The National Association of Jewellers

NAJ Chair Address | 2019 AGM
Harriet Kelsall | Harriet Kelsall Bespoke Jewellery

Introduction

Thank you again for coming here today. The NAJ is your association, and today's AGM is your opportunity to ensure that those of us who volunteer to steer the National Committee are striving forward in the right direction, that we are going about our activities well, that we are meeting the needs of members and that we are protecting the sustainability and long term future of our association.

We have invested this year in various ways in order to help get our industry fit for the future.

Today I will be talking about three things.

First, I'll talk about the overall picture. This is the vision that we want to achieve for each and every NAJ member and supporter.

Then I'll talk about challenges that we have overcome, challenges we're currently facing, and challenges that we know are coming - and are preparing for.

I'll finish by going through some of the progress we've made to date which includes some milestone achievements that are launching today, and I'll go over what's arriving in the coming months.

The Big Picture – Strategy (What?)

So then, Jewellery; what does it do, and what do we do as Jewellers? We've been thinking about this, and evidently, we are **storytellers**.

The luxury products we source, manufacture, create and serve, form important and meaningful symbols in the lives of consumers. Our own stories about the design, how each piece is carefully made, the people who extract the precious materials we work with from the earth and even the stories of how they form in the ground, all contribute to helping the consumer understand, recognise and celebrate their lives, loves and occasions. Together as the jewellery industry, when we collaborate and blend our own stories, we create that all-abiding sense of creativity, and belonging to the jewellery community.

While we continue to be more adventurous in how jewellery is manufactured, processed and sold, the world around us is changing. Buying behaviours, competing trends and changes in society can and are impacting on our industry. It has never been more important for us all to collaborate and come together as one to drive consumers buy more jewellery, more often. Whatever type of jewellery business we focus on, we have to make sure we're ready to serve the needs of our customers.

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Strategy (How?)

Somebody said to me recently that for them, The NAJ represents the centre of the jewellery solar system. So we need to activate our gravitational pull for jewellers and their relevant communities and networks, and make the NAJ that all-important reference point to be able to plot a trajectory, or alternatively navigate the meteor clouds coming your way – It is possibly time I stepped away from this metaphor now! Either way, the NAJ's role is clear – we have to support our members to ensure they are 'fit for the future'.

So, we developed this five-point strategy to make and keep our members **Fit for the Future**:

Our Strategic Plan

1. Source, monitor & share consumer & **market insights** that help members make better decisions

2. Create '**power networks'** harnessing expertise from inside and outside the membership.

3. Be a more **active voice** for the industry

4. Create a comprehensive **digital platform**/portal giving members quick and easy access to high value content and services.

5. Create a '**must-have package'** of compelling reasons to join

To do this, we must champion professionalism, we must influence, and we must continually engage members and their teams. We must bring our different types of members together for their mutual benefit, for example our designer makers and manufacturers want to meet our retailers, and our retailers want to find exciting new stock – it's a match made in heaven. We must also ensure the tools for the job are in place. This isn't about standing still and waiting, this is about creating power networks to harness and celebrate expertise so that we can all reach higher. It is about pushing as a collective to better understand our market to help make better decisions, and more than ever it is about being one single voice for the industry, and an active voice too.

We need to collaborate where needed and ensure that we talk for the industry in one single voice.

Governance

We benefit from strong foundations when it comes to voices and creating power networks as part of our strategy. The success of our existing Committees and Steering Groups for the Institute or Registered valuers, Better Business and Education have shown us the way. We also have strong collaborative relationships with sister organisations such as The Goldsmiths Company, Gem-A and the British Horological Institute and many others.

Today our governance structure has evolved. I'm happy to announce that we have refreshed and re-constituted our existing steering groups and we have introduced two new steering groups. One of these new groups will be focused on networking and events, and

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another on ‘consumer focus’. More details on the groups and their responsibilities are presented in copies of The Jeweller on your seats. The Chair of each steering group also takes a seat on the National Committee to make sure that the needs of each group find a strong voice at this top level of the NAJ.

