



# Adding Value

## West Yorkshire Chamber of Trade and Commerce

Croner Partner

For over 30 years, Val Summerscales has been the Local Secretary of the West Yorkshire Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Over this time, from voicing the opinions of local businesses to challenging proposed developments on their behalf, Val has championed the needs of the chamber's members and ensured continuous support.

"Our mission, as a group, is of course to assist local businesses: keep them up to date with Employment Law and Health and Safety, risk assessments in the workplace, and day to day problems affecting them in business," Val explains.

Maintaining close communication with the local council has enabled Val to keep a finger firmly on the pulse for any updates in the area which could affect businesses over the years, whether that may be a road closure, or one car parking space which impacts several businesses.

"I receive all upcoming plans, traffic plans, parking plans, all of the time," says Val. "If there are any businesses which I know are going to be affected by plans, I will get in touch with them to explain what's happening and ask for their views.

"I can then form a consensus of opinion, and make our comments."

In total, four chambers form the group, all of which autonomously make their own decisions about the running of their respective business and membership, but join together as a group to create the West Yorkshire Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

31 years ago, when Val first joined the group as Local Secretary, they were known as the National Chamber of Trade West Yorkshire Council. In 1995, after NCT joined with the British Chambers of Commerce, the group became an integral part of the retail division of BCC.

Being a Chamber member has always presented many benefits to businesses, which in the late 1990's included a business publication providing information and updates, among other things.

"We primarily assist the retail and service industries, but the publication provided by BCC at that time was more for manufacturers and import/export," recalls Val. "We started looking for someone who could cater to the industries we were supporting."



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In 2003, the West Yorkshire Chamber of Trade and Commerce partnered with Croner.

“Over the years, if competitors have approached us, I explain to them what we receive from Croner for the price we pay, and they say, “Oh, we can’t do it for that.” I say, “Well, that’s why I’m not with you!”” Val laughs.

Through their partnership with Croner, the Chamber’s members have been able to utilise a range of services, on top of existing member benefits like breakdown cover, travel and medical insurance.

“We are here to provide general support and backup support to local businesses, some of them are very, very ably qualified, but some of the paperwork and the change in legislation can be challenging for them. That’s where we can provide the link to Croner’s support. There’s a lot of useful paperwork from Croner - leaflets, newsletters, articles – which our members use, involving Employment Law and Health and Safety updates, and how they can help the day to day running of their businesses.

“Then, of course, our members have access to the HR and Health and Safety advice lines. Our member businesses get a group scheme number, so they can all ring and I get a call list every quarter of how many people have used it, which I find really useful.

“We also receive marketing to help promote the advice line which I forward to members and the four Chambers within our group, so they can circulate too.

“I get very positive feedback from the members, but some don’t recognise how deeply we can get involved with the support. The group, and me particularly at Bradford are very, very appreciative of the information and services from Croner, and our member businesses find it very, very, useful.”

“Feedback on our members’ experiences when using the Croner Business Support Helpline indicates that those dealing with their enquiry were concise, efficient, courteous and most importantly informative – no matter what problem they were experiencing or what information they needed. The majority of our business profiles are very small, many of which are independent, and as such it is crucial that they are able to obtain the support, encouragement and reassurance that the Croner Business Support Helpline guarantees them.”

To learn more about the West Yorkshire Chamber of Trade and Commerce or becoming a member, please contact **0127 463 5637**.

To find out more about Croner’s partnerships and association offering, please contact **0808 145 3386**.