

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS OF SINGAPORE

This Issue

- Introduction to PR and Mass Communication Course
- PR Roundtable for Accredited Members
- Networking Night at Penny Black
- Profiling the Practitioner: Yap Boh Tiong
- Feature Article
- Story on Internship at IPRS

2013/2015 Council

President
Stephen FORSHAW

Vice President
Robert CONCEICAO

Honorary Secretary
Farah ABDUL RAHIM

Honorary Treasurer
Jovina ANG

Council Members
Gregor HALFF
Gerald DE COTTA
Priscilla SOH
LIN Liangmin

Co-opted Members
Dilip ANAND
Christina CHEANG

Honorary Legal Advisor
CHO Pei Lin



43A South Bridge Road, Singapore 058677
Tel: (65) 6534 1841 Fax: (65) 6534 4691
Email: admin@iprs.org.sg

To join us, visit www.iprs.org.sg for more Information.

An official publication of Institute of Public Relations of Singapore in PDF format, 5 pages only. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, micro-copying, photocopying, recording or otherwise) be reproduced in whole or part without prior permission from IPRS. The opinions and views in this newsletter do not reflect the official view of IPRS.

IPRS Welcomes New Members!

On behalf of the IPRS President and Council 2013/2015, a warm welcome to the following who joined the Institute in the third quarter of 2014:

- Associate Member – Mr Marcus Loh, Associate Director, Ogilvy Public Relations
- Associate Member – Mr Himanshu Verma, Managing Director, Fifth Ring
- Associate Member – Ms Shelina Mahtani, Account Manager, Fifth Ring
- Associate Member – Mr Francis Hung, Senior Account Executive, Fifth Ring
- Associate Member – Ms Claudia Wong, Senior Account Executive, Fifth Ring

24 to 26 September 2014 – Introduction to Public Relations and Mass Communication Course

Twelve participants, hailing from different industries, designations and work environments, attended the three-day Course conducted by a team of IPRS Trainers, all of whom are Accredited Members – Mr Gerald De Cotta (Director, Corporate Communications, Singapore Business Federation), Mr Adrian Heng (Group Marketing Director, Asia Plantation Capital), Mr James Suresh (Managing Director, Training Plus International) and Dr Gregor Halff (Associate Professor of Corporate Communication Practice, Associate Dean, Singapore Management University).

The Trainers shared their wealth of knowledge and industry experience with the participants who asked probing questions as they discussed real-life situations and case studies.

The course covered broad and essential PR topics such as Media Relations, Events Management, Crisis Management and PR Campaigns. The participants were presented with Certificates of Participation by Dr Gregor Halff, IPRS Council Member.



Participants with Dr Gregor Halff (4th from R) on the last day of the course.



Dr Gregor Halff (R) presenting a Certificate of Participation to Mr Jeremy Lian (L), Senior Vice President, MSIG Insurance (Singapore).



Ms Sharifah Sakinah Ali Alkaff, Director, Community Engagement, Yayasan Mendaki
“Engaging the community is one of my core areas. Hence, PR is highly relevant to my work. In a nutshell, I found the course a good start point. Crisis Management is particularly significant, as a crisis can happen to anyone. I learnt a great deal about preparing a campaign. Good takeaways!”

NOVEMBER

3 – LunchTalk with MediaCorp Editors
 12 – Visit to Singapore Press Holdings
 17 – Visit by Deakin University
 17 – Networking Night

23 September 2014 – PR Roundtable for Accredited Members

About a dozen IPRS Accredited Members enjoyed an engaging dinner talk at OSO Ristorante when IPRS hosted Andrew Griffin, Chief Executive, Regester Larkin – an international specialist reputation strategy and crisis management consultancy.



Mr Andrew Griffin (3rd from R) with IPRS Accredited Members.



Mr Robert Conceicao, Vice President, IPRS (R) presenting a token of appreciation to Mr Andrew Griffin (L).

Andrew shared insights into his second book, *Crisis, Issues and Reputation Management*, which was launched in April 2014.

“It was an engaging session, with Andrew fielding questions and providing his take on a wide range of crisis, issues and reputation management topics, including the MH370 crash and the recent Scottish independence referendum,” said Gerald De Cotta, IPRS Council Member and Chairperson, IPRS Accreditation Exercise.

The Secretariat

Interim Manager
Robert CONCEICAO

Senior Executive
Jacelyn KOH

08 October 2014 – IPRS Networking Night at Penny Black

About 30 PR professionals, including six undergraduate PR students, gathered at the Penny Black at Boat Quay for IPRS’ second networking night for the year.



Ms Jovina Ang (L) sharing her thoughts and insights with the participants.

