

## Managing Corporate Reputations



Hallmark MD Dr Tom Watson has written the foreword for *Managing Corporate Reputations*, the new book on public relations published by Kogan Page.

Prepared in partnership with the Public Relations Consultants Association, of which Tom is chairman, the new book is designed as a practical source of advice and reference for senior executives in both growing and established companies.

Tom's foreword makes the point that the use of public relations techniques and planning for strategic communications is expanding rapidly. "For too long public relations has been seen as a delivery mechanism for selective messages," he said.

The book also features a chapter on the management of contentious issues by Tom and fellow Hallmark PR director, Steve Osborne-Brown.

*Managing Corporate Reputations*, edited by Adam Jolly, is available, price £35, from bookshops and the PRCA (020 7233 6026) ISBN No: 0 7494 3488 0.

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# Planning problems?

Increasingly, landowners and property developers are commenting that gaining planning permissions for housing, retailing and employment is becoming more and more difficult. Three factors are in play at the same time - changes in planning guidance, the often-unpredictable attitude of councils, and increased opposition to change in communities.

Communicating contentious messages to communities and opinion leaders is a specialist task in which Hallmark PR has considerable expertise.

Since the late 1980s the consultancy has developed a technique called **PR Negotiation** to manage the communication process and bridge gaps in understanding. Its key points are:

- *It builds bridges and seeks common ground in communities*
- *Seeks a Win-Win by communicating positive messages through negotiation*
- *Avoids public meetings and uses informal events to reach the community*
- *Treats all stakeholders as equals and avoids the "leaking out" of information*
- *Encourages the full participation of all stakeholders*

PR Negotiation has proved successful in many instances, sometimes resulting in an early planning permission while in others the project was kept alive while community benefits were negotiated. Here are just two examples of PR Negotiation in action:

**Mobile Phone Masts:** In the past 12 months, the debate over the siting of phone masts has become intense. In discussions with one of the main mast installation companies, Hallmark PR recommended a research initiative to define the parameters of concern among communities across the UK. From this information, the company has a clearer view of where masts will be acceptable and the collateral benefits that make them more acceptable to communities. This information is helping the company with its strategic planning and to create its own "Win-Win" approach.

**Housing, Central South:** A landowner-building contractor project team was taken aback when its plans for 70 houses on a site containing both brownland and green fields met strong opposition from local residents. The locals had only found out about the plans on their doorstep when notice of a planning application was posted on a telegraph pole. Faced with rejection by residents, councillors and officers, the company turned to Hallmark PR for advice. Our strategy was to create opportunities for the residents and developer to meet informally on neutral ground and to identify the residents' real concerns. Armed with this new information, the company withdrew its application and will re-submit a more acceptable plan later in the year. In this way PR Negotiation helped keep the proposals alive at a time when they faced

rejection and an expensive appeal process.

In addition to actively managing the communication process, Hallmark PR often undertakes **political and community audits** for clients before they submit planning applications and commit themselves to expensive land purchase or options. "The audits give a clear picture of the planning and political situation in the city or district where the investment is planned," says Steve Osborne-Brown, who leads the consultancy's PR Negotiation practice. "They give invaluable intelligence over the 'movers and shakers', attitudes towards planning, the important stakeholders and the likelihood of councillors following officers' recommendations."

Hallmark PR has linked with leading public affairs consultancy, **Politics International**, to give additional insight into government attitudes and policy. For more information, see the article at the foot of this page.



## Public affairs service for clients

### Politics International

Hallmark PR has linked with the leading independent public affairs consultancy, Politics International, to offer a seamless service to clients.

"Although Hallmark PR undertakes many public affairs actions for clients at regional and local level, we have been seeking a highly professional associate firm with active knowledge of parliamentary and governmental processes in the UK

and the EU," said managing director Dr Tom Watson.

After studying the market and interviewing firms, we have entered into an associate relationship with Politics International, based in central London. It is the largest independently-owned specialist public affairs firm and has the reputation as a "thinking" consultancy with strong experience in the environmental and planning sectors that Hallmark's PR Negotiation clients are involved in.

