

DEVELOPING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS LEADERS



**Insights from 24 years of the
Prince's Seeing is Believing visits**

**A Business in the
Community programme**

Research undertaken thanks to
the support of Friends Life.

FriendsLife



Authors

Lee Waller

Centre for Research in Executive Development,
Ashridge Business School

Matt Gitsham

Centre for Business and Sustainability,
Ashridge Business School

Hannah Green

The Prince's Seeing is Believing programme,
Business in the Community

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank everyone who participated in this research, not only for generously giving up their time but for their free and frank views on a topical subject.

Participating leaders are Andrew Wyllie, Angus Russell, Duncan Tait, John Varley, Ken McMeikan, Martin Baggs, Mike Wareing, Rob Devey, Stephen Howard. Full biographies and photographs of leaders are included in the forthcoming pages.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Friends Life for making this research project possible.

© Ashridge Business School and BitC 2014

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism or review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrievable system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Ashridge and/or BitC.

Ashridge Business School
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire HP4 1NS, UK
www.ashridge.org.uk

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION The rise of responsible business leaders	7
METHODOLOGY	9
OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS	10
BIOGRAPHIES	11
EARLY CAREER: ATTITUDES TO THE ROLE OF BUSINESS IN SOCIETY	17
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unaware of debates about the role of business in society• Aware but lack of interest• Traditional economic understanding of the role of business• Broader understanding of the role of business in society	
EXPERIENCES THAT SUBSEQUENTLY INFLUENCED THINKING	21
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First hand experiences of pressing challenges in society, and personal relationships with people experiencing them• Inspirational activists, thinkers and role models that helped challenge and shape thinking	
THE IMPACT OF THE PRINCE'S SEEING IS BELIEVING VISITS	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical components to the success of Seeing is Believing• Convening, inspiring and holding to account: the role of HRH The Prince of Wales• How Seeing is Believing could be further improved	
PARTICIPANTS' NEW ACTIVITIES AS A RESULT OF THE EXPERIENCES	32
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New ways of leading – taking a leap of faith• Leading change across the business• Leading change across industry and society	
PARTICIPANTS' NEW THINKING AS A RESULT OF THE EXPERIENCES	40
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The world has changed, and what it means to be judged a successful business leader has changed too• A new kind of collaborative leadership of government, business and civil society• Creating value for society creates value for business, not cost• The resulting shift in thinking	
HOW TO GET MORE RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS LEADERS?	44
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summary of findings• How to get more responsible business leadership	
CASE STUDIES: LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS	48



"Business leaders, working together, can so often come up with real, practical solutions in a way which has eluded the rest of us"

*HRH The Prince of Wales,
President of Business in the Community*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senior executives need to have a nuanced understanding of the major social and environmental forces shaping our world, and know how to respond for the good of their organisation and for society as a whole. This has implications for what business leaders now spend their time doing and what they need to be good at, which in turn has implications for the leadership development processes that organisations need to adopt.

The Prince's Seeing is Believing programme is widely regarded as a landmark example of how to help CEOs and senior leaders in organisations to engage with this aspect of their role, and has been a key driver of change over its long history.

This research project was motivated to learn from 23 years of delivering this programme in order to better embed this thinking in the next generation of business leaders. What emerges from the in-depth interviews with nine Chief Executives is a picture of the personal leadership journeys that they have been on. Their shifts were inspired by their early lives, early careers, first-hand experiences, and influential role models, as well as their Seeing is Believing experience.

The Seeing is Believing experience in particular provided a powerful vehicle for engaging them in the issues and committing them to action, by convening a credible and influential group of leaders, exposing them first-hand to the realities of people's lives whilst simultaneously demonstrating the simplicity of the solutions, and by creating conditions that helped them prioritise action.

As a result, our leaders were moved to stimulate cultural change in their organisations to develop a critical mass of individuals thinking and acting differently. This they did by leveraging the power of the shadow they cast, modelling the behaviours they wanted to see in others, encouraging, facilitating and rewarding these behaviours, integrating this thinking into their strategic goals, and recruiting the right people into the organisation. To lead this cultural

change took courage, authenticity and a leap of faith.

Outside of their organisations, our CEOs sought also to lead change across their industry and society, through influencing and partnering with peers, encouraging participation on Seeing is Believing visits, and working collaboratively to leverage the power of groups of business leaders working together to effect a sustained impact on societal issues.

They articulated an awareness of a significant shift in thinking in terms of what it means to be successful as a leader, the recognition of a need for a new, collaborative leadership of government, business and civil society, and an understanding that looking after the communities in which we operate creates value to the business, not cost.

What we learn from these journeys in terms of inspiring the next generation of future leaders is that first and foremost leaders should act as exemplars in what they say and do, making it easier for others to follow.

Secondly, organisations would do well to proactively seek out candidates who have had exposure to a diversity of life and work experience. To complement this, those looking to develop talent management strategies should look to embed experiential learning, along with creating the right culture for this learning to be transferred back into the business.

Lastly, organisations and their leadership must take ownership of experiential learning mechanisms like Seeing is Believing. This will enable these programmes to reach more people and ensure the highest quality and relevance of the experience.

The learning from this project will help to fulfil the potential of experiential learning programmes like "The Prince's Seeing is Believing programme", working in partnership with business. The aim is to ensure the next generation of leaders are equipped to lead organisations that are sustainable in the long-term and put value creation for all at the core of what they do.



Sara Weller, Lloyds Banking Group, discussing building business community partnerships to address local issues, Edgware, 2013

INTRODUCTION

The rise of responsible business leadership

Business leaders and their leadership are under scrutiny as never before.

On the one hand, the news is littered with stories of corporate failures attributed to poor leadership – and research highlights a continuing lack of trust in business leaders' ability to make ethical or moral decisions.

Yet at the same time we are seeing the emergence of a new generation of business leaders intent on putting creating value for society and shareholders at the heart of their job descriptions and businesses. Think of Paul Polman aiming to double the size of Unilever's business by inspiring sustainable living, Ian Cheshire focusing Kingfisher on helping people have better and more sustainable homes, Justin King putting values and provenance at the heart of how Sainsbury's competes with other retailers.

The emergence of business leaders who integrate responsibility into all that they do can perhaps be attributed to a broader shift in thinking about the role of business in society. A new consensus seems to be emerging.

Some business leaders are shifting away from the priority of maximising shareholder value towards experimenting with alternatives, like Michael Porter's 'creating shared value' approach focusing primarily on creating value for wider stakeholders to ensure they generate return for shareholders in the medium and long term as well as the next quarter.

Alongside this, there has also been a shift in thinking about the roles of governments and businesses to further the common good. Think back to the 1970s. The prevailing view was that the sole responsibility for dealing with society's challenges lay with government. Business leaders' priority was to keep their eyes squarely on their industry and focus on generating profit. Broader societal issues were seen as none of their business, and to get involved would only add unnecessary cost.

Fast forward to the 2010s and much has changed. Not only have civil society organisations become much more influential, but so has a much more globalised private sector. In 1970, the world's biggest economic entities were countries, but now a sizeable number of them are private companies. There is a growing view that most big challenges are pretty hard for governments to address on their own, and that a much wider group of actors need to be at the table.

As a result we are seeing more collaborative activity between businesses, governments and civil society and organisations such as Business in the Community which enable businesses to take practical action on key social issues such as tackling homelessness, youth unemployment, supporting ex-offenders, investing in community and High Street regeneration, and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

So while some business leaders are still operating from outmoded and dated ideas about the appropriate role of business in today's society, others have recognised how the world has changed and are leading differently as a result.

This research study aims to explore how to get more of the kind of business that is a force for good in society, by examining the influences and personal experiences that shaped a group of business leaders.

Although it is important not to over-attribute what happens in an organisation to the role of the CEO, it also cannot be denied that the most senior leader in an organisation, their world views, strengths and weaknesses do influence how others in that organisation think, behave and make decisions.

Ultimately this study will attempt to answer the question – how do we develop a new generation of responsible business leaders?

The Prince's Seeing is Believing programme

Business in the Community has been at the forefront of grappling with this question for over 30 years. Over the past 23 years it has developed the Prince's Seeing is Believing programme, to harness the power of experiential learning to encourage more responsible business leadership.

Instigated and supported by HRH The Prince of Wales, over 1,100 visits have taken place, involving over 8,000 business leaders in learning first-hand about issues such as alcoholism, homelessness, ex-offenders, youth unemployment and the low carbon economy. Following each visit, the leaders reflect together on how they can collectively help to address these challenges in ways that are good for the business and wider society at the same time.

Participate in a Seeing is Believing Programme

If you would like to lead or participate in a Seeing is Believing visit, please contact Bimal Karaji, Head of Leadership and Seeing is Believing on 0207 566 6663 or email Bimal.karaji@bitc.org.uk

METHODOLOGY

To investigate, a team of researchers from Ashridge Business School and Business in the Community spoke with a series of current and former chief executives who had been both participants and leaders of Seeing is Believing groups, exploring their own journeys – how their thinking about the role of business in society had evolved, how this had influenced how they had played their role as chief executive, and what experiences had shaped their thinking along the way.

We selected our interviewees based on a number of criteria. All our interviewees had at some stage been a participant on a Seeing is Believing visit, and then subsequently had gone on to lead at least one more visit. We wanted to hear from a cross-section of these individuals – both people who had participated in and led Seeing is Believing visits some time ago and those who had been involved more recently, and across a mix of different focus areas. And we wanted to speak with leaders from a range of different industries.

Their stories are told in the pages that follow.

We begin by exploring the ideas they held about the role of business in society early in their careers, and the series of influences that shaped the way these ideas evolved over time – including the role of Seeing is Believing – before reflecting on how these influences informed the kinds of things they did differently in practice and their shifts in thinking. We conclude by exploring some of the implications of these findings for business leaders today. What *do we* need to do to get more of the ‘right’ kind of business leaders?

A note on quotes

All interviews were conducted on a confidential basis. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The quotes reproduced in this report are used with permission. Where appropriate they have been edited for length and grammar, but they have not been changed in any substantive way. All edits have been agreed with the interviewee.

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

Interviewee	Company	Sector	Period as CEO	Seeing is Believing visits		
				Date	Role	Topic
Andrew Wyllie	Costain	Construction	2005 - date	2011	Leader	Addressing a skills shortage and integrating responsible business practice through your supply chain
Angus Russell	Shire Pharmaceuticals	Pharma	2008-2013	2004	Delegate	Business engagement in local communities
				2011	Leader	Developing a targeted response to supporting young people in the community
Duncan Tait	Fujitsu	ICT	2011-date	2012	Leader	Building business community partnerships to address local issues
				2014	Leader	Building business community partnerships to address local issues
John Varley	Barclays Bank	Finance	2004 - 2011	2001	Leader	Employability and Homelessness
				2004	Leader	Employability and Homelessness
				2008	Leader	Employability and Homelessness
				2009	Leader	Employability
Ken McMeikan	Brakes	Food	2008 - 2013	2009	Delegate	Employability
	Greggs	Food	2013 - date	2010	Leader	Developing collaborative action to address the needs of communities in most need
Martin Baggs	Thames Water	Utilities	2010 - date	2011	Delegate	Addressing a skills shortage and integrating responsible business practice through your supply chain
				2012	Leader	Promoting alternative routes into employment
Mike Wareing	KPMG	Professional Services	2005 - 2009	2002	Delegate	Business action on homelessness
				2003	Delegate	Business action on homelessness
				2005	Leader	Business action on homelessness
				2006	Leader	Business action on homelessness
				2007	Leader	Business action on homelessness
Rob Devey	HBOS	Finance	2006 - 2009	2007	Delegate	Business action on homelessness
	The Prudential	Finance	2009 - 2013	2011	Leader	Employee volunteering
Stephen Howard	Cookson Group	Materials	1996 - 2004	1996	Delegate	Business engagement in local communities
	BITC	Charity	2005 - date	2001	Delegate	Employability and Homelessness

BIOGRAPHIES



Andrew Wyllie

Andrew is Chief Executive of Costain Group PLC, the worldwide construction and engineering group. Prior to taking up this role in 2005, he worked for Taylor Woodrow where he was Managing Director of the construction business and a member of the Group Executive Committee.

He worked for several years on a variety of

major contracts in Saudi Arabia, Ghana, the Falklands and Malaysia, as well as projects in the United Kingdom.

In addition, Andrew is a Non-Executive Director on the Board of Scottish Water which is the UK's fourth largest water utility providing a service to five million customers in Scotland.

Andrew has an MBA from London Business School, is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Institute of Directors and the British American Project. He is also a member of the CBI Construction Council and a Companion of the Chartered Management Institute.

Andrew is a former pupil of Dunfermline High School and a graduate of the University of Strathclyde.

He lives with his wife, Jane, and daughter in Buckinghamshire. His interests include travel, music and sport and he raises money for the Marie Curie Cancer Care charity.



