

# HR UNHOOKED

2023-2024

HOW PR CAN HELP BUILD  
YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND

UNHOOKED  
COMMUNICATIONS





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# WELCOME TO HR UNHOOKED

## *Your PR guide to building an employer brand*

When it comes to PR, many businesses consider it as an important part of their marketing strategy to attract and engage with potential customers – but what about other stakeholders? In particular, PR can be a powerful business tool to support HR functions to attract, engage and retain employees.

Without the right people, businesses can't succeed. HR plays a crucial role in finding and nurturing talent. But when businesses face competition from other companies – not just in their own sectors, but from other industries too – how can they set themselves apart to appeal to potential employees across different levels, keep them invested in their work, and hold on to them?

This challenge is all too common in some sectors, such as STEM, where the shortage of talent can result in inflated salaries that are unsustainable, and construction, where the skills shortage means there's not enough people to meet demand.

This is where PR comes in. From managing your reputation to celebrating your team's achievements; and from proving how you live by your values to shouting about the difference you're making in the world, a strong PR strategy can help you build a powerful and attractive employer brand.

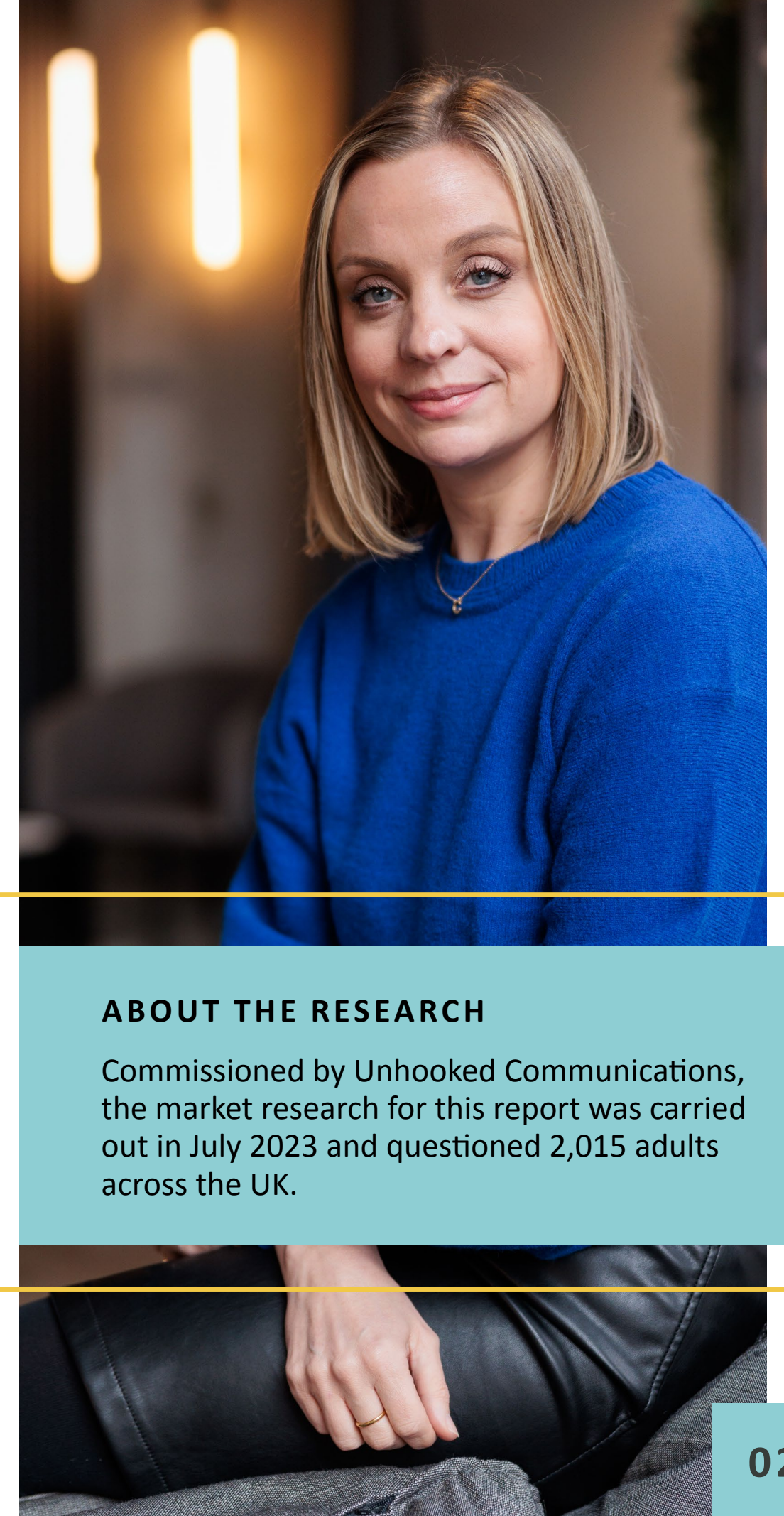
Backed by new market research, commissioned by Unhooked Communications, this report delves into:

