



Issue 2, February 2005

'Under One Roof'

The newsletter of BG Audit & Consultancy

Into the future...

2004 has been a typically busy year in the world of housing. With the higher profile awarded to the sector, through the government's interest in housing in general and the growth areas in particular, has come increased scrutiny and a desire for efficiency.

So while market renewal pathfinders, ALMOs and key worker accommodation may be here to stay, so unfortunately are the external validation of PIs, EU procurement rules and development funding for the private sector.

The recent NHF/HC consultation meetings highlighted a number of themes for 2005. Key among these were the drive for increased efficiency and the equality and diversity agenda. As always at the end of recent years, we can say that the sector has made significant progress this year, particularly around the 'iN business for neighbourhoods' agenda, but further challenges await us in 2005.

What a year!

Starting a new business is always a challenge and an exercise in risk

management, something we should be good at. I'm delighted to say that we seem to have risen to the challenge and managed our risks to make 2004 a successful entrance into the world of consultancy.

2004 allowed me personally to put into practice some of the skills and knowledge that I had acquired over the previous 12 years working in the sector but which had been rather tied-bound by the costs and organisational structures associated with working in practice. Many thanks must go to my clients who have given me the opportunity to show what internal auditors can do if given the chance.

We have been very fortunate in carrying out some exciting and novel assignments this year, including:

- facilitating Board & staff away days;
- implementing risk management processes;
- governance training for Board members;
- interim management post as Head of Housing Services;
- assisting a Council's DLO with its partnering bid;
- business process mapping exercise;
- reviews of choice based lettings, rent arrears and rent deposit schemes.



BG AUDIT & CONSULTANCY LTD
44 MONTONFIELDS ROAD, MONTON, ECCLES
MANCHESTER M30 8AW
T 0161 707 5852 M 07968 337396
E BILL@BGAUDITANDCONSULTANCY.CO.UK
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND 5001161



We are still delivering internal audit and risk management services but we are also being given the opportunity to expand into general housing consultancy, which is both challenging and fulfilling.

Equality & Diversity

The Equality & Diversity agenda has stepped up a pace and we have been fortunate in managing Tung Sing's Equality & Diversity Unit during an interim management position. The team has expanded to 4 staff now and has been carrying out a range of exciting assignments.

Mark Nesbitt heads up the team and has been providing bespoke training packages for other RSLs. Tung Sing is hoping to expand the range of services it offers to include provision of policies and procedures, email updates and strategy developments. As well as providing services to RSLs. Tung Sing is hoping to work with prospective ALMOs and Local Authorities.



Let's Get Ready To S.U.M.O !

I have been fortunate recently to work with some amazing people recently. Two of them, Paul McGee and Kate Hull Rodgers,

have kindly contributed a couple of pieces for the newsletter. I hope you enjoy them.

How many times have you started the New Year, brimming with enthusiasm and determination for the things you are going to do (or stop doing) over the next twelve months? Well here's five reasons why those 'good intentions' often fail to become reality.

1. Activity Illusion (You seem busy but actually are achieving very little)
2. Fear of Failure (This idea is rooted in the irrational belief that successful people always succeed first time)
3. Complacency ('There's always next week' or 'I'll leave it until after Easter')
4. Emotional barriers (I'm waiting to feel enthusiastic or motivated before I attempt anything)
5. Avoiding discomfort (Doing this task might move me out of my comfort zone therefore I won't do it)

Which can you relate to?

Great goals, great ideas and great intentions are meaningless without great actions. The phrase S.U.M.O. simply means **Shut Up, Move On!** It's time to Shut Up the excuses and Move On to taking action. Here's one great idea to help you towards your goals in 2005.

Just Start It! Quit waiting to 'feel motivated' or 'waiting for the right time'. **Shut Up** the dithering and **Move On** to doing something! So if you want to make 2005 a great year, remember to **S.U.M.O!**

(Paul McGee is an international speaker and author. He helps people and organisations to Shut Up and Move On from mindsets and behaviours that hinder their potential. He can be reached at sumo@paulmcgee.com or via his website www.paulmcgee.com)



Current housing issues

There is a multitude of issues facing associations at present. The Supporting People funding cuts are starting to bite. Even Manchester City Council's 3 stars in its Supporting People inspection last year could not prevent it facing cuts that have seen certain services terminated and new services not taken up.

