



*Happy Christmas, Hogmanay and
New Year from everyone at
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd*



Richard Keith

Host City rollers, Glasgow style

Bidding to become a Host City for a major sporting or cultural event has become big business even for small cities and relatively less known events.

Many of you know that GPB worked as bid coaches on the successful London 2012 Olympic bid and the London 2017 World Athletics Championship. We continue to work with a number of municipal and sports bodies helping them with their persuasive communication in various ways.

Yet whilst, ostensibly, this type of work may appear different to much of our coaching in the commercial world, there are some resounding similarities.

I recently attended the Host City Conference in Glasgow. This was a two day event that brought together rights holders, cities and suppliers for a variety of talks, discussions and networking events.



Glasgow - host city of Host Cities 2016

I listened to a number of speakers from around the world: there were attendees from the successful Rio 2016 Olympic bid, and panel members from Glasgow who hosted the 2014 Commonwealth Games. There were members of the International Olympic Committee, people from the World EXPO and from Wada.

We discussed everything from how to make your event stand out, to how to ensure an effectively legacy, to how to keep such large events safe. But not how to win such an event...

When I came away from it, I realised that the conference reinforced to me one key point more than any other. The essence of bidding effectively is the same whether you are hoping to win the rights to host the Olympics or are attempting to win a single customer in a sales process: you have to *bring to life* how you are *different* to your competitor, and explain clearly why your difference(s) is of the *greatest value* to the buyer.

Let's unpack these words: Firstly, "bring to life". What does this mean?

In this edition:

Host City rollers, Glasgow style

By Richard Keith

Host cites are big business, even for small cities.

Is there such a thing as the perfect job candidate

By guest author Richard Taylor, MD of Taylor Jones Partnership.

Richard writes about hiring on the basis of potential talent, and from top universities.

Etiquette and manners

By Alastair Grant

Alastair takes a look at how these have changed over the years.

Keeping up appearances

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Lynda, in contrast to Richard Jones, writes about how the City is not looking widely enough, with a focus on visual communication.

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Host City rollers, Glasgow style ... continued

It means that you have to paint a clear picture in the minds of your buyer of who you are, and ultimately why you should be selected. You have to articulate your argument sharply and vividly using language and (sometimes, but not always) visual aids to highlight your key *arguments* and make a *persuasive case*.



Paint me a picture... of "why you?"

The more clearly you can show your audience how amazing their future looks if they select you, the easier you'll make their choice.

Secondly, "how you are different". Being different is very important: sometimes the smallest difference can have the biggest impact. It's often hard to differentiate yourselves in the marketplace, but rest assured, you can – you just have to work harder at either finding or creating that difference.

Thirdly, "of the greatest value." Here's the kicker with being different. It's no good just being different for the sake of it, so presenting differences to your buyer that are irrelevant to them won't win you an Olympic Games. Many people fall into this trap when pitching.

They think that what they see as different and special about their company is what the client wants. This is not necessarily true, so never assume. The golden rule has always been and will continue to be **FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CLIENT/CUSTOMER/BUYER VALUES MOST AND MAKE IT EXPLICIT HOW YOUR DIFFERENCE (S) BEST PROVIDE THAT VALUE!**

When you put it like that it seems so simple, doesn't it? Well yes; but there's a difference between simple and easy.

Yet, the London 2012 bid team did this

brilliantly (we would say that, wouldn't we?!) We did our bit here as coaches to the bid team early on; the great work was done by their senior team, meeting 1-1 and with skill uncovering what the International Olympic Committee (IoC) valued most and least; that helped the team build and present a very persuasive case based on this essential information.

London's bid didn't focus primarily on how great the 'Games would be for London, or how much money they would make, or even how fantastic London would be as a venue. These were all important, but they weren't central to the persuasive case. Rather London had one key message: "We will bring children back into sport". This ultimately developed into the Games' slogan: "Inspire a Generation".



London aimed to Inspire a Generation

I can't stress enough the importance of the methodology that GPB employs here:

Talk to the buyer; find out what they value; build your Value Proposition out of how your differences resonate with what you *learn from them*. Doing this helped London win the biggest sports prize conceivable; doing so now will help the three current Olympic bidders: Budapest, Los Angeles, and Paris (Rome pulled out).