- Why your PR and media footprint is important to attract the best talent
- How your PR and content can appeal to employees' motivations
- How positive PR can help engage and retain your staff
- The top channels to use for building an employer brand
- The most effective way to approach your internal comms

With Unhooked Communications' expertise in PR for businesses across sectors such as professional services, construction and property, health and wellbeing, charity and not-for-profit, we bring you decades of experience and actionable advice. The aim of this report is to inform and inspire you to consider how PR can help fuel your HR performance.

*Claire*

**Claire Gamble,  
MD, Unhooked Communications**



### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

Commissioned by Unhooked Communications, the market research for this report was carried out in July 2023 and questioned 2,015 adults across the UK.

# WHO'S INTERVIEWING WHO?

## *The importance of a strong PR footprint to appeal to job hunters*

From reviewing application forms, CVs and even social media profiles, to carrying out telephone interviews, face-to-face meetings and asking for a presentation or piece of work to be delivered, as a business you'll have certain stages that you follow when filling job vacancies.

But the same can be said for those who are looking for new work opportunities and applying for these jobs, especially in industries where candidates hold the power.

We found that if they were applying for a new job, 59% of adults across the UK would research the business to see what recent news stories there were about the company. The age group most likely to do this are 35-44 year olds, with 65% saying they'd investigate what media reports there had been about the business.

It's a similar story for job hunters looking at other channels too; 59% said they'd look at the businesses' own websites and social media channels for information about the culture, values and general ways of working. This time, it was 25-34 year olds who would most likely do this compared to other age groups, with 66% of people in this demographic saying they'd do this.

Finally, more than two-fifths of people (42%) said when applying for jobs, they'd look to see what awards the business had recently been shortlisted for and/or won. More than half (52%) of 16-24 year olds would do this, making them the age group most likely to look for award shortlists and wins.

## *When applying for a new job...*

59%

would research to see what recent news stories there were about the company

59%

would look at the company's website and social channels for information about culture, values and ways of working

42%

would look to see what awards the company had recently been shortlisted for or won



## ***How to use recruitment and HR to show your brand personality***

The employee experience starts from the day a job vacancy is posted. There should be touchpoints at every stage of the job application process, from the initial advert and inviting them to an interview, to hiring them and their induction, before moving onto ongoing employee relations such as appraisals.

All of these should follow the company's tone of voice and are a great way of getting your personality across. Writing your job descriptions in a way that really brings to life your company culture can help to attract the right sort of candidates – so why not try to go beyond the standard job descriptions and think about how you can communicate effectively with potential candidates? And don't let the experience end once they're recruited; think about how you engage and communicate with all your staff on an ongoing basis to keep them motivated, excited and proud of where they work.



