

## **“Getting to Know your Council Members” Series – Part IV**

IPRS is headed by an elected Council which serves a two-year term and is led by a President, Vice-President, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and seven Council Members, all of whom are established PR professionals. The Council provides the overall direction for the Institute and guides the IPRS Secretariat in its day-to-day operations. Council Members are assigned ‘portfolios’ which cover the entire spectrum of programmes and activities that are undertaken by the Institute. The current Council was voted in 2009 and ends their term in 2011.

In this series, we hope to let you, our dear Members and readers, to get to know more about the Council Members and their respective portfolios. Some Council Members will also be sharing insights into issues or trends affecting the PR industry.

For this issue, fourth in the series, we would like to introduce two more of our Council Members:

- Ms Linda Lim, Honorary Treasurer, IPRS, and Public Affairs Manager, South East Asia, Australia & New Zealand, Dow Chemicals Pacific (Singapore) Ptd Ltd
- Ms Kathy O’Brien, Council Member, IPRS, and Managing Director, Red Shoe Communications

**Ms Linda Lim, Honorary Treasurer, IPRS, and Public Affairs Manager, South East Asia, Australia & New Zealand, Dow Chemicals Pacific (Singapore) Ptd Ltd**



*Ms Linda Lim*

## **Can you tell us a little bit about your portfolio?**

I am the Honorary Treasurer, IPRS. In this role, I am accountable for the integrity of our financial records and statements. The need to understand financial information as part of my communications role has been a good foundation for my portfolio.

## **What are the challenges that you have faced in your portfolio?**

The key challenge was more of a mental obstacle that I had to overcome more than anything else. I have never seen myself as being good with numbers nor having a strong understanding of financial statements.

However, I could not resist the opportunity to learn and to meet the challenge. I took on the role for the experience. The previous treasurer, Daphne Liew, did a fantastic job in the handing and over. Lily Sim, Administrative Assistant, from the IPRS Secretariat has been a good guide and has provided me with the needed support throughout my term.

## **Why did you accept being in the IPRS Council?**

I enjoy my career in the public affairs field and take the professionalism of our role very seriously. This is the primary reason why I sought accreditation with the IPRS as an affirmation of my knowledge, skills and experience. I had not thought about being on the Council but when the role was offered to me after my accreditation, I wanted to give it a try and see how I could make a contribution to the Council.

There is a lot of professional experience and heart in the Council. When these two elements come together, I know I'm working with a team that wants to do its best for the profession. There's healthy debate, dialogue and effort put into advancing our profession.

Due to work travels, I have not been able to participate in many of IPRS' activities. However, the networking opportunities and exchanges keep me updated on what's going on in the industry, the thoughts and different perspectives on communication challenges, and importantly, an understanding of prevailing standards.

## **What do you think you can contribute or have contributed by being in the Council?**

With the support of a very competent Secretariat, I believe the core value of a Council Member is to provide insights, feedback and ideas that help progress both the profession and what we do as *the* institute for public relations in Singapore. Sharing my opinions and speaking up is fortunately not a weakness of mine. I hope that this has added to the strength of the organisation. I would also grab any opportunity to speak about IPRS and highlight its role, and mentor younger colleagues in the profession.

**Ms Kathy O'Brien, Council Member, IPRS, and Managing Director,  
Red Shoe Communications**



*Ms Kathy O'Brien*

## **Can you tell us a little bit about your portfolio?**

This year I am responsible for refreshing IPRS' corporate identity. A group of members joined me in a sub-committee to refresh the visual side of IPRS' corporate branding so as to reflect IPRS' current role. We had great sessions de-constructing the elements, logo, tagline, and so on. Ultimately, we tabled our proposals to the Council.

I have been in the PR industry for more than 25 years and in the IPRS Council for about nine years. I have been involved in many corporate branding exercises and taught corporate branding at the Professional Certificate level for IPRS. It is wonderful that everyone who joined my sub-committee brought deep experience, perspectives and new ideas. Thus, the conclusion that we derived was very different from my expectations.

## **What are the challenges that you have faced in your portfolio?**

There is an internal challenge of getting time in the schedules of busy people. All of our sub-committee members are successful people who have

full diaries. Finding a time that all of us can meet has always been a challenge. We made a great effort to be efficient. We did as much work as possible via email. We could pass around ideas, vote, respond to queries, and only meet when we had something to discuss together. In fact, the whole team only met once face-to-face. But we have worked together for months and produced solid recommendations that were eventually presented to the Council.

## **Why did you accept being in the IPRS Council?**

I've had an enriching experience with IPRS, thus I was keen to give back. When I first came to Singapore 14 years ago, it was IPRS members who welcomed me, helped me to get to know the Singapore community, and taught me how things were done here. They were my friends, my colleagues, and my "sounding boards".

IPRS membership keeps my finger on the pulse of Singapore's PR community. I have made many friends and acquaintances through IPRS, whom I now bump into, catch up with, and call upon for professional advice, new information, and the sharing of experiences. When I talk to clients, I not only share what I know from the bit of experience that I have, but also a broader perspective because I have talked to many people. The only way that I got on talking terms with these people was from IPRS meetings, and sitting shoulder-to-shoulder during events such as a lunch talk. From there, we get to know each other gradually, respect each other and then go deeper. It has been a cornerstone of my career in Singapore.

After I'd been here for about six years, it seemed a natural thing for me to say "yes" when I was asked to join the Council because I have benefitted from IPRS – so why not do a little bit to help?

The experience with the Council has been excellent. Over the long span that I've been on the Council, we have done a great deal. We have advanced education on many fronts, enhanced relationships with other countries, and taken IPRS to new groups of people like younger practitioners. I love being involved in the Council.

## **What do you think you can contribute or have contributed by being in the Council?**

I love the PR industry and that fondness is for the work that we do. It gives me a lot of enthusiasm for IPRS' work. I know that I have contributed care and enthusiasm, which has sometimes helped to move projects on or inspired people to get involved. I also have many ideas to share about how we may want to be perceived as we move forward. Some of the best moments in the Council are when a lot of us throw different ideas on the table, debate and then come up with a conclusion.

I was responsible for the PRISM Awards 2004. It was an exciting experience and we had a great evening with a record number of attendees that year. I have been a strong supporter of the IPRS-LSPR Internship Programme and have hosted the LSPR interns for many years. The experience has been great for everyone. I have also taught at IPRS courses, where I enjoyed meeting new students, getting to know them, and encouraging them to go into the industry. I have played a small and worthwhile part as a Council Member who goes away, gets inputs from the community and brings it back to our group; then helps to make decisions, from things like possible venues to hold IPRS' events to the areas that we should focus our resources on.

The PR industry is changing a lot. Social Media, technology and the way people communicate are all reshaping the industry. IPRS is going to change tremendously in the next 10 years, or maybe even in a shorter time. I am excited to be a part of that and I'm looking forward to seeing more young people with different views get involved in the Council so that we make sure that we change to meet the needs of the community.

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