

PRCA SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

For Excellence in Communications **2026**

Entrant Briefing & Entry Guide | 2nd March 2026

Introduction

The PRCA Spotlight Awards celebrate campaigns that shape reputations, drive growth, and deliver real impact for clients, society and the Irish economy.

They set the benchmark for excellence in Ireland's PR and communications industry, recognising strategic insight, creativity and measurable contribution to client success.

This master briefing combines everything you need to prepare a winning entry including eligibility, categories, judging framework and best practice guidance.

Timeline

PRCA SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

- Opening of Submissions: Monday 2 March
- Early Bird Deadline: Tuesday 14 April – €220 + VAT
- Final Deadline: Tuesday 21 April – €295 + VAT
- Shortlist Announcement: Tuesday 26 May
- Gala Ceremony: Thursday 25 June - The Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin | 6pm

[ENTER NOW →](#)

Who Can Enter?

- The Awards are open to **PR agencies, sole traders and in-house PR teams who have worked with a PR agency or sole trader** to deliver impactful campaigns.
- Multiple entries permitted

Why Enter?

- **Define Excellence** – Set new standards for the industry.
- **Demonstrate Impact** – Showcase the value you contribute through your work.
- **Industry Recognition** – Celebrate outstanding campaigns and professionals.
- **Business Development** – Raise your profile with clients and peers.
- **Join the Celebration** – Awards Gala at The Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin.

The Entry Process

- **Online Submission Only:**
 - Via PRCA's platform
 - Can save drafts
 - Online support with the platform - 9.30 - 17.00
- **Period during which work is carried out:** 28 February 2025 and 2 March 2026
- **Shortlists in each category will be published on Tuesday, 26th May**
- **Submission Requirements:**
 - Entry form (250-600 word limits per section)
 - Supporting materials (up to 5 PDFs, max. 200MB)

Categories: Full List

1. **Best Consumer Campaign**
2. **Best Lifestyle Campaign**
3. **Best Health & Wellness Campaign**
4. **Best Technology Campaign**
5. **Best Social-First Campaign**
6. **Best Charity/Not-for-Profit Campaign**
7. **Best Integrated Campaign**
8. **Best Use of Sponsorship**
9. **Best PR Event Contribution**
10. **Best Public Information Campaign**
11. **Best Public Sector Campaign**
12. **Best Contribution to Societal Change**
13. **Best Corporate Campaign**
14. **Best ESG Campaign**
15. **Best Public Affairs Campaign**
16. **Best Earned Media – Short Term**
17. **Best Earned Media – Medium to Long Term**
18. **Best Ongoing Communications Strategy**
19. **Campaign of the Year**
Judges will select from category winners
20. **Rising Star Award (for emerging professionals under 35, on or before 21 April 2026)**
21. **Outstanding PR Professional**
22. **Agency of the Year**
23. **Best Agency Service Innovation**
24. **Hall of Fame - Honour to be bestowed by the PRCA Board**

Criteria for individual categories

Best Consumer Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns targeting consumers that delivered an important outcome for clients who sell consumer products including FMCG, retail and household products. Campaigns can cover everything from launching a product, to revitalising a brand or growing market share.

Best Lifestyle Campaign / Tourism Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for clients who address the lifestyle, leisure, travel and luxury sector, including but not limited to fashion, beauty, hospitality, tourism, hospitality, entertainment and recreation.

Best Health / Wellness Sector Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for clients in the health and wellness sector, both public and private. It covers all facets of the sector from health providers to pharma, medical research, medical equipment and support groups. Campaign outcomes can cover a very wide range and include, but are not limited to, changing behaviour, raising money and launching products or services

Criteria for individual categories

Best Technology Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for technology products, services, or brands.

Best Contribution to a Client's Goals Through a Social-first Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for clients with a social-first approach. The campaign may include other communications techniques, but the strategy and execution must demonstrate why a social-first approach was the best solution for the client. If part of longer-term outreach, there must be a clear client outcome achieved.

Best Charity / Not-for-Profit Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for clients who are charities, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations. If the campaign addressed fundraising, you must be explicit about how your work has contributed to the financial stability or fundraising objectives of the organisation.

Criteria for individual categories

Best Integrated Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered a specific contribution to an important outcome for a client by using an integrated communications approach across earned, owned and paid – and using any or all communications formats.

