

TMA UK Annual conference – Another successful event for the UK Chapter!!

We were delighted to welcome delegates from over 100 organisations to the wonderful setting of the Royal College of Physicians in Regents Park, London. Once again, a sell-out event with 155 delegates tickets sold and the auditorium was full throughout the day.

Our opening speaker Lord Anthony St John of Bletso set the tone for the day with a wide ranging and fascinating insight into the role the House of Lords is playing as our politician's wrestle with the challenges faced by not only Brexit, but the march of Artificial Intelligence and its impact on the workplace.

Varda Shine, the former CEO of De Beers Trading, then gave a fascinating insight into her time at De Beers; the power of branding and the secret of making something from nothing. As she explained, we don't *need* diamonds, but we have been convinced to *want* them! Coupled with the challenge of moving a century old business from the heart of London to Botswana explained why she is still sought after as a mentor to FTSE 250 CEO's.

After a pause for some valuable networking we were treated to John Mills' alternative suggestions for re-building the manufacturing base in the UK – devalue the pound and reap the benefits! Our NextGen panel took to the stage, chaired by Rashmi Dube. We heard how the younger members of the turnaround community see the challenges of being Millennials in the current workplace; perhaps more questions than answers, but some interesting ideas aired. Notably the apparent changing attitudes to work life balance and career paths. No doubt a debate that will be revisited in future forums!

Before lunch the TMA UK Young Turnaround Professional was announced by our Chair of the judging panel, Ian Fox. Five high quality candidates made the short list and the very worthy winner was... John Chetwood of Herbert Smith Freehills. After receiving his award from John Potts of Duff & Phelps, who had kindly sponsored the award, our prize winner made a brief but excellent speech proving what a credit he is to his firm.

We were delighted that Milly Chow, the Global President of TMA, was with us for the day. Her observations about how TMA continues to go from strength to strength was she felt clearly in evidence here in the UK and her congratulations on a great conference were much appreciated.

An excellent lunch provided by our wonderful support staff at the RCP allowed plenty of time for more networking and the inevitable calls and email catch ups before we headed back in for a truly inspiring story from our Olympic Gold medal winning hockey player Crista Cullen MBE. Sport always provides excellent lessons for business and so this proved; how the power of belief in the collective team can overcome the odds – ranked 7th at the start of the Rio games! Crista has now returned to her first passion, the conservation of wildlife, notably elephants, in Africa. She left the room with a whole new set of recruits to her cause!

The Network of Women (NOW), saw Jo Holland and 3 experienced women share their experiences of operating, and succeeding, in business where women in senior positions are still a scarcity. Forthright, confident and a superb advert as to what businesses are missing by not having more diverse board level representation.

On the home straight, we broke for coffee keen to ensure that delegates stayed for the final sessions, and were not disappointed. Paul Green from Halcyon Galleries provided an amazing insight into the world of the art dealer and last, but by no means least, Chris Bowring from 4C prestige explained how we were all in need of better advice when buying our next car – finance deals, depreciation, dealership tricks were all explained, and he was kept busy at the post conference reception with a long queue of potential customers!

As the formal sessions ended and we headed for the evening reception and a final chance to swap business cards it was a chance to reflect on a great day: lots of food for thought, anecdotes to take away and use as your next icebreaker.

I am proud to have been able to reflect on such a successful day, and grateful to the rest of the committee and the brilliant team we have in Nyree Magill and Kelly Darlaston; their hard work and attention to detail is critical to ensuring that the whole day runs so smoothly.

Sincere thanks also go to all our sponsors, notably John Potts from Duff & Phelps and Dilip Dittani from RSM who were our conference hosts.

Thanks to all those who came and, to those who missed out, watch this space for next year's booking details!!

Peter Stevens
2017 Conference Committee Chair