



Al Clarke

Marketing & Communications Consultant
Chairman of the Ennis & Co Advisory Group

CONTACT DETAILS

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WEBSITE

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SKILLS

- Digital Marketing
- Marketing Communications
- Automotive
- Marketing Strategy
- PR

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- UK Automotive Council; Diversity and Inclusion Working Group Member
- London Press Club Ball, Committee Member
- Motor Industry Public Affairs Association MIPAA, Honorary Life President

LANGUAGES

- English
- French
- Italian

EDUCATION

- Hatfield Polytechnic: Electrical and Electronic Engineering

CAREER OVERVIEW

- 10 years as a journalist (BBC, commercial radio)
- Head of Communications at SMMT
- Commercial and Brand Director, Ferrari
- Partner at Fair Play Consulting
- Interim advisor: APC, Triumph, LEVC
- Al is a consultant and associate at Ennis & Co.
- Al oversees Marketing and Communications at AllowAIR.

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Al Clarke has been Chairman of the Ennis & Co Advisory Group and an Ennis & Co Associate, since 2015. He continues to bring invaluable knowledge to the company; particularly when it comes to integrating strategies, solutions and enhancing communication tactics.

With considerable levels of expertise in the world of marketing, media and beyond, Al has worked within the fields of journalism, PR, and communications for over three decades – predominantly within the automotive sector.

After starting his career as a journalist and presenter with the BBC and commercial radio, Al moved on to become Head of Communications for the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), before taking on various brand director roles for Ferrari spanning more than five years.

Al then took his extensive knowledge and skillset into several consultancy roles, notably for The Advanced Propulsion Centre UK, The London Electric Vehicle Company, Vodafone Automotive, Triumph Motorcycles and Meridian Mobility UK (now Zenzic).

With a passion for reducing vehicle emissions and helping to reduce the effects of climate change, Al now works in marketing and communications for AllowAIR, as well as supporting the Ennis & Co team and operating as a consultant in his own right.

Looking back on the turbulent year of 2020, we wanted to gauge Al’s thoughts on how consultancy has changed –and how value can be added now, more than ever...

On “making something work” ...

“The fundamental reason for working with a consultant is to make something work, to fix a problem or deliver a specific result.”, says Al. “When companies pay for consultancy services, they are adding cost on top of existing headcount and the advisor must grasp what is needed (and quickly) in order to add value from the outset. This can range from helping start-ups accelerate their journey from idea to commercial revenue or providing insight to enhance the delivery of a solid business plan. There are gaps in every organisation and when leaders are considering if consultancy is the right approach, they must balance the threat posed by knowingly ignoring the gaps, with the cost of addressing them through external support. The added value from

a consultant is the ability to bring solutions from their own portfolio, adapting and integrating them into the organisation, transferring knowledge and experience to deliver the result quickly.”

“Last year we saw unprecedented changes in the ways that businesses have been forced to operate, transitioning from traditional ‘office-centric’ culture into a world where remote-working may become business-as-usual. Managing change as an external advisor is more challenging as a result, but this is where effective consultants stand out. You have a commitment to deliver a result, not simply to work a certain number of days, and the smart leaders understand how to get the best out of consultants in this sense – and they need to squeeze this!”

On digital obstacles...

“2020 turned out to be one of the busiest years to date in my career, working across a number of projects and organisations” says Al. “Although working from home has been a staple for me for some time, video conferencing in business has now transformed the ability to get hold of people a great deal quicker and more easily than before. Less time travelling to meetings or sitting in conference rooms meant that the ability to deliver marketing, communication, and business development activities increased – at least initially. “However, the ease of access also brought obstacles. We quickly transitioned into video conference overload, and instead of people being stuck in airports and traffic jams, they were stuck on Zoom calls and webinars. People are double and triple booked in back-to-back digital meetings, twin-screening and trying to catch up with email and instant messaging. The inefficiency has shifted from the cost of travelling to the price of digital

overload.

“I strongly believe we can utilise our time in a more constructive way. There really is no need for a daily diary jammed full of virtual meetings. This should be interspersed with one-to-one conversations and genuine breaks to step back from the screen and evaluate your day. I feel a great deal of genuine, productive conversations have occurred in my experience this year from just picking up the phone, calling a contact and simply saying “so, how are you?” and the conversation flows from there. It is not all about transactional dialogues. It is about being human.”

On being busy...

“Business life is fast paced – it isn’t a new thing. It is the way that people are busy right now which is new” explains Al. “Leaders are coping with levels of ‘busy’ created by the unique set of challenges arising from the pandemic. Furloughed employees, restructures and redundancies, for example, have led to increased workload for management and their employees alike, which disrupts the work/life balance in a great deal of scenarios. People have been less likely to take holiday due to the inability to travel and organisation structures have been thrown in the air. Many people are feeling the strain, yet this is another core example of where a little “outside” perspective can be brought in and can ultimately lead to positive change.”

On reflecting and refocusing...

“I really believe there is value in hitting ‘pause’ and taking some time to reflect and refocus, even in the middle of this crisis. By gathering relevant data to understand the problems leaders can avoid potential employee burnout and share the workload across the team more effectively. Consultants can help to do this objectively and ease the pressure by providing support at an operational level, coupled with insight and experience to help move the business move forward enables. This is where consultants can take away a problem – and deliver a solution.”

Concluding thoughts...

“Consultancy can play a significant role in an organisation, providing the purpose is clear and the leadership team is able to make best use of the resource available”, says Al. “Consultants with experience can truly add value, bringing perspective and insight to help the leadership team achieve results. You are a conduit to deliver genuine positive and productive change. It all starts with a conversation, an understanding of the needs and a clear plan of action.” Al Clarke provides the extra ‘head-space’ for leaders to develop strategic thinking whilst they are busy managing successful businesses.

Al brings marketing, sales and business development experience working for blue-chip brands both as an executive and as a consultant.

The strategies he proposes are typically implemented by him, or under his direction, ensuring that the idea becomes reality and drives commercial results.

