

THE RICHMOND GROUP

BRIEF HISTORY

Compiled by Bill Stern –April 1999

Formation

During 1981 regular meetings of the IMC Sole Practitioners and Small Practices Group were held on Saturday mornings at The Richmond Gate Hotel.

Over lunchtime refreshments, several members conceived the idea of a “commercially based” group of a more permanent nature that would promote collaboration between members and enhance their working and marketing effectiveness. The first semi-formal meeting, styled as Richmond Consultants, was held on 4 April 1981 chaired by John Goddard. Throughout the following summer months further meetings were held and two committees, headed by Mike Allen and Bob Busvine, were formed to investigate “Marketing” and “Cross Knowledge”.

Several further meetings followed in order to formulate the possible forms of organisation, legal position, finance, membership numbers and qualifications, a brochure and many other related subjects.

Three Task Forces were formed with the objective of launching The Richmond Group in its own right on 1 January 1982.

A governing Council was established and John Newton was appointed first Chairman, John Goddard Treasurer, Peter MacCulloch Secretary, and Harry Richards responsible for Marketing together with Neil Stevens. Many others played an important part in the formation of the Group, including: David Scott, Peter Tomkins, Robert de Ferrer, Alan Pollock, Stephen Morse, Tom Stratford, Raymond Ruddock-West, Roland Orr, Ron Bradnam, Peter Kendrick, Geoff Loftus and Denis Johnston

Invitations to join The Group were sent to 452 IMC Members resulting with a potential of some 75 members showing positive interest.

The first official meeting was held at The Richmond Gate Hotel on 16 January 1982, with a further meeting planned for 6 March 1982

The group became a legal entity in August 1982 in the form of a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The organisation of The Group rapidly developed with its sound basis of voluntary co-operation, not without some difficulties by certain potential members who viewed the organisation at that time with suspicion

Affiliates

A prerequisite of Membership of the Richmond Group has always been Corporate Membership of the IMC coupled with independence of operation. The Group however is ever conscious of having a role to promote the Management Consultancy profession and to encourage those wishing to establish themselves as Independent Consultants.

In 1991 Council devised a scheme whereby The Group could retain its unique claim of having 100% of its membership as full professional, namely Corporate Members, of the IMC, but allow a limited number of budding consultants, who were at least Associate Members of the IMC to join as Affiliates. Those applying must be proposed by an existing Full Member who would be responsible for encouraging and coaching such Affiliates, and they would come up for re-election and review annually.

The first such Affiliate was Christopher Stern, proposed by his father, Bill, and many more have followed. Christopher is now a full professional Member of The IMC, but not of the Richmond Group.

The Richmond Network Limited

The Richmond Network was formed in March 1984 with shares mutually owned by all the members of The Richmond Group. Its role was to provide a vehicle for marketing the services provided by members and to manage major projects. Its objective was to assume contractual responsibility for organising and carrying out contractual arrangements calling on the whole range of skills and experience within The Richmond Group.

The original Directors of The Network were: Warren Lamb (Managing), Jack Harvey, Michael Josephs, Peter MacCulloch with John Newton and John Goddard acting in a non-executive role. Peter Edwards was appointed Company Secretary. The Network at that time operated from Warren Lamb's offices in Chiswick.

The Richmond Network operated alongside The Group until 1991 when the benefits related to the financial burden on The Group were considered too great and the concept of The Network directly attached to The Group was abandoned.

Relationship with the IMC

Following an initial tenuous start, when we believe the IMC Council viewed our activities with some suspicion; the relationship with the Institute has gone from strength to strength.

Apart from being a source of new IMC Members, who had to qualify prior to becoming Members of the Richmond Group, individual RG Members have played, and continue to play a most active role in both, providing interviewers for Membership Review Boards and serving in various official capacities.

Also, and perhaps more importantly, RG Members have contributed positive input as members of the IMC Council have. Those who served, or continue to serve in such a capacity include:

John Goddard	David Owen
Peter MacCulloch	Peter Tomkins
Roland Orr	Bill Stern
Bob Busvine	Michael Josephs
Calvert Markham	Penny Bickerstaff
Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler	Rajan Anketell

In addition, Peter Tomkins was President of the Institute during 1996-7 and David Greggains served as Vice President during 1997-8.

Bill Stern followed Roland Orr as Chairman of the Membership Committee in 1990. Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler was Vice president of the Marketing Committee and from 1992 to 1996 Clive Bonny used to design and deliver IMC member workshops on promoting management consultancy to client organizations. Clive also served on the Professional Development Committee.

David Owen has chaired both the Registered Practices Committee and The Client Support Committee.

RG members who have been SIG Chairmen include:

Calvert Markham	Professional Development Committee
Phil Dogget	Financial Services
Rajan Anketell	Information Technology
John Calvert	Marketing
David Grant	Public Sector
Tony Overton	Customer Service Management

Ian Barclay was Chairman of the IMC Public Sector Special Interest Group (SIG) 1993 - 96 (prior to Bob Empson and David Grant). Many lunches were held at the RSA with heads of government department with speakers such as Valerie Strachan (C&E) and Ann Bowtell (DSS) - both now Dames! and John Born (now Sir) Head of NAO. A major objective was to increase the profile of IMC in the Public Sector, particularly central government, as well as generating contacts for members.