The EU procurement rules are becoming a major headache for associations. The lunacy of the anomaly of being classified as a public body for this but not under the Freedom of Information Act will not be lost on the many Private Eye readers out there. The EU procurement is more an issue for services than maintenance and development, as it is likely robust procedures were already in place for these. Options available for RSLs include using panels of suppliers or utilising unregistered subsidiaries to procure contracts.

Conferences and training

The NHF and the HAIAF are both hosting training days for Audit Committees around improving their effectiveness. We are running a couple of the sessions for the NHF course. With over 50 delegates, this will be a rather general run through many of the issues. If you would rather have a bespoke course designed to tackle specific issues, please contact us to discuss your needs.

Bill is on the Conference trail again! At the NHF Finance Conference in March, I'll be involved in workshops on the wider role of internal audit and, more controversially, best practice mergers for small RSLs.

The Belfry, in Warwickshire will host this year's HAIAF Conference, in July. Bill has been asked to chair the Conference and there is an impressive line-up of speakers and workshop facilitators. As with previous years, the HAIAF has attracted people from outside the sector and outside internal audit

to provide a varied programme. Details of both conferences can be obtained from their respective websites.

Year end

The financial year-end of many RSLs approaches and thoughts of risk assessments and internal control assurance statements come to the fore. For organisations where assurance and risk management is not embedded within the normal operations of the organisation, these activities require additional work.

If you would like assistance in developing straightforward risk management and assurance frameworks, which can be maintained and embedded without complex statistics or time-consuming databases, please contact us for more details.

New Year Resolutions – make some!

Quite simply, NYRs are nothing more than a glorified To Do List. Lists can clarify where we have been, where we are and where we want to go. They are a powerful business and personal development technique. Don't worry that you might not keep your resolves... it is *making* them that counts. It signifies hope, potential, renewal, positioning. Never quit quitting, never stop starting.

I first encountered Lists as a business tool on a career planning workshop. The assignment was to spend a week compiling our Joy List. "Joy," the trainer explained, "Will be defined as what sustains your desire to be alive."

I bought a special book and pen. But after 3 days there were only 2 things on my list. I was defining 'Joy' as the perfect mate, the great job, the Porsche. I had none of these. Surely something in my life brought me joy!



Must be things I did often... Well, I ate a lot of cereal. Sultana Bran. For breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. Added that to my list, increasing it by 50%. I also took a lot of hot baths, wrote that down – doubling my List. Suddenly, like a paradigm shift, I was surrounded by things that brought me joy – hot baths, long walks, finished assignments. My list trebled and quadrupled. The way I tell the story now: the sultana bran really freed me up.

I still have that list, referring back to it brings me 'Joy' again.

New Years Resolutions are just To Do lists. You can also use To Done lists; celebrate achievements. A popular business application is SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Another is Stop Start Continue. Personally, I do Countdown. 5 things to do, 4 things I've done, 3 people who support me, 2 new joys, and 1 thing I'm gonna quit. I do it weekly, not just yearly. It always helps.

(Kate Hull Rodgers, managing director of HumourUs, has worked with 35 housing associations and is a popular speaker for the NHF and HAI AF).

Countdown....

The new BG Audit & Consultancy website is due to be launched by the end of the month. Unfortunately, the original web designer, Charlie Farrow, obtained a new position at Reading University and was unable to continue to service ongoing clients.

The new website has been designed by Allan Duggan of DDS Web design. Greater use has been made of Flash technology and we hope you like it. Unfortunately, there's more photos of me on the site now but we hope to remedy this over the coming months with more photos of clients and training sessions and less of the ginger nut!



The site has up to date details of the full range of services we offer, a client list and a number of testimonials. Please browse the site and email me with any comments.

Christmas spirit

The pictures of the devastation caused by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean will have goaded many of you into action, especially over the festive period. A graduate of geography, I spent three years studying the power of nature – whether it be flash floods, mass movement, earthquakes or hurricanes – the cost in human life can never be measured. We have made a number of donations to various relief funds and we have nominated Oxfam as our charity this year for our Christmas donation.