Doing so in the future will help you win more clients and customers no matter what industry you are in. We're currently looking toward our next significant sporting and/or event bids: you can bet your Christmas bonus that we'll be encouraging the teams to do exactly the same thing.

By Richard Keith

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts



Is there such a thing as the perfect job candidate?



In general, employers are fairly consistent in their view of the 'perfect candidate'.

By Richard Taylor, Guest author, and MD of Taylor Jones Partnership (TJP)

Most employers think that the perfect candidate is someone with relevant experience, who is ready to make a real impact from day one. They must be charismatic and collaborative, and already perfectly moulded to their specific company culture.

Exceptionally enthusiastic about the role, the candidate must be passionate about their new firm, and completely committed to their journey. The perfect candidate should offer all this and more - for a 'market rate' salary.

Does this perfect candidate really exist, as per all of these qualities? The easy answer is yes - but they are extremely rare. Whilst these are undoubtedly reasonable factors to consider, they also happen to be what *every* firm is looking for - so the task of sourcing such a candidate is extremely difficult.

At TJP we believe that the fundamental drawback to most clients' search for the perfect candidate is that they look for individuals who *already possess* all of the qualities they require, rather than identifying the *potential* of candidates who could be future leaders within their businesses.

The strongest candidates are not necessarily those with the most experience or industry-specific knowledge; more often than not, the most suitable candidates are those with *talent*. Talent allows an individual to quickly gain the skills required for them to *become* the perfect candidate.

According to Professor and HR Guru David Olson Ulrich¹ at Ross Business School Michigan, talent is a combination of competence, commitment, and contribution. This, we believe, is exactly what having a strong degree from a world-class university indicates about a person's skill set.

Using academic merit as a point of departure allows us at TJP to source

candidates who are *competent* (i.e. have developed the key skills required to succeed in business), *committed* (work hard, and will put their time and energy into the company's success), and who *contribute* (produce meaningful work and find purpose in what they do).

Recently, talent-focused recruiting has fallen out of fashion, with firms such as the "Big Four" accountancy firms (EY, Deloitte, KPMG, and PwC) opting to lower their academic requirements or establishing more flexibility around their entry standards.

Yet, while it is unquestionably true that perfect candidates without strong grades exist, academic success remains an excellent measure of a person's communication and analytical skills, dedication, ambition, and ability to keep to deadlines.



Does the perfect candidate exist?

The Big Four firms aren't necessarily leading the way: a survey by Carl Minsky at Times Higher Education² suggests that success at particular universities is still considered as a very important factor in the recruitment process.

This survey of recruiters suggests that in every continent, the highest proportion of survey respondents (19 per cent) say that they favour universities based on past experience with their graduates.

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



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Sources: ¹ Ulrich, D (2006) 'The Talent Trifecta', *Workforce Management*, September, pp.32-33.

² Minsky, C (2015) 'Best universities producing "ready-for-work" graduates: Global Employability University Survey', *Times Higher Education* [online]



Is there such a thing as the perfect candidate? ... continued

So, although many clients cite *experience* as a key component of the perfect candidate, evidence of *academic talent* is still highly sought-after by most businesses.

A talent-focused approach doesn't just allow employers to source better candidates that they might otherwise have overlooked; crucially, it makes the whole process of recruiting much more efficient, which means that employers are then able to be extremely effective at matching candidates with roles based on their personality, interests, and career ambitions.

Our approach, therefore, has been to focus on candidates with excellent core academic qualities, but with only 0-5 years' experience. Outstanding talent is the cornerstone of our strategy, and we find that by sacrificing something on the experience part of their character, we can commit more fully to delivering all the key traits that clients look for.

Having already established that a candidate possesses the core skills required to succeed in business, we are then able to spend more time getting to know them as a person, helping them to define their own personalised career journey, and matching them with a company within which we believe they would be motivated to realise their potential. This, in our experience, achieves maximum benefits for both the candidate and you the employer.

Richard Branson once stated that *'great grades count for nothing if they aren't partnered with broad experience and a winning personality.'*



Richard Branson opines...

Indeed, perfect candidates do have confidence and charisma in abundance. Such candidates find it easy to

communicate their ideas effectively; they are positive thinkers who inspire those around them.

In short, they are people that clients want to work with.

