

Rebecca Hales

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Organised, motivated, and curious design leader and communications expert with a background in:

- developing, implementing and evaluating agile engagement strategies that put users first
- writing, commissioning, and editing quality content for print and online channels
- uncovering interesting stories from inside high profile organisations and sharing them at the right time through the right channels
- helping teams, Government ministers, and c-suite leaders articulate complex concepts in plain English
- crisis communications and reputation management
- managing individual and organisational relationships with the press and media
- leading and directing digital teams of 10 to 100 designers (working across content, comms, UX, AV production, SEO and brand)

Employment

Head of Content Design and SEO, BT, EE and Plusnet, Aug '19 - present

I currently provide direction and hands on leadership for a team of 95 content designers, content editors, and SEO experts working across three brilliant brands.

In August 2019 I introduced the discipline of content design to BT, establishing a user-centred approach to content creation as an embedded and collaborative part of the design function and processes for a global brand that serves 34m+ people in the UK. I'm accountable for setting the content strategy and all content decisions across three websites and associated apps, as well as influencing BT's overall approach to user-centred multidisciplinary design and its impact on product performance.

Head of Content and Digital Engagement, UK Parliament, Dec '16 - Jul '19

Promoted from Content Lead in May 2018, I used my expertise to help make democracy open, transparent, and engaging. Leading a team of 17 content producers, I made sure Parliament is delivering high-quality, user focused, accessible content.

Duties included:

- Setting the overall strategic direction of content for Parliament's digital services and channels, aligning the content team's work - whether that's [content design](#), [social media activity](#) or [filmmaking](#) - to organisational priorities
- Developing content strategies that respond to the needs of users and shine a light on the work of subject matter experts working within Parliament
- Implementing structures, processes and tools for content design
- Producing style guidelines, setting standards and measures, and putting them into effect
- Resolving conflict at senior levels across both Houses
- Team growth and professional development

- Crisis management and contingency planning for digital communications channels

Skills gained:

- CIPR Specialist Diploma in Crisis Communications (awarded September 2018)
- Managing team resourcing and leading roadmapping for content projects that reach audiences of millions
- Board-level negotiation and influencing
- Managing an annual budget of £1m
- Significant people management skills, including formal training in mastering performance management, coaching and leadership, conducting difficult conversations and diversity, inclusion and disability in the workplace

Head of Digital Communications, Government Digital Service, Feb '14 - Dec '16

At GDS I worked on two high-profile work streams: initially as Digital Engagement Lead on the [Digital Transformation Programme](#) and then promoted to Head of Digital Communications for the [GOV.UK Verify Identity Assurance Programme](#).

Duties included:

- Leading on the accurate and timely reporting of progress across the GOV.UK Verify Programme by: managing the editorial calendar for [the Identity Assurance blog](#); ghostwriting, commissioning and editing posts; and briefing the design team on sharable [audiovisual material](#) for use on social media
- Developing and implementing a strategy for digital engagement for GOV.UK Verify for 2015/16 by producing - and getting senior level buy-in on - a comms plan for GOV.UK Verify through public beta development to live covering: scope; resources; milestones; core messages and overall narrative; channel management; collateral; and crisis scenario planning
- Managing multiple relationships with heads of comms and media across government and in the private sector share digital engagement best practice and ensuring collaborative multimedia storytelling across a range of channels
- Sitting on the Senior Management Team for GOV.UK Verify, advising on comms best practice
- Shaping a narrative for GOV.UK Verify by identifying programme priorities, developing a set of lines to take to create a coherent story of digital transformation in government, and feeding pitches for good news stories to Cabinet Office Press Office
- Improving output on the various digital comms channels available to GOV.UK Verify, increasing engagement and reach. Including, for example, running the [@GOVukverify](#) Twitter feed and increasing the channel's following by 78% in 6 months
- Ensuring briefings for Ministers, speeches, media, reporting requests, FOIs and PQs are dealt with by: delegating or escalating the handling of requests and responses to colleagues when appropriate; keeping track of what was said (and why); and fact checking and clearing material
- Line managing 3 team members - digital engagement leads and a digital engagement assistant - supporting them in taking responsibility for their own development and acting as a role model for workplace-based learning

Skills gained:

- Formal training courses completed: CIPR crisis communications; CIPR writing for online audiences; and LCC short course in advanced copywriting
- The ability to set a campaign direction whilst seeing the big picture and identifying the implications of business priorities on digital engagement plans

- Strategic decision making by drawing reasonable conclusions from a range of incomplete and complex evidence – making difficult decisions pragmatically, even when details are not clear
- Knowing when to escalate decision making to the right level within teams, not allowing bureaucracy to suppress innovation and delivery

Senior Complaints Investigator, Press Complaints Commission, Sep '08 - Jan '14

Duties included:

- Liaising with newspaper and magazine editors across the industry and negotiating with complainants and solicitors to resolve complaints
- Managing the PCC's response to the most high-profile and contentious news stories of the day
- Working with individuals and families personally affected by press attention in addition to PR and communications staff, press offices around the UK and worldwide; and news desks and senior editorial staff on all major UK newspapers, broadsheets and tabloids
- [Drafting technically precise and well reasoned decisions](#) and press guidance
- Producing clear, concise press releases for dissemination across the industry
- Writing corrections, clarifications and apologies for publication in print and online
- Training, developing and line managing a team of 6 complaints officers
- Managing educational outreach work with colleges and universities (UK and US-based) and members of the industry (national and regional) and presenting on press regulation and ethics at more than 50 seminars and open days

Skills gained:

- Improved project management and problem solving skills obtained through complaints investigation
- Negotiation skills and the ability to handle difficult people and those in a state of grief or shock
- Versioning and the ability to respond with speed and positivity to critique of my writing
- The ability to anticipate the path of a news story and judge who might be impacted whilst planning the external and internal communications required to deal with a crisis

Assistant Editor, HarperCollins Publishers, Jun '07 - Sep '08

Duties included:

- Editorial support. Proofreading, copy editing, project/delivery management, picture research and monitoring artwork, market research to assist the commissioning of projects and writing blurbs and rejection letters
- Backlist management. Organising reprints, re-launches and rebranding of titles
- Sales and marketing responsibilities. Providing sample material for publicity, writing marketing copy, drafting rights sheets, creating book fair presentations/sample layouts

Education and professional qualifications

Harvard Talent Programme: Leading through change, Jan '20 - Aug'20

Completed Harvard Business Publishing taught course on leadership principles, approaches and best practices in corporate leadership and servant leadership at scale.

Chartered Institute of Public Relations, Sep '17 - Jul '18

CIPR Specialist Diploma in Crisis Communications. Final dissertation entitled 'Phishing for passwords: protecting UK Parliament's reputation during a brute force attack'. Pass with distinction awarded September 2018.

London School of Economics and Political Science, Jul - Aug '10

I attended the LSE Summer School whilst working full time at the PCC. [I wrote about media freedom](#) and achieved A grades in:

- International Journalism and Society – the role of the media in the modern world
- Athens to Al Qaeda – political theory and international politics

Queen Mary, University of London, Sep '04 - Jun '07

BA (Hons) English Literature, 2:1

Technical stuff...

I'm great with Google docs and apps, the Office 365 suite, and CMS systems such as Wordpress, Episerver, Adobe Experience Manager, and KenticoCloud. I've got demonstrable experience of monitoring tools including Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics, Hootsuite, Brandwatch, Sysomos, and native analytics tools for the big social platforms. I'm OK with InDesign and basic HTML. Love Trello, Slack, Miro, Figma, Mural and other collaborative tools.