

## Our highlights

Meet our new team members (right): from left, Chris Dean, Emma McNicoll-Norbury, Sophie Grant and Dawn Warwick... **pg 2**



## Learn and develop

**theblueballroom launches new offering**

How we can help you drive engagement in 2012... **pg 3**



# We capture the castle...

theblueballroom celebrated its 10th birthday in 2011 with a communications event to remember at Farnham Castle in the UK

A line-up of leading industry professionals gave guests unique insights into a range of key issues facing internal communicators, including leadership communication, employee engagement and driving strong business performance.



Speakers: Dean Capon, Christopher Wade, Friedrich-Georg Lischke and Christina Fee, with Sheila Parry.

The panel comprised Friedrich-Georg Lischke, CEO Mars Drinks Europe; Dean Capon, Head of Corporate Affairs, Roche UK; Christina Fee, Head of Internal Communications, easyJet; and Christopher Wade, Team Lead, Internal Communications, Deutsche Post DHL.

Sheila Parry, Managing Director of theblueballroom, brought the event to a conclusion by saying: "Internal

communications can make the difference between high productivity and low, between a happy workforce and a miserable one, between a loyal team member and a loose cannon. It's a privilege to be in a position to work with companies to establish great ways of working. We want people in our clients' organisations to say 'I love my job'. When they say that, we'll know that we've done ours."

.....  
**WHEN  
EMPLOYEES  
SAY 'I LOVE  
MY JOB', WE  
KNOW WE'VE  
DONE OURS**  
.....

# Listening, learning, and delivering

Milestones may measure the past but they are also a great point from which to plan for the future, says Sheila Parry



IT IS A DYNAMIC COMBINATION OF ESTABLISHED AND NEW THAT KEEPS US FRESH

theblueballroom celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2011. Looking back on the year it was about both continuity and change. We deepened our relationships with clients we have supported for many years, such as Mars and Initial, as well as working with some new clients such as Vistaprint, a dynamic company for whom we developed, built and delivered a global, digital-based internal communications strategy and a suite of multimedia tools.

To meet our clients' needs, we established two account teams – one managing our regular and niche publications, and the other specialising in consultancy,

campaigns and ad hoc projects.

The publications team comprises Christopher Dean and Wendy Gerbert. An editor and a senior account manager, Wendy has been with theblueballroom for six years; Chris has been a freelance writer and editor for us for slightly longer but this year joined in a full time capacity. Sophie Grant, who works across both account teams, also provides writing support.

Our consultancy team comprises myself, Emma McNicoll-Norbury and Cara Jenkins. This team provides strategic planning, leadership communications, stakeholder engagement, and develops bespoke

communication channels and events.

Working hand in hand with the account teams are designers Gill Siemak and Vanessa Hogge, who have been with the agency since its early days. Recently we also brought in creative director Paula Howkins, who brings a new approach to our creative challenges.

It is this dynamic combination of established and new that keeps us fresh and, more importantly, provides extra value to our clients.

Ten years old we may be, but we are looking forwards not back in 2012 and embracing a new decade of listening, learning, and delivering.

## Our highlights



From top:  
Christopher Dean, Dawn Warwick  
Emma McNicoll-Norbury and Sophie Grant

## MEET OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS

### CHRISTOPHER DEAN

Senior Account Manager

A former newspaper editor and internal communications manager, Chris has finally joined our publications team having worked with us as a freelance writer/editor for many years.

• **In his spare time:**

Chris can be found working on his dilapidated Victorian home or roaming South Coast footpaths with his faithless pooch, Maddy.

• **3 things he couldn't live without:**

"Oxygen, water and food."

### DAWN WARWICK

Finance Manager

Dawn keeps us all bang up to date with the financial side of our business. An accountant with 20 years experience, she's our best friend when it comes to budgeting and profitability.

• **In her spare time:**

Dawn is chair of governors at her daughter's school; any downtime after meeting the needs of her young family will see Dawn relaxing at her local beauty salon.

• **3 things she couldn't live without:**

"My kids, my make-up and email."

### EMMA MCNICOLL-NORBURY

Account Manager

Emma brings lots of experience in corporate social responsibility to theblueballroom. She's currently getting to know our clients, already showing great attention to detail with the smooth running of her projects.

• **In her spare time:**

Emma's glued to the internet, following social media and marketing trends, or planning her next skiing or festival adventure.

• **3 things she couldn't live without:**

"Facebook, my friends and my credit card."

### SOPHIE GRANT

Account Executive

Sophie supports both the account and creative teams with all of their needs, from organising international photo shoots to creative writing. An English Literature and Spanish graduate, she has a passion for writing and is currently training as a corporate communications writer.

• **In her spare time:**

Sophie's in the kitchen cooking, reading recipe books, and blogging about it all.

• **3 things she couldn't live without:**

"My iPhone, books and pork scratchings."

# LEARNING TO DRIVE ENGAGEMENT...

You can create great communication vehicles, but they won't work if people don't understand how to maintain, fuel and drive them. That is why theblueballroom is now providing additional support to clients with our new offering – Learn & Develop

Learn & Develop is not a one-size-fits-all service – there are already plenty of companies providing generic courses such as 'effective writing', 'how to negotiate', 'influencing people' and 'how to run a workshop'. Learn & Develop is different. We draw on knowledge of our clients to create bespoke support packages that directly address their specific communication needs.

Our Learn & Develop approach is to understand each company's unique communication culture, identify good practice and good practitioners within that company, work with them on specific messages that need to be communicated, and create a programme that fits those individual factors.