## **PR TIP**

**One of the benefits of ongoing PR activity is that it allows you to build a positive digital footprint, which can become invaluable when potential candidates are researching to see if they might like to work at your company. Positive news stories, insightful thought leadership in industry publications, regular content across your social channels and website, as well as business awards can all position you as an appealing place to work. As with any PR strategy, you need to consider what your values and messaging are so that you can ensure that these are evident in your content.**

# BEYOND WORDS

## *Appealing to employee motivations*

Understanding what motivates people to work for businesses can help you to tailor your PR strategy and messaging to appeal to them.

For example, if your business is passionate about helping local communities or the environment, promoting your values and sharing positive news about your achievements could well attract potential employees, as well as increasing job satisfaction among existing staff. Similarly, if you can offer benefits such as flexible working to show that you're an ethical business, this could help in the hunt for the right talent to fill your vacancies without having to compete on salary.

Here, we explore what motivations are important to different age groups, as well as people working in different sectors. Understanding what people look for in an employer can help you shape your PR strategy to ensure that you're positioning your business, its values, achievements and culture in the right way.



## Diversity and inclusivity

We found that 57% of people agree it's important to work for a company that champions diversity and inclusivity. This was most important for people aged 25-34 (65%), as well as people working in politics and public affairs (75%) or advertising, communications, marketing and media (72%).

On top of that, most people (54%) think that employers are more exciting and appealing if they have a diverse range of people and roles on their website, social media and news stories.

### *It's important for me to work for a company that champions diversity and inclusivity*

AGE GROUP	AGREE
16-24	55%
25-34	65%
35-44	62%
45-54	55%
55+	50%

SECTOR	AGREE
Politics and public affairs	75%
Advertising, communications, marketing, media, creative	73%
Recruitment / HR	67%
Charity, volunteer and not-for-profit	66%
Health	64%
Hospitality	63%
Social care / social work	63%
Education	62%
Civil service, central and local government	61%
Environment and energy	59%
Finance and consultancy	59%
Law and finance	59%
Retail	58%
Digital, IT, cyber security	56%
Construction / built environment	54%

## PR TIP

When it comes to case studies, news, thought leadership features, awards and other content for the media and your own channels, such as websites and social media, use a diverse range of spokespeople. Don't automatically choose the most senior team members. If you're actively doing more to develop a more diverse and inclusive work culture, consider sharing your policies, actions and achievements.

## Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Over half of people (52%) said it's important for them to work for a company that gives back to local communities through fundraising, donations and/or volunteering. Again, 25-34 (62%) year olds were the age group most likely to have this sentiment, while those working in recruitment and HR (67%) were the most likely to agree.

*It's important for me to work for a company that gives back to local communities through fundraising, donations and/or volunteering*

AGE GROUP	AGREE
16-24	52%
25-34	62%
35-44	51%
45-54	50%
55+	45%

SECTOR	AGREE
Recruitment / HR	67%
Politics and public affairs	63%
Advertising, communications, marketing, media, creative	61%
Construction / built environment	60%
Digital, IT, cyber security	58%
Retail	56%
Social care / social work	56%
Hospitality	54%
Charity, volunteer and not-for-profit	53%
Environment and energy	53%
Health	52%
Law and finance	52%
Education	50%
Finance and consultancy	49%
Civil service, central and local government	45%

### PR TIP

If your business commits time, money or other resources to helping charities and good causes, you can help spread the word through relevant media outlets and your own website or social media channels. As well as celebrating your CSR achievements, it will help to raise awareness of the charity or cause you're supporting. Plus, showing your commitment to CSR can appeal to current and potential employees, as well as other stakeholders such as investors.



## Sustainability

Working for a business that considers its impact on the environment and society was also a priority for people, with nearly half (46%) saying it's important for them to work for a company that has an environmental, social and governance (ESG) policy. But it's not only important to have a policy in place, 49% want to see a company share the activity it does to support its ESG strategy.