There may be many others who have acted in either an official or unofficial capacity and certainly many more who have contributed greatly without holding any particular office (the unsung heroes?) .

Many RG Members qualify as Registered Practices of the IMC

Events and Personalities

Meeting places:

1981 to 1983	The Richmond Gate Hotel
1983 to 1987	Sheraton Heathrow Hotel
1987 to 1992	The Osterley Park Hotel
1992 to present	Great Fosters at Egham

Chairmen:

1981 to 1987 John Newton – served to establish RG as a forthright going concern and calmly but firmly overcame the difficulties in establishing an organisation of diverse and forceful personalities.

1987 to 1991 Bill Stern – during a four-year term faced the difficulties of the interface of The Richmond Network with RG and the rising costs in attempting to establish The Network as the marketing arm of RG. Eventually, after protracted negotiation The Network became self-supporting but not before RG had to move its meetings to less expensive hotel premises to reduce costs. Initiated “Breakfast Council Meetings” prior to Saturday morning meetings.

1991 to 1993 Bernard Warner – built on the foundations laid earlier in a highly competent manner – oversaw the introduction of Affiliate Members and as more funds became available for direct use by the membership oversaw arrangements to move meetings to a more upmarket location.

1993 to 1997 Raymond Ruddock-West – during his four-year period in office Raymond made a determined and successful effort to raise the visibility of RG both within the membership and also externally with potential clients. Meetings became more proactive with discussion groups and a broad range of influential external speakers. The annual Conference programme got underway and the Members Handbook was updated. Furthermore professional secretarial assistance was introduced to relieve the load on the faithful volunteers who had hitherto carried out all aspects of this task.

1997 to 1998 Graham Ross – continued to put his mark on the work commenced by Raymond and others, leading the meetings with his own firm but relaxed manner achieving a higher integration of members to the common cause and presentation of RG.

1998 to present Calvert Markham – uses his undoubted interpersonal and presentation skills to motivate members with interesting programme content coupled with tremendous background work in revamping the external presentation of RG. His work together with that of his team becomes apparent as this history is prepared, by the introduction of a completely different but effective approach in both internal and external presentation documentation.

Secretaries:

1981 to 1988	Peter MacCulloch
1988 to 1989	Graham Walker
1989 to 1993	Robert May
1993 to 1997	Peter Chrisp
1997 to present	Hedley Basford

Events:

1987 AGM held in Sadlers Wells Theatre – partners joined us for tour “behind scenes” and we then saw performance of “Song and Dance”.

1988 AGM held in foyer of The National Theatre – again partners joined us for theatre tour behind scenes both of the National Theatre complex with The Royal Festival Hall and thereafter enjoyed the afternoon performance.

These venues were arranged be our one time Treasurer, Peter Hill (who sadly is no longer with us). Peter and his wife also arranged special Richmond Group theatre visits and other activities each month, which were well attended and enjoyed by many members with their families.

Conferences

A poll carried out of Council members in 1991 proved in favour of a conference, which Calvert Markham organised and was held on 16 May 1992 at the ICL Beaumont Conference Centre. The format was to have three sessions, covering Marketing Consultancy Services, Selling Consultancy Services and Making the Most of your Client Base. Each was introduced by two short sessions given by RG speakers, and then the whole conference broke into groups of about 10 people to discuss the topics and report back. The keynote speaker was John Lidstone. The conference attracted 34 members and 40 guests all paying to attend.

The Conference was judged a success, and Calvert organised the second in 1993. This was run on 15 May 1993, again at the Beaumont Conference Centre, under the title "Successful Business Development for the Small Consultancy Practice". With the same format as in 1992, the conference covered the topics of Product Management and Development in Consultancy, Managing your practice for profit, and Networks and Liaisons. Barry Curnow was the guest speaker.

In 1994 RG decided to use a professional conference organiser to promote and run the conference. Entitled "Developing Competitive Advantage" It took place on Saturday 14 May, at the Ramada Hotel at Heathrow. It was at this conference that the idea of three streams was introduced - Developing practice performance, developing personal skills, and developing business. Three sessions were offered under each heading, led by RG members, and the keynote speaker was Prabhu Guptara. There were 72 paying participants.

The last conference Calvert organised was in 1995. In a departure from the formula previously used, being on a non-RG meeting date (in previous years it had replaced the May meeting), it was held on a Friday rather than a Saturday. The venue was the newly refurbished Pavilion at Ascot racecourse and, although the format was the same as in 1994, the idea of most of the speakers being non-RG was introduced. Professor Ralph Stacey was the keynote speaker. Once again a professional conference organiser was used, and on this occasion it was decided to engage in a heavy promotional programme. Despite this, we managed only one more delegate than in 1994, and the conference made a substantial loss.

