

saw a gap in the market for a networking group for young property people, and YEP now has 1,500 members across the UK, aged from 18 to 35, who come from all areas of the property sector. The new chairperson, who took over the reins last week, is Sophie Eastwood, founder director of PR firm Holistic.

Describing YEP's philosophy, Eastwood says: "It is an opportunity to network with your immediate peers. We have around 10 events a year – which can be breakfast or daytime seminars that give young people access to high-powered speakers, or more relaxed, casual events."

Eastwood says the aim for members is career progression, winning business and developing contacts. She doesn't believe

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that the word "entrepreneur" is outdated in this more frugal, post-recession world.

"We do have the word 'entrepreneur' in our title but our members are people who want to do things off their own back," she says. "We're here for people who have a much longer vision than just seeing how many deals they can close."

The recession has been a double-edged sword for the group. On the one hand, as YEP is a not-for-profit organisation and events are usually free, it made it harder to get sponsorship for events and seminars, says Eastwood's predecessor, Groveworld land manager Charlie Rosier. "As a result," she says, "we started holding meetings in people's offices instead of using venues."



Current YEP chairwoman Sophie Eastwood (l) with predecessor Charlie Rosier

Rosier adds that the group's seminars also changed to be more recession-aware. She explains: "We have done seminars on topics such as insolvency, how to negotiate and how to promote your CV."

But the recession has also highlighted the need for people to work harder at making contacts. "It's important to note that our membership has doubled in the past two years, on the back of the recession," says Eastwood. "We have been pushing YEP harder and have seen a lot of students apply for membership. And there are more companies trying to find business in other ways, as a lot of business development managers tend to be younger."

During her tenure in the chair, a position which rotates every year, Eastwood says that she wants to enlarge YEP's membership. "I also want to try to capture the views of young people," she says. "I want to start surveys looking at things like where we have gaps in membership, and who you would like to have seen as prime minister. The surveys could also look at training, and I would like to see those things regularly."

YEP has now set its sights set on becoming an international organisation. A branch was established last year in the UAE by a formerly London-based member and now has 300 members, and Rosier is to start a Hong Kong arm when she moves there to take up a new job next month.

Eastwood also is keen for YEP to work with like-minded organisations. She says: "We want to collaborate with other groups, such as Movers & Shakers, which is more established. We have already done a breakfast with CoreNet, which gave our members access to theirs."

Embellished on The Yacht is the motto of the boat's former owner, the Port of London Authority. It reads: "Floreat Imperii Portus" – or "Let the imperial port flourish". The YEP members on board may be mentally substituting "property people" for "imperial port".

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## CASE STUDIES



**The established member**  
**Nik Hilton, aged 30 – architect, Design 4D**  
Since joining YEP five years ago, Hilton has gone from working in a large company – Arup Associates – and being a freelance to establishing his own company,

Design 4D, in 2008. He says that he joined YEP "because it was an aspirational-sounding organisation".

Hilton says he has seen the group grow in his time as a member. He says: "The younger generation have to meet more people [if they want to get on] and YEP has become more valuable in helping them to do that."

Hilton says that he has made good friends through the organisation but, importantly, he has also made contacts which have helped

his career. "I have had access to important and influential people like Peter Freeman, founder of Argent," he says. "I had lunch with him and he gave me some good advice."

Hilton adds: "I have also met with directors of Bovis, and it's good for someone like me who is running a practice to be able to call them up and say that I have already met them at the YEP seminars. If you are young and entrepreneurial and have aspirations, then YEP is a good place to start."



**The new member**  
**Scott Jeffery, aged 30 – The Bluefin Group**  
A business development executive for real estate, Jeffery has been with Bluefin – an independent financial advice and specialist insurance broker – for the past two years. He

says that joining YEP eight months ago was important in helping him to raise his own profile in the market. "People knew my predecessor and I thought it was important to get my name out there," he explains.

Jeffery says that he has already made good contacts from being in the organisation. "Being in YEP has had a snowball effect for me," he says. "I find the more relaxed events helpful. At the seminars, you get to hear good advice, but it's not as easy to meet people."

Having heard about YEP through word of mouth, Jeffery also searched the internet for its networking events, to learn which suited his ambition of rising to sales director within 10 years. He adds: "The people I talk to at YEP are my age – they have their own aspirations. They don't have key decision-making roles at the moment but, when they do, I will have already made contact with them. I believe that working in property is largely based on relationships."