This has meant that some people have stepped away from our committee structure, and I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for their support over the years to get the organisation to this point. I particularly want to thank Jo Henderson who has been very helpful on the National Committee, leading the development of our Better Business Framework. And I’d also really like to acknowledge Vanessa Burkitt’s contribution – she has been on the National Committee for many years, helping to guide us to where we are today – thank you Vanessa. They have both given significant amounts of time for the association, and will continue to be strong supporters of the NAJ in different capacities.

Even though we are happy with our new steering group structure, which contains many brilliant volunteers and has a great gender balance, we have a way to go yet. We have noticed that we aren’t fully balanced on our National Committee that sits above these groups and so we are putting in place a programme to resolve that. This builds on our work to identify future leaders. We intend to work harder to counteract any gender or racial imbalance in our governance structure. We are actively exploring how other trade associations overcome this and it’s a major topic for discussion at our next meeting on 18 June.

Whatever your background, if you want to help drive positive change for our industry, then being part of the NAJ’s steering groups and committees alongside other passionate jewellers is where you need to be. And being at our side is where we want you to be.

Our trade is jam packed full of creativity, brilliance and inspiration – an industry of which I'm so proud to be a part. When this is combined with commercial savviness, this industry is a great place to be, both in business, as a professional and as a volunteer.

Operations

It’s fair to say that we are in an exciting state of evolution at the moment, not just in governance but also with our operations. We are striving to deliver those strategic objectives I’ve just presented, but we are also working to achieve significant improvements in the budget.

Our new merged brand is being embedded, and existing internal structures and processes continue to be challenged and refined.

Over the last 12 months we’ve said goodbye to some members of the staff team –Mandy, Malcolm, Amanda, Ian, Stacey, Holly and Maddy, and welcomed new members to the staff team – Ben, Greta, Ruth, Chloe and Katie, and soon Garry Lane.

So, with all of these changes, we worked hard this year re-structuring our NAJ staff team and whilst we have been sad to say goodbye to some great friends and team members, we have also been pleased to welcome new faces with new energy and enthusiasm. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the staff team, both the former, the new and

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existing for all your efforts in moving the Association forward. And of course, thanks to Simon Forrester too.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the any volunteers who sit on our steering groups and National Committee for all that they bring. And I'd also like to thank the British Allied Trade Federation for all of their support in this year of change and investment.

We've invested a lot of time and some of our reserves to restructure the NAJ to be fit for the future – without this strong foundation we won't be able to deliver our promise to you. And now I'd like to explain some of the new things that have resulted from these changes.

Launching day – member benefits.

Earlier in the year we identified today as the launch day for our latest initiatives and products, some of which I'm delighted to share with you. Membership of the NAJ is all about being part of something but also getting good value for your membership fee. If you ever want to clarify just what you are eligible for, please visit the website or speak to the membership team directly. All these benefits are here waiting for you to use, so please make every effort to get the most out of them.

Better Business – new benefit

As a Trade Association we have a responsibility to support Jewellers to be the best jewellery professionals they can be - and give them what they need to do better businesses.

Better business started off as a simple checklist to show our members what they must do to stay the right side of the law – so for example giving them sample employment contracts or health and safety information for their workshops. We called this 'doing right'.

However, it's not better business if you're not turning a profit. So we wrote lots of guidance on what the steering group thought represented the key things you need to do in order to make your business more financially successful. Examples might be how to promote your business, advice and guidance on effective packaging and whether it makes financial sense to rent or buy your equipment. We called this 'doing well'

The final element of this is doing good. This means, that in addition to running a business that is legally sound and turning a profit, you're also doing good things to support the community, and training your team as well as thinking about their wellbeing, maybe you're enabling flexible working for your employees and sourcing your precious materials responsibly. The basis of this is creating a business that is sustainable, both in terms of its longevity and its impact. We call this 'doing good'.

There are more details in the latest edition of The Jeweller, but in summary this online reference guide and signpost is fully published and is now ready to support members to understand what better business looks like. I'd encourage all members to take the Better Business Health Check which identifies what is being done currently, and highlights where potential developments for your business may be found. It doesn't take long, and the material that has taken our volunteer team over two years to put together is really helpful.