Angus Russell

Angus Russell retired at the end of April 2013 as chief executive officer of Shire plc, one of the most successful and admired global specialty biopharmaceutical companies in the world.

Angus became chief executive officer of Shire in June of 2008. He joined the company in 1999 as chief financial officer, serving as a key member of Shire's leadership team and helping to transform this once-small UK-based pharmaceuticals company through an exciting period of expansion and diversification. Having grown significantly over the past two decades through a series of strategic acquisitions, Shire today is a substantial public company with more than 5,500 employees in 30 countries and revenues of around \$5 billion. It is listed on both the London and Nasdaq stock exchanges. Shire develops and commercialises medicines and treatments for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, human genetic therapies, gastrointestinal diseases, and regenerative medicine among other emerging therapeutic areas.

Prior to joining Shire, Angus worked for nearly 20 years with ICI, Zeneca and AstraZeneca, serving in his most recent position with AstraZeneca as vice president for corporate finance where he was responsible for financial oversight of M&A activities, management of tax, legal, and finance structure, investor relations, and the management of various financial risks. He previously held several positions of increasing responsibility within Zeneca and ICI including, group treasurer, group investor relations manager, strategic planner, marketing manager and management accounting roles in the manufacturing and R&D operations.

Following his retirement from Shire Angus continues to be actively involved in the pharmaceutical industry and serves on the boards of InterMune, Inc. and Questcor, Inc., two Nasdaq listed public companies. Angus has a passion for art (particularly Native American art) and classic automobiles. A bicycling enthusiast, Angus has ridden in several charitable cycling events and is engaged with several community causes, fostering his personal commitment to help others.

Angus was born in Forres, Scotland and lived and worked for many years in the both the UK and the US before becoming a permanent US resident in 2010. He and his wife, Nadine, a native of Montreal, Canada, have homes in Montreal, Florida and California. Angus is a chartered accountant, having qualified with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and is a fellow of the UK Association of Corporate Treasurers. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Business Administration from Coventry University, UK in November 2012.



Duncan Tait

In April 2011, Duncan Tait was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Fujitsu's UK and Ireland region and Chairman of Fujitsu Telecommunications Europe Limited (FTEL). Duncan is responsible for nearly \$3 billion of annual revenues and 14,000 employees serving major private and public sector customers. Duncan has more than 27 years of experience in the ICT industry. During this time, Duncan has led businesses across the broad spectrum of technology, in the UK and internationally. His deep business and industry knowledge and global perspective are critical assets that enable Fujitsu to achieve its mission: to use technology to

improve global business and society.

Duncan joined Fujitsu in 2009 to run the Private Sector organisation within UK and Ireland, and grew that business by 55% before being promoted to his Chief Executive role. He enjoys building high performance teams and has a passion for inspiring people to achieve the company's strategy.

Duncan started work as a systems programmer at BAE Systems. After a career in consulting, he moved into product marketing with Keane's Infrastructure Management business. Subsequently, Duncan ran Granada's networking business across EMEA. After that, he led numerous services businesses and managed global clients at HP. He later joined Unisys and was eventually Managing Director of all Unisys operations in the Africa, Middle East and UK regions.

Duncan is a member of the Prince's Trust Technology Leaders' Board, non-exec director of BITC, board member of e-skills and a fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

Outside work, Duncan is a committed family man and he and Sally have four daughters to keep them busy. When time permits he enjoys riding motorbikes, attempting to keep fit and is a long-suffering Liverpool football fan.



John Varley

John Varley was formerly Group Chief Executive of the Barclays Group, having held a number of senior positions with the bank during his career, including that of Group Finance Director. He is also a Non-Executive Director of BlackRock, Non Executive Director of Astra Zeneca and Rio Tinto.

He is Chairman of Marie Curie Cancer Care. John was awarded the Prince of Wales' Ambassador Award 2010 for his work with Business Action on Homelessness on 5 July 2010.



Ken McMeikan

Ken McMeikan joined Brakes as Group Chief Executive on 11th March 2013. Previously he was Chief Executive of Greggs plc for five years from 2008-2013.

Prior to this, Ken was Retail Director of J Sainsbury plc from 2005-2008. He spent 14 years at Tesco where he was appointed Chief Executive of Tesco in Japan in 2004 having previously been Chief Executive of Europa Foods convenience store business after it was acquired by Tesco in 2002. He began his retail career at Sears UK in 1986.



Martin Baggs

Martin Baggs became CEO of Thames Water in March 2010 having been a non-executive Director since 2006. Prior to taking up the role of CEO of Thames Water, he was an Executive Director with the Macquarie Infrastructure Funds with responsibility for the portfolio of utility investments across Europe. Martin has a long career in the water industry with previous roles including Managing Director at South East Water and Operations Director at Southern Water.

Martin is a Chartered Civil Engineer, a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers and a member of the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators.



Mike Wareing

Mike Wareing has major international and board level knowledge gained during an extensive global career up to senior partner level at KPMG. His last position at KPMG was as International Chief Executive Officer, a position he occupied for four years. He is currently a Non-Executive Director and Audit Committee Chairman at Wolseley plc, Intertek and at Cobham plc. He was appointed as the Economic Development Adviser to the Government of Afghanistan in August 2011.



Rob Devey

Rob Devey was an Executive Director of Prudential Plc and Chief Executive, Prudential UK and Europe from 2009 to 2013. He joined Prudential from Lloyds Banking Group where he worked from 2002 in a number of senior leadership roles across insurance and retail banking. Prior to joining HBOS, Rob was a consultant with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in the UK, US and Europe. Rob is also a Trustee of the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales and a Non-Executive Director of Octopus Investments.



Stephen Howard

Stephen Howard joined Business in the Community in September 2005. Stephen brings a wealth of senior management expertise to Business in the Community acquired in the corporate sector. Stephen has held a number of different executive and non executive roles including, Chief Executive of Cookson Group plc, and Chief Executive of Novar PLC.



BP and Deloitte, supporting social enterprise to deliver olympic lessons, Kings Cross, 2013

EARLY CAREER: ATTITUDES TO THE ROLE OF BUSINESS IN SOCIETY

Summary

- Some leaders unaware of the role that business might play in society
- Others aware of the potential role, but not engaged with it
- Business' contribution is purely economic, providing jobs and generating wealth
- Social consciousness was a private, not workplace ethic
- Organisations have an ethical and moral responsibility to society
- Informed by family, education, training and early career

The business leaders we spoke to had a range of different 'starting points' in their attitudes towards the role of business in society at the beginning of their careers.

Some were completely oblivious to wider debates about the role of business in society or had some awareness but not much interest.

Others started with a clearer view. Some held what might be characterised as a 'traditional economic' view that the role of business in society is about generating economic growth, providing jobs and paying taxes. Others started with a broader perspective – that the success of organisations and wider society are intimately linked, and that therefore business has a role to play that is more than just growth, jobs and taxes, but also in some way or another taking broader care of communities, society and the wider environment through the way they did business.

Unaware of debates about the role of business in society

For some, the role of business in society simply was not a consideration that was thought about in the early years of their careers. As Mike Wareing commented:



The brutal truth is that it almost just wasn't thought about. I have to say the harsh and truthful reality is that it just didn't seem to be on the psyche at all." Mike Wareing

His description of this earlier period as a kind of Dark Ages that was 'brutal' and 'harsh', suggests that this thinking was to dramatically change over time. A similar sentiment was echoed by Andrew Wyllie who reflected that *"I think I'd be misleading if I was to say that I even thought about it very much, to be honest."*

Aware but lack of interest

A step on from those who were not aware of debates about the role of business in society were those who seemed to have some awareness of an idea that business should be playing a broader, more engaged role, but were not, at the time, bought into it. Stephen Howard for instance failed to see the relevance of responsible leadership to his job, as he remarks, *"I started life as a lawyer but doing corporate work and M&A deals, so I was always in the transaction side of life. In those early days it didn't seem all that relevant actually."* The language is again interesting as Stephen Howard contrasts the 'transactional'

side of doing business with the more integrated and holistic approach that he developed.

Rob Devey went further, considering the notion of corporate responsibility as a distraction from the primary focus of his role – maximising commercial value: *“When I was running the HBOS Retail current account portfolio I was asked to give my input to our stance on social inclusion in banking. This was an area that not only was not contributing to our profits – it almost went completely against our commercial objectives. And I must admit I leaned towards our commercial objectives. Whilst I supported our social objectives to an extent I didn’t really buy into the theory.”*

Traditional economic understanding of the role of business

Many of the leaders interviewed, perhaps unsurprisingly given the context at the time in the 1970s and 1980s, subscribed at that time to the traditional economic view that the main contribution that business can make to society is through maximising profit, generating wealth, creating jobs, paying taxes and delivering goods and services.

These leaders spoke of their own personal values, ethics and a social consciousness as being of great importance, but as something that was to be expressed as an individual, in private time, rather than through the company or through their capacity as an employee. As John Varley described it, *“I was conscious of the importance of business in family life and the importance of business as a generator of wealth. And also the importance of business as a source of employment”*. Ken McMeikan echoed a similar perspective when he described his earlier attitude:



“If I’m really honest, when I first started in business I was, as I think a lot of people were, focusing solely on customer service and what I as an individual I needed to do, or what the company needed to do, to succeed by looking after its customers better than anyone else. So at that time, engagement started at the point when the customer came into the shop, and stopped pretty much when the customer left the shop.” Ken McMeikan

Ken McMeikan’s story shows how these leaders’ thinking appears to develop, from what often starts as an insular and internal perspective to one that broadens out to include a wider sphere of influence, towards a more integrated understanding of business and society.

Broader understanding of the role of business in society

Of the leaders we spoke to there were some who had a broader and more integrated understanding of the role of business in society from the very beginning of their career. Angus Russell spoke of having always had *“a strong belief about a responsibility, certainly an ethical and moral responsibility”*, a feeling that was also reported by Martin Baggs and Duncan Tait.

These three spoke about diverse influences shaping this thinking, including family, educational and training experiences and the culture of the organisations they joined in their early career. However, the factor that united the three leaders who were best able to connect personal values with their careers was an early experience that exposed them to this synergy.

Duncan Tait spoke at length about the experience of growing up working in his parents' newsagents. It was at a time when small local shops were starting to be put under pressure by the arrival of larger chains and Duncan reflects, *"My mum knew everybody that came in, took a personal interest in them. The people that worked in our shop were part of the community. They didn't travel 400 miles, 200 miles, 50 miles to see us, or to work in the shop. The way my mum and dad enabled their business to be competitive, and not be put out of business by this Spar shop next door, was because they were a part of the community; they cared; they knew people; they got a smile and all that stuff when they came in the shop. And that's where I get a lot of my zest for business from, was from growing up in a newsagents shop."*

This appeared to be a powerful early lesson for Duncan, and one that was absent from any formal business education that he received, and it was only later in his career that Duncan reports being able to reconnect to his original experience of business as 'part of the community'.

Angus Russell and Martin Baggs both reported that working in their sectors – pharmaceuticals and water utilities respectively – instilled in them early in their careers, a sense of public service and an awareness of the social responsibility of business. As Angus said: *"Despite some of the bad press we get, I find that most people who work in this industry do so because they identify with helping people. I mean the whole essence of what we're doing here is to help people's lives and help people get better or save their lives. So I think this industry gives you a very good start in putting you close to people and working with people, particularly those whose lives have been very badly affected."*

For Martin Baggs, the combination of several early experiences was key. Firstly the public service ethos of the culture of the organisation he joined: *"When I started my career, I was working for what was then a water authority, so you were very much in a public service organization with strong links with the community to start with."*

The experience of seeing the community impacts of big engineering projects was also important for Martin.

"If you work in a community on a major engineering project you also start to realise that you've got local links to the community in so many different ways. Now whether that's working with the local schools and the impact you're having on the local community, or whether it's because you're employing local people, or whether because the projects you're actually working on are actually going to make a difference to that local community."

Martin talked about an early training course where participants took a day out to support a local community event as another influential experience that shaped his early attitudes toward responsible business, as did early participation in a Prince's Trust programme.

"The next big thing for me, which I thought was fantastic, as a young junior manager, was the Prince's Trust programme. That to me was a real eye-opener in terms of the impact you can have on individuals, when you saw the impact on these youngsters after 10 or 12 weeks on that programme."

What these recollections of early influences suggest is that the earlier in their careers leaders were able to experience first-hand the synergies between business activity and social value, the more likely they were to carry that thinking with them through their careers.

