission Statement**

“Essex Communications exists to promote the work of ECC; to enhance and protect its reputation; to win resources for the organisation and county; to attract and retain quality members of staff; to increase access to and awareness of services; to increase residents’ satisfaction and to promote the wider county of Essex as an unrivalled place to live, invest, learn and visit.”

**Business objectives and analysis of performance against budget**

- Increase number of residents feeling informed and satisfied with ECC
- Increase number of residents believing ECC delivers value for money
- Deliver key priorities corporately and for service areas
- Increase positive stories in key media outlets

A centralised communications budget is divided among the priority campaigns each financial year. The campaigns are reported on a monthly basis to ensure they are on target for spend and objectives.

**Overview of business/team strategy**

The team delivers campaigns aligned to the business objectives of ECC. The last 12 months have been a challenging time, not only for the sector as a whole, but the spotlight has been firmly directed on ECC due to the court case involving the previous Leader of ECC. During this time of intense scrutiny the team has continued to deliver outstanding work. This work has been delivered to budget and on schedule without the leadership of a Head of Communications, a role vacant since June 2010.

**Summary of outstanding achievements**

- Centralising communications delivered over £1million in savings
- Development of trading arm delivering income for ECC and identifying opportunities to share services and thus reduce costs: Comms for Suffolk County Council (ended June 2010) Brentwood Borough Council, Comms for Slough Library Services; Formal

agreement with Essex Police to share services; Comms lead for South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP); Revenue generating communications support to Essex schools outside LA control

- Keeping Essex Safe: post campaign survey showed residents feeling safe outside during daytime improved from 57% (2009) to 64% (2010). Night time improved from 59% to 64%
- National coverage for trailblazing campaigns: Essex Apprenticeships (The Sun), Banking on Essex (Daily Telegraph)
- Proactive media relations addressing financial issues facing local government: Panorama; Politics Show
- Place survey (2008) shows 85% residents satisfied with Essex as a place to live
- Tourism campaign May 2011: [www.visitessex.com](http://www.visitessex.com) 38% increase website visits compared with same period 2010
- Marsh Farm campaign spring 2011: Visitor numbers up 14% compared with same period in 2010. 26% increase in revenue compared with 2010
- Campaign launching [www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk) doubled website access
- ECC held best practice seminar discussing Drive Essex campaign at The Guardian's SmartGov conference June 2011
- April 2010 to March 2011 the team generated over 7,000 media cuttings. Over 2700 media enquiries received. Over 300 press releases issued.

**An example of a campaign you are proud of, including brief, objectives, strategy and tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget**

**Drive Essex: Budget £100,000**

Aim: to engage with 17 - 30 year old, male drivers and encourage them to positively change their driving behaviour.

**Strategy / tactics**

- Traditional and new media channels to maximise reach
- Channels / techniques utilised were more commonly associated with the consumer brands
- To maximise cut-through and gain social currency, the concept was pro car, anti establishment and unbranded ECC
- Focus group with young drivers to test campaign visuals and messaging.

**Tactics**

- 16 traditional outdoor 48 sheets in key accident hotspots inc 2 special build (first of their kind)

- Street clean stencils in town centres
- Anamorphic type at Lakeside Shopping Centre (identified as a key touch point research)
- Architectural vinyls and mirror stickers in pubs, clubs and bars across the key hotspot districts
- [www.drivessex.co.uk](http://www.drivessex.co.uk) held rich media content and sharable online game 'Reaction Road'
- PR ran at the end of the campaign so it could be 'claimed' as ECC with the story being the campaigns success.

### **Objectives and outcomes / results**

- 55% of target audience to be aware of the campaign (**result 60%**)
- Cumulative agreeable attitudes towards behaviour statements to be maintained or improved (baseline 91.76%) (**result 92.3%**)
- 20% of target audience to have claimed to have changed their behaviour as a result of seeing the campaign (**result 46%**)
- 10,000 visitors to [www.drivessex.co.uk](http://www.drivessex.co.uk), 30,000 plays of 'Reaction Road', 2,000 competition entries (**result 195,000 visits to website, 470,000 plays of the game, 2,200 competition entries**)

### **Endorsements**

#### **Alison Crowe, Managing Director, Brentwood Borough Council**

"ECC has successfully developed, and continues to deliver communications service and support for Brentwood. They have worked closely with council members and senior officers to develop clear corporate narrative and clearly made a fundamental shift from reactive local media focus to proactive campaigns. They have been an invaluable resource, helping us make great strides moving forward in the last few years."

#### **Sherilyn Turkington, YEA co-ordinator, Children's Services**

"Thank you for the work that communications, and in particular Jessica, has done with the Young Essex Assembly; she has brought many new ideas to the process that are creative, dynamic and cost saving. The young people love working with Jessica and value her contributions as much as the YEA staff team does."

### **Information about what makes you special as an employer.**

Essex Communications exists to be the best team in the public and private sector.

The team is supported by a strategic communications board which includes the Leader, Cabinet Members and Directors who trust the team to produce campaigns that deliver the organisations priorities.

The team is encouraged to be creative, to develop skills through training opportunities and conferences and to take advantage of secondment opportunities with-in the public sector.

In the last year Essex Communications has won 12 industry awards which reflect the passion, enthusiasm and talent within the team. This level of commitment will continue through 2011 and beyond.