### *It's important for me to work for a company that shows what activity it does to support its ESG policy*

AGE GROUP	AGREE
16-24	55%
25-34	55%
35-44	52%
45-54	48%
55+	40%

SECTOR	AGREE
Advertising, communications, marketing, media, creative	64%
Social care / social work	61%
Environment and energy	59%
Charity, volunteer and not-for-profit	58%
Recruitment / HR	56%
Construction / built environment	52%
Digital, IT, cyber security	52%
Finance and consultancy	51%
Hospitality	51%
Health	50%
Law and finance	50%
Retail	50%
Education	48%
Civil service, central and local government	44%
Politics and public affairs	38%

## PR TIP

Developing an ESG policy and framework to measure and report on your improvements and achievements is a great place to start on your ESG journey. Whether you're trying to appeal to employees, potential candidates, customers, investors or any other stakeholders, increasingly people want to partner with businesses that are not only talking about sustainability and environmental issues, but taking action to improve the way they operate to benefit people and the planet.

## Money, money, money

Interestingly, many people said that other factors such as a company's values and having a work-life balance were more important to them than a higher salary.

Nearly half (46%) of adults across the UK agreed that working for an ethical business was more important to them than getting a higher salary. Those aged 25-34 were most likely to agree with this (54%), as well as those working in the environment and energy sector (65%).

### *It's more important for me to work with an ethical business than to get a higher salary*

AGE GROUP	AGREE
16-24	55%
25-34	55%
35-44	52%
45-54	48%
55+	40%

SECTOR	AGREE
Environment and energy	65%
Advertising, communications, marketing, media, creative	64%
Recruitment / HR	59%
Construction / built environment	56%
Digital, IT, cyber security	54%
Charity, volunteer and not-for-profit	53%
Politics and public affairs	50%
Social care / social work	49%
Finance and consultancy	47%
Retail	47%
Law and finance	46%
Civil service, central and local government	45%
Education	45%
Health	45%
Hospitality	41%

## PR TIP

Money isn't always the biggest motivator when it comes to engaging current employees and job hunters. Working for an ethical business or one that offers flexible working are just two ways that companies can stand out against competitors, but there are all kinds of other benefits – for example, access to health and wellbeing services, personal development and training opportunities, regular team socials and away days, or time given for interests and hobbies outside of work. PR can play a crucial role in highlighting the wider values and benefits of working with a company, as well as the culture.

*Having a better work-life balance is more important to me than being paid more*

AGE GROUP	AGREE
16-24	57%
25-34	68%
35-44	67%
45-54	58%
55+	57%

SECTOR	AGREE
Advertising, communications, marketing, media, creative	68%
Hospitality	68%
Social care / social work	68%
Education	65%
Health	65%
Law and finance	65%
Digital, IT, cyber security	63%
Politics and public affairs	63%
Retail	62%
Construction / built environment	61%
Charity, volunteer and not-for-profit	61%
Environment and energy	61%
Recruitment / HR	59%
Finance and consultancy	57%
Civil service, central and local government	53%

Nearly two-thirds (62%) of people valued a better work-life balance over getting paid more. This trend is most commonly seen amongst 25-34 year olds (68%) and those working in social care or social work (68%) and hospitality (68%).



## Remote working

It's a topic that divides many people; should employees be able to work from home some or all of the time? There have been reports of some businesses demanding everyone returns to the office following the pandemic, with others taking a more relaxed approach. But could having the option to work from home at least some of the time help to attract potential employees and retain existing staff?

Over half (53%) of the adults we spoke to said they'd prefer to work for a company that gives the option to work remotely at least some of the time. This was the preference among 35-44 year olds, as well as those working in the charity and volunteer sector (63%) and law and finance industry (63%).

### *I prefer working for a company that gives the option to work at least some of the time remotely*

AGE GROUP	AGREE
16-24	48%
25-34	61%
35-44	62%
45-54	49%
55+	42%

SECTOR	AGREE
Charity, volunteer and not-for-profit	63%
Law and finance	63%
Advertising, communications, marketing, media, creative	59%
Environment and energy	59%
Recruitment / HR	59%
Social care / social work	59%
Digital, IT, cyber security	57%
Finance and consultancy	57%
Construction / built environment	55%
Health	55%
Civil service, central and local government	53%
Education	51%
Politics and public affairs	50%
Hospitality	49%
Retail	47%



## The most important factors

There's a lot to consider when positioning yourself as a great place to work and building a strong employer brand. So what should you prioritise?