Andrew Wyllie, Costain, addressing, skills shortage and integrating responsible business through supply chains, Neasden, 2011



EXPERIENCES THAT SUBSEQUENTLY INFLUENCED THINKING

Summary

- Exposure to societal issues through work or travel
- Influential role models within the organisation that committed to working with society
- Inspirational encounters and lightbulb moments that reframed their definition of personal success
- Seeing is Believing – exposure to the realities of other's lives and the need to help, along with a roadmap of how to help

Irrespective of the point of departure for the leaders we talked to, they all spoke of going on a journey throughout their career that led them to reassess the way that they looked at the role of business in society, and by extension, as their seniority increased, the role of the leader in shaping that relationship.

Themes common for many of the people we spoke with were the importance of first hand experiences of:

- pressing challenges in society and personal relationships with people experiencing them
- people and groups successfully working to address challenges
- other inspirational activists, thinkers and role models that helped challenge their thinking.

They also received support to reflect on and make sense of these kinds of experiences and how to act on them in business leadership roles.

Participating in Seeing is Believing groups formed an integral part of this broader combination of experiences in many of these leader's journeys.

First hand experiences of pressing challenges in society, and personal relationships with people experiencing them

For the most part it was experiences at work that proffered a heightened awareness of a role for business in engaging with pressing challenges in society.

For many the experience that led to a reassessment of values involved an increased exposure to societal issues through travelling with work. Andrew Wyllie spoke of his time in regions such as the Middle East, West Africa and the Falklands as impacting the way he thought about his role and the organisation he represented. Similarly, John Varley's work as a lawyer in the aviation insurance arena took him to Africa and the developing world on many occasions. As he recalls: *"The first time I went to Africa would have been in about, I should think, 1979, something like that. It was very, very obvious, the connection between business, economic growth and poverty."*

It would not appear necessary to visit such far-flung locations to come face-to-face with poverty and the social realities that force a change in attitude. Ken McMeikan described how his thinking was influenced by travelling around the UK, encountering people experiencing different challenges: *"I think if you*

do keep your eyes open you see what great needs there are that business can play a part in and support. So walking around London you'll see those who are homeless, if you keep your eyes open. You'll see areas of great deprivation when crime is appallingly high, where drugs and other substance abuse is incredibly high, where unemployment is exceptionally high. So because the businesses that I've been in have tended to have customers and employees that come from all walks of life my whole thinking has been much more greatly influenced and shaped because I've lived in amongst all of that."

Having one's eyes opened by being exposed to diverse people, experiences and locations was mirrored in Mike Wareing's experience of moving to London for the first time with his work: *"Something that I wasn't used to seeing at all where I'd grown up and indeed where I was doing business in the Midlands was the level of overt rough sleeping going on right in front of people in London. I was quite troubled by it just generally but the biggest shock was the extent to which these people were just lying there or sitting there with the rest of humanity just walking straight past. They could have been dead or seriously ill or – actually not rough sleeping but just having fallen over. People were just walking past them. I found that really quite shocking in many ways. It wasn't something I'd been used to. It was gnawing at me for quite a long period of time."*

John Varley similarly reported that seeing homeless people sleeping rough near the London office of the solicitor's firm where he started his career, invoked a sense of responsibility to engage with the issues that were quite literally on his doorstep. Mike Wareing described an encounter that was equally emotive and transformative: *"One time later on in life I was in my very nice, quite large, chauffeur-driven car in London, and as I was sat there I looked out of the side window and there was a young girl sat in the corner, absolutely white as a sheet, with a blanket over her. It looked very much like she'd got a major drug problem just by the look and the colour of*

her. And she was just sat there. I think she was, I don't know, late teenage probably. She looked at me and I looked at her and I – it's just one of those things where you think, well, here I am, in my nice car in my nice suit with somebody driving me and all the rest of it and there's she a few yards away, early in her life and – the gulf between us was just extraordinary."

Finally, personal life events also impacted leaders' thinking, such as the personal trauma of family illness described by Ken McMeikan, who said: *"I think when you've experienced events like that in your life it shapes your thinking about business life."*

Inspirational activists, thinkers and role models who helped challenge and shape thinking

In addition to being confronted with social realities through these experiences, many of the leaders also cited particular individuals inside and outside their organisations who had challenged or shaped how they thought about the role of business.

For some, like Duncan Tait and Martin Baggs, inspiration came from senior managers inside the business who exemplified the dual commitment to business and society, people who they both described as role models. As Martin describes: *"I had the real pleasure, many years ago, of working for a fantastic managing director who was a real role model in so many ways because he did live and breathe the values and he had such strong integrity, and ethics, and values, and morals. The way that he operated, he set the behaviour for the business. He set the standards for the business. And quite frankly he had the knack of being able to engage with anyone at any level, which some people think is easy, but it's not."*

For Stephen Howard reading a book – Half Time, Moving from Success to Significance, by Bob P. Buford – was a significant moment,

which brought about the realisation that he was measuring his success in too narrow a manner, focusing on financial achievements rather than significance. Stephen Howard also spoke of a chance encounter with Mother Theresa on an aeroplane not long afterwards that made him reassess his values and his life purpose: *“She asked the question: what do you do? So I’m about to tell her I’m in international business, I’m this important guy. And she said, no no, that’s not what I meant. She says to me, what do you do that matters? It’s like, oh my, it’s Mother Theresa, you can’t lie to Mother Theresa! And it was this amazing conversation that we had then for the next hour and a half on this flight. Not about whether business is right or wrong or whether I should be doing this or that. It was this whole conversation about, I don’t know who you are or why you are where you are. But you are where you are. So what are you going to do about it. And it was this – it shocked me into this realization that I was given a platform to do some interesting things. My voice would broadcast in a way that it wouldn’t otherwise because of this job. And therefore what should I do with that and how should I do it in a way that matters?”*



Rob Devey, talking about employee volunteering in Westminster, 2011

THE IMPACT OF THE PRINCE'S SEEING IS BELIEVING VISITS

In addition to these kinds of experiences, all of the CEOs with whom we spoke talked about their participation in a Seeing is Believing group as highly influential, and sometimes 'transformational' in the development of their thinking around responsible leadership. Seeing is Believing had different kinds of impacts on different people. For some, it opened their eyes to a different way of thinking and the need for doing things differently. For others it acted as a trigger: they were already sympathetic to the need for acting and Seeing is Believing provided the push to help them to start. Others specifically sought out Seeing is Believing because they knew they wanted to start acting but didn't know where to begin.

For Ken McMeikan, Seeing is Believing visits addressing the issues of homelessness and child poverty opened his eyes to *"the reality and the horror of some of the difficult issues in society that are easy to walk past or ignore."* He recalls: *"I went home after one visit and – it's the greatest sense of guilt I think I've ever had in my life that I was feeding my children and I knew there would be millions of children who weren't getting food. And that the need is great and the funding wasn't there."*

Angus Russell regarded the Seeing is Believing programme as 'very significant' in the development of his attitude towards responsible leadership. Being exposed to the plight of children with ADHD and the impact of their personal stories triggered an existing thinking, motivating him to act, and led to Spire's financing of a research programme with Great Ormond Street Hospital. The visit also served to put such community issues to front of mind.



"It's hard to know how you change or how you are influenced as a person, but I would think, pretty clearly, that that visit eight years ago did bring that sudden reminder, that's what the Seeing Believing things are good at, I think, it does remind you, because life's very busy, it's easy, particularly in business, to get away from remembering about those kind of issues." Angus Russell

For others, Seeing is Believing provided the means through which they could act on their determination to make a difference. Mike Wareing was looking to address the 'shocking' homelessness that he encountered on the streets of London. Stephen Howard was driven to identify a way to make an impact, to do something that really mattered. For both, this opportunity was presented by Seeing is Believing.

Critical components to Seeing is Believing's success

Summary

- Exposure to societal issues raises awareness and demonstrates how to help
- Provides an emotional hook to engage with the issues
- Understanding the simplicity of the solution drives action
- Providing evidence that solutions do work and do have an impact
- Support to reflect on and make sense of experiences
- Undermines the pervasive narrative that responsible leadership has no value to organisations
- Reputation and credibility of the leader and HRH The Prince of Wales encourages participant and commitment to action

It is clear from the leaders' stories that several aspects about the way Seeing is Believing is organised contribute to its success in provoking new activities and thinking among business leaders.

In part this is because it provides a structured opportunity – through experiential learning – to have many of the same kinds of experiences that our interviewees talked about being so influential in other parts of their lives. Things like, for example, first-hand experiences of people experiencing pressing challenges in society and people and groups successfully working to address challenges, as well as other inspirational activists, thinkers and role models that helped challenge their thinking.

Seeing is Believing also helps address many of the barriers to acting they identified: a feeling of not knowing enough or not knowing where to start, the challenge of prioritising, and making time to act, and a pervasive narrative that it's not the business leader's role to get involved in helping address social challenges.

Raising awareness and providing a roadmap

One of the barriers to engaging in a broader role in society that many of the interviewees raised was the challenge of not knowing enough, or not knowing where to start. Seeing is Believing, they said, through providing these first hand experiences of both the issues and how people were working successfully to help tackle them, was very effective in raising awareness and providing a model for what effective action could look like.

All of those to whom we spoke found the experiential nature of the visits – whilst for some anxiety provoking, highly impactful. Being exposed to the realities of other's lives provided the emotional hook that moved them from an intellectual to an emotional connection with the issue in focus, while demonstrating the simplicity of the solution drove them to action. For many, hearing individuals recount their personal stories was particularly powerful.

Being drawn into their personal space, meeting those people that they had previously only observed from a distance had a real impact. As John Varley noted *"What I think the Seeing is Believing visit does is, it takes you beyond concept into reality. We can all conceptualise a homeless person who needs help. We can conceptualize that. But as we conceptualize it we're sort of standing back from it and we've not crossed into their space."*

Mike Wareing echoed that sentiment. For him there is no substitute to the Seeing is Believing programme. It shocks you into action by immersing you in these issues, challenging your preconceptions and then showing you how to help. *"You can send emails, attend presentations, all the rest of it, but I think there's something about people getting out of their comfort zone and actually into that other world which is uniquely moving and motivating, which is obviously how the day is designed, to some extent to start with the shock and then end with the positive and the constructive. There isn't anything else that I'm aware of that does that."*

Martin Baggs also considered the power of Seeing is Believing to be its capacity to get business leaders out of their bubble and get a real sense of some of the challenges other people face, and see the people worked with them to help tackle those challenges in action. *"Some of the guys you meet in business, quite frankly, when you chat to them they haven't got a clue what goes on on the ground. So the more opportunities we get to get these guys out there and actually see what happens in reality – for me it almost needs to be like shock treatment. You want people going home at the end of that day thinking, wow, what the hell have we just seen?"*

From our conversations it was apparent that the power of the visits lay in the combination of exposure to both the issue and the fix. Hearing personal stories, having that first-hand experience of the realities of some people's worlds provided both the emotional spark

and the realisation that there are solutions, those solutions are within the grasp of business, and that they work, as captured by Stephen Howard's story of his visit looking at homelessness in London: *"We started in a wet hostel, which means they can drink. So it's eight o'clock in the morning, everybody's pissed and rowdy and slightly dangerous. We go then, mid-morning, to another programme that's working at helping people dry out, training, a little bit of support, coaching. The third stop in the morning is our Ready for Work programme, seeing guys who've come through the cycle. And people go, 'Oh! This works! We can help people! There's actually a solution here.' Because it seemed so hopeless when – it's those drunk, scary people in there that you see on the street that you walk across the street from them. 'This is hopeless, this is a million miles away from my comfort zone,' to two hours later going – 'I could do that! I could help!'"*

Similarly, Duncan Tait reflected that the most powerful moment of the visit for him was recognising that it is possible to intervene and succeed in these issues. *"Seeing those people in the boxing academy, who come from some very difficult backgrounds, many of them involving knife crime, drugs, gangs – those people in the boxing academy take excluded children and get them four or five decent GCSEs where normally they'd be expected to get zero GCSEs. It's just fantastic. Just fantastic. You could see people going: Ah!"*

For Ken McMeikan, Seeing is Believing is a powerful tool for capturing disengaged business leaders, focusing them on a particular issue, and driving them to action. *"Those people just haven't been touched yet. They haven't been touched in the heart. They might have been touched intellectually. They might know that they need to be involved. But they haven't been connected yet with an issue where it's really touched them in the heart that they want to do something about it. So what do you need to do? This is where Seeing is Believing is so powerful. Touch them in the heart, let them see first-hand."*

Support to reflect on and make sense of these kinds of experiences and how to act on them in business leadership roles

It's not just the powerful emotional experience though. A second crucial aspect of the Seeing is Believing experience is the support participants receive to reflect on and make sense of these kinds of experiences and how to act on them in business leadership roles. This support is provided for the most part by the group leader through the way they facilitate the visit and post visit work, as Angus Russell articulated,



"What I think everybody always struggles with is understanding how it fits their business. You get a lot of people saying, well, this is great, I really feel concerned or I'd really like to do something, and they almost say, well I'll do it on a personal level because I can't see how this fits my business, so I think that's where the leader has to come in, be able to say, well, actually, it does fit your business, and try and bridge that gap." Angus Russell

In this way, the group leader can inspire and challenge thinking among the rest of the group, and through their own stories, and past actions, act as a role model. Spending time with powerful exemplars of responsible business leadership in this way also helps tackle one of the other barriers to action cited. Ken McMeikan reflected on a pervasive narrative that positions responsible leadership as unimportant, as having no value to organisations, which can present a real barrier to responsible leadership. *"But I do think there are business leaders out there who genuinely don't care, don't see it as value added, don't believe it's what makes them successful, don't believe it will necessarily impact on their profits, and therefore don't do anything about it."* Spending time in the company of individuals who are vocal on the need for a

different approach can be a powerful step in undermining this pervasive narrative.

