

## Minutes of the Charity Retail Association's Corporate Members Advisory Group Held at CRA Offices, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA on Wednesday 18 January 2017, 11am – 1.30pm

### Attendees

**Chair:** Lesley Gorton (Head of Retail and New Business, Helen and Douglas House)

**CRA staff:** Robin Osterley (CEO), Susan Meredith (Head of Member Services) (minutes)

**CMAG:** Adrian Barker (Owner/Director, ARB Recycling Ltd), Jayne Cartwright (Owner/Director, The Charity Retail Consultancy), Colin Day (Senior Customer Relations Manager, Choice Textile Ltd), Sonia Fletcher (Communications Manager, Eproductive Ltd), Tony Hilton (Founder and Managing Director, The Charity Fleetcare Alliance), Janet Northway (Customer Service Manager, Propress Ltd), Richard Sheppard (National Sales Manager, Shopfittings (Manchester) Ltd)

**Apologies:** Rob Finley, Sales Director, Cybertill Ltd

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Lesley Gorton (LG) welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Corporate Members' Advisory Group (CMAG).

Everyone introduced themselves and highlighted why they wanted to join the group:

- LG volunteered to chair the group because she feels the connection between charity retailers and the corporate world is very important.
- Robin Osterley (RO) advised that the group came about as the CRA Board of Directors rejected the suggestion of having Corporate Members on the Board of Directors but felt it was important that they had a forum in which to feed into Board discussion and decisions.
- Susan Meredith (SM) advised that she felt the group was important so she could identify more and better ways in which Corporate and Charity Members can work together.
- Tony Hilton (TH) was interested in improving return on investment for Corporate Members.
- Adrian Barker (AB) was a charity retailer for many years and feels that the sector can be insular, therefore further and candid discussion is a good thing.
- Sonia Fletcher (SF) used to be a charity retailer and would like to challenge any underlying feeling of Corporate Members being a 'necessary evil' although she acknowledges the sentiment has lessened in recent years.
- Jayne Cartwright (JC) also used to be a charity retailer, starting when she was 21, running an Oxfam shop. She is now a consultant and welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the CRA again.
- Janet Northway (JN) advised that Propress had been supplying charity shops with steamers for over 30 years and has been involved with the CRA since its inception. She agreed with SF re Corporate Members being seen as 'baddies' at times, when in fact many Corporate Members have a lot of experience to give the sector.
- Richard Sheppard (RS) advised that he was excited by the opportunities the formation of the group would bring.

## 2. Remit and TOR

Please refer to previously circulated paper. RO asked the group if they were happy with it.

JN asked if current members can be re-elected after a three year cycle. RO advised that yes they can. The group were happy with this.

RO reminded the group that they are there to represent all Corporate Members and not just their own industries.

**Action for SM:** SM to email all Corporate Members to remind them who their representatives are if they would like to put matters forward for discussion, and they can also contact SM or RO as well.

**Action for SM:** RO advised that minutes would be published to all Corporate Members and a report/summary would go to Charity Members.

JC asked what would happen between meetings, as they are 6 months apart. RO suggested that the group answer any such queries on an ad hoc basis by email. The group agreed.

*Colin Day (CD) entered the meeting.*

## 3. List of issues for discussion, for comment, addition and subtraction

Please refer to previously circulated paper. RO asked the group if they had any edits, additions, subtractions from the suggested list of issues.

LG suggested a detailed discussion of Conference as an addition. This was agreed.

## 4. Prioritisation of issues

RO asked what should be on the agenda at the next meeting. It was agreed that this should be:

- a) Conference (as it will have just happened)
- b) Complaints about Corporate Members / quality threshold for Corporate Members

TH suggested that the next meeting is longer because of the amount to discuss and more could be achieved. RO suggested 11 am – 3pm. This was agreed.

**Action for SM:** Next agenda to include Conference, and complaint and quality assurance. Time to be extended as above.

## 5. Title of 'Corporate Member'

SM advised that there had been comment, and she also felt, that Corporate Member was not a very friendly term. She also advised that in the past there has been other terms such as 'Associate', 'Affiliate', 'Commercial', 'Platinum/Gold' etc and asked what the group thought and if they had any suggestions.

AB felt 'Corporate' was fine, because that is what they are. JC liked 'Partner' SM suggested 'Corporate Partner' – which seemed to go down quite well. RO put forward whether this sounded like endorsement – and the feeling was that it didn't.

TH suggested leaving the decision until the discussion about quality assurance had happened. JN added that 'Corporate Partner' suggests a level of quality assurance, so maybe there should be a probation period for new members.

It was agreed that this decision would be postponed until the discussion, and any resulting decisions from the quality assurance agenda item at the Summer meeting has taken place.

**Action:** Postponed

## 6. Supplier Award

RO advised that there was concern that the current way in which the 'Supplier of the Year' Award winner was decided had potential to result in a winner based on one project, rather than satisfaction from multiple customers. RO asked for opinion and alternative process suggestions.

TH suggested a simple survey using scores and averages.

AB suggested size categories.

LG felt the process needed to be objective (it is currently subjective)

RO suggested asking Charity Members for two recommendations and two anti-recommendations (in strictest confidence). In addition there would be three size categories. This was agreed.

SM pointed out that the Awards Brochure is currently being prepared so there is not much time to come to a decision. TH suggested removing the category for 2017. JC felt it was too important the Corporate Members to drop the category this year.