"We have worked with Hallmark PR on a common client and built mutual respect for the way that both firms operate," said Politics International director David Massingham. "From this base, both firms will be stronger in the advice and service that they offer clients."

For more information, contact Tom Watson, Steve Osborne-Brown or Helen Symes at Hallmark PR or look at [www.politicsint.co.uk](http://www.politicsint.co.uk).



# ON THE RECORD

## Explosion! is a bang-on success

With a client whose name is the **Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower**, Hallmark PR has had plenty of potential impact to work with recently.

The new museum at Gosport in Hampshire is the latest attraction for visitors to the Portsmouth Harbour area, which already features the Tudor "Mary Rose", Nelson's HMS Victory and Britain's first ironclad, HMS Warrior. Explosion!, which has been developed by Gosport Borough Council, is based at the former naval armaments depot at Priddy's Hard overlooking Portsmouth Harbour.

Earlier this year, Hallmark PR was appointed to handle the PR for the launch of Explosion! and its official opening by the Duke of York. Director Steve Osborne-Brown and senior account executive (now account manager) Fiona Peters led the team to launch the £3.5 million museum that features exhibits ranging from 18th century cannons to Exocet missiles.



*The Duke of York visiting the Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower on April 30.*

Fiona said: "It's been great fun working on the account seeing the museum take shape and we were delighted when we negotiated an explosive week-long feature on BBC South's Southern Ways news programme. This was filmed at the museum and aired in the week running up to the opening."

The results were excellent with high visitor numbers on the opening day and widespread print and broadcast media coverage.

Bill Sainsbury, marketing executive for Explosion! said: "Hallmark PR did an excellent job - particularly for the opening weekend when we were

let down at the last minute by the stars of the show. Steve and Fiona saved the day by finding a murder mystery company that provided actors in period costume who entertained the crowds."

You can find out more about Explosion! on [www.explosion.org.uk](http://www.explosion.org.uk).

## Hallmark PR goes to Le Mans

Hallmark PR was closely involved in the 69th running of the famous **Le Mans 24-Hour motor race on June 16-17.**

Supporting top British race team Ray Mallock Ltd (RML), the consultancy gave round-the-clock support to RML's Saleen S7R supercar in the GTS category and was also a team sponsor.

Managing director Tom Watson provided pre-race support from May onwards which resulted in extensive

coverage in motorsport media in the UK and the US. During the week leading up to the race, dozens of interviews and photo opportunities were organised and there was close co-operation with Channel 4 and Eurosport.

The RML Saleen reached 10th overall and second in category when it suffered an engine failure after 15 hours. "It was a great shame because the driver team of Bruno Lambert, Ian McKellar jnr and Johnny Mowlem had driven brilliantly", said Tom.



Hallmark Public Relations operates regionally, nationally and internationally. Our specialised services are:  
**Business Awareness** – supporting products and services    **Community Relations** – linking clients with communities  
**Employee Communications** – building productive dialogue    **Issues Management** – analysis, counselling and action

## News from clients

**KPMG:** Hallmark PR has been appointed as consultancy for the whole Southern Business Unit that covers the international accountants and business advisors' offices in Gatwick, Reading, Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff and Plymouth.

Working with SBU public relations manager Mandy Graham, the main activity is media relations. Account director Eva Lambert-Smith and director Helen Symes, supported by account executive Chris Skerry make up Hallmark PR's team.

**Atlantic Housing Group** has doubled its usage of Hallmark PR's services following a very successful initial six months. The Hallmark team under director Steve Osborne-Brown and account manager Fiona Peters has had strong praise from Atlantic, especially in creating a series of industry seminars.

The first event in February on Best Value in Housing was commended by Atlantic's Business Review Manager Sharon Mitchell, who said: "Your attention to detail is second to none, and your commitment to making sure the event ran without a hitch is exemplary."

**uknetguide;** A three-month media relations project was undertaken for uknetguide, which is a "portal of portals" group based in London. The campaign focused on raising the profile in a period of rapid growth during which at least one new site was being launched each month.

The results included wide coverage in online media and strong support for uknetguide's advertising sales and marketing efforts.

