

A time for trust



The credit crunch has triggered a global conversation about business. Governments are taking part; the media has a leading role; the internet is alive with comment and criticism; regulators are actively engaged; public policy groups are contributing and customers of all types of businesses are vocal in their opinions about what has gone wrong and what needs to be put right.

If you are not taking part in this global debate, it's unlikely that you can become part of the solution. Never have the reputations of governments, public bodies, businesses, brands and NGOs depended more on communications.

Across the Chime Group, we are working with our clients in each of these sectors and trying to help them have a constructive voice in the debate. If you don't take part, you risk your reputation. If you do take part, you need to have clarity on where you stand, what you do and what your overall point of view is.

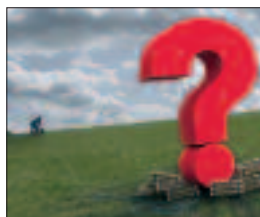
So despite the uncertain economic conditions we find ourselves in, the need for communication has never been greater. If you add to this need the continuing explosion of communication options available for our clients – even politicians are Twittering – the need for modern communications is clear.

A recent research study by Opinion Leader examines the declining degree of trust that people have in all organisations. Being seen to push vested interests or demonstrating incompetence undermines trust; understanding customer needs and addressing them in what a business says and does, help to build it. Helping our clients to maintain a trusted voice in the ongoing debate is where we come in.

Trusted organisations are those that can demonstrate that they walk in their customers' footsteps. They are confident about being transparent in what they say and in how they handle disagreements or criticism. They understand that communication is as much about listening as persuading. They embrace the information age by having a 24/7 approach to communication, whether answering the demands of the media or taking part in social networks.

This Annual Report demonstrates how companies that can help to build this trust continue to add value to clients despite the difficult economic climate. Throughout our divisional reviews you'll find a number of themes that help to explain the resilience of our companies' performance: diversified business models; healthy exposure to public sector work in PR and advertising; leading expertise in Corporate Responsibility (CR), where demand is being driven by the regulatory environment; strong growth in international business. The progress of our Middle East business and finally progress in sports marketing which is becoming a critical aspect of major clients communications. I would argue, though, that the most important factor is the quality of the work across all of our divisions, a reputation for innovative and effective solutions, and a proven track record for building trust and reputation.

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Numerous highlights stand out from the year. VCCP's 'Alcohol: Know your limits' campaign combined creative flair with a deep understanding of digital media and modern opinion-forming and used this to deliver fantastic levels of engagement around a sensitive message. Teamspirit's award-winning launch of MetLife in the UK proved just how powerful a well-constructed brand reputation can be. Fast Track's Lucozade Sport Performance League helped amateur footballers across the country to realise their potential, whilst building strong grassroots support for the brand. The groundbreaking study of the impact of Unilever's operations on Southern Africa, conducted by Corporate Citizenship, is an excellent example of the power of communicating values through actions. Opinion Leader's work for Bupa demonstrated the strategic role of deliberative research. Meanwhile, the successful election campaign of President Banda in Zambia and innovative work for Müller, Fortnum & Mason and GS4 provided further demonstrations of the expertise of the PR Division in building powerful and valuable reputations across all regions, sectors and scenarios.

Christopher Satterthwaite
Group Chief Executive

Some of the high-profile activities we were involved in during 2008 include:

- Representing Rupiah Banda in the **Zambian Presidential Election**, he won
- Mubadala's sponsorship of **Ferrari**
- The **Lysander Gatwick Investment Group** bid for London Gatwick Airport
- The **Food Standards Agency** advertising campaign for saturated fats
- **Emirates'** sponsorship of the **Rugby Sevens World Cup**
- The new advertising campaign for **'Comparethemarket.com'**
- The launch of the **Department of Health's** new **Hepatitis C** awareness campaign
- The launch of the report on the future of the luxury industry commissioned by **De Beers**
- **BT's** sponsorship of the **Paralympic World Cup**
- The study into the Future of Financial Advice and Distribution on behalf of **Aegon**
- Entry into service of the largest fleet of the world's biggest aircraft – the **Airbus A380** superjumbo for **Emirates Airline**