

Lisa Pool

lisamichellepool@gmail.com | 07450553349 | 51 Kipling Close, Hitchin, SG4 0DU (happy to relocate)

Experienced Communications and Engagement Manager

With over ten years' communications experience, I have a proven track record of delivering transformational change in low-to-medium performing organisations. I haven't missed a strategic target yet, no matter how ambitious. In my most recent position I led a communications turnaround that resulted in UWLSU becoming the number one higher education students' union in the UK. Now seeking my next major challenge, I believe my skills and experience are transferable to any sector, and I would like to bring this expertise to an organisation with big aims and the drive to achieve them.

Professional experience

Communications and Engagement Manager (2013 – current)

Where: University of West London Students' Union – the number one higher education students' union in the UK (2017 National Student Survey league table)

Areas of responsibility: organisational and departmental turnaround strategy, project management and delivery, people management and development, data management, legal compliance, organisational reputation, stakeholder satisfaction, development of communications channels (digital and offline), organisational brand.

Achievements during my time on the UWLSU management team:

- Communication became the organisational priority – investment in funding in communication increased by over £250,000 and the staff team grew from one (me) to a team of 13, who I recruited and managed;
- Organisational turnover increased from £1.1m in 2013/14 to £3.2m in 2017/18;
- It went from a low-performing organisation to best in the country in its sector;
- It gained 7,000 followers on Facebook and over 2,000 followers on Twitter and Instagram (after introducing those two channels in 2014 and 2015 respectively, with a membership audience of 8,000);
- Engagement with membership increased from less than 10% in 2013 to 80% in 2018.

Communications Producer (2011–13), National Union of Students (NUS)

Areas of responsibility: communications project management, content creation, brand development and implementation, social media management national communications training programme, development of communications in UK students' unions.

Priority Campaigns Organiser (2010–11), National Union of Students (NUS)

Communications Officer, Vice-President (2008–10), Anglia Ruskin Students' Union

Education

MA (distinction) in Advertising, Branding and Communication (2015–16) University of West London

CAM Professional Diploma, Managing Digital Media (2012–13) London School of Marketing

BA(Hons) Illustration (2005–08) Anglia Ruskin University

Skills

Strategy development, planning, project management, branding, innovation and problem solving, political and change campaigns, people management, Adobe creative suite.

About me

Industry knowledge (communications)

My postgraduate qualification and ten-year record of achieving results demonstrate my knowledge of communications, with expertise in strategy development, branding and community engagement.

I have undertaken professional qualifications and training with the Chartered Institute of Marketing in managing digital media, and with the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in dealing with the press and planning crisis communications.

At UWLSU I increased satisfaction among members from 59% to 80% by using the research undertaken during my Master's degree to implement a communications strategy in partnership with the University of West London (UWL). **As a direct result of my project, UWLSU is now the best higher education students' union in the country for member satisfaction.** The partnership approach also led to an improvement of the reputation of UWL – it is now one of the top 50 universities in the country, listed in the Guardian league table.

Within the students' union sector I am the most successful communications and engagement manager, I have been invited to speak at national conferences and training events, and written articles for sector publications. I have also been invited to speak at wider industry events that focus on communications in the not-for-profit sector. My public speaking appearances have included Social Media Week, where the Chartered Institute for Public Relations and the International Hydropower Association invited me to be a discussion panel member on the topic of [how social can change the game for membership organisations](#).

How my work in the student movement relates to your organisation

Students' unions are registered charities, and membership organisations with a number of target audiences. They are complex, democratic organisations with many departments that have competing priorities and differing communications requirements. Applying my industry knowledge during my time at previous organisations resulted in:

- **Being shortlisted for national awards.** Both students' unions I worked for were nominated for the National Union of Students (NUS) awards for Higher Education Students' Union of the Year and Campaign of the Year.
- **Increased resource.** Every communications department (national and local) I have worked in has seen at least a 100% increase in funding. The number of staff in every communications team I have managed has increased.
- **Achieved strategic aims (in addition to my results at UWLSU, which can be seen in the professional experience section of my CV).** Engagement has increased by at least 50% among target audiences at all organisations. Over 50,000 people attended the national demonstration I organised in 2010. I increased NUS social media followers to over 68,000 on Twitter and 69,000 on Facebook (from around 6,000 on each platform in 2010), by designing and implementing a social media strategy.

