

# CIPR PRide Awards 2009

**Region:** Midlands

**Category:** 16 - Best newspaper or magazine

**Entry:** *ldr*, the magazine for school leaders, published by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL)

**Submitted by:** Nick Bannister (editor) and Caroline Wainer (production manager)

## 1 Aims and objectives

*ldr* is NCSL's flagship magazine. Published quarterly, it is available both in print and online at [www.ldr-magazine.co.uk](http://www.ldr-magazine.co.uk). Copies are sent to all 23,000 state schools in England, local authorities, educational organisations, academics, education media and policy-makers, as well as overseas subscribers. The total print run is 42,000 units.

*ldr* is aimed at all school leaders - headteachers, deputy and assistant heads, year and subject heads and school business managers – and those with school leadership ambitions. Its purpose is to:

- build awareness of NCSL among school leaders
- provide accessible, practical information on topical issues and best practice
- stimulate thinking and discussion on leadership issues

Our key objective is to hold a mirror to good school leadership practice, look at how school leaders tackle the many challenges of leading a school, and share this with readers through case studies, opinion and analysis, so that they can be inspired, informed and feel supported.

## 2 Meeting the needs of our audience

The focus of *ldr* is to give readers 'practical inspiration' and feedback from them tells us that the magazine is widely regarded by them as part of their support network.

Our readership is synonymous with working in pressurised and accountable public roles. They look to the College to provide them with leadership support, advice and professional development so that they can lead their schools more effectively. If a school is well-led then its pupils are more likely to succeed. This ethos of support and advice is the driving force of the College and for *ldr*, which is its flagship publication.

Our tone is upbeat, positive and supportive. It leaves critical analysis of policy and political intrigue to the TES (Times Educational Supplement) and national press education correspondents, instead acknowledging the realities that school leaders face and demonstrating the practical approaches that other school leaders have adopted to tackle these challenges.

During the last year and a half, we have moved towards a more flexible format which delivers greater variety of topics for the reader. This open approach also means that we can include an in-depth special focus approach when an issue merits it.

Many pieces include a 'practical guide' box which gives the reader quick, practical approaches on the topic covered in the article. A next steps section also offers readers weblinks for further reading.

Other recent content innovations include 'Healthcheck' – a quick exercise which allows the reader to complete a self assessment questionnaire on a key aspect of leadership. It's intended as a starting point and directs the reader towards our extensive online leadership development resources and programmes for further detail.

We continue to draw on prominent educationalists to contribute to the magazine, including our regular columnist Tim Brighouse and guest writers such as London Olympics chair Sir Sebastian Coe.

To further meet the needs of our audience, *ldr* is now integrated with the College's online communities. When a new copy of the magazine is published, our online forum goes live in NCSL's online discussion network talk2learn. This gives readers the opportunity to discuss a key topic from the current issue – and we then reflect that discussion in a feature in the following issue called '*ldr* interactive'

### **3 Design and creativity**

The very high design standards of *ldr* - inspired by quality newspapers and business magazines - ensures that it stands out from the many education publications currently available.

It has distinctive, compact format which readers tell us they like and a clear, modern layout which uses white space and a considered colour palette to draw the eye and create an easy flow across each page.

Its smart and modern visual style uses a creative mix of innovative photography, original illustrations and graphics and is designed to appeal to new and established school leaders alike.

This design approach reflects the needs of our readership. For example, we understand school leaders lead pressurised lives so we often break articles down into easy-to-read sections, allowing readers to dip into the magazine as their schedule allows.

The images used in *ldr* are also designed with the expectations of our school leader readership in mind. Our research indicates that teachers seek to identify with real-life images of their colleagues and students so we make it a priority to include specially commissioned photography which captures this in

each issue. These images help us connect with our readership as well as adding real value to our editorial content. We also use original illustrations throughout each magazine which reinforces *ldr*'s distinctive, original look.

In line with our sustainability policy, the magazine is printed on stock with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) accreditation and is published in a practical format that is distinctive from most other publications yet minimizes paper waste.

#### **4 Evaluation and measurement**

We regularly seek feedback from our audience on our content and style. Our most recent *ldr* reader survey (summer 2008) saw **85 per cent of respondents rate *ldr* as good or excellent**. When the same survey was conducted two years previously – before changes in format, content and design - the ratings were 44 per cent good or excellent.

More recently, NCSL's Annual Opinion Survey was completed by FreshMinds in January 2009. This survey gathered feedback on performance from school leaders across England, yielding information across a range of topics relating to knowledge, awareness of and engagement with NCSL and its programmes and activities. Included in this were specific survey questions on the effectiveness of *ldr*. Findings showed a **93 per cent net positive rating** for the magazine, where 'net positive' is the sum of 'good' and 'very good' ratings.

#### **Industry awards and accolades**

- Winner of a gold award in the Midlands CIPR Pride Awards in October 2008, in the Best Newspaper or Magazine category.
- Finalist in the external newspaper or magazine category in the 2008 CIPR Excellence Awards.
- Winner of a bronze award for design in the 2008 Roses Design Awards.
- Winner of five awards at the 2007 Communicators in Business northern region awards: overall communication of the year award, Gold Awards for

best design and best redesign, and Silver Awards for best writing and best magazine. Judges, drawn from business communication professionals from across the country, said *ldr* was: *“an informative, appealing and inspiring publication produced with the target market firmly in its sights.”*

### **Reader comments**

Some recent comments received from readers:

*“I like the variety of each issue. I share it with my leadership team.”*

*“It’s a really easy, interesting read.”*

*“We devour every issue.”*

*“ldr is an excellent publication - much read and valued in this school”*

*“I regularly use ldr in senior team meetings - it has provided us with many a starting point for leadership initiatives”*

*“Great publication, which I recommend to other heads.”*

*“I think it’s great - compact and no time-wasting”*

**5 Total budget per issue: f) £11 to £50k**