These candidates can be depended upon to deliver excellent results consistently. They are also genuinely passionate about the role, committed to the company and its values, and have an excellent grasp of how business really works. Not only are they collaborative, but they also have the drive, hunger, and initiative to become a future leader in the business that they join.

Your business is unique; so, therefore, is your ideal candidate. An individual with talent has the tools to mould themselves effectively to the particular culture of the company they join. In this way, while employers initially may have to spend more time, money, and effort in training inexperienced candidates for a role, talent-focused recruiting has proven to have a much better return on investment, whilst also providing a long-term solution to leadership problems.

So, do perfect candidates exist?

Our core belief is that they do, but that you won't find them simply by looking. Perfect candidates only exist in the realms of *potential*, to be created through an effective blend of talent, collaboration, and guidance.

By Richard Taylor, MD of London-based Taylor Jones Partnership

Advice *squeezed*
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experts



Etiquette and Manners



Recently¹, Luke Johnson wrote an article in *The Sunday Times* whose title started with “*Lunch is for wimps?*” but then ended with the riposte “*No, it greases our wheels*”.

When I joined the world of work, men wore bowler hats and I had calling cards to place on silver salvers when arriving at a new appointment. A quaint custom from by the military from the 1960s.

On arrival in ‘Civvy Street’ in my 40s (I hasten to add before joining GPB) I was quickly indoctrinated about the need to sell, make a profit, and make exaggerated claims about how good my employer’s products services were.

This was a strange new world to me. Previously, a culture of understatement and self-deprecation were respected. But preservation and the need to earn a crust drove a change in my behaviour especially during the sales phase.

After a while it became apparent to me that although unappealing aspects of business behaviour exist, trust, courtesy, relationships, and integrity also continue to be relevant, and indeed they make a huge difference. That’s especially true in *our* business of advising and coaching communication skills. All pretty obvious perhaps, but what are the ways of fine-tuning such social customs? What is good etiquette? And does it *really* matter any more?

Let’s start by offering a few tips:

Gaining rapport: On meeting, shake hands firmly, not limp nor, even worse, a bone crusher. Then engage in the right amount of small talk for your counterparty. Not all of us are good at small talk, apart from discussing the weather or travel conditions. Asking more profound open questions is a good ploy. Get them talking, listen with gusto both in your facial features as well as comments. In other words listen in an authentic way.

Following Up: Saying thank you was drilled into me as a child. I am sure that is still the norm, although not always so.



A good firm handshake... no broken bones

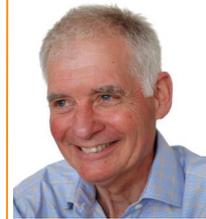
I am constantly surprised at the lack of courtesy of many who do not say thank you when it is deserved. Those who do might send an email. This seems fair enough in our electronic age yet a carefully hand-written note is somehow of much higher value.

My father served on Lord Mountbatten’s staff in the Burma campaign in 1945. Lord Mountbatten would make a point of writing thank you letters by hand the same night, or if needed in the early hours after the event took place. They were always written in green ink - an affectation of senior naval officers. This etiquette seemingly of a bygone era still has its place, and once into the habit, it’s not difficult to do.

Handwriting may take no longer than typing the same words, but of course there are envelopes, address, stamps and posting to deal with. Try it and see how much it is appreciated. It also makes you stand out and be remembered. The more significant the need for the thanks to have been, the more warranted the effort of writing.

Lunching: Ah, the subject of Luke Johnson’s *Times* article. Big boozy lunches were common place in the City 30 years ago, with afternoons being written off .

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Alastair Grant

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



Sources: ¹ The Times, 6th November 2016. See online at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lunch-is-for-wimps-no-it-greases-our-wheels-2vqk7fknc>.

Etiquette and Manners ... continued

This is less in vogue now but a modest, low-ish alcohol lunch is a great way to get to know someone. Better than a formal meeting, better than a telephone call, and much better than an email.



A glass of something helps to grease the wheels of commerce

Mobile Phones: So often our mobiles have priority attention, at the expense of the person we might be talking to. They are incredible devices yet need to be silenced and put out of sight to show 100% interest with the other party.

Language: People swear and use vulgar language much more than they did even only 20-30 years ago. I find that most people are careful to be polite and circumspect when with strangers but they can quickly become less inhibited as relations build. I think views vary so the only sensible course is to be moderate and alert so sensitivities. Anyway it is quite possible to make a point strongly, maybe elegantly, without resorting to **** words!