When thinking about the ethics, values and environmental credentials of a business that they may work for, the most important factors for adults in the UK were that they pay employees fairly (23%), look after their staff (21%), pay fair tax (15%) and reduce their carbon footprint and emissions.

**If you're interested in this data split by gender, age, region, sector, job role/position, please contact us for information. See the contact page at the end of this report.**

*When thinking about the ethics, values and environmental credentials of a business that you may work for, what are the most important factors you look / would look for?*

SECTOR	AGREE
They pay employees fairly	23%
They look after their staff	21%
They pay fair tax	15%
Reducing carbon footprint / emissions	13%
Giving back to the local community / investing in the local community	12%
The product is recyclable / can be reused at the end of its life	12%
Promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity	12%
Education, training and development	11%
Made from recycled and/or sustainable materials	10%
Evidence that they support communities/countries where they're importing products from	10%
They look after their supply chain	9%
Protecting and investing in green spaces	9%
They don't have negative media coverage	9%
They prove they're tackling the gender pay gap	7%
That they regularly measure and report on their ESG activities	7%
Charity fundraising, donations and volunteering	7%
They have a diverse and inclusive board	7%
An accreditation such as B-Corp or Fairtrade	6%

## HEADLINES: FROM HIGH MORALE TO HIGH STAKES

Positive PR stories and achievements don't just help to attract new talent, they can also help to keep current employees engaged and motivated.

Over half of people (58%) say that if their employer is in the media for positive reasons, it makes them proud of where they work. A similar figure of 52% said that if the business where they work wins an industry award, it makes them proud of where they work.

Just over half (52%) of people think their employer is good at celebrating the company's or team's successes, with only 13% who think they do a bad job at it.

But just as businesses should consider how they use PR and the media to build morale amongst their employees, they should also make sure they have a crisis communications plan in place.

From time to time, businesses may face all kinds of internal and external challenges that may make the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Whether financial problems, redundancies, health and safety issues or something else, PR teams need to work closely with HR and internal communications teams to ensure the right messages are getting to the right people in the right way.

For example, if employees are hearing about possible redundancies for the first time via the media without any communication from their company directly, this could cause all kinds of worries, rumours and uncertainties. What's more, it could escalate any potential negative PR and media coverage during or after a crisis.

Even if negative media reports turn out to be nothing, it might already be too late. In our research, 44% of people said that if their employer failed to communicate negative news about the company appropriately to them it would make them consider leaving or looking for a new job.

### PR TIP

**A PR strategy shouldn't just cover positive news, it also needs to incorporate crisis communications too. A clear plan should be developed that outlines the various channels and tactics that need to be used in different circumstances. Failure to have a joined up approach to reputation management and crisis communications between PR, HR, internal communications and senior management teams can have disastrous consequences.**

CRISIS  
MANAGEMENT

# THE TOP CHANNELS FOR INFORMATION

We've explored why it's so important for businesses to have a PR strategy in place and to share positive news, updates and messages to current and potential employees, but what are the best channels to use?

One thing we're an advocate for at Unhooked Communications is to have a multi-channel approach when it comes to PR. This is something that was backed up by our research, when we found that the majority of people (53%) say that even if they read, watch or consume non-work related media or content outside of a work situation, they still take note of the information if it's of interest to their role or sector.

When it comes to the top channels and sources people actively use for information about their job, work opportunities and industry news, we found that a general online search is the starting point for all topics. This highlights the importance of certain PR tactics, including:



## YOUR OWN WEBSITE & SEO

Make sure that you're focusing on the right keywords and search terms when creating content for your own website to make sure that you rank well and that employees or potential candidates can easily find you online. As well as clear business information, your website should include relevant blogs, awards, case studies, your values, ESG policies, testimonials and great images and video to bring it all to life. Remember to include a diverse range of spokespeople to help demonstrate your business' culture and values.