Helping to put it at the top of the action list and keeping it there

A third challenge to action that many cited is the difficulty, even once a business leader is motivated to act, of prioritising the time and energy to do so in the face of multiple conflicting demands on their time. As Ken McMeikan described, the pressure of competing stakeholder agendas presents a very real challenge to engaging in responsible leadership. *"For a chief executive you've got many stakeholders and you have to keep on board with what you're trying to do. You've got your shareholders, you've got your board members, non-executive directors, customers, your own people, third-party organisations that you're working with. You can see why for some chief executives, because it is hard, they would choose to put it lower down the priority list, or not do it at all."*

Seeing is Believing helps address this barrier in a number of ways. Firstly, as previously discussed, many reported that the emotional connection with the issues that Seeing is Believing creates is a powerful motivator that helps business leaders move from intellectually grasping the idea of doing something to actually feeling strongly motivated to put it at the top of their priority list.

Many of the leaders we spoke to also cited two further specific aspects of the way Seeing is Believing is organised as being particularly effective in helping put acting differently at the top of the action list and keep it there. These were the roles of the group leader and HRH The Prince of Wales.

Firstly, both are important in persuading people to participate in a Seeing is Believing group in the first place. In particular, the reputation and credibility of the group leader was considered a critical motivating factor for getting participants into the room. Being invited by someone who was known, trusted, and respected helped

to establish the credibility of the programme. The opportunity to network with and learn from a group of senior leaders from within your industry was also attractive, as Martin Baggs described: *"Part of it was actually getting the invitation from Andrew Wyllie, as someone I knew and someone who has a similar value set. So that was a big piece as well. And obviously then I think from a pure business point of view the opportunity to be working with a group of like-minded senior leaders of industry has a big plus to it."*

Secondly, the group leader plays a crucially important role in not only helping participants to make sense of their experiences and how to act on them in business leadership roles, but also challenging them to make commitments as a group to act, and then subsequently keeping participants connected with each other and supporting them and holding them to account to act on their experiences and commitments.

This role the group leader plays is complemented by the role of HRH The Prince of Wales, through the mechanism of the formal report-back session. The need to make a formal report on the action taken as a result of the Seeing is Believing visit is another useful accountability mechanism that helps business leaders prioritise making the time to act amidst multiple competing demands.

Many also noted the crucial role of Business in the Community as well in helping business leaders prioritise action through the support they provided to groups after visits. For Mike Wareing the follow-up by Business in the Community played a pivotal role in ensuring that commitment was turned into action:



"I think, the absolutely essential role of BitC - which I think is an absolutely extraordinary organization, and unique in many ways - is providing a genuine, independent connection and interface between the NGO charity world and the corporate world. And actually understands both, which is pretty unique. And has extraordinary convening power in terms of the CEO top leadership group of people that they've cultivated over the years through the Seeing is Believing programme."

Mike Wareing

Convening, inspiring, and holding to account: The role of HRH The Prince of Wales

The Prince's vision for his Seeing is Believing programme is that it should convene, inspire and hold business leaders to account to take action. It is clear from our conversations with visit leaders that his vision is being achieved and that his continued support is a key factor in this success.

Convening

The story of the Prince's role in establishing the Seeing is Believing programme and his on-going support are key drivers in establishing the credibility and status of the programme and in persuading busy and unengaged business leaders to make the time to participate in the first place. As John Varley noted:

"Anybody who does a little bit of homework knows that the things set up by the Prince of Wales and he gives it its credibility. And if you take the trouble to look into it a bit, it has some fame, as you know, so the starting point is that he initiated this. People know that he is completely sincere about it, and that's a very, very good starting point."

Inspiring

The influence of being exposed to powerful role models is a theme running through all

the stories we heard from the leaders we spoke to. Many noted the influence of the Prince in the same way. As Martin Baggs put it:

"Like most people, I have got a huge amount of time and respect for the Prince because I think He clearly exhibits many of the things that we have talked about today in terms of His own personal values and commitments."

Holding to account

The third particularly significant role the Prince plays in the contributing to the impact of the Seeing is Believing process is through the mechanism of the Report Back. The experience of the Seeing is Believing visit may be inspirational, but there is still work to do to act on that inspiration, and the responsibility to report back to the Prince about actions taken can be a helpful nudge to prioritise making the time to act. Angus Russell describes this from his point of view:

"If you don't have any accountability you can throw out initiatives or requests all day long. If there's no deadline set or no feeling of accountability like that, guess what, no-one does anything. It all sort of fades very rapidly. So I'm sure, because it's the Prince of Wales, that with him personally getting involved like that, people commit to attending the report-back. That does give a deadline to work towards, it gives a process that people have to be aware of, that this is going to be required and you build towards that."



How Seeing is Believing could be further improved

We explored with our interviewees their thoughts around how the Seeing is Believing experience could be improved to be even more effective and impactful in the future. For the most part, the leaders we spoke to were of the view that, subject to a few tweaks here and there, the experiential learning visits worked extremely well. Where most of the energy for improvement is required is around enhancing the engagement with groups after the visit.

Developing skills for articulating your personal manifesto

The main theme to emerge about the visit itself was around the need to provide more space for leaders and future leaders to discuss and develop their own personal narrative about their perspective on the role of business in society. By being able to effectively articulate and communicate what it is that they stand for, and developing their leadership manifesto, they argued, leaders are able to engage others in their ideas and counter the pervasive narrative that responsible leadership is unimportant. As Andrew Wyllie noted: *“The sooner you can start to articulate and communicate what you stand for, the faster you’re going to refine that thinking. I think an opportunity that gave young talented leaders the opportunity to refine and communicate those skills would be valuable – because if somebody doesn’t buy your values and behaviours they won’t follow you.”*

Greater emphasis on post-visit engagement, and leveraging the influence of the visit leader and Business in the Community

The role of the group leader, the report back to HRH The Prince of Wales, and the support of Business in the Community were all noted as crucial in translating the power of the visit experience into new activities and behaviours afterwards. But this area was noted as where the most scope for improving impact lay. Ken McMeikan offered some suggestions in this regard, such as ‘Grand Designs’ style return visits, following up with the leaders and the community groups to determine whether the

impact was sustained. *“If you brought the same people back to look at the issue they’d looked at, given chief executives and senior leaders are meant to be about long-term strategy, not just short-term reactive. Let’s look at the issue two, three, four, five years on. Go and see the issue again, see how things have changed.”* He also suggests that holding CEOs to account by evaluating the impact on the issue and measuring their connection with the programme would help to ensure it remained on their list of priorities.

For Ken McMeikan, responsibility for ensuring that relationships are maintained and impact sustained falls largely with the visit leader, who should be involved in developing long term connections between activists and thought leaders and the CEO alumni. Mike Wareing believes that BitC are in a unique and powerful position in terms of their credibility, and ought to leverage that influence and be more assertive with the CEOs in following up their commitments. *“Because the enormous asset that BitC has got is that there are people involved with BitC who, if they actually call a meeting of senior business, the amount of respect that they’re held in is such that actually people will come. And that’s incredibly valuable. Very few organisations have that. And personally I think BitC could and should use that more to actually keep hold of these people and not let them slip away.”*

Duncan Tait suggested BitC should be more explicit in their contracting with CEOs in advance to ensure that they recognise that there is a very real expectation that they must commit to action after the visit. *“If people are going to pitch up for a Seeing is Believing visit we need to set an expectation with them that you’re not just out for a day in the sunshine. As a result of going you are expected to do something. And then it becomes quite natural. Yes, I’m going to go to the Reconvene meeting, I knew exactly why – this was a two-way street and here’s my contribution to the two-way street.”*

Extend the reach beyond the current leader to future leaders too

For Andrew Wyllie, those with the potential to become CEOs are identified as early as their twenties. They stand out through what they do and how they behave. As such, a programme that targeted these younger leaders would help them develop their potential: *“And let’s assume you’re going to be chief exec of Glaxo SmithKline by the time you’re 45. That means by the time you were, say, 40, you’ll have run their second-largest division, their biggest division. So by the time you were 35 you would have been doing this, by the time you were 30 you would have been doing – so by the time you were 25 you would have caught somebody’s attention. If that makes sense. So actually the time to make the biggest impact on your leadership potential and application is actually when you’re in your 20s, not in your 40s.”*

Engage and leverage the influence of the Seeing is Believing alumni more broadly

Some CEOs, including Martin Baggs, also suggested follow-up networking events which could again leverage the credibility and influence of the past participating CEOs and offer inspiration to future leaders. *“You have got some really, really big business leaders involved in this. It’s also the influence that they can have as well. ... Some of the junior managers across various organisations would gain a hell of a lot just by having a chat with some of those guys. But a lot of those in the room that you’ve got there have got a huge amount to give, and would be a huge inspiration to a lot of youngsters out there.”*

Similarly, Stephen Howard and John Varley saw a role for Seeing is Believing alumni in engaging and mentoring future leaders, and offering their experience and expertise to support future agents of change. *“Business in the Community has a fantastic network of people who have thought about serving their community through their business and so there’s an awful lot of experience there. I’ve always found that people are very generous with their time. So if you’ve got a particular issue that you’re thinking about when you’re trying to press forward in some philanthropic or charitable endeavour there will be somebody else who’s been through that ground before you and might be available.”*

Finally, CEOs saw value in reconvening visit leaders and hosts from each year to explore their personal journeys, to build a sense of group identity, encourage them to host future visits, and learn from their experiences. *“What have they learned. Because, you know, although we think we’re getting reasonably good at all this now, when I meet other companies I’m constantly reminded that we’re just not good enough, actually! Because there’s always more to do, isn’t there? And we don’t hold all of the good ideas. We don’t have a monopoly over all the good ideas. So just learning from other companies.”*

It was suggested by Andrew Wyllie and others, that by reporting back on stories of success both in terms of the impact on the issue being addressed, and the benefit to the participating organisation, would be a valuable means of mobilising the network of alumni from the programme and encouraging future participation. *“Because again, the more evidence that we’ve got of demonstrating this makes good business sense, or examples where relationships were formed that have gone on to lead to real business benefit.”*

PARTICIPANTS' NEW ACTIVITIES AS A RESULT OF THE EXPERIENCES

Summary

- Acting differently is a leap of faith and takes courage and authenticity
- Culture change is greatly facilitated by having the Chief Executive on board
- Leverage the power of the shadow you cast to encourage others to act similarly
- Model the behaviours you want to see in others, and give permission through what you are seen to do
- Articulate the rationale, the business case for responsible leadership
- Provide opportunities for others to have first-hand experiences
- Engage and integrate all stakeholders into decision making
- Integrate responsible leadership into organisational strategy
- Reward and celebrate those who embrace responsible leadership behaviours
- Choose activities that align with the business and have tangible impact.

Acting on this constellation of different kinds of experiences – both from Seeing is Believing and more broadly – meant, in practice, the leaders taking on new kinds of leadership roles both inside and outside the organisation.

New ways of leading – taking a leap of faith

Although they were all influenced by the experiences we have so far explored, in order to integrate the lessons into their leadership style, the leaders we spoke to described that this required an authentic passion, courage and a leap of faith.

Although the leaders we spoke to had come to understand the logic of how and why they could act differently, many believed that to take this leap of faith to actually act differently required real courage. There was certainly a fear of criticism if things didn't work out, particularly if the issue being tackled carries stigma for some, such as working with ex-offenders, or HIV and AIDs as it did at the

time, as described by Ken McMeikan. *"I do think it takes time and it takes a degree of courage. The time's an easy one, you just prioritise it. The courage actually isn't so easy because – what I've found is that if you've got a large organisation with a lot of people they tend to be doing a lot within the community without you realising it. So the courage you have to have is often giving people permission to do more. Because the risk is that they become distracted from looking after customers. Or if your business isn't performing well you'll be criticised that you became distracted."*

There was also a widespread recognition that if a leader was going to take this path, they needed to truly believe in what they were doing, it needed to be authentic and genuine – as Ken described again: *"I think what needs to change is the number of business leaders that embrace the responsibility and are more public about it. There's an authenticity and genuineness that has to come through, because the biggest danger in all of this is the general public think it's all in pursuit of profits and it's not genuine, it's not meant, it's not real. It's marketing. It's all about image rather than substance."*

Leading change across the business

Many of the leaders spoke about specific activities they had personally become involved with as a result of these combinations of experiences from Seeing is Believing and elsewhere – such as volunteering their own time, mentoring, and even using their influence to enable local charitable organisations to use the company's facilities for holding meetings.