**Action for SM** Advise Julia Cloke of decision – brochure need only state 'This award will be decided via online survey'. Decide on size categories. Find out how big each Corporate Member is and allocate a category. Consult Olaia to come up with a survey reflecting the above decision.

## 7. Code of Practice

Please refer to paper B that was tabled at the meeting. RO went through it asking for opinion, amendments, additions, subtractions.

**Point 2, bullet point 2:** Add '.....involved *at Director level* in more than two organisations...'

**Point 2, bullet point 2:** AB felt that some current Corporate Members would not pass this requirement. TH felt that the charities could also carry out better due diligence.

RO asked how 'squeaky clean' should the CRA's Corporate Membership be. Under the current wording Alan Sugar, Richard Branson etc could not be members. SF suggested putting a time limit on any bankruptcies. 10 years was agreed.

**Point 2, bullet point 3:** Add '.....monies *or services* owed ....'

**Point 2:** Add a bullet point that the CRA reserves the right to refuse Corporate Membership.

**Point 3:** It was agreed that a right of appeal to the Board is required.

**Point 5, bullet point 1:** Add 'Where there is *an established* history ....'

**Point 5, bullet point 2:** It was agreed to consider multi-year agreements but that pricing would need to be carefully looked into and histories with current sponsors would need to be considered.

**Point 5, bullet point 3:** Add '... offer the opportunity to a *sector* of Corporate Members ...'

There was discussion about the way in which marketing opportunities are offered to Corporate Members. RO asked if the 'first-come-first-served' basis works currently. SF felt that she had missed out on opportunities on this basis as she was e.g. in a meeting when the email went out. TH agreed. SF suggested a random draw for some opportunities. This was agreed.

**Action for SM:** From now on offer some marketing opportunities to all Corporate Members, request that all members who wish to take up the opportunity respond by a deadline, then conduct a draw.

**Point 6:** RO moved on to 'What the CRA won't do' section of the CCP.

RO advised that, especially due to some recent events in the sector, affinity deals were deemed too risky, so the CRA would not, as a rule, partake.

JN requested clarification that it states 'Co-branding of products is possible ...'. This sounds like an affinity deal. RO explained that the CRA should reserve the right, with Board approval, to be able to co-brand a proven exceptional product/service for the sector, should an appropriate opportunity arise.

RO advised that the CRA will not endorse, but will signpost charity members to corporate members, most commonly by way of the Directory. SM advised that there are non-member Directory entries which are paid for (as opposed to member entries which are included in membership cost). TH felt that if we are to have a Corporate Code of Practice, then non-members should not be allowed in the Directory. Some others felt the same.

JC asked why these non-members don't just become members. SM advised some organisations don't want to pay a membership fee of £750 + VAT. They just want the Directory entry of £350 + VAT. AB asked if the distinction between members and non-members in the Directory was clear. SM advised that Corporate Members are labelled as such. Non members have no label. It was felt that this wasn't clear enough – that anyone looking in the Directory would assume they are all members.

TH also raised the issue of non-member exhibition stands, which SM advised cost considerably more than member stands. It was suggested that any Code of Practice should also apply to takers of non-member exhibition stands.

**Action for SM:** It was decided that the CRA should leave non-members in the directory and sell exhibition stands to non-members provided that a) they were clearly labelled as such online and in hard copy AND b) they agreed to sign up to the code of practice, i.e. the quality threshold was the same.

TH raised concerns over non-member companies obtaining low price tickets to the Conference and Exhibition with the express purpose of networking and gaining new business without having paid for membership or an exhibition stand. It was felt that we could not police this, nor take this income stream away. Charity retailers may also have commercial interests.

**Point 7:** It was discussed that 'Non-renewal' or 'Refusal of renewal' may be better actions/terms rather than 'Expulsion' which may incur legal issues as there is potential for defamation. RO pointed out that this is a Code of Practice, not a contract. However AB felt that legal advice should still be sought on the wording.

**Point 7, bullet point 2:** Remove 'Persistent'

**Point 7, bullet point 3:** add at the end '(as per point 2)'

**Point 7, bullet point 4:** Remove 'Persistent'. Replace with 'Serious and/or multiple'

**Action for RO:** Make the above amends and take to the Board. Get a steer on whether legal advice is necessary.

## 8. AOB

TH advised that he found it hard to break into the sector as a new Corporate Member. Maybe there should be a 'New Supplier Award'.

TH suggested inviting Head of Finance to Conference for free as they are the decision makers. LG felt that it would be very difficult to get Heads of Finance to turn up.

TH felt that the gaps in time during the Exhibition (due to the fact it is within a Conference) is a problem. AB suggested that exhibitors should go to sessions to use the time wisely. SM confirmed that this is allowed. SF advised that Eproductive mainly attend Conference to maintain existing relationships rather than find new ones. AB felt that there was 'too broad a church' attending e.g. many shop managers, who are not decision makers. SM advised that the Conference is not marketed to shop managers – they just started attending. Others around the table found the presence of shop managers beneficial and informative.

LG asked the group what more the CRA could do for them.

TH felt that once the quality assurance processes and Code of Practice were established, these should be promoted to charity members. All agreed.

The question was asked that should the Code of Practice be applied to existing members or be phased in. The general feeling was that it should be phased in for the next membership year.

**Action for RO:** Decision for board

TH felt that outside of Conference there needs to be more opportunities to reach charity members. SM advised that he should use his guest blog opportunity, which is a free member benefit.

### **9. Date for the next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 12 July 2017 (check with RO), 11am – 3pm, at Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road, London.

LG thanked everyone for attending.