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Print Cloud – improved benefit

For the last few years we've offered members the chance to access packs for use in their own businesses - for example useful marketing leaflets about coloured gemstones to use in retail environments. We've seen a rise in members asking for more of these since the start of 2019, and a common request to personalise them with your own brand.

The good news is that with the launch of your NAJ Print Shop – you can now order your member support packs online, which gets them to your door much more quickly. On some of the lines, you can introduce your logo and contact details to overlay for no additional cost.

For now, we've launched with some basic business stationery and a creative voucher for you to personalise, but over time we'll be giving you more by redesigning the traditional member support packs and member stickers, and introducing a raft of new point of sale and promotional materials. Again, information is in the latest issue of the Jeweller and on our website.

Education – improved benefit

Our new Education platform is also now live. The Education team led by Marie Garnett has worked with HiUp to develop a much-improved online platform for the JET pathway.

Our aim was to make the whole learning experience even more enjoyable and engaging, whilst achieving flexibility to fit around the responsibilities and time commitments a typical jewellery team member might have. We also want to make sure that the individual doing their JET course will want to continue their journey with jewellery education and training with the NAJ. We're extremely proud of the great reputation that JET has, and now we're able to move forward with the foundations of the programme firmly in place.

Something we're currently experimenting with is breaking the modules down a little further in order to attract entry level students, and students from abroad. This also helps us to extend out voice and influence internationally. So watch this space.

In addition to embedding the new online platform, the team is making good progress with the Retail Jewellery apprenticeship. We hope to share more about this with you at IJL in September. Do please speak with our NAJ education team about any and all of this, either today, or book in with Marie for a bit more time on another day.

Foundation Category – new benefit

We launched a membership category for start-up companies, and secured funding from charity to reduce the fee burden on small fledgling businesses. As someone who knows a bit about creative start-ups, I only wish this had been around when I started out over twenty years ago.

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Made in Britain – new benefit

We began to measure interest in this a year and a half ago, but progress on Made in Britain slowed for several reasons. One of those reasons related to the fact we were doing something that hadn't been considered before with the Made in Britain brand – setting the NAJ up as a sub-licensee, which brought with it a whole set of unprecedented legal hurdles to jump through.

After re-establishing links this year, and looking at the relationship from a new angle, we've been able to overcome some of the previous barriers. This means that the NAJ's pin that I am wearing today can be marked with the recognised Made in Britain mark. In order to get this off the ground, we had to engage support from the four assay offices whom I must thank because without their backing we wouldn't be where we are now. We are working towards a full launch at IJL, so if you are making jewellery in the UK, or want to promote British brands in your shops, register your interest on the NAJ website.

Unveiling of new Chair's Pin

Historically most association chairs wear a thick mayoral-style chain of office, and the NAJ is no different. But it isn't really OK any more that our main chain of office says 'CHAIRMAN' on it and is designed to be worn on a men's suit. One size definitely does not fit all.

Last year we supported a design competition at the Goldsmiths Craft and Design Awards, and our winner was Bethan Cubbin from Birmingham School of Jewellery, whose design I am proud to be wearing today. This gender-neutral pin works for anyone, and the design brief was about building on the traditional elements of the Association but also looking to the future. I am very pleased that it has been made in the most traceable and ethically sourced materials that we could find.

I particularly like how Bethan has incorporated contrasting metals, gold and silver, to represent the NAG/BJA merger using the unicorn horn from the NAJ logo which was also present on the NAG and the BJA's logo too. The Pin was made by Charles Green and Weston Beamor, from materials donated by CooksonGold (Fairtrade gold), Nineteen48 and GF Williams (gemstones), Curteis (Fairtrade gold chain) and Hatton & Spencer (sustainably produced box). So well done to Beth and thank you to all involved. Again, all the details are in the latest issue of The Jeweller. We now have a pin which is fit for the future of balanced diversity.

In summary, I hope you can see we've been working really hard to rethink the NAJ from the ground up, and investing for the future of our industry. The things we are launching today are just the first tranche of benefits in our long-term strategy. But we can only deliver this with your continued support and active involvement.

So please,

- Show your customers how they benefit from your NAJ membership
- Get involved in NAJ activities
- Ensure all your staff are trained and working to the correct standard

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- And together we will build and association and an industry that's truly fit for the future.

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