

VISION: *To be the provider of choice for “out-of-court” dispute resolution services based on the highest standards of integrity, trust and service excellence*

Chairman’s Report:

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.” Warren Buffett

Buffet’s reputation for practical wisdom is legendary. Simply put, your actions plus what others say about you equals your reputation. This simple formula is the most powerful leverage for a business and, while an intangible concept, having a good and solid reputation is critical to driving consumer preference; support for organisations in crisis or controversy; or protecting the future value or reputation of an organisation. Efficient dispute resolution offers practical and effective solutions in these situations.

This year the Dispute Resolution Centre (DRC) celebrated its 20th anniversary. Buffet’s words seem both timely and relevant. The DRC has carefully built and reinforced its reputation as a leader in the field of dispute resolution. By choosing the right people, for the right job, at the right time, the Centre has created within it a kindred spirit; one that is commonly driven towards creating a unique and exceptional customer experience. Indeed, the DRC’s reputation has been carefully crafted, nurtured and replicated through integrity, trust and service excellence.

The hallmark of a reputable organisation is its ethics; how it behaves and treats with its employees and customers. The DRC has had a long standing board of directors, some of whom have served well over 10 years, some from its inception. There is a similar trend with the management and staff. There have been no dismissals, no resignations, but rather a sustained and steady increase of talented resources within the organisation. This trend holds true for the cadre of mediators, arbitrators, trainers and coaches who have served the Centre’s clients with trust and integrity. We have had a steady influx of professionals from a range of backgrounds whose reputation marry and carry the Centre’s proud name.

Though relatively young, the Centre is evolving into a financially strong organization which has a record of profitability and growth prospects. The DRC is well managed by a team with a clear vision. There is an understanding that our historical grounding and our present efforts will reinforce and protect the company’s future reputation. The Centre’s reputation is well ingrained locally and, since its inception, we have trained over 10,000 persons in dispute resolution and have mediated hundreds of matters. In 2015, the Centre facilitated 58 such events which equates to more than one event per week for the entire year. We facilitated 35 workshops over 91 days and trained over 962 persons. We also facilitated 23 mediations, arbitrations and adjudications over 53 days. I am also pleased to report that we have closed the year with receivables at 7%.

The DRC is customer focused; it cares about and is strongly committed to service. One client vividly described the DRC as a towering lighthouse in an angry sea of substandard service. It is through our reputation of service excellence, that we have successfully administered the only two court annexed mediation programmes in Trinidad and Tobago with a 95% customer satisfaction rate.

The Centre's reputation is founded on uncompromising quality standards and controls. We have in place a credible screening and evaluation process for admittance to the DRC's roster. Our training and development of mediators and arbitrators is recognised internationally and we have quality systems that are in place to ensure consistent and reliable service.

In spite of our natural leanings toward corporate/commercial work, the DRC's reputation for social responsibility is well documented. We support solid causes and organisations like the Citizen Security Programme (CSP) by training and developing community residents in conflict resolution and mediation so they can work towards violence reduction and peace promotion. By the end of 2016, the DRC would have trained over 100 residents from CSP partner communities.

Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, famously said *"If you think you can go it alone in today's global economy, you are highly mistaken."* The Centre realises that with modest resources, alliances are the quickest and most effective way to grow a company, particularly in times of change. It unites organisations to achieve common interests, such as reaching new markets or accessing supplementary skills and services, while remaining independent.

The DRC and Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago (LATT) have partnered with a common objective of promoting out-of-court dispute resolution alternatives for the better administration of justice. The Law Association's well appointed three-story building at a prime location in Port of Spain is outfitted with rooms of varying sizes to accommodate mediations, arbitrations and adjudications. Our combined resources of reputation, talent, knowledge, expertise, market access and fixed assets make a relational model attractive. We are pleased to report that the DRC has administered several local, regional and international mediations, arbitrations and adjudications at these headquarters. The Centre has the capacity to administer arbitrations from one or two days to several months and have recently completed an ICC matter at the LATT. The parties, attorneys and arbitrators have commented that the facilities are first-rate and professional.

For many clients, what distinguishes the DRC's reputation in an often times cold corporate world is its softer side, its emotional appeal. It is an organisation where people are treated with respect and care. It is a comfortable, welcoming and easy environment. This becomes particularly valuable to clients when disputes might be at their peak or when emotions are running high. The DRC's staff and neutrals are trained in manoeuvring and diffusing disruptive situations. A recent study of similar international ADR agencies confirmed that the Centre's practical and innovative approach to business is suitable to the local market and reinforces our reputation of doing things right. In 2014, the DRC received from the Mediation Board of Trinidad & Tobago, the award for the Longest Standing Private Mediation Agency. Like Buffet said, it takes 20 years to build a reputation, and we are pleased that our reputation precedes us.

I sincerely thank the Board of Directors of the DRC, President of the Chamber, our Executive Director as well as our cadre of mediators, arbitrators, trainers, coaches and staff for their commitment to creating a well-oiled and Reputable Dispute Resolution Centre!