But most of what the leaders described was really about leading cultural change in their own organisations to encourage others to act in different ways. This stemmed from a recognition that a critical mass of people across organisations needed to be thinking and acting differently, and this was easier to achieve if the chief executive was visibly on board, and much harder to achieve if not.

Ken McMeikan told us: *“Leadership is all relative. It doesn't matter where you are in an organisation, you have the same responsibilities. The difference is, I think, just the scale... The power of one multiplied can be as strong, if not stronger, as the power of one chief exec trying to get a whole organisation behind something. So if you've got that responsibility at all levels I think the organisation can still be hugely influential and impactful, even if the chief executive doesn't seem to be that supportive of it. The difference, I think, is if you can line up both: where the chief executive is passionate and open and engaging and empowering and you've got managers at all levels doing the same. I think you get the sort of one-plus-one-equals-three.*

I think the other thing is that there can be a negative thing if the chief executive isn't behind it. Then what you'll get, I think, within the organisation, those who are committed to it anyway naturally will still do something, but you have a whole untapped resource where people, because they get a steering direction from the chief executive: don't get involved with it. Worse is when the chief executive, sends out messages that they just don't want people

to be involved because it's not part of the core business.”

There were several different kinds of activities that leaders reported to have put time into in an effort to bring this cultural change to life, and these are explored below.

“Leveraging your shadow”

Being conscious of how people interpret your behaviour and language, and using that to influence theirs

Several of the leaders we spoke to talked about how over time, they had come to realise the importance of how they were seen to be, as a leader, what they were seen to do with their time, and what they were seen to be interested in. Recognising the power of this symbolic influence, the ‘shadow they cast’ and example they set, many sought to employ this in service of encouraging others in the organisation to act in a different way.

These leaders recognised the importance of setting the right example and giving permission through their actions, to behave responsibly, as Ken McMeikan discussed: *“One of my biggest roles is developing people and developing leaders of the future, developing my own successor, developing the board of the future. My hope is that through personal example and through giving them permission they develop into the type of leader that I would like to see for the future. But it is a specific part of my responsibility.”*

But being authentic, being consistent, and walking the talk was also considered critical to this influence, as articulated by Duncan Tait: *“In my job, people watch everything you do. Do you smile when you walk into the office? Do you look a bit down? Are your trousers creased? People notice everything. So if you say you believe in a set of things, people have to see you believing in that set of things as well. And some of them are symbolic. So if I give you an example, our Manchester office decided, what a great thing, they're going to run a Children in Need call centre for the night.*

And people travelled from all over the UK to be there. And I thought, do you know what, I should actually be there. I brought my family with me and we were bringing cups of tea to people at desks and I was taking calls. Now that's largely symbolic but it does show that we don't just say these things, we mean them. And then people watch, do I behave with integrity?"

This was echoed by Rob Devey: *"The biggest thing you can do is be an exemplar – doing it and talking about it. You've got to be credible when you say: "this is important". Every single leader has an enormous footprint, and this only increases the more senior you get. You cast an enormous shadow and it's down to you to choose where it falls. People say "If the boss is doing it, then it's OK for me to do it."*

For Martin Baggs, the influence of the CEO can set the tone for the whole organisation: *"One thing you've got to realise, and one thing I always try to encourage the guys on. You're always casting a shadow. The higher you get up in the business the bigger shadow you're going to cast. And people will watch you. People will watch you the whole day. They'll watch your behaviour, they'll watch what you do, they'll watch how you talk to people, they'll watch how you respond to issues, and you set the tone for the business."*

Andrew Wyllie agreed: *"One of the things I underestimated when I was perhaps earlier in my career is the significance of the leadership influence on behaviours and activities, not least because it's quite uncomfortable to think of yourself having that sort of influence. But time and time again actually I think it is reinforced; people do watch what you do and what you say about things and the things that you consider important as a business. Therefore it's fundamentally important that leaders set the right tone and set the right example and reflect the values and behaviours that they want the outside world to see. You can't have the two things disconnected."*

Angus Russell also comments: *"When I became CEO, I mean you really do get the influence. On becoming CEO I think I was both realistic and somewhat humble in the sense of I didn't honestly think that one person could influence an organisation. I thought you could influence people around you and then that would influence, but I take that back in retrospect now. You're watched so much and you're under the microscope so much, you do have this enormous position of say, where you have to set an example, because people do look at you and they do take a lead from what you do."*

Similarly, the subjects leaders choose to speak of, and how they frame what they say, can all be far more influential than one might expect. The leaders we spoke to talked about how over time they had become aware of this, and took care with their language to use this influence to shape how others behaved, as Rob Devey explained: *"In business like in life I believe that 20% of effort is because you have to do it and 80% is because you want to do it. Engaging that 80% can make a massive difference in terms of overall productivity. I think the biggest thing I have done is give people permission through my own actions. A lot of what I have done is communication, a blog, a weekly note or an email saying: 'this is what I've been doing'. When that was taking my team out in the community or supporting other colleagues volunteering that became something that everybody knew about and knew that I was proud of."*

Part of using language well is being able to effectively and authentically articulate a rationale for why leaders behave in a certain way. Being able to make a compelling and coherent argument was considered a core skill, according to the leaders we spoke with such as Duncan Tait:



"Until you can make the breakthrough that you link what I call the two sides of the business case, this is good for the society we happen to be in, or the community, and it's good for our financial performance. Until you can connect those two things together it's kind of just words. You can tell immediately the companies that can articulate both sides of the story, and when you get both sides of the story, it's just beautiful. It is just beautiful. And if you can't articulate it simply it's probably not real." Duncan Tait

Creating opportunities for your employees to have their own first-hand experiences

Many of the people we spoke with recognised that, as first-hand experiences had been so influential in encouraging them to think and act differently, one of the most impactful things they could do to influence others was to create opportunities for them to have these kinds of first-hand experiences. Rob Devey for example talked about how, after his first Seeing is Believing visit, he had taken his own team for their own Seeing is Believing visit: *"I led a Seeing is Believing visit for my own team near one of our own sites in Bristol and saw first hand the impact on them. You'd see the fragility of literally the other side of the road to our offices. It forces you to reflect: "I've ended up here, running this business, and someone very similar to me, for a whole set of consequences that nobody could have predicted, has ended*

up in a hostel, without his kids or his family around, literally living from day to day". From that two or three of my team then went on to volunteer themselves and so inspire others. When you see the impact between making those commitments and action, and then the leverage effect you get from that, it is totally inspiring."

Integrating stakeholders directly into decision-making

Angus Russell took this theme of stimulating a change in culture by encouraging other employees to have first-hand experiences one step further by inviting key stakeholder groups to be present in the heart of decision-making conversations in the organisation: *"We started to regularly bring in patients to all employee meetings, encourage interaction between patients and employees here, and I got very involved in that myself, I met some wonderful patients, directly and, again, it's very humbling when you listen to what they've gone through in their lives, what they had to put up, that really reinforced the things I was doing."*

Integrate responsible business practice into strategic goals, set targets, and measure success

Another way of influencing others in the organisation to act was by addressing this broader idea of what it takes to be successful in business into the strategic goals of the organisation, and linking that to specific targets, measurable targets, as Rob Devey comments: *"In Prudential UK & Europe I chose to say: we're going to make impacting on communities one of our really critical objectives for the organization. As the CEO you are in an incredibly privileged position because you can define the objectives for the organization."*

Stephen Howard stressed the need to start with small, achievable targets to avoid becoming overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge:



You don't need to start by saying: we're going to cure cancer. You need to start by saying: we're going to help three people. Let's see if we can't help them. And the three

leads to 13, leads to 23, and on it goes like that." Stephen Howard

Rewarding and celebrating exemplars

Closely linked to setting goals and targets is rewarding those who exemplify the new way of acting that is being encouraged. Most of the leaders we spoke with talked about the critical need to recognise and reward those who embraced the desired kinds of actions and behaviours, both to encourage those individuals and help sustain these behaviours, and also for the influence this would have on others, as Andrew Wyllie described: *"The more that we can make the consequence of the type of behaviour that we want to encourage very clear and very immediate, the more chance we have of encouraging that type of activity or that type of behaviour."*

Similarly, Stephen Howard talked about the importance of celebrating individual efforts, and sharing those stories: *"We started having contests within the organisation, nation against nation and region against region, who's got a good idea, who's doing some-thing, how do we begin to celebrate people, not just the well-known leaders in the place but people deeper into the organisation – ordinary people doing extraordinary things".*

Making it easy for people to engage by creating the infrastructure

Some leaders supported others in the organisation to take on new activities by removing stresses and barriers, and putting in place the support infrastructure to make it easier for people to act, as described by Rob Devey: *"In addition to scheduling the time, the other reason that people find volunteering tricky is the organization. So we take all that administration off people's hands, and we pay for that separately. It tells people it's important and it takes away," oh I'd love to do it but actually I can't go and do the risk assessment etc etc."* Our approach is: *"You tell us what you want to do, and we'll go to our whole list of partners, we'll find the right school, the right community centre or whatever. If you want to do something intellectual, that's fine; if you want to do something manual, that's fine; high skill; low skill; we'll get it all set up. All you need to do is schedule the time off for your team and make the most of the opportunity – for you, for your team and for the community."*

Attracting the right people into the organisation

As well as playing their part in creating the conditions that encourage others in the organisation to think and act differently, some of the leaders we spoke with, such as Andrew Wyllie, stressed the value of also focusing on being more mindful about actively seeking people with a certain kind of outlook when recruiting into the organisation: *"The best thing we can do is by attracting the best people who believe that that's part of their role as a leader."*

Choosing activities that have clear alignment with existing business and culture and that bring the most tangible and visible impact to business and society

Many of the leaders we spoke with talked about the need to choose to focus on engaging in activities where there was a clear alignment between the nature of the needs to be

addressed and the core competences of the organisation, as Stephen Howard described: *"It took us a while to find the right idea. We were full of enthusiasm but not necessarily full of knowledge about the problem or the real solutions that were needed. And it took us a while to scratch around and to find where were the needs and where were our assets, and how could the two line up the best?"*



"Find the things that really resonate within your business, that matter to your people, they get it, it makes sense, it matters to the communities that you serve.

Those are the kinds of things that really have longevity. And then build on that. And maybe we can help you and maybe there's others that can help you. And that's OK too." Stephen Howard

Many, including Stephen, also spoke about it being easier to get support and alignment for pursuing activities where there was a more tangible and visible way of grasping the positive commercial and societal impact: *"The other thing that I was attracted to, this particular initiative we got going on, was the outcomes were measurable. What were we trying to do? We were trying to get people into work. So you can tell. You know if somebody's gone into work. You don't always know how long they stay, we don't have the greatest record-keeping and that's almost beside the point. If we gave them the confidence, the skills and the access to get a job and to get something on their CV, that was a real outcome. And I like the tangibility of that."*

Leading change across industry and society

Summary

- Encourage peers from other organisations to collaborate on initiatives
- Invite peers onto Seeing is Believing visits
- Work together to create a critical mass to effect real change.

As well as playing their part in trying to stimulate a cultural shift inside their organisations, the leaders we spoke to also talked about how they had come to recognise the need to play a wider leadership role more broadly than just within their own organisation. Many noted how the externally-facing side of the role of a business leader had increased, taking on more of a 'public service' aspect. Martin Baggs, for example, said: *"The pressure on the leader is far more the upward and outward looking aspects of the role rather than the inward and downward looking aspects of the role."*

How the individuals we spoke to acted on this broader perspective varied, but many specifically voiced how they had deliberately sought to both influence and partner with their peers in other organisations – often by inviting them and leading them on a Seeing is Believing visit. Many had also acted on this shift in perspective by spending time chairing or participating in collaborative or multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as Business Action on Homelessness or Business in Community itself.

Ken McMeikan discussed examples of how he had persuaded other business leaders to work with him on collaborative initiatives around breakfast clubs and unemployment: *"I'm really proud of what we did at Greggs with Greggs breakfast clubs, in the fact that I was asked by the Prime Minister and HRH the Prince of Wales to look at how other businesses could scale up breakfast clubs and tackle child poverty. When I left Greggs, we already had*

something like 30 new companies involved in running their own breakfast clubs in partnership with Greggs with ambition to get to 300 clubs feeding somewhere in the region of 15,000 to 20,000 children every morning with a free school breakfast."