Working Abroad: In mainland Europe there is generally greater formality. For example, if we are running a workshop in France, we usually shake hands at the start and at the end of the day. Men and women who know each other have a peck on each cheek. It seems that by the second day of a workshop then we get to that elevated status too, but it doesn't work in the UK unless we are already known to each other. It is a difficult area but a simple guiding principal is to let the client take the initiative.

Emails: So often we either fail to copy in some person who might be affected or worse by far, in my opinion, we copy everybody in to all sorts of low value messaging, thinking that we have passed on our responsibilities properly.

But the sheer volume of emails we have to handle means they often go unread, indeed unwanted. The subject title is often unchanged in a series of emails sent back and forth. Here it is helpful to update the subject to something relevant. The reader is more likely to take notice. If an email comes in inviting a response, do not procrastinate. But if you are unsure then just acknowledge their message and commit to answer within a set time. This also helps *you* not to procrastinate.

Other Courtesies: Being on time is polite. If you are delayed then a phone call or email will mitigate the situation.

Christmas is coming up. Presents are being bought and some are sending out gushing accounts on Christmas cards of how well they and their children have done in the past year. Yes, the Grant family do send out a covering letter to our card, but it is only sent to those who are distant; just a photo and some handwritten comments.

I think those who receive presents should in the traditional way write a letter of thanks; and it's particularly children receiving presents that I am thinking of here. Because if they don't learn this courtesy at a young age, then maybe in their adult lives a useful and helpful piece of etiquette might be missing.

By Alastair Grant

Advice *squeezed*
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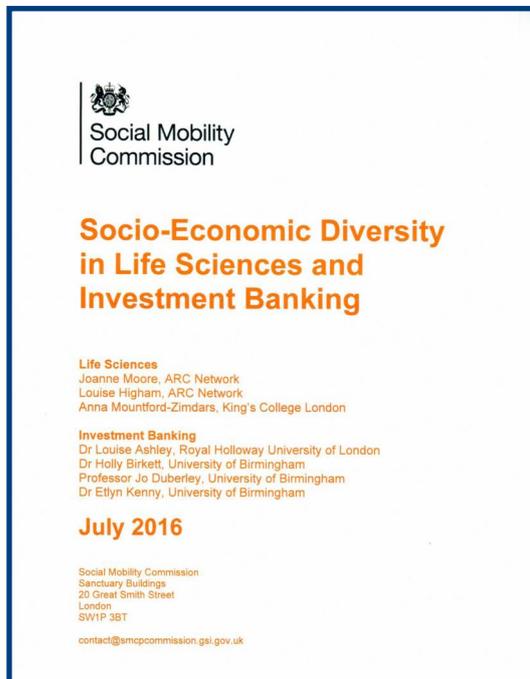
Keeping up appearances



“Blue and green should never be seen. Fawn should never be worn. Only wear yellow if you are mellow. Never wear brown, when in town.”

I’m not sure that the above rhyme was ever intended as style advice....

A report done by researchers from Royal Holloway University of London and the University of Birmingham was published by the Social Mobility Commission (SMC). This, along with several related articles in the press that have followed, indicate that at least part of it seems to have been taken seriously in certain industry sectors, and in general it has caused quite a stir.



Most of you would have seen the headlines then, if not the details. The assertion was that people are not getting jobs in Investment Banking because they have the wrong speech, accent, dress or behaviour, and they even cite that some men are wearing the wrong shoes.

The biggest headlines were based on a quote by Alan Milburn MP, the Chair of the SMC, a public body that advises the UK government. Commenting on the report, he said: *“It is shocking, for example, that some investment bank managers still judge candidates on whether they wear brown shoes with a suit, rather than on their skills and potential.”*

The report (July) and its related Press

Release (September) have highlighted once again the age-old issue that your university and network are more important than intelligence or ability. To give a little more context, Alan Milburn also said about the research: *“Bright working-class kids are being systematically locked out of top jobs in investment banking because they may not attend a small handful of elite universities or understand arcane culture rules. While there are some banks that are doing excellent work in reducing these barriers, there are still too many that need to wake up and realise that it makes sound business sense to recruit people from all backgrounds.”*

So I thought for this article I would comment on Dress Code, and especially the focus of the report, men, as it’s an important part of Visual Communication. After rummaging around recently on the internet, I discovered dozens of articles regarding the pitfalls of wearing the wrong colour shirt, suit, tie, shoes, etc.

