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## THINKING OUT LOUD

### Back to basics

It sounds obvious, but when times are hard, you cannot underestimate the importance of getting back to PR basics. While bells and whistles may attract an initial burst of interest in a product or service, providing polish to a simple but focused communications strategy will deliver far more effective and sustained results.

In fact, if you take PR down to its bare bones, all it takes to achieve a positive change in understanding and attitudes towards an organisation, product or service, is a simple three-step process...and a PR consultancy with the clarity of thinking required to deliver it, of course!

Firstly, it is important to identify the key issues that need to be addressed.

Step two involves defining and raising awareness of these issues among your stakeholders or customers, thus generating a desire for your proposed solution. Having prepared the ground, the final step is to deliver the solution.

So remember, in turbulent times, the most successful companies are those that lay the foundations for long-term success by taking their communications back to basics.



## ALL ABOARD FOR A COMMS EXTRAVAGANZA

Sailing off into the sunset for a relaxing break was certainly not what Proteus MD, Paul Davison, had in mind when he joined the Oriana cruise ship in Southampton for three nights in May.

As the venue for the 2009 Communication Directors' Forum, senior communications practitioners from some of the UK's top companies were on board, keen to meet a range of suppliers of services and products to support their needs.

Paul comments: **"The Forum provided a great networking opportunity, which we used to showcase our expertise, make new contacts and potentially secure new business leads. And, the timing couldn't be better. Having recently refined our credentials to focus on our core skills, we are taking our enhanced offering to market during a period of significant change. While the impact of the recession has been patchy, for those struggling in the current climate, effective communication is critical."**



# WINNING STREAK

## Consultation expertise called in by Council

Proteus recently took on the role of independent facilitator in a series of public workshops organised by the Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC). The Council is in the process of setting out its development aspirations for the next 20 years, which include identifying major sites for new homes, employment, shops and infrastructure.

Public consultation is a vital part of this process and a series of eight workshops were set up to provide an opportunity for local residents to have their say on the proposals. Proteus was appointed by VWHDC to facilitate the workshops, take notes and produce an in-depth summary report. In total, approximately 365 residents and local councillors attended the workshops.

## Proteus facilitates a meeting of minds

Climate change and its impact on the construction industry was the topic of the day at a workshop facilitated by Proteus. Working on behalf of the Technology Strategy Board and the Natural Environment Research Council, Proteus' role was to facilitate and observe the discussions on key climate issues.

Rachel Latham, Senior Consultant at Proteus, comments: **"The impacts of climate change are so wide-ranging that our role at this workshop was to keep the discussions on track to ensure that the needs of the clients were met.**

**Following the production of a final report, we are now working on the next steps with the clients."**



Proteus' Paul Davison facilitates a public workshop in Abingdon



# ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

## A fine exhibit

Trade exhibitions form an important part of the marketing strategy of world-leading fire detector manufacturer, Apollo Fire Detectors. None more so than International Firex, a biennial exhibition held this year at the NEC in Birmingham.

In addition to delivering Apollo's wider B2B communications strategy, Proteus provides the marketing team with support for International Firex. This includes arranging media pre-briefings and article placement, producing a special edition newsletter, e-newsletter and press pack, as well as media management at the event.

Rowland Davies, Marketing Services Manager at Apollo Fire Detectors, comments: **"International Firex is an important event in our calendar, providing our customers with an opportunity to learn about the latest product innovations and for us to discuss new business ideas and opportunities. Proteus helps us to maximise our success at the exhibition by ensuring our event communications are on message and on target."**



# FOCUS ON...

## Proactive planning support

There's no such thing as 'off the shelf' communications when it comes to Proteus' support for a planning application. Whether it's for a new supermarket, housing estate or power station, each development will have its own set of issues and audiences – requiring a tailored communications response.

Planning support will often include elements of media relations, community liaison and stakeholder dialogue, but it is the initial contextual analysis that is crucial in being able to pinpoint the specific issues and audiences, and the appropriate communications tools to use.

