

Corporate Members Advisory Group

22 January 2021, 3pm – 4pm
Zoom

Attendees: Emma Peake (Deputy Chief Executive, The Air Ambulance Service Trading, Chair), Neil Collarbon (Morplan), Sarah Dodd (Kudos Software), Dawn Dungate (East London Textiles), Sonia Fletcher (Eproductive), Susan Meredith (Deputy CEO, minutes), Robin Osterley (CEO, Charity Retail Association), Richard Sheppard (Shopfittings Manchester)

Minutes

Action

1. Welcome and apologies

EP welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Janet Northway and Adrian Barker.

A minute's silence was held for Tony Hilton.

2. Minutes from September 2020

The minutes were approved.

3. Update on how Corporate Members and CRA have fared during lockdown

RO – CRA has fared well. The situation has been both rewarding and challenging. There has been a shift to online meetings, with over 70 held since March 2020 with up to 200 people. The CRA has helped members through closure, hibernation and reopening, and members have really appreciated this. We made a material difference. The CRA is very lucky to have Jonathan Mail on its staff – he has been amazing – a goldmine of information.

SF – Eproductive have had a steep learning curve. It has been easy to spot holes in tech knowledge and address this with clients. The pandemic period has been interesting and not all terrible. Unlike lockdown 1, where work ceased, staff are now on flexi furlough and work is steady.

SD – Kudos are busy at the moment with new customers and others preparing projects for reopening. Clients have been using Kudos' training resources. They are

The voice of charity retail

noticing some sector shrink, but hopefully this is consolidation.

NC – Clients are planning future projects and have been engaging in positive discussions getting ready for quarter 2 of 2021, feeling of retailers getting ready for a ‘Spring Party’ as expecting no further lockdowns. Incoming sales during 2nd lockdown have been hit as everyone already has their stores ‘set up’. However, sales for online products have been increasing. We are currently working with a National Charity on a case study regarding the importance of adopting the correct safety and social distancing instore and by doing this, ensuring both customers and staff feel safe whilst driving in custom.

RS – Shopfittings Manchester have a lot of work coming up and is expecting a retail renaissance in the spring.

DD – The first lockdown was horrific, especially for recyclers who only deal with charities. The situation was slightly better for those that operate clothing banks. Some recyclers may not survive this lockdown. It’s not going to be over for recyclers for many months to come. The cost of sending goods abroad has massively increased and there will be a knock on effect on rag price. TRA are currently lobbying government about this. NC agreed that global shipping is a huge issue right now.

EP pointed out that at the CRA’s ‘kick off 2021’ meeting, retailers reported not only closing shops, but opening too and there was a huge shift to online – which was all quite positive. RO also mentioned that the Stock and Recycling group were also positive and felt the sector was on the verge of a large influx of donations again. Trading is expected to be amazing, with an estimated reduction of 5-10% of the charity shop estate. A bounce back in shop numbers is also expected further down the line.

4. **Review of Corporate Code of Practice**

The following was decided:

Point 2 bullet 3: Add “At any time, the CRA can request copies of accounts, health and safety records, or any such documentation so as to confirm the continued sounds operations of its Corporate Members” SM to add

Point 7: Add a bullet point “Data protection” SM to add

Point 7: Add a bullet point “Equality, diversity and inclusion” SM to add

DD also suggested a whistleblowing entry along the lines of “we will investigate any alleged breaches”. EP suggested a random audit of documentation – 10 per year. RO and SM will think about it and bring a suggestion back to the next meeting. SM and RO

5. **Conference 2021**

The CRA is planning for this event to go ahead 9-10 September 2021, same venue and same format as planned for the cancelled 2020 event – restrictions permitting. There would be a separate stream of activity for hospices as the CRA will be picking up Hospice UK's retail activity once they cease to provide it. SM advised that the planning will be a phased process – getting the Headline Sponsors back in place first, then other sponsors, then seeing how things look from there.

6. **Update from CRA on new events formats and corporate involvement**

SM advised that the online conferences has been a success, there is another one coming up and there are likely to be more. She also advised that there will be a Corporate Webinar series of 10 webinars in 2021. RO added that the events picture going forward is likely to be a mixture of online and face to face meetings. Through Zoom the CRA has engaged with so many more members as the barriers to attending have been lifted.

SF asked what the feedback has been for corporate sponsored sessions at the online conferences. SM advised that they had rated consistently well and that attendance had been as high as charity and external speaker sessions and very little drop off.

7. **Update on TRUST**

Due to the pandemic, the scheme stalled, but there is still determination to get it done. David Roman is still very much involved and the scheme administrator has been re-hired by the CRA so things can move forward. One recycling organization is going through the process at the moment. The audit process has been redesigned to a point where the auditors and TRUST forum are all happy.

8. **Any other business**

Susan is to run an election to fill Tony's place on the CMAG

SM

RO thanked EP for chairing the CMAG. She is stepping down as she is now Chair of the CRA Board of Directors. The new Chair of the CMAG is Sarah Coles of Hospice of St Francis.

9. **Date of next meeting**

SD suggested the date needs to be before the next conference – perhaps June/July 2021. Susan will send dates round. SM