Best Contribution to Achieving Client Goals Through Sponsorship

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered a specific contribution to an important outcome for a client by using sponsorship. The contribution of the sponsorship to the client goal must be made explicit by the entry.

Best Contribution to Client Goals Through a PR Event

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered a specific contribution to an important outcome for a client by using a PR event. The contribution of the event to the client goal must be made explicit by the entry.

Criteria for individual categories

Best Public Information Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that improved awareness or generated support for a specific topic among the general public or specific interest groups. The campaign may be instigated by a company, government department, local authority, state body or interest group.

Best Public Sector Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns for a single topic that delivered an important outcome for clients who are a public sector organisation, local authority, or a government department.

Best Contribution to Societal Change Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important contribution to affecting societal change, such as a change to legislation that has a significant positive impact on Irish society.

Criteria for individual categories

Best Corporate Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for a business or organisation by focusing on the organisation as distinct from its products or services.

Best ESG Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for a client by focusing on its approach to Environment, Social and Governance. Just highlighting the ESG approach is not enough, the entry must demonstrate a positive outcome from the campaign.

Best Public Affairs Campaign

This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for a client by influencing public policy, legislation, or shaping political perceptions. Campaigns may include issues management, advocacy, or structured engagement with political, public service or regulatory stakeholders. Just outlining engagement activity is not enough, the entry must demonstrate a clear and positive outcome achieved through strategic public affairs activity.

Criteria for individual categories

Delivering Impact Through Earned Media - Short Term

Delivering immediate business impact through earned media in less than one month. This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for a client by using earned media. This award recognises how the agency created immediate impact as a result of its strategy and execution. Just highlighting coverage is not enough, the entry must demonstrate a positive outcome from the campaign.

Delivering Impact through Earned Media - Medium to Long Term

Delivering business / organisational impact through earned media over a longer time frame. This category shines a spotlight on campaigns that delivered an important outcome for a client by using earned media. This award recognises campaigns that ran for 1-12 months and delivered specific impact as a result of the strategy and execution. Just highlighting coverage is not enough, the entry must demonstrate a positive outcome from the campaign.

Criteria for individual categories

Best Ongoing Communications Strategy

This category recognises sustained PR, communications, and media relations consultancy for long standing clients. It celebrates agencies and teams that consistently deliver strategic, long-term communications that enhance reputation, drive engagement, and achieve measurable impact over time. This award recognises how the agency created impact as a result of its strategy and execution. Judges will look for demonstrated success, adaptability, and the ability to maintain momentum in an evolving media and business landscape.

Campaign of the Year

The winners of all the campaign categories will be entered into the Campaign of the Year category and reviewed by the panel of judges. (Entrants do not apply for this category)

Award Criteria Categories About

All Award categories are for work by an agency in support of a client between 28 February 2025 and 2nd of March 2026.

The aim of these criteria is to highlight the valuable contributions entrants make to their client's success.

As a result, the criteria are designed to bring the impact of the work - the valuable contribution made to the client - to the surface. It will not, for example, be sufficient to just list a lot of press coverage. It will be necessary to identify what that press coverage contributed to achieving the client's goals.

Entrants also need to show the quality of the thinking that was done that ensured a successful contribution from the outset. This needs to show how the agency's approach overcame the barriers to the client's success, such as: competitor activity or mindshare; economic, legislative or political environment; negative perceptions etc.

Each criterion is allocated a maximum score, with 100 points in total available for the entry. Scores of less than 65 are unlikely to reach a shortlist.

AVEs will be rejected as an effective measure.

Award Criteria Categories (1-18) | 1/5

1. The client problem to be solved and the outcome to be achieved - 20 points – up to 400 words

In assessing an entry, the judges will need to understand the level of difficulty and the level of value to the client. There will be 10 points available for each - so hard challenges score higher than easy ones - high value more than low value.

Please provide sufficient information so the judges can assess the value to the client of achieving the outcome and also how difficult it is to achieve the outcome by identifying the key barriers to success. For example, if a client was launching a product into a sector that already had several other competitors and a dominant market leader, the agency would need to work very hard to make the client's product top of mind with buyers. It would also need to build sufficient trust in the client's product to persuade buyers to choose it over the dominant market leader.

