

Category: Young Communicator of the Year

Department: Press office

People: Amelie Barrau

Company: WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

Address:

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Amelie Barrau

Supporting statement from employer

In a two person press office, Amelie is the perfect partner. Representing over 5,000 UK staff and promoting half of our key business departments, Amelie has hit the ground running since arriving last year, despite this being her first English-speaking job. Joining the business at the time of a merger that meant great upheaval and a doubling in size, Amelie's clear communications and steady hand helped the business speak with one, consistent voice.

Most impressively, Amelie introduced public relations to an acquired business that previously eschewed media relations and communications unless it absolutely had to. Now our public sector facing engineers, including its senior management, knows it has to speak to the media through Amelie, and often! This year our energy business – a hitherto unknown quantity in the UK - has been getting the Amelie treatment with press releases, social media training, trade interviews all part of a wider marketing campaign that Amelie is spearheading.

In the past year Amelie has proved she is a very quick learner, creative improviser (particularly with videos), and built up a phonebook's worth of journalist contacts. Amelie has a long career ahead of her, and is a worthy winner.

Tom Hawkins

PR Manager

WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

Amelie Barrau

1000 word entry text: Young Communicator of the Year Award

Budgets: *Not applicable*

Objective/brief from client: *Not applicable*

Strategy: *Not applicable*

Measurement/evaluation: *Not applicable*

Method deployed: *Not applicable*

Relation to objectives and cost-effectiveness: *Not applicable*

Creativity/originality: *Not applicable*

Indication of outside contractors where used: *Not applicable*

Category specific criteria

By my second day at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff I had already secured an interview with New Civil Engineer and media trained a senior leadership team member. Since then, I have revitalised the way we approach social media, launched a media campaign for the company's energy department, and worked on releases that led to over **650 individual articles on the business in a twelve months period**.

I have been working at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff for just under a year, as part of a two person press office representing over 5000 UK employees, and interfacing with a global business of over 34,000 people. I have secured coverage in national (Guardian), international (BBC World Radio), trade (Building, Construction News, Architects' Journal) and regional (Northern Echo, Exeter Daily) media and publications.

Despite being new to the business and a junior member of the team, some of our **biggest departments fall under my remit**, including rail, highways and bridges, and energy and industry. I work closely with boards members, advising them on profile-raising opportunities. The company's head of highways and bridges particularly appreciated my "thoroughness in preparing staff for interviews and how I carefully crafted potential questions to ensure a positive outcome". My guidance has also been described as 'invaluable' by one of our senior energy leaders, Malky Valentine.

A key accomplishment in the last year has been to devise a multi-channel marketing and communications strategy to raise the profile of our energy department in the UK, and help them to win more work. The newly restructured arm of the business was very much a sleeping giant, with some of its leaders being apprehensive of external publicity. Through hard work, persuasion and excellent stakeholder management, I **have renewed the image of the department** at a critical time for the business.

I developed a full programme of activity, from events and newsletters, to social media and press releases that would position the business positively in the wider market. Since its launch in January, I have media trained senior staff, written features, conducted interviews and even created a variety of videos. I achieved coverage across key trades, including New Civil Engineer, Power Engineering, and ReNews, which referred to the business as '*engineering muscle*' and an '*inspection muscle*'.

I helped to devise and lead a multi-channel communications and marketing campaign to raise the profile of our transport and infrastructure business. I was responsible for media relationships and a dedicated social media campaign during Transport Week. I **secured 85 articles in the press** on our transport and infrastructure expertise across four months.

In addition, I wrote content for a number of blogs and project case studies, with my efforts culminating in a marketing feature on the Guardian's business page. I also project managed a series of videos aimed at showcasing our tunnelling, high speed rail and bridge expertise, giving our business a human face and making engineering accessible. My Transport Week efforts **broke all company records on Twitter**, hitting 10K impressions for the top day, over 27,000 on LinkedIn, and allowing us to double our average new weekly followers' figures.