One in the New York-based online magazine ‘Gentleman’s Gazette’ was devoted entirely to the merits of smart brown shoes. I found the ‘Comments’ section fascinating; clearly there are men who care very deeply about the quality and colour of their accessories. As a woman who enjoys fashion trends to some degree and clothes in general, I was reassured by this attention to detail in their dress sense.

Clearly there are some idiosyncratic dress codes whose origins are dubious, such as wearing the bottom button of a waistcoat undone in a three-piece suit. With others it’s rather more obvious. If a cuff button can be undone, the suit must be of high quality.

Other codes of dress may be about showing good taste, or not. E.g. I can’t see why anyone would choose to wear cheap grey shoes with white socks unless they had to. Or why anyone would wear white socks with anything other than tennis shoes or trainers...

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Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts





Keeping up appearances ... continued

I personally love to see a beautiful Ox-blood brogue or a dark brown Oxford worn with a navy suit. Recently, walking down Southampton Row in London I spotted a man wearing a grey pinstripe suit with tan leather brogues. He had his own sense of style within a set of well-defined parameters. It worked.



The BBC's Hyacinth Bucket ("Bouquet") knew how to keep up appearances.

There are a number of things that occur to me with regard to pursuing a job in investment banking in London's 'square mile'. One is that the competition is so fierce that recruiters need some criteria to cut down the vast number of applicants per job. Their logic is probably that if they can recruit from a top university, why go elsewhere? They muse that the top advertising agencies have done this for decades, so perhaps there's no reason why investment banking should be any different.

Another seems to me more tribal: i.e. whether you belong or not. If you appear to fit in, you'll have much more chance of being accepted. That makes me wonder why you wouldn't give yourself every advantage possible. If there are a number of candidates of high calibre, what would give you the edge over them?

In a client-facing role with such a bank, your interviewer wants to feel assured

that they can trust you know how to behave with a valued bank client. The message you send by what you wear and how you come across must be that you are confident in your own skin as well as your abilities and that you belong in this 'tribe' and that you appreciate and aspire to the finer things in life. I don't agree that people should be excluded because they are unaware of these unwritten rules. However, any candidate worth interviewing needs to do their research.

That research should definitely include visiting the square mile, if investment banking is your chosen career. Spend time in the places the bankers go for a coffee or a drink after work, and observe their dress code. You will soon see that it differs dramatically from that of their neighbours in 'Silicone Roundabout', Shoreditch; the beards being the most obvious difference!

If you've already proven yourself to some extent in another sector, perhaps the odd flamboyant gesture is acceptable (patterned socks or a striking tie?). Otherwise, here's my advice: if you want to work in a conservative industry, invest in the most expensive (preferably navy blue) suit you can afford. Buy a good quality black leather belt and a pair of black leather Oxfords or brogues. Never wear these with white socks!

It may seem superficial to some, but whether we like it or not we are judging and being judged on appearances constantly. If you're bright and ambitious but didn't go to a top public school or a Russell Group university, perhaps thinking about how you appear to others and making adjustments is worth the extra effort, especially when the competition is so tough and the stakes so high.

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Source: To read the SMC's Press release, go to:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/less-affluent-kids-are-locked-out-of-investment-banking-jobs>

Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd is a respected adviser based in London. We enhance the performance of businesses, helping clients to excel in the use of the spoken and written word, improving the performance of individuals and teams. Over the long term our work improves the way a firm does business.

We coach and advise individuals to perform at their best in the toughest situations including: Presentations, New Business Pitches, Business Development, Negotiating, Media Interviews, Telephone Calls and Document Writing.

We also produce scientific voice, visual and content analysis reports, which are unique to GPB. We then provide voice and visual coaching, and content advice.

Our clients' needs are the only focus of our work; we listen to them and closely tailor our response to deliver first class coaching and advice. In support of this we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as Voice, Visual and Content Analyses, Prospect Relationship Management (PRM) and the Information Iceberg.



London Office:
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd
4 Bloomsbury Square
London, WC1A 2RP
United Kingdom

Tel: +44(0)20 7831 1000
Website: www.gpb.eu
Email: journal@gpb.eu