Award Criteria Categories (1-18) | 2/5

2. Your strategy for making a tangible contribution to solving the problem or achieving the outcome - 30 points – up to 400 words

This is weighted higher than the first criteria because we want you to show that the core value of your agency is the expert thinking behind the work.

Judges will allocate up to:

- 10 points for the depth and quality of research or insight that guided your strategy
- 10 points for the quality of audience targeting that ensured the right effort was focused on the right people
- 10 points for the clarity about the contributions it will make to the client's success. This section needs to include the metrics agreed with the client to measure your contribution. Using the product launch example above, this section would need to explain how you planned to cut through competitor 'noise' to make your client top of mind and how you would build trust in the client's product in the process.

Please explain your strategy so it is clear how you were planning to contribute to the client's success. Identify any research that led you to this strategy. Set out your campaign objectives and demonstrate how you planned to measure and prove your contribution. Judges will be looking for an explicit connection between your work and the outcome to be achieved. General statements such as raise awareness will not suffice. You will need to show who needed to be aware, what they needed to know and what this awareness needed to trigger.

Award Criteria Categories (1-18) | 3/5

3. How you delivered on your strategy - 20 points – up to 400 words

The goal here is for you to show how the actions you took increased the certainty of making the required contribution to the client. Judges will be assessing the effectiveness of your processes and team as well as the level of innovation or creativity that was applied in relation to the specific client problem/outcome. Please explain the specific steps you took to make success more assured and why you took these particular steps. For example, why you developed a particular message or campaign, why you selected a particular influencer or expert or why you chose a specific communications technique or channel.

Award Criteria Categories (1-18) | 4/5

4. The results of your work - 30 points – up to 400 words

This section is weighted more heavily because it is essential that your strategic thinking and approach translated into a meaningful contribution to the client's objectives.

Agencies are not always directly responsible for final commercial outcomes. However, you are expected to demonstrate how your work made a clear and valuable contribution such as increasing awareness, building trust, shaping perception, or influencing key audiences that supported those outcomes.

Please share tangible, measurable results that prove you achieved or exceeded the expected contribution. List your results clearly against the objectives outlined in Section 2, and demonstrate a direct link between those objectives, the metrics selected, and the outcomes achieved.

Award Criteria Categories (1-18) | 5/5

5. Why you should win – up to 150 words

Please provide a brief summary of why your entry should win the award. This needs to highlight the value delivered, the expert thinking and the outstanding execution.

What judges are looking for:

- ✓ Clear articulation of client challenge & objectives
- ✓ A strategic approach to problem-solving
- ✓ Creativity and innovative execution
- ✓ Measurable impact – media coverage and beyond media coverage
- ✓ Alignment with client goals and business objectives
- ✓ Clear ROI and success metrics

Categories: Individual & Team Excellence Awards – 20-24



Rising Star Award (for emerging professionals under 35 years of age, on or before 21 April 2026)



Outstanding PR Professional



Agency of the Year



Best Agency Service Innovation



Hall of Fame

Rising Star Award - About

The Rising Star Award recognises an emerging communications professional who demonstrates talent, dedication, and impact. This award will honour an individual who, within a few years of entering the industry, has made an impact on their agency and for the clients they work for, showing innovation, strategic thinking, and the ability to drive meaningful engagement for clients or organisations. Recipients of the Rising Star award exhibit leadership potential, a keen understanding of communication trends, and a results-driven approach that sets them apart from their peers. Their work contributes to the advancement of the industry, whether through creative campaigns, media relations, crisis management, or digital storytelling. This award celebrates not just past achievements but also the promise of a bright future in public relations and communications.

Rising Star Award - Criteria 1/5

Applicants for the Rising Star Award must meet the following criteria:

1. **Professional Experience (suggest 300 words) 20 points**

Here write a short a description of yourself and your career to date

2. **Demonstrate Excellence (suggest 500 words) 30 points**

- Candidates must show evidence of exceptional talent, innovation, or impact in their comms role.
- Please include a case study of a campaign you worked on and your contribution to it within 28 Feb 2025 -2 March 2026).

Rising Star Award - Criteria 2/5

Applicants for the Rising Star Award must meet the following criteria:

- The case study should demonstrate:
 - Successful execution of a PR / communications campaign that shows creative problem-solving or innovative use of communications tools and platforms.
 - Tangible communications impact results such as media coverage, audience engagement, reputation management, brand recognition, audience growth.
 - Provide an example of how you introduced an innovative idea, approach, or strategy in your work. What impact did it have?