Recently, I wrote a blog on smart ticketing for one of our rail engineers, Fazil Ahmed. The resulting piece was published on Twitter and caught the attention of the Policy-UK Forum organiser. Fazil was consequently invited to speak at this **high profile event alongside HS2** technical director Andrew McNaughton and Network Rail's strategy and planning director Paul Harwood. Fazil's presentation was well covered in April's Rail Professional.

I also run our social media feeds, and I am always on the lookout for ways to improve our engagement and presence.

I introduced the concept of dedicated weeks on social media to the company, having since organised campaigns for Transport Week, Aviation Week and National Apprenticeship Week. For the latter, I organised an apprentice vs graduate challenge. Participants were encouraged to build the most impressive and sound structure out of marshmallows and spaghetti. The event was a great success, with NCE journalist Katherine Smale, ACE COO Anil Iyer and our own EMEA CEO John Murphy

judging the event. The challenge was extensively covered on our Twitter account and tweets reached a **5.1% engagement rate**.

I have also taught myself how to make and edit videos using Adobe Premier, and have created short videos for National Apprenticeship Week and to illustrate various press releases. Videos are a different and interesting way to tell a story and personalising our business. **These efforts doubled our average engagement rate.**

Forging relationships is an integral part of my work, not only with my internal stakeholders, but also with journalists and government organisations. As part of my previous job, I took care of media relationships for former Guinean Prime Minister, and current leader of the opposition, Sidya Toure. I secured coverage in international broadcast media, as well as meetings with the French Foreign Office minister Laurent Fabius and high-profile business leaders. These meetings drew attention to the ethnic conflict that was happening in Guinea.

I really love working at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff and learning about all our exciting projects; I have a particular soft spot for everything relating to the rail industry, from digital railways to high speed rail. I recently attended a conference on the future of railways and really enjoyed learning how rolling out new signalling systems (ETCS) across our aging railway could greatly improve capacity without having to create new rail lines. As I progress through the company, I look forward to spreading the word on the great work our engineers do.

Good PR is no longer about just writing press releases and cold-calling journalists to pitch a story. It has become a more rounded profession, in which we need to have expertise in digital, marketing, and video. I haven't finished learning, and will build on my success in the past year by expanding my skills through training courses, pushing myself out of my comfort zone, and (hopefully!) working towards a promotion in the next year.

Amelie Barrau

Biography

Summary

Amelie works as part of a two person press office representing over 5000 UK employees, and interfacing with a global business of over 34,000 people. She is responsible for three departments (highways and bridges, rail, energy and industry) and manages the company's social media accounts.

Key achievements:

- Devised and launched a multi-channel marketing and communications strategy
- Introduced the concept of dedicated weeks on social media to the company that broke all records on Twitter and LinkedIn.
- Managed the company's social media accounts, increasing follower numbers on Twitter by 22% and 42% on LinkedIn

In less than a year at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff, she has secured coverage in national (Times), international (BBC World Radio), trade (NCE, Construction News, Architects' Journal) and regional (Manchester Evening News, Yorkshire Post) media and publications.

Previous roles:

Amelie worked at a boutique PR agency in Paris with clients such as Eni Gas & Power, Sotheby's International Realty, Cushman & Wakefield, Labco, Guinean politician Sidya Touré and secured positive coverage for her 14 clients in: Bloomberg, Le Figaro, M6, RFI, Reuters, De Standaard, FT, Mobile Today, Mobile News, Sydney Morning Herald.

One of her biggest accomplishments was working alongside a lobbying firm for insurance company GALIAN, against a major governmental legislation led by housing minister Cecile Duflot. This

campaign was a real success, and Amelie secured coverage in national press (Le Figaro, Le Monde), television (BFM, France 2, LCI), and managed to change the publics' opinion on the law. GALIAN consequently became the go-to company for matters relating to real-estate insurance, and the law was amended in line with proposed amendments.

Prior to this, Amelie interned at the Assemblée Nationale (French Parliament) for the UMP Group's press office during the 2012 presidential campaign.

Education

Amelie holds a bachelor degree (2:1) from Richmond the American University in London for Politics and a Masters (Merit) in Modern Europe Studies from University College London. She achieved Distinction on her Masters' dissertation.