## MEDIA OUTLETS

Many media outlets, especially national and consumer media, have high domain authorities and invest a lot into their own SEO. This means they often rank well for certain keywords and phrases. As a brand, if you can get your company, products, services, case studies and expert comments included in relevant articles online, your own website will perform better as a result. As we saw earlier in this report, potential candidates will actively search for news stories about businesses when they're job hunting so it's vital to make sure you're developing and pitching stories that will appeal to relevant media outlets, whether that's regional, national, trade, consumer or a combination of these.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media profiles don't just come up when you're searching for business information online, but people actively head to the likes of LinkedIn and Facebook to get a feel for the company. Make sure you have lots of relevant content that helps to communicate your brand, culture, ethics, values and personality as an employer. Social media can also be effective for celebrating teams and individuals too.

**53%** of people take notice of non-work related media or content if it's of interest to their role or sector.



# The top channels used for work-related information and content



## INFO ABOUT THE COMPANY WHERE YOU CURRENTLY WORK

- General online search 16%
- Company / brand websites 13%
- Facebook 10%
- Review websites 8%
- Newspapers – online 7%



## INFO ABOUT COMPANIES YOU'RE CONSIDERING WORKING FOR / APPLYING FOR JOBS

- General online search 27%
- Company / brand websites 14%
- Review websites 9%
- Facebook 9%
- LinkedIn 9%



## INFO ABOUT NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- General online search 26%
- LinkedIn 13%
- Company / brand websites 11%
- Facebook 10%
- Newspapers – online 9%



## INFO AND NEWS RELATED TO THE SECTOR OR ROLE THAT YOU WORK IN

- General online search 19%
- TV (live) 12%
- Newspapers – online 12%
- Facebook 10%
- Newspaper – print 9%



# BRINGING TOGETHER HR AND PR FOR HARMONIOUS INTERNAL COMMS

It can be confusing to decide where the internal communications function sits within a business – is it something the HR team looks after, or is it the responsibility of the marketing team?

We'd argue that to make sure your internal communications works effectively, you need to bring together HR and PR / marketing teams.

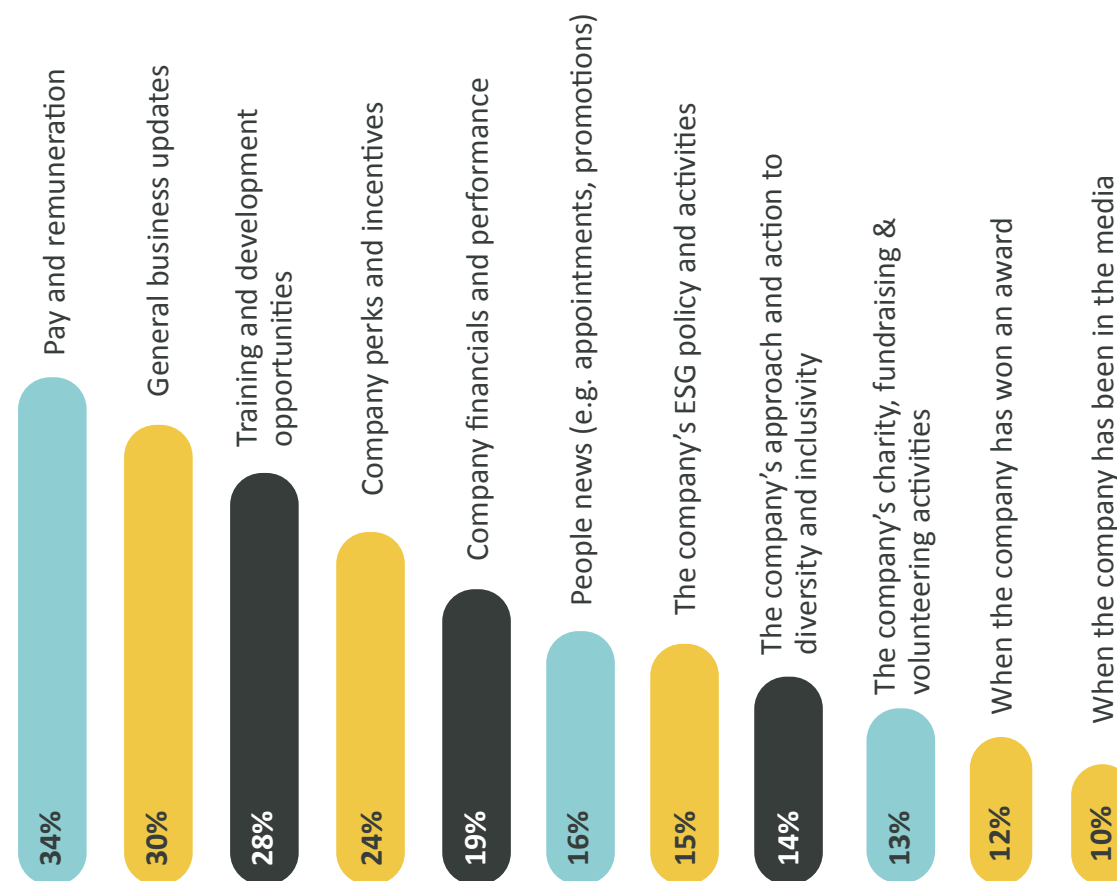
As we've seen throughout this report, get PR right and it can help to motivate and engage employees. But get it wrong, and you can lose staff.

