

In-House Team of the Year



An Garda Síochána
Ireland's National Police and Security Service

Organisation

Garda Office of Corporate Communications (GOCC)

Description of Campaign

This award was delivered to a team that not only deliver great work for their organisation but fosters a culture of support, creativity, and collaboration.

Provide up to three examples of communication work in the period 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2025. *
The three examples should demonstrate your team's innovation, results and impact. Include objectives, summary of actions and measurable outcomes/impact for your employing organisation

1. A major focus of our communications strategy has been the expansion of social media channels to provide information directly and quickly to as many people as possible, particularly in emergencies.

There is a strong emphasis on engaging with our on-line audience as we have found that high levels of engagement drive increases in followers.

Also, a highly engaged audience is more likely to help us when we make public appeals, especially during national emergencies.

Our use of appropriate humour has supported our drive for engagement, delivered positive media coverage, and helped humanise Gardaí.

In May 2024, we had 42 social media channels – six controlled by the GOCC and 36 devolved to local level with GOCC oversight and training, with 2.1m followers.

From May 2024 to June 2025, in order to reduce reliance on an increasingly toxic X and further widen our audience to a younger demographic, we increased our posting on TikTok (125% growth in year to 67,225 followers), Instagram (25% growth to 242,690), and LinkedIn (50% growth to 74,188).

A dedicated Missing Persons Facebook page was introduced and gathered 28,128 followers.

Engagement rates are above industry standard of 1% with X (6%), LinkedIn (15%) and TikTok (25%) performing particularly well.

Overall followers have grown 10% in the year to 2.3m – all organic.

The result is a large, highly engaged audience that regularly supports our requests for assistance to prevent and detect crime locally and nationally, as well as public information and recruitment campaigns.

2. A core function of An Garda Síochána is protection of democracy and public safety. Misinformation and disinformation is a threat to this.

The rise of political extremism and protests relating to immigration saw an increase in posts on social media deliberately and falsely linking serious crimes to immigrants and/or “foreigners”. In some instances, this had directly led to violent public gatherings.

To counter this, in May 2024 GOCC started proactively publishing Misinformation Notices via press release and social media.

These Notices clearly spelt out the facts of the situation and that the suspect(s) was not in the IPAS process or was an Irish citizen.

While speed was important, so was accuracy to maintain the credibility of our Notices. The eight Notices resulted in a large level of online, broadcast and print coverage from respected outlets detailing the facts and dismissing the social media information as false. For example, a Misinformation Notice on what was an innocent interaction between a man with limited English and schoolchildren was viewed over 200,000 times on Facebook and Instagram, and had 830,000 impressions on X.

It was most recently deployed during the fatal shooting incident at a Carlow shopping centre.

The overall result has been a de-escalation of situations that could have turned violent, an undermining of so-called “citizen journalists”, and a properly informed media, political representatives and public.

3. To expand our reach to different audiences, the Garda Podcast was launched in June 2024.

Produced and edited in-house, it aimed to increase public awareness in the diverse work undertaken by the organisation; enhance internal organisational awareness of this positive work; and to assist with Garda recruitment by detailing the many career opportunities available.

Twenty-three episodes have been released including: Inside the Air Support Unit, Policing Dublin, Life in the Garda College, and Community Policing. There have also been interviews with senior officers on their careers.

It has reached number five on the Irish national Spotify chart and number one in Ireland in Society and Culture category on Apple Podcasts chart.

The average consumption rate of the podcast is close to 80%, resulting in over 20,000 hours spent listening.

What does your team do to support continuous professional development, training and skills growth?

There is a strong focus on training to develop the skills, organisational knowledge and leadership abilities of personnel.

In the last year, staff have undertaken training in – Human Rights and Policing (University of Limerick), Digital Photography (Griffith College), Public Affairs (PRII), Public Sector PR (PRII), Management Development (Garda College), Mentoring (Garda College), Competency Based Interviewing (Garda College), and Data Protection and GDPR (IPA).

Personnel are helped broaden their skills base by working on cross-functional projects. For instance, in the last year a former TV news producer joined. Through training and support, they now not only produce video content, but operate as a communications officer working across media relations, social media, and campaigns.

Once personnel have received appropriate training, understand our high standards, and have the required managerial support, a high level of responsibility is delegated to them.