"With any planning application, it is critical to understand from the outset what motivates an audience and to assess how they are likely to respond to a particular situation," explains Managing Director, Paul Davison. "No two developments are the same; what's accepted by one community could become an extremely contentious and fiercely contested issue in another. That's why it's essential from both a communications and commercial perspective to do your homework."

Preparing an extensive audit of political and community opinion formers, and the 'communications nodes' or areas where information dissemination cannot be controlled such as leisure, retail and education establishments, is key to Proteus' approach to planning issues. Our targeted programmes predict and then manage the likely reaction of community groups, stakeholders and the media.

The results to date speak for themselves: Proteus' proactive communications plans have helped to secure more than £3 billion worth of development with robust and measurable impacts on both the media and local communities' acceptance of projects.



Proteus led the communications for the Elvetham Heath village in Hampshire



Some of the media coverage generated by Proteus for TITECH UK

## From zero to hero

TITECH is a leading manufacturer of sensor-based sorting systems used to separate recyclable materials from co-mingled waste. Scandinavian in origin, TITECH originally approached Proteus in 2007 for help to raise its profile in the UK.

With a limited budget available, Proteus recommended an initial intensive six month media relations campaign to coincide with RWM – the main trade event for the recycling sector. This strategy paid off, establishing TITECH as market leader, and Proteus has retained the account ever since.

Alison Jones, Senior Consultant at Proteus, says: "We position TITECH as experts in their chosen field by connecting with issues that are important to their customers, such as improving recyclate quality. In 2009 we've also started a monthly opinion piece for the company, which appears in leading trade publication MRW (Materials Recycling Week)."

Jonathan Clarke, head of TITECH UK, says: "Our UK sales are growing all the time and this is attributable at least in part to the high levels of exposure in the trade press that Proteus creates for us."

# OUT & ABOUT

Committed to keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in all our client sectors, the Proteus team recently attended four exhibitions dedicated to packaging design and optimisation – Packaging Innovations, Ecopack, Pro2Pak and the opening of the 'Packaging a Sustainable Future' exhibition at the Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising.

Paul Davison joined a programme of expert speakers at the Recycling & Waste World conference on Domestic Mixed Plastics Packaging Recycling in May, where he delivered a communications seminar on 'Avoiding mixed messages about mixed plastics'.

In May, Proteus was in Barcelona at Ecocity & Industry, a key international exhibition for those in the environmental and sustainable development sectors.

## COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

As part of its commitment to corporate responsibility, Proteus is providing £15,000-worth of pro bono communications support to Katharine House Hospice. Located just four miles from Proteus' offices in Banbury, the Hospice provides palliative care for a population of more than 145,000 people.

Encompassing the development and implementation of a communications strategy that raises the profile of the Hospice among key audiences, the support provided by Proteus will specifically help to deliver a new website and corporate partnership campaign.

Claire Owens, Consultant at Proteus, comments: "At the heart of our corporate responsibility policy is a commitment to delivering at least £10,000-worth of consultancy to a charity or good cause each year. One in three people know a close friend or relative that has benefited from hospice care. So, by supporting Katharine House Hospice, we are making a positive contribution to our local community as well as supporting a charity valued by our clients, suppliers and employees."

Sue Lane, Fundraising Manager at Katharine House Hospice, comments: "As a charity relying on donations, we are fortunate to have the support of many businesses in the locality and were delighted when Proteus contacted us. Following a series of meetings, Proteus devised a strategy to extend the scope of our communications, part of which includes the development of an excellent corporate information guide which we shall use within Banbury's growing business sector. What impressed us about the staff at Proteus is that they listened to our specific requirements and were sensitive to the needs of those requiring our services. Their free support is highly valued."

For more information on Katharine House Hospice, or to make a donation, please visit [www.khh.org.uk](http://www.khh.org.uk).



Garden at Katharine House Hospice

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