

NIGEL CURTIS | REFLECTS ON REDUNDANCY, LUCK AND THE NEED FOR TEAMWORK AS HE LOOKS BACK AT A CAREER SPANNING 30 YEARS

WHAT I'VE LEARNED...



There's that old adage 'the harder you work the luckier you get' and it's undoubtedly true – but I think we do also need at least one genuinely lucky break in our careers.

My stroke of luck was being made redundant in 1987. Obviously, it didn't seem that way at the time with a new house, large mortgage and my wife three months pregnant with our first child.

But it gave me the opportunity to start my own business; something I had never considered a remote possibility before.

Neither Harry, my business partner, nor I were businessmen or salesmen. But we got on with people and delivered on our promises. We worked long, long hours producing employee publications that got results for some high-profile clients and our business grew almost entirely through their referrals and recommendations.

CiB membership certainly helped, too. I have been to most national conferences since Jersey in 1989 and met some great people, many of whom have become clients, suppliers or associates, and not to mention employees and firm friends.

Which brings me to one of the big lessons I have learned over the years – surround yourself with talented people and never underestimate the power of true teamwork.

Our industry today is far more demanding, complex and sophisticated than it was when I started out. The choice of delivery channels multiplies as technology advances yet audi-



ences are harder to reach – both physically and mentally – than ever before. At the same time management expects to see more results from strategically aligned communications but for less resource, all backed up with evidence that messages have been received and understood, and topped off with clear proof of contribution to the bottom line!

That's a big ask for any individual but get a great team around you, relish the challenge and the possibilities are endless.

As communicators our job is to explain facts or ideas in a language that the recipient will understand and, if appropriate, act upon. As such, it follows communication is most effective when it is clear, concise and simple. It's all about the message.

So, despite all the smoke and mirrors that some may try to deceive us with, I still believe that, at its heart, effective communications is essentially good journalism... with a strategist putting it into perspective and a designer grabbing attention.

We're back to that teamwork again! ➡



PASS IT ON

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TODAY | MANAGING DIRECTOR

CW Corporate Communications

Same company, different name. Writing and designing publications remains a mainstay of the business, but we changed the name several years ago to better reflect the diversity of our offering.

1988 | DIRECTOR

CW Publications

Reorganisation at Cadbury's gave me the opportunity to do my own thing when my job disappeared! A colleague, Harry Witcherley (an old CiB stalwart) and I established CW and our former employer sweetened the redundancy pill with a contract to continue to produce several publications on its behalf, giving us a much-needed head start.

1985 | PUBLICATIONS MANAGER

Cadbury Schweppes

Long hours, poor pay and a lack of interest from Fleet Street persuaded me to look at corporate journalism. But I decided I could only write for an organization that I had a real interest in... so I applied to Bass and Cadbury's. Beer? Chocolate? Tough call! Chocolate won. Based at Bourville, our department was responsible for a suite of employee newspapers, special editions, brochures and other communications activities.

1983 | DISTRICT REPORTER

The Shropshire Star

The proud possessor of my NCTJ Proficiency Certificate, I moved to the UK's fastest growing evening newspaper responsible for filling my own edition each day. It was all about gaining the trust of the local movers and shakers and making sure my readers knew exactly what was going on – little difference to the work of an internal communicator. My claim to fame here was nearly making the news myself during a heated exchange with Arthur Scargill on a picket line in North Wales during the Miners' strike of 84/85!

1980 | JUNIOR REPORTER

The Western Gazette

I cut my teeth as a cub reporter in Somerset on such glamorous assignments as parish council meetings, magistrates court hearings, village fete openings and – the highlight – collecting mourners' names at funerals! Also had my first taste of 'stringing' for the nationals thanks to a very ambitious local would-be Liberal MP by the name of Paddy Ashdown and the fact that the HQ of the Fleet Air Arm was on my patch – the focus of world attention in 1982 during the Falklands War.

1979 | STUDENT

Highbury College of Technology, Portsmouth

It was a toss up between Brunel University to study economics and modern history for three years or a one-year National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) course with the promise of job at the end... the earlier prospect of some money in my pocket proved the greater lure.