# Virtual Press Office the press officer who never sleeps

It's 11.00 pm in London and the office cleaners have just left. The phone rings and on the other end is a frustrated journalist sitting in San Francisco, pushing a deadline and desperate for some information on your company. She needs some data on a new product you've just launched, background on your CEO and a couple of relevant high-quality photos.

So how do you provide quality, accurate information to the media, investors and other stakeholders on a 24/7 basis? The answer is a Virtual Press Office (VPO).

Most companies and organisations these days have a website, but many

don't take full advantage of the opportunity to make it a source of information beyond customers' needs. This is where the VPO can be a valuable tool.

Basically, a VPO is a source of information on your company that can include media releases, corporate background information, key contact details, photos, video and audio files to name but a few.

When setting up a VPO, here are a few guidelines to ensure that it is useful and user friendly.

- **Make access and navigation as straightforward as possible. Make sure it's linked from your home page and don't turn people away by putting**

*passwords on it - journalists especially dislike this.*

- **Have full contact details for key spokespeople and list their areas of responsibility. Where possible offer an email address or phone number for urgent matters (and ensure incoming emails or phone calls are followed up promptly).**

- **Include thumbnails and/or descriptions of photos/video/audio files so people don't have to wait forever to download a file that may or may not be appropriate.**

- **Update, update, update. Out-of-date information is useless and takes the shine off any image your company is trying to promote.**

- **Be a broad source of information. Include links to other sites which can provide in-depth information on your industry or which complement your site.**

For more information on VPOs, contact Steve Wilson on [swilson@hallmarkpr.co.uk](mailto:swilson@hallmarkpr.co.uk).

## New staff



Chris Rose

**Chris Rose:** Formerly international marketing manager at Star X Holdings and Chief Press Officer at Denplan, Chris has joined Hallmark PR as account manager in the PR Negotiation practice.



Chris Skerry

**Chris Skerry:** A geography graduate from Southampton University, Chris spent 12 months at the Defence Agency before joining Hallmark as account executive in February. In that time she also gained a diploma in public relations from the London School of PR.

**Kirsty Gunner:** A recent graduate from the highly-regarded BA (Hons)

Public Relations course at Bournemouth University, Kirsty is joining the consultancy's PR Negotiation practice team as an account executive.



Patricia Monaghan

**Patricia Monaghan:** With a background in sales and a spell in the US, Patricia is Hallmark PR's new business development executive. She will be working alongside director Jenny Watson and other directors in developing our new business pipeline.



Samantha Burton

**Samantha Burton:** "Sam" is a Winchester girl and joins Hallmark PR as receptionist/administrator. She studied at the city's Peter Symonds College and gained her Legal Secretary's Certificate. Before joining the consultancy, she worked at a medical centre and for a firm of chartered surveyors.

## Promotions

**Eva Lambert-Smith:** Since joining the consultancy in July 1999 from Ordnance Survey, Eva has been promoted twice and became an account director on June 1st. She works exclusively on business awareness clients such as KPMG, Lloyds TSB Commercial, DDI, Foresters Friendly Society, Hampshire Business Awards and Dorset Business Awards.

"Eva has been a success for clients and with colleagues since she joined Hallmark PR," said managing director Dr Tom Watson. In her few spare moments, Eva is completing her IPR Diploma in Public Relations with a survey among Worldcom consultancies on the impact of the Internet on public relations.

**Fiona Peters:** Fiona was promoted to account manager on April 1st in recognition of her service to clients such as the Atlantic Housing Group, Explosion! museum and Inside UK Enterprise.

**Hannah Brown:** Hannah has moved up from account administrator to account executive to work as a team with Fiona Peters. Hannah is a graduate in Media Studies and English and joined Hallmark initially as receptionist/administrator. She was part of the team that delivered this year's very successful Hampshire Business Awards.

# Issues Negotiation – investment in stakeholders

**It does not take long to imagine the circumstances in which a company's reputation comes under threat. Read the business and news pages each day and the examples leap out, especially for organisations which are solely focused on financial performance and ignore their relationships with staff, stakeholders, regulators and the media.**

**ISSUES NEGOTIATION** is a new communications methodology, developed by Hallmark Public Relations, that is designed to address issues raised by today's rapidly changing business environment.

