

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Calling Planet Earth: Large Engagement and Communications Initiatives (6)

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USING ROLE MODELS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO REACH MILLIONS

Abstract

“Space has a PR problem”, said Air Vice-Marshal and head of UK Space Command Paul Godfrey at Space-Comm Expo in March 2024. He talked about the global space industry failing to excite society of the benefits and opportunities of space.

The disconnect between society and the global space sector is largely a communication issue. Society views the space sector as difficult, exclusive, remote, complex, closed, and the domain of a small number of leading space faring nations. New ways to educate and communicate with society are needed to engage people with the benefits they receive, and the opportunities offered by space. In addition to engaging society with space, the space sector needs a continuous and increasing inflow of talent. With the rapid growth of new space, this talent can come from all over the world, from any background, STEM and non-STEM.

Reaching the millions – or even billions – with the messages of space is not easy, especially in the light of strong biases that exist about the space industry. Previous research in the field of outreach has shown that education and outreach play a critical role in reaching these millions. To counter the biased views of society towards space, a diverse set of role models is needed to help the industry tell new stories, using new online channels, reaching new audiences.

This paper aims to be a practical guideline for the industry in how to use role models to achieve corporate and industry image and workforce objectives, but also for potential role models to give them personal confidence and the best online and social media tools to become these much-needed role models.

We will look at the definition of role models, why they are needed, who needs them, and how companies can benefit from campaigns using role models. We will look at the role of HR and corporate communications in identifying and training role models. We will look at some principles of influencer marketing and see how influencers relate to role models and vice versa.

The presentation of this paper will be aimed both at space organisations, their HR and marketing and/or communications professionals, and at potential industry role models, providing practical insights, tips, and methods for developing and using role models to reach millions.