Several interviewees, such as Mike Wareing, talked about inviting peers to participate in Seeing is Believing visits, helping facilitate their experience on the visit, and supporting them and holding them to account to act afterwards, *"What I used to do – it was just the way that I chose to do it – was that I used to follow up with my group, usually twice in terms of a working dinner after all the formal debrief things on – and just try to keep in touch with people. Actually encourage them to do something."*

Several of the leaders also talked about how they had worked in partnership with their peers in other organisations, to generate a powerful critical mass to really have an impact on an issue, as described by John Varley: *"The most powerful thing that business leaders can do is to create leverage out of a movement. Where you get synergy and leverage is through a number of businesses collaborating with each other. I very much see that about the Business Action on Homelessness table where we've got quite diverse businesses represented as our national partners, but they create leverage by collaboration. If you've got business leaders who are prepared to do that it is extremely powerful."*

This perspective is echoed by Martin Baggs: *"Over the last years, 25 plus years I've got to know some great people across the industry, both on a business basis and also on a personal basis, and the real thing for me is that rather than just one business working on its own, if you get two or three, four, five or six businesses joined together, you can achieve a hell of a lot. And so for the visit that we ran last year, with the group of contractors and suppliers that we work with, I thought that was really good in terms of actually being able to get a group of guys together and look at something which you could almost work on together with a common cause."*

Many, such as John Varley, had also either taken a leadership role, or spent time chairing or participating in collaborative or multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as Business Action on Homelessness or Business in Community itself, and encouraging their peers to take collective ownership of these collaborative efforts: *"I certainly branched out as a result of the experience I had through Seeing is Believing and Business Action on Homelessness. So I did some things that were outside my comfort zone. I became president of the UK drugs policy commission, which was something I would never have done, I think, if I had not had these experiences. I became chairman of a gay and lesbian community group in the East End, which again I would never have done if it hadn't have been for these experiences."*

Several also noted that fulfilling this broader, more public role involved being able to relate well with people from all different walks of life. Stephen Howard talked of: *"The pressures from shareholders, from government, from lobbyists, from media, from all those people is going to increase, and it's going to make it a trickier job for leaders going forward. But I think that's a good thing. I think the kinds of people that will go into those jobs, knowing that it's going to be public and very political – but they've got wider constituencies, they have to serve us, is a healthy thing"*.



Duncan Tait, Fujitsu, building business community partnerships to address local issues. Tottenham, 2012

PARTICIPANTS' NEW THINKING AS A RESULT OF THE EXPERIENCES

Summary

- What it means to be a successful leader has changed
- Contribution to society and to wider stakeholders is as important as profit maximisation
- Society's attitude and expectations of business have changed
- As business is now so influential, issues in society should be tackled by collaborative leadership of government, business and civil society
- Responsible leadership brings value, not cost, builds customer loyalty and wins business
- Responsible leadership attracts talent and motivates employees.

Through these various combinations of experiences and their subsequent actions the leaders we spoke with had all, in different ways, come to reach a broader view about the role and purpose of business in society. These journeys were crucially combined with a realisation of changing attitudes and expectations that society has of business and business leaders. The leaders we spoke to seemed to have internalised these changing expectations and internalised them to an extent that they now think differently about the purpose of business and the role the leader plays in achieving that purpose.

The world has changed, and what it means to be judged a successful business leader has changed too

Many noted how they had come to realise how shifts in the wider environment – like the 2008 crash and much greater transparency driven by technological change – had changed the expectations on business and how their success as business leaders would be judged.

Angus Russell for example argued that the 2008 crash had contributed to a fatigue with the 1980s and 1990s focus on profit maximisation, and that expectations on business were now more complex: it's now not enough just to make and sell your product, you have to be able to articulate how your

overall contribution to society is valuable if you are to be considered successful, *"Business these days, it's not so easy to just say, oh, you make a product and you sell it and your job's done. It doesn't end there any more, not in our world anyway, now there are real comparisons to be made about showing that what you did was valuable, that it made some real beneficial contribution to society. There was this period when the phrase "yuppies" came along and everybody got caught up in the financial boom of the 80's and 90's period, and that's when the world became so focused on making money and finance and business, almost to the expense of other things. There seems to me there's a bit of a fatigue with that, the whole financial thing came crashing down, I think that's made a lot of people question what was it all about then."*

Rob Devey also emphasised that the 2008 crash has changed the way success in business is judged:



"The reality of the financial crisis has been very bruising - we've been through the mill. However, I think that is a great opportunity because Boards and senior leaders

in business are aware of the need to re-frame and re-set the conversation with society."

Rob Devey

Stephen Howard noted how the greater transparency driven by technological change has fundamentally shifted how aware people are of poor business practice, and contributed to an expectation of something better: *"The world is a much more transparent place than it was. That's a good thing because people got away with all kinds of stuff in the old days. Shocking, when I think – even in my time! Let alone 100 years ago."*

John Varley and Andrew Wyllie also noted a new kind of expectation from society about what would be deemed a successful business. John Varley put it like this: *"I think, what society wants to see is business generating employment, generating economic growth, behaving responsibly to its customers, and being thoughtful about the space that it occupies in its communities. That might be thoughtful about the environment or it might be thoughtful about senior pay or it might be thoughtful about support for the local hospice. There are lots of ways it can – but we should be absolutely clear that there is an expectation what matters is what society expects."*

And for Andrew Wyllie: *"There is a greater recognition now that business is not just about making money. It's not just about a return to the shareholders. We do have a responsibility to provide employment opportunities, we do have a responsibility to enhance the society in which we live. Especially in a world where public-sector budgets are constrained, it's an important part of our role. And our customers reflect that more now as well."*

Several leaders spoke about how they had come to realise that being judged successful as a business leader meant creating value for a wide group of stakeholders, not just shareholders, as Stephen Howard described: *"There are your shareholders, your customers, your employees, the communities in which you operate, all of whom have a say... Some have a more direct say. Your shareholders can turf you out quickly if they don't like what you're doing. Your communities will take longer. But if you don't bring all of those constituencies with you, life's going to be harder. It was this kind of eye-opening moment that this isn't just about hitting the numbers, or the short-term numbers, even though you're rewarded on hitting the short-term numbers. The success, as I would define*

it, of the job would be your long-term numbers. And your long-term numbers are measured in profit and earnings per share but in all the other metrics that we use as well."

Similarly, Ken McMeikan believes that leaders have a responsibility beyond generating profit, to the society in which they operate:



"Profits are absolutely right for a business and absolutely necessary because it's a measure of your success, but it is the foundation that profit is built on is where society and community and environment all come into place. How proud are you, when you look back, on the quality of those profits? For me as an individual I've always been in big-people businesses. Society is about people. And therefore you can't disconnect business from society. Business is society. That's lost in some chief execs' understanding of their responsibility. So your responsibility in leading a business is actually leading a part of society and contributing to the wider society."

Ken McMeikan

This perspective was echoed by Martin Baggs: *"You have got a responsibility to the wider community. You have got a responsibility to the environment. Directly we employ 5,000 staff, indirectly we've got another 15,000 contractors that work for us as well. We're providing a service that provides water and waste water to 14 million people out there. And so the responsibility that sits directly on your shoulders is far greater than what you do as your day job. We've got a big part to play in both the local and wider community and wider society. In the same way that you actually set the tone for your business, your business is also setting the tone for society."*

A new kind of collaborative leadership of government, business and civil society

One theme that emerged was a sense that the conventional notion that it is the responsibility of government alone to deal with social challenges has broken down, and that because of the rising influence and capability of business, actually a new kind of collaborative leadership from government, business and civil society organisations is now required, as reflected on by Mike Wareing, *"The amazing thing is that you look at a number of corporate organizations that we have quite a number of them are genuinely more powerful as an organization than a lot of governments. They employ large numbers of people all over the world and actually can genuinely, and a number of them, more and more do, cause real things to happen. When I left it, KPMG had 140,000 people in 150 or so countries. You take organizations like that and you get three or four or five of them round the table and they really can do some really quite remarkable things because the firepower they've got is really considerable. And a lot of it is about having people on the ground in many of these countries actually motivated and organized to do these things. And actually the corporate world is in a unique position to do that. More so than any government. Because no government is that global."*

Stephen Howard spoke in a similar vein: *"It probably wasn't until I got into more senior roles that I began to think about this ability that we had as business to influence change in ways that others didn't. The thing about being with a large company, this is probably true of any business but I happened to be in large companies, you have to think beyond borders and election cycles because my business plan crossed borders and crossed election cycles. And I also realised if you wait for politicians and others to do it you're probably going to wait a long time. But I know that there is something that business can do that government and other non-profits can't because of the scale, the resource, the number of employees they have."*

Creating value for society creates value for business, not cost

Another theme that emerged was the recognition that the old convention that tackling social problems was just adding cost to the business is also out of date. Several of the leaders we spoke with talked about how helping to address challenges in society helps build customer loyalty and win more business, such as Andrew Wyllie, *"Now I happen to believe we actually get more work from our customers because we are a Platinum Big Tick member of Business in the Community. I just happen to believe that to be true. Because I know that our customers measure the type of thing that we're doing in that regard, and the fact that we can turn to that BitC accreditation, or achievement level, materially improves our ability to win work in an area that we think is important anyway."*

Duncan Tait offered a specific example, *"If in some way you can connect your business model to solving these problems, so you can grow your business at the same time as helping address some of these issues. Look at M&S, our engineers that fix their tills, the thing M&S love about what we do, we send nothing to landfill and the cars they drive are, the lowest carbon emissions of all similar vehicles. So we can now connect into plan A for them."*

Many also spoke about the commercial value of being able to attract talent into the organisation, as captured by Andrew Wyllie:



"In our business our ability to attract the very best talent is dependent on our being able to answer questions from talented graduates who've got choices. 'What is the company's view on this?', 'What are the values of the organisation?' These are not questions that would have been asked ten years ago. The very best young people making career choices today are acutely aware of their responsibilities. Much more so than maybe a generation above them." Andrew Wyllie

Similarly, Rob Devey and others recognised that making community a priority helps engage and motivate employees, and in turn, can lead to improved effectiveness and productivity, *“Financial results are critically important. However, the way to deliver them is not to bang on about them. Most people don't care. What happens to motivate them is not cash, capital and profit, but rather the feeling of working for an organization that supports the individual in whatever they do, professionally, personally or within the community. That makes people hugely more effective. And all of those people being hugely more effective means better financial results.”*

Duncan Tait offered a similar perspective: *“if we better engage and enable our people they'll do a better job for customers who'll give us more work in return and we'll grow and make more profit. And in that sentence it then gives you a wider view of what a company's role should be in society in general our people want to know they work for a decent company.”*

The resulting shift in thinking

So while many had started their career either with a view on the social purpose of business, or a view centred on wealth creation and generating employment, they had now come to a broader and more nuanced perspective. This arose from general shifts such as the changing expectations of society and different stakeholder groups, which had exposed weaknesses in the prevailing 'profit-maximisation' model of business, as well as their first-hand experiences, influential role models, and Seeing is Believing visits.

This broader view might be summarised as reframing what it means to be judged as successful as a business leader.

Each in their own ways, had come to the position that their goal was to create value for

all stakeholder groups, not just shareholders, and that they had a leadership role in wider society, not just in their businesses. Thus, to be judged successful means not just to have good short term profitability numbers, but also to be able to demonstrate the value you have created for all stakeholder groups over the longer term, and that the former does not take priority over the latter.

They had come to recognise that business leaders now need to work with government and civil society leaders in a way they didn't in the past because business has become that much more influential. With greater global integration, and stronger networks and greater resources, businesses now have an ability to influence and lead change on some societal issues and challenges that governments and civil society organisations do not have, and so it has become essential that business leaders engage in playing that broader collaborative leadership role in partnership with government leaders and civil society leaders.

At the same time, while in the past engaging in social issues had been perceived as adding cost to a business, these leaders had come to the view that that shifts in the expectations of customers and employees had meant that playing your part in leading change to address societal challenges was now core to growing the financial value of the business, particularly in relation to attracting and retaining customers, and attracting and motivating employees.

HOW TO GET MORE RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS LEADERS?

Summary of findings

Our research uncovered some illuminating and inspiring leadership journeys, which took our CEOs to a deep and embedded understanding of the influence that they and their organisations could have on the societal issues in their communities. Their shifts in thinking were inspired by their early lives, early careers, first hand experiences, and influential role models, as well as their Seeing is Believing experience.

The Seeing is Believing experience in particular provided a powerful vehicle for engaging them in the issues and committing them to action, by convening a credible and influential group of leaders, exposing them first hand to the realities of people's lives whilst simultaneously demonstrating the simplicity of the solutions, and by creating conditions that helped them prioritise acting.