It meets the need to find new ways of dealing effectively with issues that have a significantly negative impact on otherwise successful organisations. It aims to allow companies to better predict and take control of their future, rather than allowing it to manage them.

Stakeholders have many, very different reasons for concern – some very real, others founded on emotion or ideology. These can make relations more

difficult to develop and maintain and that impacts on reputation, the most intangible of assets.

## Decide, dictate, defend

How do many organisations currently react? The most common approach is for organisations to decide what they are going to do, before releasing their plans to the public and waiting for the criticisms to roll. This is what we describe as the **'decide, dictate and defend'** approach.

It often has negative effects and spiralling costs. Not only that, this approach means the underlying issues haven't been solved. The result – the issue is still there waiting to reappear.

## What is Issues Negotiation?

It is an empowering and powerful process by which trusting relationships are built with those that potentially affect the value of your organisation – either in a positive or negative way. It is also about being ahead of the game and not just telling people what

you're doing but involving them in the decision-making business process.



## Display, discuss, decide

The Issues Negotiation philosophy means moving away from the detached approach of 'Decide, Dictate, Defend' to an inclusive process of **'display, discuss, decide'**. This means working towards a goal of mutual gains and a 'win-win' situation.

## How it works

Issues Negotiation takes a step-by-step approach to building relationships through a disciplined approach to

joint fact finding, regular contact and the process of negotiations. It aims to avoid the black and white approach of 'all or nothing' situations that so often result in total breakdown. It means involving stakeholders in the process and creating dialogue that builds on the existing potential of those relationships.

## Five stages

The Issues Negotiation process is made up of five key stages – Insight, Include, Explore, Negotiate and Progress – that create a continuous process of relationship building.

## Does it work?

Some of the greatest successes of this type of approach have been in the initiation and development of long-term community relations, negotiating land-use issues, developing CSR policies, creating dialogue over contentious issues and conflicting science, monitoring and managing industrial relations in dispersed workforces and re-establishing corporate credibility.

A detailed description of Issues Negotiation, can be found in the PR Forum section of [www.hallmarkpr.com](http://www.hallmarkpr.com). Alternatively call Dr Tom Watson or Steve Osborne-Brown on 01962 863850.

## New accounts



### Cargill Feed Applications

THE Worldcom PR Group has brought Hallmark PR into a group of consultancies advising a new global business unit of Cargill, one of the world's leading food and agribusiness companies.

Cargill Feed Applications is developing and seeking specialty feed ingredients to enhance animals digestive health and performance. These will include enzymes, organic acids and direct-fed microbials, initially for poultry and pig integrators and feed manufacturers.

Led by Morgan & Myers in the US, the programme has brought together Hallmark PR with Murray Consultants in Ireland, Arvizu in Mexico and Wisse Kommunikatie in the Netherlands to undertake programme of media relations and monitoring in Europe and the Americas.



### Bowman Power

Based in Southampton, Bowman Power has ambitious plans to lead world markets on microturbine gas co-generation and secure power.

After a competitive pitch, Hallmark PR was chosen to work with the rapidly-growing company which already has joint ventures in Japan and a sales operation on the US West Coast.

Senior account manager Steve Wilson says that Bowman's microturbines have great advantages for large and small businesses.

"We will be conducting an extensive media relations programme in the UK and other key markets. Online news sites will be very important too."

More information can be found on [www.bowmanpower.com](http://www.bowmanpower.com).

## Hampshire Business Awards



Olympic yachting silver medallist Ian Walker (centre) with (left to right) Hallmark PR's Fiona Peters, Chris Skerry, Eva Lambert-Smith and Helen Symes.

**The 11th annual Hampshire Business Awards, organised by Hallmark PR, took place at Le Poussin at Parkhill, Lyndhurst, Hampshire on June 12.**

Special guest speaker, Olympic yachting silver medallist Ian Walker presented trophies to the winners of the KPMG Company of the Year, Bond Pearce Business Innovation

and Marsh Business in the Community awards.

The Awards are the premier regional business recognition event and are organised with the support of the award sponsors and the Southern Daily Echo newspaper. As in previous years, the awards and the winners gained extensive press and broadcast coverage.