Sports:

Amelie has a strong international background in downhill skiing, competing in international and achieving 1st place at the American national championships in 2004.

It's not all hard hats and oily rags

Apprenticeships have grown up; they now cover everything from law to web development, says **Allison Dickinson**

Anounce you've decided to do an apprenticeship and many will assume you either failed to get into university or you want to be a tradesman. "A lot of parents and teachers don't understand that pretty much everything from law to web development can be accessed through a modern apprenticeship," says Nick Boles, minister of state for skills and equalities.

The landscape has moved on, he says: "You can get a degree through an apprenticeship, so it's not about capping your ambition. It's a choice to secure the qualification through working and studying rather than full-time study."

Boles knows that apprenticeships have a bit of an image problem and is keen to address it: "We just need to get the message out that these are very high-quality programmes."

June Durrant, deputy principal at Kirklees College in Huddersfield, agrees: "The hard thing is getting people to understand that modern apprenticeships aren't an 'oily rag' route - that's not the real picture any more."

This is certainly the case for former Kirklees student Luke Warby, 19, who is now employed by IT firm ProVu after completing a level 3 apprenticeship in professional competence in IT for telecoms professionals combined with a level 3 in IT systems and principles.

"I found out about the apprenticeship from my progress coach at the college," he says. "As well as the more technical aspects of the job, I've learned how to deal with customers with different levels

of understanding, so I've become more confident when it comes to things like dealing with people on the telephone. I was even awarded an apprentice of the year award last year, so it's been a really good experience all round."

Warby's boss, ProVu managing director Darren Garland, says that taking on apprentices has given

his small business - he has just 20 employees - a cost-effective way to get staff up to speed. "We have to train for 6-8 months before we see a return, so we look for potential - that can be a graduate or an apprentice. We weren't sure how well it would work at first, but taking on Luke and another apprentice, Matt, was such an absolute success we took on a third."

For many apprentices, the experience of being able to learn on the job provides them with a valuable insight into their chosen career and helps them to make decisions sooner. Rupinder Kooner, 18, from Wolverhampton, is in her third year of a building services in the built environment apprenticeship with WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff. It's an area she might not have chosen had she decided to go to university first.

"I can transfer to something like civil

Ten top disruptive energy innovations

Gone are the days when cleaner energy was viewed as a fad – now innovations in energy production, storage and use look set to become mainstream

◆ INNOVATIONS
● CELESTINE CHEONG

1 GOODBYE RESTAURANT LEFTOVERS
Sometimes picky eaters and left-over food can drive you bananas when it comes to being wasteful. But in the North West, there's one good reason to leave a bit of food on your plate. The company, ReFood, uses leftover scraps from the catering sector to produce enough gas to feed into the UK grid's network. Not only is the waste from its anaerobic digestion process reused by local farmers as crop fertiliser, therefore closing the food chain "recycling loop", but its Doncaster plant alone can power 5,000 homes an hour. Out-smarting children to eat all their greens is another battle.

2 HOT CLOTH
There is an alternative approach to harnessing solar energy where traditional panels cannot be used. Solar Cloth's lightweight, extremely thin and highly flexible photovoltaics (PVs) can adhere and wrap themselves around anything from domed buildings to canvas structures. Their PV cells bond on to tensile fabrics similar to that used to construct London's O2 arena. Currently used in Cambridge to power a carport for electric vehicles, the company is currently seeking to raise £780,000 to scale up its commercial operations and meet market demand.

3 WINDS OF CHANGE
Just like a child flying a kite, but for big engineering adults in the sky 300 metres high, where the winds are stronger and more consistent, EnerKite's novel 100-600 kilowatt wind energy plants use carbon fibre kite wings to fly in a figure of eight loop. Back at sea-level, floating wind turbines can harness power where their fixed offshore counterparts cannot feasibly do so in deep oceanic seabeds. Siemens' Hywind can deliver 2.3 gigawatt-hours (GWh) in a year and has been known to survive 11 metre waves seemingly without any wear or fear.

