Creating clarity and embedding change.

How communicating change is helping a utilities leader build a culture of innovation.

EQUAL EXPERTS

Our client is a water/ utilities company on a mission to transform its services for its 15 million customers, growing a culture of innovation that uses data and IT to improve how they solve problems.

This is a complex transformation for any organisation and, to ensure it was successful, the whole organisation needed to understand and embrace the changes.

Which is why one of the most important parts of this process was the communications strategy.

Equal Experts were asked to work with our client to help build a clearer understanding of what the future of the organisation looked like. This needed to build confidence in their team's capabilities, improve understanding of agile working, and share success from the digital team.

To position them as an aspiring place to work, and create the foundations needed to be a 'digital first' water company.

4 awards

won at two prestigious IT industry awards events.

About the client.

Our client is one of the UK's largest water and wastewater services companies, and supplies 2.6 billion litres (570 million imperial gallons) of drinking water per day, and treats 4.4 billion litres (970 million imperial gallons) of wastewater per day. Their 15 million customers comprise 27% of the UK population.

INDUSTRY

Utilities

ORGANISATION SIZE

9,000 staff plus many contractors

LOCATION

UK

Communicating a changing structure and IT culture in an organisation.

The digital team was undertaking a rapid delivery transformation. Working with Equal Experts they started to establish a whole new set of team structures, built a 'you build it, you run it' culture, and a major shift in their way of working.

This has helped to change the workplace culture within the digital teams. But, for this programme of change to be a success, the benefits of rapid delivery needed to be communicated to the wider organisation. People outside of the digital teams needed to collaborate across the business without hesitation, to ensure there were no silos, only open and transparent work practices.

To ensure this new way of working was accepted and adopted, in a still largely traditional IT environment, Equal Experts needed to communicate the value of the new software and working practices. This meant building a shared understanding and full appreciation of the agility with which teams can operate across all the operational groups.

If we did this effectively, then we would position their organisation as an aspiring place to work and much admired by the technology, digital, and utilities sectors.

Defining the messages, to ensure they resonate.

The first priority was to help them to find the right narrative for talking about rapid delivery, ensuring links to the strategic goals and organisational priorities were obvious. This would help everyone at the organisation to build confidence in their team's capabilities, and create the foundations needed to be a 'digital first' water company. It was also important that the value, both financial and operational, was communicated. Finally, messaging needed to communicate clear leadership and vision, explain the internal culture change, and create a shifting perception of what is now possible.

To achieve this, two key audiences were defined – internal and external.

The Internal audience included the digital product and data factory teams, future digital product team members, operations teams, and customer experience teams. Here we needed to communicate how the new rapid delivery model and agile ways of working would help the whole organisation to meet its strategic aims.

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Externally the work needed to target digital and technology industry experts, future employees, and the wider utilities industry, particularly those working in digital or at the executive level. This needed to position the organisation as a "digital-first" organisation, with innovation at the heart of everything they do.