\* ACCOR Group

.....  
**75% OF LEADERS HAVE NO ENGAGEMENT PLAN OR STRATEGY EVEN THOUGH 90% SAY ENGAGEMENT IMPACTS ON BUSINESS SUCCESS \***  
.....

## Intercultural training

# Developing global communicators

Find out about our thought-provoking intercultural training at Roche Pharma Development Global Operations

**“Excellent, it gave us food for thought and direction on how to move forward.”**

This was just one piece of feedback from delegates attending an intercultural workshop we ran for the Roche Pharma Development Global Operations (PDG) division in November.

The division's Virtual Communications Network is a team of global representatives who devote 10 per cent of their time to communications. The aim of the one-day workshop was to give the group an understanding of variations from culture to culture.

This is just one element of the work we are doing for PDG. Our work includes consultancy on creating a coordinated communications strategy to align people behind a common purpose and identity, and creating a sense of community and pride among PDG employees.

We offer bespoke training aimed at improving communications capabilities throughout the organisation which includes a range of services from one-to-one leadership coaching to group facilitation, as well as train-the-trainer sessions to develop communication skills that are critical for success.

## 2011 highlights

### MAY

- The IOIC annual conference gave the platform to David MacLeod on the newly formed Employee Engagement Task Force, and Leandro Herrero on networks in the workplace and his new book *Homo Imitans*. Herrero is an inspirational thinker and you should take any opportunity to hear him speak.

### SEPTEMBER

- Nita Clark, co-author of the *Engaging for Success* report, showed how it is done at the IOIC Seminar on Employee Engagement.

### OCTOBER

- The line-up at Echo's Annual Summit was impressive. Chief Technology & Media Officer at WCG Global Comms stole the show with extracts from his thought-provoking and practical book, *E-Commerce*.
- Industry award judges – don't you just love them, especially the SoMe panel who judged our sister company, thebluedoor to be the Best Small Agency of the Year. The awards celebrate the best in UK social media and this award category recognises consistently great understanding and use of social media by a small agency.

### NOVEMBER

- The Icon judges gave theblueballroom an award of excellence in the Best Internal Communication Agency class. To be recognised by your peers is a great accolade for theblueballroom and something that the whole team shares.



## Where's the ball gone?

theblueballroom ... in with the new

The blue ball has gone! Why? It was originally there as an obvious visual description of our name and was a useful graphic element that represented one of our corporate values, 'fun'. We've decided that simplification is the answer – it gives us more flexibility, looks clean and confident and gives us the opportunity to play with other concepts without having to fight visually with the logo. Now, we can focus equally on all our values and our vision at the centre – make work better. Our supporting visual style is still about having 'fun', not just with balls but with concepts, words and business strategy.

... out with the old theblueballroom



# AIM TO THRIVE, NOT JUST SURVIVE

With the probability of a recession in 2012, Sheila Parry looks back at the lessons theblueballroom learnt during the last recession

TALKING AND LISTENING ARE THE FIRST STEPS TO CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE IDEAS CAN FLOURISH...

Right now, it's easy to talk yourself into depression. Just as we bounced back from the recession in 2009, which saw cuts in most communication budgets, commentators are now forecasting a new recession this year. Rather than singing the blues, I am trying to apply the lessons from three years ago.

Wherever you work, employees need to know what the priority actions are for the business and how they can affect them. Every team member should look for smarter ways of working and efficient use of time on projects that make the most impact. If sales are dropping or levelling off, companies need to explore opportunities to cross-sell into other markets and encourage their staff to think creatively.

This type of working together – especially when times are tough - won't happen in silence. Talking and listening are the first steps to creating an environment where ideas can flourish; where people trust each other and want to find solutions.

That's what we're doing and we're helping our clients do that too. We get behind clients' business plans and identify what their priorities are that they need to communicate to their staff. Our job is to provide affordable and achievable communications strategies for the short, medium and long term.

The last recession also proved that there are as many opportunities in a downturn as there are threats. High-performing companies maintain their efforts to drive high scores in employee engagement during a recession – because they know this is what drives business success. Our challenge is to show companies that a small investment in internal communications during a downturn brings a significant bottom-line return.



## The case for employee opinion surveys

# Maximise your speed

Budgeting for internal communications – what will you do differently in 2012? Here's one way to get a big bang for your buck

Assuming you managed to safeguard your communications budget for 2012, here at theblueballroom we're wondering what you are going to do differently this year to maximise your spend. The best practitioners not only align their activities with what the business needs but also with what employees want – and they know that from listening.

An employee opinion survey can be a useful tool for identifying areas within your business that require additional or adjusted spend.

Offering employees the chance to express their views on a variety of topics relating to where they work can help identify areas of strength and weakness, giving you invaluable insight. You can then gauge the relevance of your communications strategy and allocate budget far more appropriately.

While such surveys are typically owned by HR departments, internal communications professionals need to grasp the opportunity to work together with the business to promote

participation in the survey and then to drive awareness of any actions taken as a result. By monitoring, evaluating and then changing, you are also showing your workforce that their opinion matters, that you care how they're feeling about work, and that you are prepared to do something about it.



## On the 2012 agenda

Employee engagement will remain high on the agenda of internal communicators as we head into 2012. With the economic situation in Europe under the spotlight and another recession being forecast, having employees on your side is crucial to riding another downturn.

Social media, too, will continue its rise up the corporate agenda with more and more leadership teams embracing the social media networking landscape.

Collaboration is fundamental to employee engagement and innovation in organisations where relationships have changed, hierarchies are disappearing, knowledge is more in demand, and individuals expect their employer to provide tools that allow them to connect freely.

Watch out for the IoIC Annual Conference Programme that will be launched early this year. The 23-25 May event will take place in the Forest of Dean.