4 PUMP UP THE VOLUME
What pumps do well, like the human heart, is ensure consistent flow in one direction. Scottish Mitsubishi subsidiary Ardenis Intelligent Power's digital displacement and hydraulics open and close high-speed valves to spin shafts of electrical generators at significantly larger capacities than conventional transmission systems. In the same pumping fashion, IBM's scientists are developing a pump driven by heat from its data centres to regulate the temperature of buildings. Considering 40 per cent of general electricity supply is lost to heat and cool building space, this thermal pump aims to satisfy demand.

5 FISSION CHIPS
"The drive is on for smaller modular reactors to make nuclear more affordable and reliable," says Dame Sue Ion, chairwoman of the Royal Academy of Engineering's MacRobert Award. In response, GE Hitachi's PRISM technology is gaining ground. The company's liquid-sodium cooled reactor utilises existing nuclear waste to produce low-carbon electricity as well as safer by-products – another power generating application where waste is turned into an asset and the cyclical "cradle to cradle" regenerative loop is closed. It means safer, cheaper and consistent energy supply for all.

6 TURN DOWN FOR WHAT?
A range of smart LEDs has replaced the common 60-watt incandescent bulb over the years. LEDs promise a longer shelf life of up to 25 years, greater energy efficiency and, in some cases, are brighter than their predecessors too. So unique is IVITI's ON light bulb, which can still be switched on and off, and provide light for up to three hours during a power shortage, that electricity network operator Scottish and Southern Energy is fast tracking them into the company's "business as usual" practice. Available at around £29.99 a pop.

7 BIG DADDY DATA
Understanding when e-vehicles plug into the grid and when we're likely to turn the kettle on provides real-time and more informed control of energy usage. With consumers being able to generate their own power, WSP's smart design lead Rupert Green says the advent of instrumentation and big data analytics is playing a bigger role in household energy management than ever. Big data allows utility companies to know when to buy energy back from consumers. This means it won't be long before analytics firms such as Google will make the move over into the retail energy space.

8 YOU'RE MY WONDERWALL
Tesla's \$3,500 Powerwall home battery stores power generated from a rather handy fusion reactor in the sky – the sun – to provide electricity to homes in the evening. This means people in remote villages or on islands can combine solar panels with the Powerwall and never need to worry about connecting up to electricity lines. Power can be provided around the world where it does not otherwise exist. Slim, flat, easily mounted on a wall, its 10 kilowatt-hours (kWh) weekly cycle and 75kWh daily cycle models are likely to go global.

9 PRESSURE IS ON
When energy is stored by compressing air at very high pressures in an underground cave, you have one big pressure cooker. Once this air is released and run through turbines, power generated can be fed directly into the grid. Storelectric has plans for its 800 megawatt plant in Cheshire to store 12-20GWh worth of electricity for peak use and mass storage. This is 20 times larger than anything produced before it. In terms of countryside energy storage, the scale of this is the really amazing part. Who would have thought salt caverns could be so useful?

10 AUTO-MOTIVE
It is no wonder sales of electric vehicles in the UK have grown a whopping 366 per cent in the first part of 2016. As car interiors get better and make us feel like we're at home, or at least more connected through our devices, the auto industry has come on leaps and bounds. With the world demanding more hybrids, such as BMW's i3 and i8, supercars such as Elon Musk's Tesla Model P85D and Google's self-driving technology, there are more compelling reasons to move away from the internal combustion engine – or not drive at all.



Africa Rising or Falling?



For the past year and a half, commodity prices globally have been tumbling. We ask Olusegun Okubanjo, CEO of the London-based investment banking services firm OBSIDIAN, what the end of the commodities boom means for African economies, given that strong commodity prices have helped fuel investment and demand from China in the continent.

Available now
⌚ 18 minutes

Also, reporter Michael Koloki speaks to professionals in Nairobi, Kenya, about how they think their economic lives have changed in the past decade. Meanwhile, Rosh Barden who was head of human resources at London Mining in Sierra Leone, tells us how the combination of a plunge in iron ore prices and the Ebola crisis finished the company off. And, we speak to Femi Fadipe, technical director at the engineering-management firm WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff about what it takes for western companies to compete against their Chinese counterparts when investing in Africa.

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