Rising Star Award - Criteria 3/5

Applicants for the Rising Star Award must meet the following criteria:

3. Approach and Leadership Future Potential (suggest 300 words) 30 points

- Demonstrate your approach to working in PR covering your approach to working with colleagues, with your employer, clients and with stakeholders.
- Nominees should demonstrate potential for future leadership within the communications industry, such as mentorship, team collaboration, continual upskilling and growing industry knowledge,

Rising Star Award - Criteria 4/5

Applicants for the Rising Star Award must meet the following criteria:

4. Future Gazing (suggest 300 words) 20 points

- Outline challenges, opportunities and some PR trends you see impacting the industry and development of your communications role over the next 5 years
- How do you see your career evolving in the next 5 years? What impact do you hope to make in the PR industry?

5. Endorsements:

- Please include a recommendation from a manager/agency lead on why you are an appropriate candidate for the rising star award (150 word limit)

Rising Star Award - Criteria 5/5

Applicants for the Rising Star Award must meet the following criteria:

6. Submission Materials:

- Completed entry form, including:
 - Professional headshot.
 - CV
 - Supporting case study file - optional

Outstanding PR Professional - About

Outstanding PR Professional: This award recognises a mid-level professional (approx. 8–12 years' experience) who is making a significant impact on the public relations and communications industry in Ireland. It honours individuals who demonstrate leadership beyond their role, contribute to industry progress, and show clear potential to become future industry leaders. These professionals drive meaningful change, champion best practice, and inspire others through their work, innovation, and commitment to professional development.

Outstanding PR Professional - Criteria 1/3

Criteria for the Outstanding PR Professional includes:

1. Industry Leadership & Advocacy - 300 words 25 points

- Demonstrates emerging leadership by shaping conversations around communications trends, responsible practice, or the future of the profession.
- Participates in industry bodies, networks, events, or professional development initiatives, contributing meaningfully beyond their core role.
- Shares knowledge through training sessions, internal best-practice initiatives, speaking engagements, or collaborations with academic or professional programmes.

Outstanding PR Professional - Criteria 2/3

Criteria for the Outstanding PR Professional includes:

2. Industry Impact - 300 words score 25 points

- Shows strong strategic and creative thinking that has influenced successful campaigns or helped organisations achieve key objectives.
- Introduces or supports new ways of working, whether through improved processes, fresh ideas, or adoption of new tools, that strengthen practice within their team or organisation.
- Helps raise the profile and perceived value of PR across business, media, or wider societal contexts.

Outstanding PR Professional - Criteria 3/3

Criteria for the Outstanding PR Professional includes:

3. Measurable Impact & Legacy - 300 words 25 points

- Has delivered work, campaigns, initiatives, or internal improvements, with clear and measurable positive impact.
- Champions approaches or tools that enhance team performance, stakeholder engagement, or overall communications effectiveness.
- Recognised by peers, managers, or clients as a standout emerging leader with significant potential to influence the future direction of the PR profession.

4. Endorsement:

- Please include a recommendation from a manager/agency lead on why you are an appropriate candidate for the Outstanding PR Professional Award (150 word limit) - **25 points**

Agency of the Year - About

Agency of the Year: The Agency of the Year will be awarded to the agency that has demonstrated significant positive impact in four key areas: Impact for clients, impact for the agency's people, impact on agency business performance and contribution to the PR and communications sector.

Agency of the Year

The Agency of the Year will be the agency that has demonstrated significant positive impact in four key areas:

- Impact for clients – 250 words. 25 points. Proof of excellence would include client Net Promotor Score (NPS) and client retention as well as outstanding results for clients. It would also include service innovation and how this contributed to all four elements of this award
- Impact for the agency's people – 250 words 25 points Proof of excellence would include employee NPS and employee retention as well as culture development and the professional development of people and how this contributed to the other three elements of this award
- Impact on agency business performance – 250 words 25 points. Proof of excellence would include how the business has become more resilient by increasing profitability, generating cash, commanding premium prices and breaking the time to revenue equation.
- Contribution to the sector – 250 words - 25 points Proof of excellence would include how the agency has been a leading light in the sector for creating reasons why the sector should attract the best talent. This would include service innovation, culture and professional development and the value delivered to clients.