Mike Kearsley took the conference over in 1996, '97 and '98, moving to the Latimer Conference Centre venue that we have enjoyed, continuing to have a conference in addition to our programme of Saturday meetings, and developing the style that emerged during the conference's early years.

SUB GROUPS

RG4

A successful sub-group was set in Hertfordshire to run supplementary meetings and enable local members to get to know each other better.

It was founded in 1981 by Denis Johnston and John Cuthbert took over as Secretary/Treasurer in May 1985. The Group met, 8-10 times a year, in members' houses on a weekday evening for dinner followed by a business meeting. The host was Chairman for the evening.

Though it started in Hertfordshire, it had members from London and most Northern Home Counties, plus Stephen Morse (Cambridge), Hans Butler (Loughborough) and, for a time, a member from Liverpool.

In 1986, with moral support from the RSA the Group celebrated their Industry Year by doing a research project on "Planning for the Future". Members interviewed the Boards of 21 manufacturers (at no cost to them), published a report and ran a conference. The quick answer was that the companies didn't plan very well. Out of that the group also got a lot of business (John Cuthbert's team got over £ 100,000 of business). It was an interesting lesson in selling consultancy---give something for nothing and, in the course of that, demonstrate your competence.

John resigned as Secretary/Treasurer of RG4 in December 1994, due to too much consultancy work. Regrettably, meetings became further apart and stopped in late 1995.

RG1

Donald Butcher established this sub-group in the early 1990's with members from the Surrey and south London. Several meetings were held at Burford Bridge Hotel near Dorking but the group did not progress.

Brochures

The original brochure took the form of an A4 folder with large flaps describing the aims of The Group, a full list of current members (with full qualifications) together with other marketing information.

Michael Speirs has prepared the latest brochure, but this does not appear to be universally used. Michael has also made several attempts to publish a Newsletter, called The Richmond Grapevine, but has been frustrated by lack of material from members.

During 1998 a completely fresh look for overall promotion and presentation was presented to the Group and at the time of writing implementation is imminent.

The Guild of Management Consultants and RG

The idea of forming a City Livery Company specifically for Management Consultants arose in 1992. A small group of consultants, mainly from the major practices, under the auspices of Brian O'Rorke (then Director of the MCA) were encouraged to proceed with this idea by Sir Brian Jenkins, a former partner of Coopers & Lybrand and Lord Mayor.

The foundation dinner was held on September 30 1993, and the foundation committee took the principal offices. David Miller (of Coopers & Lybrand) was the Founding Master, Calvert Markham (RG), Mike Jeans (KPMG), George Cox (Unisys), Keith Burgess (Andersen) were first, second, third and fourth wardens respectively. Brian O'Rorke took the role of Acting Clerk.

Sufficient management consultants expressed interest at the Foundation Dinner that we could proceed with the formation of the Guild, and a number of RG members became a founding member, or have subsequently joined. The membership is now well in excess of 100.

The Founding Master was in office for two years, and was followed by Calvert Markham, who served as Master 1995 - 96. Key features of his year in office were the inauguration of a City lecture series, in which Calvert chaired lectures by speakers including Jonathan Porritt, Maurice Saatchi and Glenys Kinnock. Paddy Ashdown was Calvert's guest at the Master's dinner in May 1996. Calvert also identified (the then) Sir Peter Levene as a possible sponsoring alderman for the Guild.

The Guild continues to thrive and its membership is active in contributing to its educational and charitable objectives. It has been of great help to a number of deserving charities which - in need of consultancy advice, but unable to afford consultancy fees - have greatly benefited from the advice of Guild members.

It is hoped that the Guild will proceed to the status of a Company without Livery in 1999 (the year in which (now) Lord Levene is Lord Mayor), and will achieve full livery status in 2006.

Treatment of Enquiries

During the 1980's The Group used an answering service and address within The World Trade Centre. Members took turns in a rota system to collect enquiries and channel them to appropriate sources. A proportion of fees earned by the members securing an assignment was made available to the person who had taken his turn to be the "Duty Officer" originally accepting the enquiry and being responsible for ensuring appropriate action was taken.

The E-mail Explosion

Peter Hardie-Bick was the catalyst in encouraging members to communicate both internally and externally by e-mail, and RG adopted the LiX service for members. The advantage of LiX was that it enabled members to have structure among the various exchanges of messages that took place, but there were members who had also already subscribed to other Internet service providers, and who were reluctant to subscribe to yet another system. Others also felt strongly that LiX was not the best system for RG, and Council debated the matter at length. In the event, LiX eventually ceased to be used by RG members, but the episode accelerated RG members communicating by e-mail.

With thanks to the early developers, Peter Grant has undertaken prime responsibility for developing the total IT strategy for the Group, applying his wide experience of e-mail and the Internet to get our web pages put up and the whole system under control. Communicating by e-mail is now well established throughout the Group and we have a lot to thank those both who encouraged those timorous beginnings and who now advise and control a really effective system.

Acknowledgements

In preparing this Brief History I wish to acknowledge the helpful assistance provided by several of the founders, particularly Harry Richards. I have also received many helpful comments and suggestions from current members, which have been gratefully incorporated.

WMS April 1999