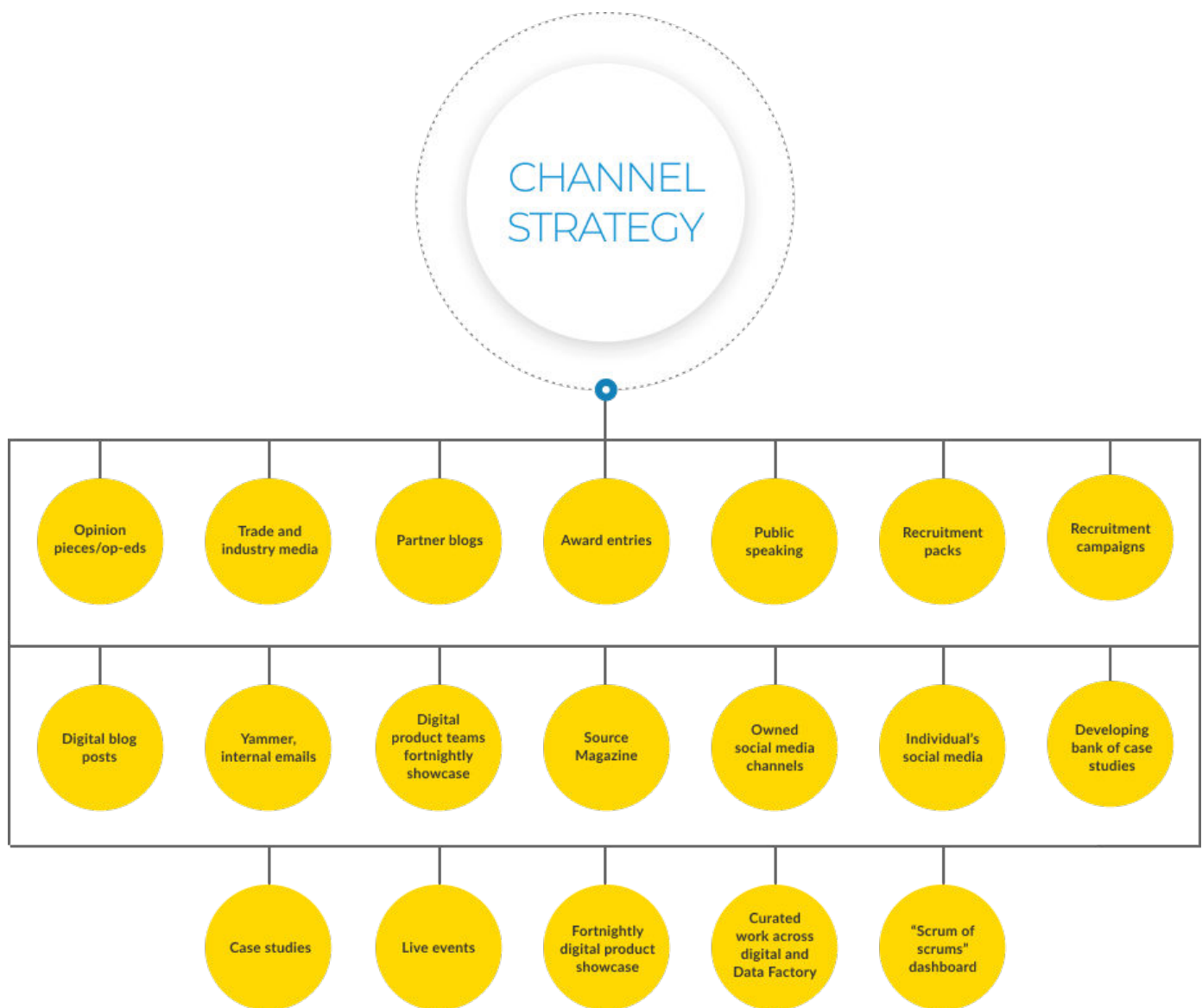# A channel strategy to stimulate new thinking and lay foundations for innovation.

This was not something that could be communicated through a single channel, so a range of tactics was agreed.

To promote transparency, openness and understanding throughout the organisation, there was a new dashboard, blog, and digital product showcase events.

To demonstrate the effectiveness and value of the work – and improve their reputation with an internal and external audience, we created a range of supporting case studies and entered several high-profile industry awards. This highly successful strategy saw their **success in the UKIT Awards, UK App Awards, DevOps Industry Awards, and TechWomen100 Awards.**

We also supported recruitment and built their reputation by amplifying the voices of individuals through leadership. This included public speaking, social media, and publicising the awards entries with relatable and accessible content.

We also brought together a team of digital product experts for a panel discussion on how to be an effective product owner. It was an opportunity for employees to hear how other organisations have embedded product owners into their way of working.

CHANNEL STRATEGY

Opinion pieces/op-eds • Trade and industry media • Partner blogs • Award entries • Public speaking • Recruitment packs • Recruitment campaigns

Digital blog posts • Yammer, internal emails • Digital product teams fortnightly showcase • Source Magazine • Owned social media channels • Individual's social media • Developing bank of case studies

Case studies • Live events • Fortnightly digital product showcase • Curated work across digital and Data Factory • "Scrum of scrums" dashboard

Taking a utilities company to the next level.

These initiatives combined, have started to build **a radical new way of delivering IT solutions** for the utilities sector. The cultural changes emerging with the project are helping the company move away from a bureaucratic governance model.

Importantly, digital changes are now starting to be recognised and the team is working to ensure these are welcomed by everybody across the organisation rather than resisted. A good barometer of this is, increasingly, operational groups are enquiring about when their process can be digitised. An 'I want some of that too' culture.

Want to know more?

Are you interested in this project?
Or do you have one just like it?
Get in touch. We'd love to tell you more about it.

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