On the whole, 60% of people we spoke to said that their employers keeps them up to date with news and updates. However, 44% said if their employer failed to communicate negative news about the company appropriately to them it would make them consider leaving or looking for a new job.

## TOP TIP

Have a multi-channel plan for releasing company news that aligns with internal audiences and external audiences. Even if it's good news, if the first time your staff hear it is from an external source it might cause resentment or confusion. It's important to have a joined up approach to your communications so the relevant people – including your employees – are briefed at the right time. It can also help to consider writing any internal communications statements such as company-wide emails and news as though they're external too – there have been numerous occasions of internal emails being leaked to the media or gone viral on social media.

*What are the main topics you want to be kept up to date about?*



*What's your preferred way of keeping up to date about your company?*

Email newsletter	25%
Whatsapp group	15%
One-to-one meetings with my manager	15%
Company/team-wide face-to-face meetings	14%
Intranet	13%
Updates from the HR team	12%
Company or team-wide virtual meetings	10%
Physical noticeboard	9%
In the news / media	8%
A dedicated app	8%
Slack, Microsoft Teams or other similar online tool	7%
Physical newsletter / magazine	7%
Public Facebook	7%
Public TikTok	7%
External company website	6%
A closed Facebook group for employees	6%
Public LinkedIn	6%
Public Twitter	5%
Digital screens around the workplace	5%
Public Instagram	5%
Dedicated company radio or TV channel	5%
A closed LinkedIn group for employees	4%

# ABOUT UNHOOKED COMMUNICATIONS

We hope you've enjoyed our HR Unhooked 2023-2024 report and found it useful!

If you want support with turning these insights into actions to deliver success for your business, we'd love to chat to see how we can help.

Unhooked Communications was set up in 2017 to offer businesses a creative, flexible and results-driven PR service to help them manage their reputations, get in front of the right people and achieve their business objectives.

## *What makes us the best fit for our clients...*

### **Specialists**

We're all specialists in your sectors, meaning you get a higher level of expertise and consultancy.

### **Experts**

We choose the best PR and comms specialists with sector and/or tactical experience to work on your day-to-day activity.

### **Innovative**

Transforming the outdated traditional agency model, we only work with senior practitioners with 10+ years experience.

### **Creative**

We have a creative campaign approach to PR and marketing, focusing on developing informative and inspiring content.

### **Leaders**

We invest in our own research and insights, as well as deliver talks and workshops with organisations and universities, including Google Digital Garage, Brighton SEO, Digital Institute of London, Manchester Metropolitan, University and University of Salford.

### **Learning and development**

We're committed to investing in our learning and development on key topics such as ESG, carbon literacy and technology use in comms.

