

# PRIDE AWARDS 2017

**Category:** Outstanding Independent Practitioner

**Entrant:** Rachel Picken Chart.PR, MCIPR

**Company:** Agile PR

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**An overview of your experience, your commitment to professional development and how you contribute to the industry:**

I am one of the first from a new batch of Chartered PR awarded in November 2015.

I started my career in print journalism at the West Briton newspaper in 2004. I moved into PR in 2006, working both freelance and agency, before joining Cornwall agency MPAD in 2008. I became a director in 2009 and MD in 2014, delivering steady growth of 45% during my first year as MD.

My work focuses on Agile communications and best practice in evaluating communications. Much experience is based in the third sector, supporting charities with brand, strategic communications, procurement, media relations, events and crisis.

In March 2016, I became an associate tutor with Manchester's MOL delivering CIPR qualifications, the Professional Diploma and Advanced Certificate. I have gone on to develop a flagship training course for 2017 with the CIPR – Agile Project Management for PRs, which is proving successful.

I'm chair for the CIPR South West committee, having volunteered with the committee since 2014, when I joined as treasurer. Our plan in the South West is to deliver opportunities and events for members to access 30 points of CPD each year in each part of the region.

As a Chartered PR, I am committed to maintaining 60 CPD points each year. I hold an ILM Level 5 qualification in leadership and management, and a BA (Hons) Communications from Bournemouth University.

**Outline your work related achievements over the last three years, including your business objectives and/or plan:**

I launched Agile PR in August 2016. Prior to this, I was managing director of Cornwall's leading communications agency MPAD. A change in personal circumstances plus opportunities to teach the CIPR Diploma with Manchester's MOL led me to set up my independent consultancy.

My business plan is simple:

Aim to generate 100 days of consultancy each year, allowing me time to look after my family

Focus on PR and communications strategy, including AMEC best practice evaluation

All services delivered based on Agile principles of collaboration, flexibility and goal-setting

Continue to deliver tutoring and training to support PR practitioners to maintain a high standard of practice

Career highlights include:

Being one of the first practitioners to become CIPR Chartered under the new assessment format in November 2015

Being approached by MOL following my Chartership to deliver the CIPR Diploma and Advanced Certificate, plus develop teaching materials and deliver the new Professional Diploma this year.

Gaining my CIPR Diploma in 2012 and discovering Agile as part of my research project

Joining the CIPR South West Committee as treasurer in March 2014 and turning around the region's financial position from struggling cashflow to £5000 credit.

Being elected Chair of CIPR South West in March 2017

Project highlights since launching Agile PR include:

Developing a flagship training course for the CIPR – Agile Project Management for PRs – launched this year.

Winning a contract to name, brand, develop a website and communications strategy for a South West domestic abuse and sexual violence charity

Developing an Agile Communications Strategy for Age UK Cornwall.

Develop a Communications strategy for leading charity brand, Cornwall Air Ambulance Trust, focusing on a new focus on digital fundraising

Becoming the UK's lead feature writer for US base magazine, Agile Vox, the in-house publication for the Scrum Alliance

**Outline the biggest work-related challenge you've faced in the past three years, including details of what happened, how you overcame it and what you learnt from it:**

My biggest work related challenge is coupled with personal challenges. At the end of 2015, I separated from my husband, business partner and father of our two daughters.

Having been offered associate tutor work on CIPR qualifications with MOL, it made sense to exit the MPAD. I have managed to juggle establishing Agile PR with a house move and carving a new life. Major life changes have taken their toll on my mental health, and therefore managing my hours, ensuring there is enough time for exercise, sleep and time with my family is paramount.

Within the first year, having only properly launched from August 2016, I managed a strong turnover and profit. This achievement has enabled me to support myself and my daughters as a single parent, whilst protecting my health and wellbeing.

**A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:**

Because my consultancy focuses on Strategy, Evaluation and training, I don't often see a campaign through from beginning to end.

However, I am particularly proud of a project to name and rebrand two merging charities.

Brief:

Following public sector cuts, two charities that support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence decided to merge. Cornwall-based Skoodhya and Plymouth-based Twelves Company needed a brand new name to represent the organisation going forward. The project was set against tight timescales – Agile PR was engaged end of January 2017, with expectations for a new name and brand by April.

Objectives:

Deliver a new name and brand that can be embraced by stakeholders

Deliver a new website for the charity

Deliver a Communications Strategy

Strategy:

Agile PR collaborated with Thad Cox Design and web developer Hooked On Media to deliver the project.

The process was Agile from the start. Up to 6 potential brand names were presented to staff and board with opportunity to vote on preferred concepts. An early concept, Sinopia – which represents the first orange of dawn after the darkness of night – was a winner. This soon evolved to First Light, which is easier for stakeholders to use.

Tactics and implementation:

Agile PR executed:

Facilitation of three brand workshops during the naming and branding process

Advising Chief Executive and Board on best course of action at each stage

Copy editing and content loading for the website

Lead on development of collaborative Communications and Fundraising Strategy for the new charity, including evaluation framework

Agile PR also project managed the following:

Brand development and set of brand guidelines

Website design and build

Overall project management of the naming and branding process, reporting to the chief executive

Outputs/Outcomes:

New name adopted and registered with the Charity Commission

Branding adopted by the charity

Website due to go live end of June 2017

Collaborative Communications and Fundraising Strategy starting on June 9th with interactive workshop amongst board, staff and specialists