Communications theory is completely transferable. I use MARCOMS tools such as PESTLE, SOSTAC, SWOT and AIDA to produce thorough communications plans and strategies. These tools can be applied in any sector to create relevant communications that meets the needs of the audience in terms of messaging and access. Understanding and applying communications theory is learned over a number of years through experience and qualifications. Understanding the motivations, limitations, external political influences, nuances in messaging and aspirations of an organisation and its audience is something I can learn on the job.

Managing a communications department

I ensure communication is high-quality, consistent and aligned with the strategy at every organisation I work for, by implementing and evaluating processes within the communications department.

In smaller organisations, the communications team is responsible for all aspects, including producing communications for other departments and their projects. My experience of membership organisations and charities is that tension exists between communications departments and other areas of the organisation. Because of this, the communications staff are often not

central to organisational planning, and can be seen as a department that is only responsible for key messages. As a result, other teams begin to create their own communications and the organisational brand suffers.

However, in this situation, the communications team can add value at the project scoping, planning and delivery for any department. To achieve this at ARUSU and UWLSU, I implemented new processes to ensure that members of staff across the organisation knew how to access support from the communications team. It allowed them to collaborate on communications planning for their specific departments and projects, giving them ownership over the communications targets. This process incorporated initial meetings to discuss the project, followed by a clear step-by-step process to draft, agree and implement a communications plan with clear timescales, deliverables and measurements.

To support cross-organisational delivery of communications, I implemented a training programme for all staff to gain an understanding of the communications team, its functions and how it could contribute to their individual aims.

I recognise that not all communications departments operate in the same way. Therefore, communications departments, maybe in larger organisations, tend to have very specific strategic aims and don't act as a service for other departments. In this situation, I have a process-driven approach to project implementation, while allowing space and flexibility to be adaptable and responsive to change. As such, when creating plans to support regular ongoing communications or specific projects at a strategic level, I build in objectives and milestones, but also regular evaluation points and innovation sessions for new growth ideas. At UWLSU I applied innovation techniques I learned during my MA to create SMART communications plans.

Whenever I undertake a new role where the communications department acts as a service for the wider organisation, I begin by reviewing the communications function and how that operates. From this evaluation I establish if any existing processes need to change, or if new ones need to be added. This will be done in collaboration with other department managers and staff to ensure the processes meet the needs of the organisation's audiences. I also review the project scoping and planning processes of the organisation to ensure that the communications team adds value at relevant opportunities.

Where the communications department is highly strategic and does not focus as a service for the rest of the organisation, I start by looking at the milestones underneath the strategic aims and where they sit within team members' workplans.

People management

I have managed numerous types of roles, from volunteers to interns to managers. I recruited and managed a team of 13 at UWLSU to successfully achieve their objectives, develop personally and professionally, and enjoy their job while they did so. UWLSU is consistently the highest scorer for staff satisfaction in a sector-wide survey, and in the communications and engagement team, 100% said they would recommend working at UWLSU.

I am a trained coach and have used these skills extensively to help individuals solve problems and manage conflict. I have mentored a team of young student interns to help them achieve their probation targets and I have also mentored communications managers at other students' unions to design and develop projects.

Some of the ways in which I ensure effective people management include:

- People management dashboard – a record of each person's objectives, 121 meetings, appraisals, and personal development targets;
- Collaborative objective-setting with short-term milestones and regular reporting;
- Achievable personal development goals;
- Understanding different working styles by using tools such as Myers Briggs and TotalSDI (totalsdi.uk).