Guest speaker, Ms Jovina Ang, Honorary Treasurer, IPRS, former Director of Marketing Communication at Microsoft Services Asia, shared key points from a paper that she delivered at the World PR Forum in Madrid (Spain) on 22 September 2014, entitled “*Communication with a Conscience*”. Sharing her rich experience in leadership positions with international corporations such as Microsoft and Sun Microsystems, Jovina touched on the challenges, including ethical dilemmas, that today’s PR practitioners face. Jovina maintained that even in today’s digital era and highly matrixed and diverse work environment, it was important for communicators to maintain a personal touch and human connection.

IPRS Vice President, Robert Conceicao, and Council Member, Lin Liang Min, were present to welcome the guests.



From L to R: Mr Alex Chiew, Sales Manager, Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Mr Matthew Law, Director, Telum Media, and Mr Robert Conceicao, Vice President, IPRS.



Ms Sofiana Ramli (L), undergraduate, University of Newcastle receiving the lucky draw prize from Ms Lin Liangmin (R), Council Member, IPRS.



From L to R: Mr Tony Chao, undergraduate, University of Newcastle, Ms Caren Keung, undergraduate, University of Newcastle, Ms Jovina Ang, Honorary Treasurer, IPRS, and Ms Elyana Zainudin, undergraduate, University of Newcastle.



Ms Kathiyayini Vijayakumaran (L), and Ms Sofiana Ramli (R), undergraduates, University of Newcastle.



From L to R: Mr Jeremy Lian, SVP, MSIG Insurance, Mr Francis Hung, Senior Account Executive, Fifth Ring and Ms Claudia Wong, Senior Account Executive, Fifth Ring.



From L to R: Ms Jini Walsh, Senior Consultant, Prospect Resourcing (Asia), Ms Holly Brace, Account Director, SE10, Ms Dee O' Neil, Country Head (Singapore), Prospect Resourcing (Asia) and Mr Ben Shaw, Partner, SE10.

Mr Francis Hung, PR Senior Account Executive, Fifth Ring

"It was a thought-provoking and insightful session. Jovina had some very interesting points."

Ms Sofiana Ramli, Journalism and PR undergraduate, University of Newcastle

"This being my first IPRS networking session, I didn't know what to expect. I learnt a lot from Jovina's talk and from mingling with the PR professionals. I look forward to the next IPRS Networking Night!"

Profiling the Practitioner

Yap Boh Tiong (Chairman, Mileage Communications)



Boh Tiong has been in the PR industry for over three decades. He served as IPRS President from 1985 and 1993. Here are his observations of the evolution of the PR scene since the 1970s.

"In the early 1970s, the PR Industry was much different from what it is today. The term 'Public Relations' was rarely used. It was more commonly classified under 'Marketing'. Formal PR education was also uncommon at the tertiary level. Only with the entry of the multinational corporations (MNCs) into Singapore, did the concept of 'Public Affairs' and 'PR' come to the fore," said Boh Tiong.

"Competition among PR agencies was much less in the 1970s and 1980s. Compared to today, there were fewer PR agencies. On the media front, there was only traditional media. PR strategies were more straightforward. Most PR practitioners hailed from journalism," he added.

"The PR landscape is totally different today. There are countless PR agencies. They come in different sizes, strengths, and specialties. Many young PR practitioners, having learnt the tools of the trade from their mentors, have set out to form their own agencies. At the same time, foreign PR agencies, usually larger than their local counterparts, and some entering via the buying up of smaller local agencies, have set up shop in Singapore. Many of these foreign agencies hope to use Singapore to connect to the rest of Asia. Finally, there are the 'integrated agencies'. These are normally in high demand, as they offer all-encompassing services including social media engagement and digital marketing," said Boh Tiong.

In such a competitive arena, Boh Tiong shared his views on how local boutique PR agencies could survive:

- Have a unique selling point. Without this differentiating factor, it will be extremely difficult to survive and thrive.
- Have a strong niche area. While the lifestyle industry has traditionally been an attractive field for boutique PR agencies, it might be good to look at other industries to build a niche specialty.
- Attract and build a strong talent pool. Without a strong team, it will be difficult to provide good service to good clients.
- Build a strong network, within the region and further afield. "Today, Mileage Communications is established in nine countries in Asia. This has provided us with a strong network among both and clients and contacts," said Boh Tiong.

IPRS would like to thank Yap Boh Tiong for his insights in this interview, which was conducted by Ms Natasha Crescentia, an SMU undergraduate who interned at IPRS from May to August 2014.

Our so sorry ‘Sorry, no comment’ days



“Sorry, no comment. If you have any questions, write in.”

“But we are running our story on your ministry tomorrow!”

“We cannot talk to the press. Civil service manual, you know.” CLICK.

That, in the early 1960s, was the sorry state of Government Public Relations, or lack of it, in Singapore. The private sector was no better. I worked then as a rookie reporter in The Straits Times, an English language daily newspaper.

It was exasperating, frustrating for pressmen to deal with Government departments and related authorities. It did no good for either, pressmen and the Government agencies concerned – and did not aid the flow of right, accurate, and helpful information to the public.