For instance, a former producer of a national radio programme working in internal communications was given autonomy to produce a podcast series.

Similarly, a former commercial graphic designer at a second-level grade was empowered to create brand guidelines for the Garda organisation within six months of joining. The guidelines were subsequently approved by the Garda Commissioner.

How does your team promote collaboration, knowledge sharing, and clear internal communication? *

To expand the pool of local spokespeople available to speak to media on policing activity, all senior officers are provided with a half-day media training session developed by GOCC and delivered by Communications Clinic. In the last year, 40 senior officers were trained with over 100 trained since 2023.

With the creation of the first ever Garda Board in 2025, the GOCC developed a training session for the Garda Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on interacting with a board. The training involved scenarios covering the area of expertise of individual SLT members.

In the last year, GOCC also delivered training to colleagues working on local social media pages, providing crime prevention advice on local radio, Senior Investigating Officers on media strategy during investigations, and video production for local content creators.

The Internal Communications team collaborated with a large number of sections in this complex organisation to produce succinct briefings and educational material on new developments in plain English. It is now accepted practice that such material is best delivered across our internal communications platforms – internal e-zine Newsbeat, which has a 66% open rate compared to international standard of 57%, Garda intranet, and screensavers – rather than the previous top-down, formal, legalistic missives.

Outline your approach to performance management and talent retention.

According to staff, GOCC has a high retention rate because of the variety and level of the work available, the impact it has on society, and the value placed on it by senior management inside and external to GOCC.

On average, staff members stay for nearly five years and 18% have been promoted within the team since joining.

No day is the same in the GOCC. Staff could be working on a murder investigation, or a public information campaign on domestic abuse, or communicating new procedures for roads policing.

They can see a career path and opportunities to progress. They have seen colleagues who joined at entry grade work their way up through the GOCC to senior management positions or leave on promotion to head-up communications functions externally.

The Director of Communications holds regular all-staff meetings where work is showcased, personnel detail learnings from projects, and they are thanked for their work.

All personnel receive mentoring from the Director who has over 20 years' experience in public relations, 12 of those in his current role.

All personnel have regular performance management reviews with their line managers, and this form the basis of their training and development plans.

What policies or practices do you have in place to support employee wellbeing and work-life balance?

- Up to three days per week working from home
- Access to confidential and independent 24/7 Counselling Service
- Access to Garda mental health and wellbeing app
- Mental Health First Aid course to help themselves and other suffering mental health issues
- A range of wellbeing initiatives such as “lunchtime walk in the park” and Wellness Days including a talk from a psychologist on building emotional resilience and strategies for maintaining wellbeing.
- First guide to menopause in the public service
- Access to on-site gym
- A wide-range of Garda sports clubs and societies
- Expert advice provided via internal e-zine on topics such as eating well, sleep hygiene, and dealing with stressful events
- Female employees can join the Garda Women’s Network, which provides mentoring and support in progressing their careers
- GOCC personnel have received a talk from the Head of the Garda Welfare Service on how to mind themselves during and after traumatic situations
- Director of Communications regularly emphasises the need for personnel to take the leave they are due, and to take breaks after dealing with traumatic/stressful issues that can go on for days.
- Can avail of civil service shorter working scheme
- Personnel on shift, work four days on, four days off

What makes your in-house public relations team the best?

The ability of the 30-strong team to consistently deliver quality, impactful communications across multiple channels in a highly pressurised environment.

In the relevant period, GOCC produced over 2,000 press releases; held more than 50 media briefings; delivered 99 issues of Newsbeat; created more than 100 videos; prepared 50

speeches; oversaw content across 43 social media channels to 2.3m followers; released 23 podcasts, and helped produce 10 episodes of RTE's Crimecall with an average audience of 309,000 per episode.

This was delivered in line with the communication strategy and supporting the organisation's mission of keeping people safe.

GOCC personnel also remained calm and strategic in dealing with a wide-range of crises including national emergencies, serious public disorder, threat-to-life, and high profile national and international investigations to provide clear, factual information to media and directly to the public.

GOCC delivered the multi-channel Garda recruitment campaign that increased the number and quality of applicants.

Most importantly, all of this work contributed to the organisation's high public trust rating. Without trust, policing services have no legitimacy. In 2024, according to independent research, An Garda Síochána had a public trust rating of 88%, one of the highest for a police service in the world.