As a result, our leaders were moved to stimulate cultural change in their organisations to develop a critical mass of individuals thinking and acting differently. This they did by leveraging the power of the shadow they cast, modelling the behaviours they wanted to see in others, encouraging, facilitating and rewarding these behaviours, integrating this thinking into their strategic goals, and recruiting the right people into the organisation. To lead this cultural change took courage, authenticity and a leap of faith.

Outside of their organisations, our CEOs sought also to lead change across their industry and society, through influencing and partnering with peers, encouraging participation on Seeing is Believing visits, and working collaboratively to leverage the power of groups of business leaders working together to effect a sustained impact on societal issues,

They articulated an awareness of a significant shift in thinking in terms of what it means to be successful as a leader, the recognition of a need for a new, collaborative leadership of government, business and civil society, and an understanding that looking after the communities in which we operate creates value to the business, not cost.

Our starting assumption was that a big part of how you get more of the kind of business that is a force for good is through fostering a certain kind of organisational culture, and part of how you influence organisational culture is through having more of the 'right' kind of business leaders. So what have we learnt about how we catalyse more of this?

The learning from the current and former chief executives we spoke to about their journeys is that a constellation of different kinds of experiences are valuable in shaping the kind of thinking and acting we need to encourage more of.

How to get more responsible business leadership

1. Leadership behaviour

First and foremost leaders themselves should act as exemplars in what they say and do to help make it easier for others to follow. This means that a key facet of being a responsible leader today is creating the conditions that will allow the responsible leaders of tomorrow to flourish.

- Champion responsible leadership on public platforms and in conversations with peers.
- Encourage responsible leadership in their organisations – pay attention to:
 - The goals they set.
 - The stories they tell.
 - The shadow they cast through what they are seen to do.
 - What they hold people accountable for.
 - Who they celebrate and reward, and what for.

2. Talent management

To date, the extent to which organisations have ended up with leaders who can play this kind of leadership role well (or not) has in practice been less to do with design and more to do with just good (or bad) luck. How can we help ensure we end up *by design* with more people in leadership positions who've had these kinds of experiences and will lead in this kind of way?

This research would suggest that to get more responsible business leaders, we need to foster the conditions that would lead to more people in senior leadership positions having had some of the following kinds of experiences:

- Early life – people who, whether influenced by family, school or something else, developed strong values around wanting to achieve something positive for society through their life's work.

- First-hand experiences of pressing social challenges, relationships with people experiencing them, and people and organisations working effectively to help address them.
- Early career experience in organisations with a strongly-held culture and values of responsible and sustainable business.
- Exposure to senior leaders with a passion for this kind of business leadership who act as role-models or mentors.
- Support to reflect on and make sense of these kinds of experiences and how to act on them in business leadership roles.

Organisations should deliberately encourage, value and seek in recruitment, career development planning and succession planning people who've had these kinds of experiences. They need to value experiences like volunteering, secondments to voluntary organisations and participating in Seeing is Believing groups, not because they are 'nice-to-haves' that demonstrate a rounded individual, but because of the crucial contribution they make to developing a worldview, relational ability and an organisational culture that is more valuable than it used to be.

The most impactful learning comes from experience, experiences that are laden with emotion. Experiences such as Seeing is Believing induce a state of physiological arousal that leads to effective learning in the moment, and an enhanced perception of resourcefulness, which results in improved performance back at work. So leaders ought to embed these kinds of experiences into their organisation's leadership development activities, whether by expanding the use they make of Seeing is Believing visits and connecting them more systematically to their wider portfolio of leadership development work, or by directly embedding these kinds of experiences into their own graduate, high potential and senior leadership development activities.

Previous Ashridge research suggests that to successfully embed this kind of learning into leadership development activities, leaders should give thought to the following:

Give participants the chance to develop relationships with people experiencing some of the world's most pressing challenges, and also with people working to help address these challenges.

Give participants a chance to engage with new ideas to help make sense of the demands of this new business context like ecology, complexity, systems thinking and social constructionism, and how these link with business language through new concepts like 'shared value', 'brand substance', 'closed loop manufacturing' and 'integrated reporting'.

Support participants to make their own sense of these experiences and relate them to their organisational roles through action learning and business challenge strategic projects.

Help participants develop and articulate their own authentically held view on the purpose of their work, and the value it creates for wider society.

Build a sense of common endeavour among participants, and a group commitment to act.

Draw on more senior leaders to invite participants to take part, help them make sense of their experience, and support them and hold them to account to act differently afterwards.

3. Experiential learning and the Seeing is Believing programme

Seeing is Believing has proved to be a powerful and enduring process for supporting business leaders to think and act differently. It relies on the ownership and stewardship of past participants to continue to play this role. To continue to make the contribution it does, it needs the active support of today's chief executives to do the following:

- Think of Seeing is Believing as a shared resource owned by the UK's chief executives that exists to continue to catalyse more of the 'right' kind of business leadership.
- Play an active role in leading Seeing is Believing groups:

- Invite other business leaders to participate.
- Integrate the Seeing is Believing Programme into the organisation's leadership development strategy.
- Help them to make sense of the experiences they have on their visit, and think through their scope for acting collectively through the influence they have in their organisations.
- Support, encourage and hold them to account for thinking and acting differently in the months and years after the visit, and give them courage to take a leap of faith.
- Collaborate with other businesses through the Seeing is Believing Programme.

This research identified five specific ways in which the impact of the Seeing is Believing process could be increased:

- **Ongoing support to help participants embed this learning into all aspects of leadership:** The Seeing is Believing Programme has proven particularly powerful as a catalyst for action around the social issue the visit focused on, for example homelessness, ex-offenders, or education. We have seen that this change in behaviour, combined with other factors, does often lead to a change in the way the leaders think about the role of business and leadership more broadly. In order to ensure this happens more often and to a greater extent there is an opportunity to build into the Seeing is Believing Programme a process that would proactively encourage and support participants to reflect on how they might translate the learning from the visit beyond the specific issue into other aspects of the business and leadership behaviour.

- **Helping participants develop their own narrative on the value of business in society.** Seeing is Believing does an amazing job of catalysing action, collective action by business leaders. It could do more to support leaders to develop and articulate their own narratives and rationales on the purpose of their work and that of their organisations, and the value it creates for wider society. It could do this by introducing and helping participants make their own sense of ideas like ecology, complexity, systems thinking and social constructionism, and how these link with business language through new concepts like 'shared value', 'brand substance', 'closed loop manufacturing' and 'integrated reporting'.
- **Placing more emphasis on keeping groups engaged after the Seeing is Believing visit.** Play a more active, determined and longer-term role in keeping participants connected with each other and supporting them and holding them to account to act on their experiences and commitments.
- **Developing an engaged and active alumni.** Place more emphasis on keeping the wider Seeing is Believing alumni community of business leaders engaged, connected and active in the longer term, perhaps through reconvening group of leaders to share learning on ongoing impacts from their groups' work, or developing a broader role for alumni in mentoring high potential future leaders.
- **Diversify the target audience.** The leadership journeys we have looked at in this study show that those leaders who had the earliest experiential exposure to the broader social purpose of business were able to integrate this thinking into the way they behaved at work from earlier in their careers. For this reason there would be value in developing a Seeing is Believing offer for leaders identified at all levels of the organisation, from graduates to middle management.



Alex Gourlay, Alliance Boots, addressing high street restoration, Croydon, 2013

CASE STUDIES: LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS

Andrew Wyllie



Early thoughts and influences

At the start of Andrew Wyllie's career, the role of business in society, he confesses, was not really on his radar. Following graduation however, he began working for an organisation that took him frequently overseas to the Middle East and West Africa, and through that experience, began to appreciate the role that leaders could have: *"That had quite a big influence on me in terms of leadership and the impact of leadership."*

He acknowledges too, the "shaping effect" that his early childhood environment had on his later thinking: *"I'm not a psychologist but I think there's no question that the environment that you're brought up in, the influence of your parents, the peer group, has a shaping effect, intangibly, on what's happening all the time. We don't actually realise it and the values that your family, your society, your relationships have on you are quite defining."*

The Seeing is Believing visit was also influential to Andrew's thinking around the role of business in society: *"One of the moments on the Seeing is Believing visit that we did was when we were just talking to the pupils about homework and the presumption that there was somewhere for children to do their homework in their living environment. And one of the speakers stood up and talked about the work that they were doing going round getting hold of tables and chairs from charity shops and auctions to provide the pupils just with a table at home to do their homework on. It's a stark reminder of the work that we've got to do to make sure that everybody has as best a chance in terms of achieving their potential. And just listening to the pupils talking about the reality of their environment is hugely sobering, really."*

For Andrew, bringing a group of leaders together also provided a valuable forum for interaction, for sharing experiences, broadening the discussion and raising the profile of the visit: *"I think we got more engagement from the school as an entity because there were ten businesses rather than just one. Because they'd clearly set time aside to prepare, and the pupils had all thought about it and came armed with good and challenging questions, and there was a good discussion. I think if it was just a bilateral thing I'm not sure that you'd get the same level of – it wouldn't have the same level of importance as an event, and I think there would be a danger that you would miss an opportunity of having a much broader discussion about the role business can play in a community rather than talking specifically about one project or one business."*

Leading change across the business

What is critical for Andrew, in terms of the influence a leader has to change attitudes within an organisation, is their own behaviour: *"One of the things I underestimated when I was perhaps earlier in my career is the significance of the leadership influence on behaviours and activities, not least because it's quite uncomfortable to think of yourself having that sort of influence. But time and time again actually I think it is reinforced, people do watch what you do and what you say about things and the things that you consider important as a business, and therefore it's fundamentally important that leaders set the right tone and set the right example and reflect the values and behaviours that they want the outside world to see. You can't have the two things disconnected."*

Similarly, what you choose to spend time on as a business sends a clear message about what you consider to be important: *"It's what we choose to do as a company with our customers and with other interested parties. These send very clear messages. So we weren't in the House of Lords talking about*

our business, we were in the House of Lords talking about youth unemployment, career opportunities, skills training etc., etc. And that sends very, very strong signals.”

For Andrew an ability to articulate and communicate what you stand for is also critical to your ability as a leader, to influence: *“Because the sooner you can start to articulate and communicate what you stand for, the faster you’re going to – first of all refine that thinking... I think a programme or an opportunity that gave young talented leaders the opportunity to refine and communicate those skills – because if somebody doesn’t buy your values and behaviours they won’t follow you.”*

Andrew is also mindful of the power of immediate, positive consequences in encouraging desired behaviour, and as such his organisation does *“a lot of work around recognising individuals’ contributions to the community, we have annual award ceremonies like many other businesses...because the people in the audience pick up on those triggers.”*

For Andrew, recruiting and developing the right people is also vital to encouraging responsible leadership and activities within your own organisation: *“It’s not a – it’s a nurturing, not a teaching, if you see what I mean. The best thing we can do is by attracting the best people who believe that that’s part of their role as a leader, and the more opportunity we can give them to practise those skills the better.”*

The Seeing is Believing visit specifically spurred Andrew to redouble his efforts to ensure everyone in society was able to fulfil their potential. This he realised through providing employment opportunities: *“The more that we can demonstrate interaction with the community, supporting apprentices through their training, giving opportunities whether it be placements or job experience – and again one of the things that came out of the Seeing is Believing thing which we’ve subsequently taken on is providing more work placements.”*

Leading change across the industry

Finally, Andrew considers part of his role as a leader to be to encourage other leaders to behave similarly: *“I think it’s just part of this leadership role, that if we can mobilize many businesses in the UK to help make this contribution it can only be the right thing to do.”*

Shifts in thinking

Andrew recognises a shift in thinking in terms of the role business should play in society, *“I think there is a greater recognition now that business is not just about making money. It’s not just about a return to the shareholders. We do have a responsibility to provide employment opportunities, we do have a responsibility to enhance the society in which we live. Especially in a world where public-sector budgets are constrained, it’s an important part of our role.”*

Andrew also believes that it is now clear that being responsible to society is of value to the business. Customers expect their suppliers to behave responsibly, which results in more business and greater profitability, *“I happen to believe we actually get more work from our customers because we are a Platinum Big Tick member of Business in the Community. I just happen to believe that to be true. Because I know that our customers measure the type of thing that we’re doing in that regard, and the fact that we can turn to that BitC accreditation, or achievement level, materially improves our ability to win work in an area that we think is important anyway. So we’re not just doing it for altruistic reasons, we’re doing it for good business reasons.”*

Similarly, Andrew believes that an organisation’s approach to corporate responsibility is vital to attracting talent: *“Certainly in our business our ability to attract the very best talent is dependent on our being able to answer questions from talented graduates who’ve got choices. What is the company’s view on this, what are the values of the organisation? These are not questions that would have been asked ten years ago. The very best young people making career choices today are acutely aware of their responsibilities. Much more so than maybe a generation above them.”*

Angus Russell



Early thoughts

Reflecting back on his early career Angus Russell states that he *“always had a strong belief about an ethical and moral responsibility”*. He attributes this to the school he went to, the

accountancy qualification he gained which he sees as bringing a *“kind of moral ethical outlook on business”*, and finally the sector he chose to work in – pharmaceuticals: *“It’s a great industry to work in, despite some of the bad press we get. I find that most people who work in this industry do so because they identify with helping people”*.

