

PubAffairs Profile

Name	Ben Wallis
Job Title	TransAtlantic Consumer Dialogue Coordinator
What academic /professional qualifications do you have?	Bsc Econ in European Union Studies,
How did you get into Public Affairs?	Following a degree and long-term interest in politics I applied to be a trainee in the European Commission. I loved Brussels and was stimulated by the political environment, so I spent a few months plugging away until I found a job with an MEP. When she and I both lost our jobs at the 1999 Euro Elections the most obvious career development was public affairs. I found that experience of working for a politician, or in a civil service, was very attractive to employers in public affairs as it suggests you'll understand how the institutions work, know how to influence, and bring along some contacts to help you in your work. After a year with the American Chamber of Commerce I applied for my current job, where I coordinate the lobbying of 65 European and American consumer organisations direct to the US Government and European Commission.
What others careers did you consider?	Leaving university I had very little idea of what I wanted to do. I don't think I had the self-confidence to imagine for myself a career in politics / public affairs, but a friend persuaded me to apply for the EC traineeship and it all followed from there.
How did you get your current job?	I saw the advert in the European Voice and applied. I think the ad may also have been in the Guardian. I had one interview and was chosen. It's a very particular job, and my knowledge of the EU, and some of the issues TACD works on, combined with some exposure to US lobbying through the American Chamber of Commerce helped me stand out.
What characteristics do you need to work in Public Affairs?	A real interest in politics and the machinery of government. This is what gives me an underlying interest even when the issue I'm focused on has no appeal to me. It also helps me think strategically about how best to further the interests of the people I represent. You need to be assertive, a skill which I've ended up developing, and need to be able to make good contacts that seem more like friends. This is how it's worked for me anyway.
What skills are most important in your job?	Diplomatic nature, patience (I have to get consensus from a big group of consumer organisations), understanding of political processes, and a political nose / sensitivity.
What does your current role entail on a day to day basis?	<p>As TACD Coordinator I coordinate all matters related to TACD, a coalition of 65 EU and US consumer organisations which acts as a consultative body to the European Commission and US government on transatlantic trade policy (www.tacd.org)</p> <p>I apply for, manage and account for significant annual European Commission funding. I also oversee the website and the running of the electronic listserves, develop and implement media strategies, draft press releases, and act as the contact point for journalists.</p> <p>As well as managing an administrative assistant, other tasks include organising meetings between consumer representatives and government officials, liaising</p>

	with contacts in the EU and US Government and moving forward TACD s work through contact with its leadership and general membership.
Which campaign that you have worked on are you most proud of?	TACD s success depends on the strength of relations that I develop with government officials and key members, and on the influence I can wield. For example, the dates for an EC-hosted OECD workshop on Spam were moved to coincide with TACD s 7th Annual Meeting in Brussels. This resulted from my representations to the European Commission and OECD, and enabled TACD to present the results of an online survey on Spam directly to representatives of OECD governments.
How do you go about making contacts?	A phone call, or an email followed by a phone call. My approach and tone is friendly and not overbearing. Whenever possible, I try to highlight how our contact can also benefit the other person. Mostly, however, I have not consciously made contacts, they have just been picked up through working with people on various little issues or jobs over the years. I find that my openness and willingness to help people when I can has paid off in providing me with people who can help me in my time of need.
How has networking at PubAffairs helped you?	Returning to the UK from Brussels I had no detailed knowledge of the UK political system which I have followed as an avid spectator since my teens. PubAffairs has provided a relaxed and friendly setting for me to find out about Westminster and Whitehall.
What advice would you give to anyone looking to break into Public Affairs?	Work for an interest that you are comfortable representing.