No Government ministry had a designated spokesman. Official press relations was one way: each day the ministries, public authorities, and quasi-government corporations would dish out press statements through PRO, the Ministry of Culture’s news release department. I never quite knew what PRO stood for, but guessed it meant press relations (*sic*) office.

PRO employed publicity officers who were usually ex-newspapermen, and paid them more than what they received from slaving away in the press. Some of us lived on the hope of an invitation to join PRO or Radio Singapore; I remember one reporter who went from earning \$250 a month in a rival newspaper to \$700 as starting pay as a government broadcast journalist!

You will be amazed at the incredible stories of the lack of understanding of Public Relations during that period, and even into the early 1970s.

PR, Corporate Communications or Public Affairs management – any practice or programme to promote and maintain mutual understanding between any organization and its publics – was unheard of. If practised, it was largely misconstrued, even abused.

PR people were regarded by many as corporate *winers* of underpaid, thirsty pressmen (Jack Lemmon’s “Days of Wine and Roses”?). One nightclub even paraded its sexy hostesses as PR Officers – and the newspapers idiotically lapped that up!

At best, organisations with an inkling of ‘PR’ employed publicity-seeking officers. The first few PR agencies or consultancies in the late 1960s and early 1970s were, if I recall correctly, Comcore (a department or offshoot of Grant Advertising), then Burson-Marstellar, and Eric Whites; they attracted capable pressmen who were tired of living on pittance from colonial media organisations.

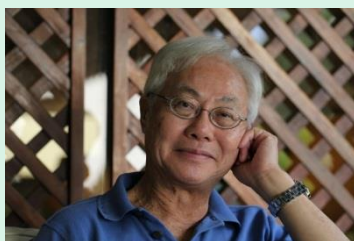
A few advertising agencies employed people, who possessed some knowledge of media relations, to promote their clients’ products; one agency even sent one of its staff to visit my newspaper office to purvey publicity material.

Thanks to the efforts of pioneering practitioners such as Kenneth Seah (Esso, then PSA), Chee Koon Lin (Shell) and K C Yuen (Ford Motors, then Esso and Economic Development Board), and Kim Church (Hilton, then Mandarin Hotel), the industry developed.

K C studied in the States and worked for a newspaper there. He returned to Singapore to join Radio/TV Singapore as a broadcast journalist, then Ford Motors, which had a car assembly plant in Bukit Timah, and Esso. He was the first professional PR person I had met as a pressman when he represented Ford Motors and gave me a lasting impression of exemplary corporate affairs management. In the mid 1970s, he started Yuen & Wong Associates, a very successful PR and graphic design outfit that repeatedly won annual report design awards.

The inception of the Institute of Public Relations of Singapore (IPRS) in 1970 was a boon for PR in Singapore. IPRS's trail-blazing efforts in promoting an understanding of PR and training PR neophytes had a great impact on the industry; it helped to develop PR into a profession, and turn misunderstanding into understanding. I was privileged to witness the gestation of the PR business – as a newspaper reporter, news editor, then PR practitioner, and – from 1980s to 1990s – as an IPRS Trainer of aspiring PR practitioners.

(Watch out for Part 2 of Toon Joo's insights into the changing PR landscape in our next issue.)



This article is courtesy of Mr Yeo Toon Joo, an Honorary Fellow, IPRS, and the recipient of the IPRS Lifetime of Achievement Award (2006). A former journalist and Public Relations/Marketing Communication practitioner, Toon Joo is now happily retired and lost amidst the forests, lakes, and mountains of Seattle, USA.

Story: My Internship at IPRS



Ms Natasha Crescentia (left) is a Final Year student at Singapore Management University, majoring in Corporate Communication and Operations Management. She interned at the IPRS Secretariat from May to August 2014.

I embarked on this internship with an expectation of getting a better understanding of the Public Relations (PR) landscape, its players, and the tools of the trade. Throughout the duration of the internship, I was grateful to be exposed to many opportunities and events where I was able to interact with PR practitioners.

Being an Indonesian, this internship allowed me to have a better understanding of the PR landscapes in Singapore and Indonesia. Each country's PR sector has its strengths and weaknesses. Due to Indonesia's vast geographical area, PR in my country encompasses a broader spectrum, especially in terms of media and publicity channels. This broader spectrum is also more complex. There are more variables to consider, such as income and social disparities. In this aspect, PR in Singapore might seem to be more straightforward and 'controlled' when it comes to reaching out to different audiences. Being an international hub, Singapore also has more global corporations and consultancies in its PR network. The PR network that is centered in Singapore holds many advantages including a strong regional presence.

My internship at IPRS was definitely fruitful. It has provided me with a clearer view of the PR industry. I feel that IPRS is headed in the right direction by bringing together PR practitioners from all fields to achieve excellence and greater professionalism.

On behalf of the IPRS Council and Secretariat, we thank Natasha and wish her all the best in her future endeavors!



Natasha (far right) at an IPRS Networking Night at Toby's Estate in July 2014.