Best Agency Service Innovation

This category is designed to recognise the way an agency has responded to changing client needs and expectations by developing a new service or enhancing an existing service. Entries can include, if appropriate, how new technology has been used to improve either internal or client-facing processes. This covers any technology and does not have to involve AI.

Judges will be looking for the following:

- A description of the new service and the problems it solves or client outcome it contributes to - 25 points – up to 150 words
- An explanation of why this is innovative - 25 points – up to 150 words
- An explanation of why the new service is better than traditional approaches - 25 points – up to 150 words
- Proof that the new service has been well received by clients – 25 points – up to 150 words.

PRCA Hall of Fame

The PRCA Hall of Fame is an honour awarded by the PRCA Board. It recognises individuals who have made a significant, lasting impact on the public relations and communications industry in Ireland. This award celebrates those who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and dedication throughout their careers. Inductees into the Hall of Fame have not only shaped the communications industry but have also contributed to its evolution through thought leadership, mentorship, and outstanding professional achievements. The PRCA Board will consider nominations and make a decision accordingly. You can submit your nomination on this platform, there is no fee. Alternatively you can email your nominations before 21st April to: admin@prca.ie.

Criteria:

- ✓ Industry Leadership & Advocacy – Driving change and setting new standards in public relations and communications.
- ✓ Long-Term Contribution – A proven track record of excellence and sustained impact on the profession.
- ✓ Mentorship & Development – Supporting and nurturing the next generation of communications professionals.
- ✓ Innovation & Influence – Introducing pioneering ideas, strategies, or campaigns that have reshaped the communications industry.
- ✓ Recognised Excellence – Consistently delivering outstanding results and earning respect from peers and clients alike.

How to Win – Tips for a Strong Submission

Align with Objectives – Clearly demonstrate client goals and how your results delivered against the goals.

- ✓ Make sure your **contribution** to the client's success is **explicit**.
- ✓ **Clarity & Conciseness** – Get straight to the point.
- ✓ **Tell a Story** – Outline the challenge, solution, and impact.
- ✓ **Prove Effectiveness** – Use data, results, and client testimonials.
- ✓ **Show Creativity & Innovation** – What makes your campaign a good solution for your client's challenge?

How NOT to Win

- ✗ Recycle entries from other awards or different categories – there MUST be a good match to each award criteria.
- ✗ Exceed the word count – the platform won't let you.
- ✗ Fail to give explicit contributions – expecting judges to 'read between the lines' will not work.

Supporting Materials & Technical Notes

Supporting material may be submitted in support of your entry, but the judges will focus on the submission submitted above. Supporting material include press releases, sample press cuttings, photos, broadcast material and any other information deemed relevant.

Please note that while only a moderate amount of media material is required at least one original press release must be included.

- **Formats:** PDF submissions and documents
- **Size Limit:** 200MB total across 5 files
- **Required Materials:**
 - At least one original press release
 - Sample media coverage (if applicable)

Additional Materials

Please follow the link below for the Best Practice Briefing hosted by the awards chair Crispin Manners

[Download PDF →](#)

Esteemed Judging Panel

New Chair: Crispin Manners

Members:

- Chloe Brennan, Matchstick Talent Agency
- Geraldine Herbert, journalist and broadcaster
- Thomas Kelly, DCU & another
- Eoin Kennedy, Novartis Ireland
- Joseph Hoban Group Head of Marketing, Communications | RTÉ
- Padraig McKeon, Consultant
- Allison Morris, Belfast Telegraph
- Andras Sztaniszlav, Consultant
- Padraig Barry, ALDI Comms Director
- Stephen Hopkins, IBEC
- Charley Stoney, European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA CEO)
- Eleanor Guinan, Poetry Ireland, Communications Manager
- Gillian Nelis, The Business Post
- Andy Green
- Florence White, Uisce Éireann

Timeline

PRCA SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

- Opening of Submissions: Monday 2 March
- Early Bird Deadline: Tuesday 14 April – €220 + VAT
- Final Deadline: Tuesday 21 April – €295 + VAT
- Shortlist Announcement: Tuesday 26 May
- Gala Ceremony: Thursday 25 June - The Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin | 6pm

[ENTER NOW →](#)