



impressions

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Newsletter of the City of London Guild of Public Relations Practitioners

Summer Banquet



The summer season for the Guild started with the Summer Banquet on the 9th June at Cutlers' Hall. Once again this was a really superb evening made possible by kind permission of The Worshipful Company of Cutlers. After enjoying an extremely fine feast, entertainment followed with some rousing singing by members of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

The highlight of the evening saw a general 'sing-along' with guests joining in such choruses as Songs of the Sea, Waiting at the Church and a Proper cup of Coffee. The Guildhall School have nothing to fear! The evening proved to be great fun.

Charities supported by The Public Relations Practitioners Charitable Trust

Over the course of the last 18 months, the PR Practitioners Charitable Trust (i.e., the charity associated with the Guild) has made donations on your behalf to a number of charities, including Coram (as part of the Lord Mayor's Appeal 2011), Deafblind UK and SignHealth.

Like all Livery Companies, the Guild contributes every year to the Lord Mayor's Appeal. This year's Appeal was called Bear Necessities – Building Better Lives (the Lord Mayor being Alderman Michael Bear, and bears of various sorts featuring prominently throughout his mayoralty), and its aim has been to provide the Bear Necessities for a generation of children and young people in the City Fringes, in London and nationwide by supporting children's charity Coram and across the world by supporting disaster relief charity RedR.

The other two charities we have supported were selected by the Trustees from a number of requests for donations because they relate to the Trust's core aims – that is, to support people whose ability to communicate or enjoy the benefit of communication is severely impaired. Our donation to Sign-

Health went towards the training of Deaf students in professional counselling skills. Once qualified, these students will join SignHealth's team of British Sign Language counsellors in providing therapy to culturally Deaf people throughout the UK who are experiencing mental distress and urgently need to share their problems with a professional therapist with whom they can properly communicate.

Deafblind UK serves a wide range of people with combined sight and hearing loss, a key area being the isolation that deafblindness can bring. The charity seeks to address this by using volunteer befrienders, and running local deafblind groups and peer support groups, as well as by providing individual case support through an Information and Advice team.

Members of the Guild are always welcome to suggest charities they would like the Trust to support. They should in the first instance write to the Clerk (e-mail is fine), naming the charity and indicating in particular how it relates to communication and the support of people with communication difficulties.

Forthcoming Events, for your diary, 2012

- *Christmas Carol Service, St. Bartholomews Church, 15th December.*
- *Winter Dinner/ Homecoming Banquet 9th February, Brooks' Club, St. James*
- *Informal gathering, May 10th at the House of Lords, joint Guild and PRCA.*
- *Summer Charity Ball, 15th June. To be held at the H.A.C., joint Guild and M.O.G. (V).*
- *Court Supper, 5th July.*
- *Installation of next Master, 11th October.*

Moving Up

by The Revd. Martin Dudley, C.C.

The Guild has taken rather a long time to move up in the City – a bit like a child stuck in primary school! The next stage is becoming a Company without livery. It is usually achieved after seven years but we have taken more than ten. Nevertheless, we now have a chance to achieve company status during the year in which our sponsoring Alderman, Roger Gifford, a freeman of the Guild, is the Lord Mayor of the City of London.

The key requirements are people, money and charity. First, we need to show that we have an adequate number of freemen and enough practitioners with an interest to sustain the Company into the future. Second – the one we find really hard – we need money in our current account. We live a rather hand-to-mouth existence. Our main expenditure is the Clerk's salary but I am sure we would all agree that without the Clerk we wouldn't get anything organised. She is part-time but there is, frankly, enough work for her to be full-time. We need a real

injection of cash to lift our current balance. The Clerk might say that she needs people to respond to the mailings in which she has already told us this. Third, we need a certain amount in the charity fund. This is going really well and only needs a bit more and if freemen responded to the Clerk's request for their donations to the charitable trust, then all would be well. More than that, we would be able to increase our giving to charities working with people who have communication problems.

So we have a chance that won't come again to become a Company while Roger is at the Mansion House, and we would be foolish to miss it. The City, financial and civic, is waking up to the need for better and more effective PR, not least when we are trying to influence those who make significant decisions in Brussels and elsewhere. Now is the perfect time to make our impact as a Company and after that... Livery!