### **Award winning**

We were named Best PR Agency at the 2022 Construction Marketing Awards and we have multiple other award wins and shortlists.



# WHO WE WORK WITH

*Here are just some of the brands that we've worked with since Unhooked was founded:*

**H'AFELE**

  
**Marshalls**

  
**SAINT-GOBAIN**

**JEWSON**

 **Polypipe**

**Artex**

**ANWYL**  
*thoughtful homes*

  
COVERING THE WORLD

 **forget me not  
children's hospice**

**BAYFIELDS**  
— OPTICIANS & AUDIOLOGISTS —

 **FLETCHERS SOLICITORS**  
*Serious Injury Specialists*

  
**FLOORING  
SUPERSTORE.COM**

**YMCA**

 **Hearing  
Direct.com**

**Jack Badger**  
TRADITIONAL JOINERY COMPANY

## *Training, workshops and events*

We've also delivered training, workshops and events with organisations, businesses and universities including:

**Google**  
Digital Garage

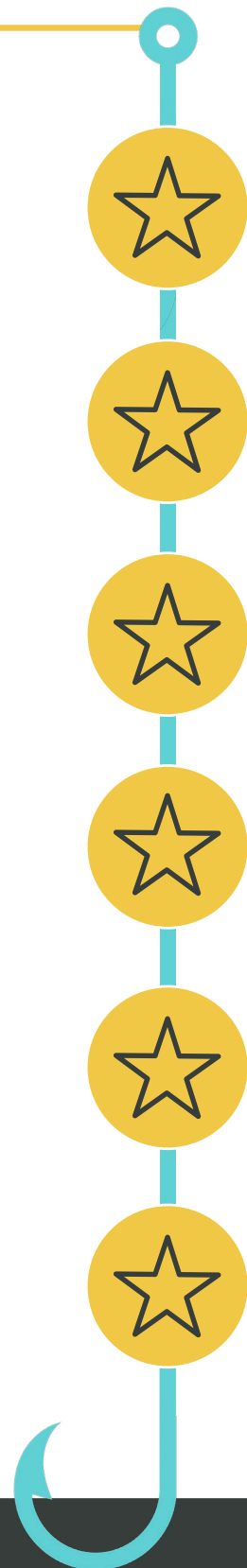
University of  
**Salford**

 **Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University**

 **LONDON  
DIGITAL  
INSTITUTE**

**Blogon**

# OUR SERVICES



## **PR strategy**

Strategic insights to work out the best approach for your PR and marketing, teamed with effective measurement.

## **Media relations**

Coverage in print, broadcast, online. News, thought leadership, products and more.

## **Copywriting and content**

From blogs to brochures, we craft your copy and manage the creative and design for impactful content.

## **Creative campaigns**

Make your PR go further with creative, multi-channel campaigns that meet several objectives.

## **CPDs and e-learning**

Inform, educate and inspire your target audiences through CPDs, e-learning and training.

## **Launches**

Whether launching a new brand, product or service, we can help you build awareness and drive interest.



## **Data-driven campaigns**

Bespoke market research to fuel campaigns and feed into inspiring and informative content like reports, events and PR to amplify the insights.



## **Media training**

Working with former journalists and producers, we can train your teams to make them confident in interviews and when presenting.



## **Sustainability and ESG**

Identify your messaging, collate the evidence and share your values and activity in a meaningful way.



## **Award entries**

We have a great track record of getting businesses shortlisted (and winning!) reputable awards.



## **Crisis comms**

Planning the strategy and managing the comms for the worst case scenarios to look after your brand.

To set up a call or to request our full credentials, please email Unhooked Communications MD, Claire Gamble, [claire@weareunhooked.com](mailto:claire@weareunhooked.com)



For more information or to arrange a meeting to see how we could work together, please contact Claire Gamble, Unhooked Communications MD:

[claire@weareunhooked.com](mailto:claire@weareunhooked.com)

**UNHOOKED**  
COMMUNICATIONS