

ACCA UK found its attendance at the 2006 FD Forum provided many valuable networking opportunities with its members, as Tony Carlisle explains.

FD Forum provides golden networking opportunities

■ From 1–4 November over 60 ACCA members were joined by three members of ACCA UK staff at the 9th annual Finance Directors' Forum on board P&O's flagship cruise liner, *Oriana*.

This was the second year running that ACCA UK has had a presence at the forum, which offers finance directors and their equivalent a combination of conference sessions, think-tanks and workshops to keep them up to date with the latest thinking in their industries, as well as a schedule of carefully selected meetings with potential suppliers.

supplier status

This year ACCA UK had supplier status which meant that we were able to select forum attendees we wanted to talk to. Meetings took place throughout the three days of the Forum, including over breakfast, lunch and dinner. ACCA's three representatives were Barry Payne, Head of Business Development; Maureen Chambers, Senior Business Relationship Manager; and Tony Carlisle, Members' Networks Manager, all of whom were kept very busy with these and with the unscheduled meetings at our stand in one of the lounges on board.

Of the 230 FDs on board, over 60 were ACCA or FCCA and this was an excellent opportunity to meet with some of our members in very senior positions and learn about their roles and organisations. We were also able to engage with non-members and promote the benefits of ACCA membership, training and affiliation.

In fact we managed to engage formally with at least 40 of our own senior members (and informally there can have been very few we did not meet). We also established positive leads to 14 organisations for professional training, qualifications and employer approval. In particular we gained a number of new contacts in the NHS.

Another benefit of our attendance was the opportunity to advise members entering phase three of ACCA *Realise*, reinforcing the 'relevance' message and explaining how to keep evidence.

other bodies

The other professional bodies represented at the Forum were ICAEW, CIMA and CIPFA. It was clear that members of all four bodies were comparing the information, services and facilities offered. Without doubt ACCA fared very well in this comparison; a number of members praised the quality of ACCA staff coming through in their organisations, the structure of the CPD scheme and the level of opportunities for participation available.

Despite rivalries, the other bodies were happy to co-sponsor the farewell drinks party with ACCA; a very enjoyable and animated gathering of some of the UK's top finance professionals. ACCA also held an exclusive pre-dinner reception for its members, which was very well attended and provided an additional opportunity for us to get to know members in a more relaxed setting.

opportunity

The FD Forum proved to be a fantastic opportunity to listen to and understand the needs, demands and challenges of the FD's role. Our engagement with ACCA members and other delegates on board the *Oriana* will help us to augment our support for individuals in senior positions and their organisations.

ACCA very much looks forward to developing these relationships and to attending the Forum again in 2007. ■

Tony Carlisle – Members' Networks Manager, ACCA UK