Guild of PR Practitioners – Associate Membership Scheme

At the inaugural Communications Working Group meeting chaired by Middle Warden – Jon Chandler, the assembled representatives discussed ways to make the Guild more accessible, through opening up membership to younger members of the PR profession. It was thought that the classification of membership being aligned to Senior Practitioners needed to be reviewed against a background of smaller creative agencies being created as a result of digital and social media evolution.

It was also felt that by encouraging younger members of the profession the opportunity to join as Associate Members, we could offer tangible benefits that would work both ways in terms of providing support to the Guild and to Associate Members, by offering professional opportunities to underpin career progression. Another key benefit was defined as being able to provide an injection of enthusiasm for our charitable work through participation in fundraising activities.

The objectives of this proposal are to open up a new membership pool amongst younger members of the profession, to recognise that there are many smaller agencies now operating in digital and social media who would benefit from the fellowship opportunities the Guild offers, to supplement our committees for the delivery of execution of events and deliver long term apprenticeship schemes. It will also allow senior members of the profession to offer mentoring/buddying opportunities.

Our Past Master, the late Carol Friend was a very strong advocate of apprenticeship and bringing young people on in the profession and this work would be carrying on her vision of the Guild.

In the first instance, we will want to target the 15-20 or so young professionals who are already working as apprentices in the industry. The National Apprenticeships Agency have already volunteered to distribute letters to their members inviting them to join the Guild as Associate Members. The CIPR and PRCA have indicated that they would be interested in working with us and the Agency to define an apprenticeship programme for the industry which would also underpin the work being developed to provide qualifications to injured servicemen.

Once the 15-20 have been established as Associate Members, we can open up to all members of the profession offering opportunities such as committee work, the prospect of becoming mentees, the organisation of charitable events and encourage participation in events in support of the Charitable Trust. In terms of measuring the effectiveness of the programme, we will measure take up, numbers of volunteers on committees, increase in Charitable events and numbers volunteering the Charitable Trust as their chosen charity, number of Guild members offering their services as mentors. The fine details are still being developed but it is hoped that we will launch a programme during the incoming Master's year.

Mentoring

A couple of years ago I was asked by City University whether I would like to take part in their mentoring programme. As an alumnus of City University I wanted to participate in the programme (though anyone can). Mentors are assigned a student and then meet and talk to them during the mentoring period, assisting with careers advice, job applications, CVs and providing support. I know how difficult it is to navigate the world of work, especially the City, and felt I could offer some insight into what was expected in that environment.

Although I knew it was much tougher now, I had not expected things to have changed quite as much as they had. When I graduated there was a general assumption that a half decent degree would get you a job, which it mostly did, even though many of us gave little thought to a structured career plan. Working with two mentees over the last two years made me realise just how competitive the job market is, and how much help graduates need to be ready for it.

There are a number of things a mentor can do, but building the mentee's confidence is perhaps the most important. However, talking through their hopes, helping them see the real value of their achievements and giving them access to our own networks are also invaluable, as is talking through how they present themselves. Interviewers often make a decision within a few minutes, if not seconds, so appearance and how we hold ourselves are as important as CVs and covering letters – and, as a company owner, I certainly see plenty which are badly written.

Being clear about what one wants is hugely important. My mentees had an idea of a 'profession', without really understanding what it entailed. Both my mentees wanted to work in the City; thanks to my network I was able to arrange for them to spend time with senior bankers and partners of accountancy firms. They found this very useful and gained a real insight into banking and accountancy. One such meeting led to the mentee deciding to go in a different direction.

Mentoring is very satisfying – seeing someone gain confidence and being able to present themselves well is great; our experience and networks are invaluable to them. And it's really not a big time commitment.

Alla Lapidus

The Guild Of Public Relations Practitioners is indebted to Jenny Dale for the excellent photographs taken at the various events.

Master **Brian Moore**
Deputy Master **Kelly Freeman**
Senior Warden **Dr Martin Dudley CC**

Middle Warden **Jonathan Chandler**
Junior Warden **Kevin Moore**
Clerk **Virginia Rounding CC**