

Dancing the real estate tango for over a decade

PropertyEU and Bellier Financial Communication's growth and success have followed parallel paths through the twists and turns of the real estate markets for a decade. We were both established in Amsterdam in 2005/2006, near the peak of the last cycle, and shared the same premise – that the rise in cross-border investments would create a growing appetite for news and analysis of markets further away from home and storytellers would be needed to chronicle the narratives of the winners and losers in this new globalised world. Bellier helps our clients extract their stories, while PropertyEU is a leading arbiter of which competing news makes it to the headlines. It's no surprise either that we both were originally established in Amsterdam. PropertyEU came from its domestic PropertyNL magazine roots and Bellier was established as a pan-European financial PR agency, by me and my Dutch partner, venture capital and legal specialist and professional singer, Edwin Nabbe. Editor-in-Chief Judi Seebus is an Aussie of Dutch extraction, who previously worked on the Netherlands' Financial Daily. I'm a Brit who was a Reuters journalist for 16 years, initiating the news agency's international real estate coverage and also acting as Chief Correspondent for European fund manage-

ment. I was captivated by Amsterdam during a posting to the Reuters bureau in the Dutch capital in the early 1990s.

MAXIMISING MARKETING SPEND

One of the first things I noticed in moving from journalism to the 'Dark Side' in public relations was the way many real estate managers and companies struggle to tell their stories. There's often an internal consensus that if the firm's a 'great deal shop' then its track record will speak for itself. The trouble is that if you communicate in a pro-forma way then pretty soon the media and the market will take you at your word and view you through the same prism. The company's winning narrative becomes lost in the mundane, particularly when the market is being bombarded like never before by thousands of competing messages online. That's a pity as there is no better way to maximize a firm's sales and marketing spend in a cost effective way, underpin your share price, or reach those hard to contact investors, than by cultivating open and trusting two-way relationships with the press. The reach of quality publications such as PropertyEU is infinitely greater than the number of roadshows a company can do and has the great advantage of being an independent view, compared with you selling

your own case. The vast majority of journalists are not looking to misrepresent what companies say, or trick you into damaging revelations, they're just trying to get the most interesting news story in an accurate way. When things do go wrong, that investment in trust will usually give you more room for manoeuvre than any number of threats and legal writs. It might also mean the difference between the company's survival or demise. Another thing I've realised over the last 10 years outside the media is that the journalist's instinct for news and story telling are very valuable skills. Something I'd taken for granted is actually in short supply in the market. Unfortunately that challenge also gets greater when non-native speakers have to communicate in the international business language of English. It's always worth incurring that little more added expense or time to check text or translations with a fluent source. I remember one European real estate developer that memorably described itself as an 'erection specialist', but luckily we caught that one before the story was published.

**Steve Hays, Managing Director
Bellier Financial Communication**

Both PropertyEU and Bellier Financial Communication have Dutch roots. While PropertyEU came from its domestic PropertyNL magazine, Bellier was established in Amsterdam as a pan-European financial PR agency, by Steve Hays (far right) and his Dutch partner, venture capital and legal specialist Edwin Nabbe (centre). They have since been joined by Simon Packard (second from right); Michiel Rohlof (left); Nathalie Felix (centre) and Willem van Hasselt (not in picture).



BELLIER IS BORN 2005-06
Brit Steve Hays and his Dutch partner Edwin Nabbe set up Bellier Financial Communication in Amsterdam