What we see from Angus’ story was that he always had a sense of social purpose of business and this developed through his career as he became more senior and due to the influence of experiences like participation in the Seeing is Believing programme. He moved from a perception that business had a social responsibility to its staff, to understanding the impact on a much broader range of stakeholders, and this transition allowed him to develop a more nuanced understanding of the role of business and leadership.

Experiences that developed thinking

For Angus, key factors shaping his perception of the role of business in society were an awareness of increased public scrutiny coupled with a sense of fatigue with old economic models and the need to attract the best talent: *“When the whole financial thing came crashing down, I think that made a lot of people question what was it all about... Many younger people we employ now, who say the reason I joined Shire is I read about your social responsibility stuff, on your website. There was a time people would say, I read about how successful you are, I read about what you pay, so I think there’s been a shift somewhere.”*

This thinking further developed as Angus rose to more senior positions within the business and he became aware of the influence he could have as a leader: *“I didn’t honestly think that one person could influence an organisation, but I take that back in retrospect. I’ve surprised myself in that clearly you’re watched so much and you’re under the microscope so much, you do have this enormous position where you have to set an example, because people do look at you and they do take a lead from what you do.”*

Angus was committed to ensuring that he used his growing influence as a leader in the right way: *“When I became CEO five years ago I felt we had strayed as an industry away from the true reason we’re here, which is to help patients. You get caught up in it’s a business, it’s finance, it’s the markets. I tried to remind people what we should be doing, which is focusing on the patients, and if we do that right, then hopefully things like profit and positive return and everything flow from that. It’s very rare in my experience, if you’re doing the right thing, that you’re going to lose because of it. Whereas I see other people who put all the emphasis on making a profit, and they’ll do anything they can to make a profit, and I think with that the danger is you then lose the sense of purpose.”*

Key to Angus’ leadership approach was a commitment to stay authentic and grounded, a trait which he observes does sadly get lost on some leaders: *“It’s funny to me that people think they have to change somehow to get to the senior jobs ... that’s a bad reflection on what it means to have these kind of roles, if you think you’re going to have to change who you are, and I never did that, I stayed true pretty much I think all my life to the things I believed in”*.

Seeing is Believing

Angus regarded the Seeing is Believing programme as *“very significant”* in the development of his attitude towards responsible leadership. He was influenced by the community leaders he met, particularly Camila Batmanghelidjh from Kids Company who is a *“very colourful and persuasive personality”*. More than that he was influenced by speaking to the young people themselves, as he describes it: *“I was really taken with the plight of those kids. The biggest impact was them talking about their own situation.”*

The visit came as a timely reminder that it was possible to bring about change through the business. As Angus says: *“That’s what the Seeing Believing visits are good at... because life’s very busy, it’s easy, particularly in business, to get away from remembering about those kind of issues. So it just came as a very nice activity which was consistent with what I was trying to do, which was to get back to a more humane agenda, remind people about the plight of other people, whether that be patients in our case or whether it’s just people in society in general who are not as well off.”*

For Angus the visit was particularly impactful because it aligned with the way his thinking was already developing and what he was trying to achieve within the business. In terms of the topic, there was a clear correlation between Shire's work on ADHD medication and Camilla at the Kids Company's theory that negative influences at home, especially violence and abuse, negatively impact the development of children's brains. This meant it was easy to make the link to business and to engage staff around the agenda: *"The fact it was children, the fact it was some psychiatric issue, put it very much front and centre of what we're good at in Shire, so that's why I felt that immediate affinity myself, but it was clear that also affected many of the employees... they saw it as very ... complementary, very synergistic with the business."*

Leadership activities

As a result of his participation in the Seeing is Believing Programme, Angus was keen to support the work of Kids Company, not through one-off or ad-hoc support, but through a sustained commitment, and so worked in partnership with them, Great Ormond Street Hospital and Cambridge University to research the affects of abuse on young people. This activity aligned with the strategies of both Shire and Kid's Company and so *"here we are eight years later, and it's one of the proudest things I have is that we managed to sustain that kind of relationship."*

Deepening his commitment to responsible leadership, Angus later decided to lead his own visit, this time focusing on improving life and employment prospects for care-leavers. In his role as leader Angus ensured that he emphasised the importance of long-term strategic engagement with the issues, saying: *"It would be very easy to come on these days, get very emotional about it, because if you're a reasonable human being, how can you not get emotional about what you witness on those days, but I said it needs to be a bit more than just giving some money."* He saw his role as leader as helping to *"bridge the gap"* that meant people were able to make the connection between the social issue and the business strategy and go beyond doing something on a personal level to integrating it into their business. As well as encouraging others to take action to help care-leavers, Angus also committed Shire to running a programme that worked with care-leavers in their local area, a programme that continues today.

Beyond tacking specific action to tackle issues brought to life during Seeing is Believing visits, Angus also acknowledges the importance of leading cultural change within the business, as he describes it: *"I tried in my way to put a culture in place. You've got to have some big umbrella I think of a culture in the company that puts emphasis on the right things."* Creating this culture meant linking *"our business to how we produce value to society and to stakeholders"*. In terms of engaging with a broader range of stakeholders, Angus led the business to start putting more *"emphasis on this much more holistic world. At one time, we used to just deal with physicians, we used to sell the products, get paid, that's it, job done. These days, now, we think about all these different audiences."*

Looking back on his time spent as CEO of Shire and participation in the Seeing is Believing process, Angus reflects that *"for me it's been this journey, this evolution, and I've tried to build on all these issues as we've gone along."*

Shifts in thinking

Comparing Angus' early conception of a responsible leader, we can see a clear development in that thinking through the activities he engaged with as a leader and also through the way he describes the changing role of the business leader. One of the major forces he recognises is the further global integration of business operations and the resulting requirements of a leader. As he describes: *"It will require this more holistic approach. It's not as simple as it used to be. At one time we could roll out our model of innovative products, get premium prices and made very good returns. Now things are a lot more complex, a lot more challenging... you think everybody's going to be like you, and of course, you learn people just aren't like you, or they're not as well off or they don't have the same privileges and the same lifestyle."*

He goes further than this and articulates a change in the purpose of business: *"There's a more complex way of thinking about business these days; it's not so easy to just say, oh, you make a product and you sell it and your job's done. It doesn't end there any more, not in our world anyway. Now there is a real need to show that what you did was valuable, that it made some real beneficial contribution to society."*

Duncan Tait



Early thoughts

Duncan Tait spoke of having a strong sense of the role of business in the communities they operate in, generated by growing up working in his parent's newsagents. *"The thing which enabled my parents' shop to thrive was being part of the community. My mum knew everybody that came in, took a personal interest in them. The people who worked in our shop were part of the community. They didn't travel 400 miles, 200 miles, 50 miles to see us, or to work in the shop. So all of that made a lot of sense to me, that you had a business in a community and it was a place where people came together."*

Experiences that developed thinking

Moving from the newsagents through business school, Duncan recalls that this sense of the social purpose of business was lacking, and it was up to him to re-connect to his original experience and express it in the corporate world. *"If you go to business schools, or certainly the ones I went to, some while ago, they see it as a completely different concept from running a small business. And after a while it clicks with you that it's not different at all. It's exactly the same. It's just the dynamics and sense of community and sense of society are different because you're playing on a bigger scale."*

This development in Duncan's thinking was catalysed by an inspirational boss who taught him that: *"If we better engage and enable our people they'll do a better job for customers who'll give us more work in return and we'll grow and make more profit. In that sentence it then gives you a wider view of what a company's role should be. Particularly now if you think that we have to engage our people – and our people want to know they work for a decent company."*

He also recognises that shifts in this thinking were influenced by the changing expectations of society: *"I think it becomes more and more important, and if you go back to the scandals that have come out since 2008 and the financial crisis, the behaviour of all sorts of people: MPs' expenses, the stuff in the Lords the other week and GlaxoSmithKline in China and all this. I think this becomes more and more and more important, that people, when they look down their supply chains or when they look at who do I want to bank with, who do I want to spend*

money with, which IT people do I want to work with, for companies like ours to demonstrate that we behave responsibly."

The Seeing is Believing experience

As result of his growing ability to link the social and business purposes, Duncan committed Fujitsu to participating in Business in the Community's Business Connector Programme, which involved seconding staff into deprived communities. Out of this commitment arose the opportunity to lead a Seeing is Believing visit to Tottenham in order to engage more companies to participate in the programme.

For Duncan it was really impactful to meet young people in Tottenham who had been excluded from mainstream school and were now attending the Boxing Academy, to hear them tell their stories: *"That was the moment for me that really brought it home. Because you could see people who look exactly like our apprentices, but if we're not careful have wildly different life expectations, just simply via the fact that they grew up about 30 miles away from where the others did. And I think you could see people go: Ah."*

This experience inspired Duncan to act and also challenged preconceptions that he previously held: *"I don't know if this is a general perception that people might have is – if you get expelled, as I would have called it when I was a lad, or excluded as it is this week, then you've done something really bad and you shouldn't be messing up other people's education. And no one ever thinks about what happens to that individual after they've been expelled. And they might have just had a really difficult family life. They might have had a whole bunch of negative role models and – if you peel this thing back, this takes me back to the newsagent's thing by the way, is – there's a kind of a duty on us that every living human being has talent so we should try and help them develop that."*

Activities

Duncan sees his experience of leading a Seeing is Believing visit as sparking an "epiphany" in terms of how the Business Connector Programme could *"take us just to another level of engaging with our business model."*

As well as committing to seconding more employees to deprived areas, Duncan also committed to continue to support the organisations they had met on the day of the visit, and Fujitsu has an ongoing partnership

with the Boxing Academy, whereby students have visited the Fujitsu offices to learn about the business, and in turn senior leaders at Fujitsu have visited the Boxing Academy and had a boxing lesson with the young people. Duncan likes the reciprocity of this arrangement, as he explains: *"We get people more engaged in the mission of Fujitsu and we're helping the people who go to that boxing academy".*

Following this experience with the Boxing Academy, Duncan was convinced that this kind of activity will only work when *"when you can connect it to your business model"*. He does not feel comfortable entering into relationships which are based on the *"donate money thing because that's writing a cheque and disappearing. It doesn't work with our business model. That's just spending profit, not how you make profit."*

He acknowledges that although behaviour throughout the organisation is important *"if you haven't got CEO-level sponsorship for it you're not taking it seriously enough. It has to come from the top, because after that you're only influencing a part of the business...if you are some layers down in either of our organisations and you say that's what you believe in, if it's only you that doesn't have the full integrity of the organisation"*.

As well as committing to action at an individual level Duncan also recognises the importance of using his seniority to create a culture where the whole organisation feels empowered to live these values. A key way of doing this is to lead by example: *"When you get the job I've got you get the ability to play this throughout the whole organization. And on the way up to my role, so you advance a little bit further, a little bit further, you get more things to play with. If you say it, you have to do it. Otherwise people don't believe it. And then you'll get people wanting then to mimic that behaviour."*

Like many of the leaders we spoke to, Duncan reflected on the shadow that he casts and wanting to use that for positive gain: *"People watch, in my job, people watch everything you do. Do you smile when you walk into the office? Do you look a bit down? Are your trousers creased? People notice everything. So if you say you believe in a set of things, people have to see you believing in that set of things as well. ..And then people watch, do I behave with integrity? And we say we want to be a responsible business and they watch how we manage our supply chain, they watch who do we do business with? Who do we subcontract work to? Who's in our supply chain? So people watch everything."*

As well as always behaving with integrity Duncan also recognises the importance of engaging with *"largely symbolic" activities and he gives the example of how the senior team went to a call centre who were holding a charity fundraiser and worked the phones along with the rest of the staff there, because "it does show that we don't just say these things, we mean them."*

Duncan is fully aware of the effect of this kind of activity on staff engagement and also in terms of building better relationships with customers, *"the thing M&S love about what we do, as well as providing a good service we send nothing to landfill and the cars they drive are the most – the lowest carbon emissions of all similar vehicles. So we can now connect into plan A for them."* He also gives the example of how their relationship with the Ministry of defence is enhanced, through Fujitsu's support of rehabilitation of returning service people, as he describes, *"The people in the services are delighted about it and our people are delighted about it, and our defence business is growing. That's really, really, really visible to the 12,000 people we have in our defence team. Because they actually feel they've got a higher purpose than just delivering IT to MoD. I could talk for hours about this!"*

Shifts in thinking

The feature that characterises Duncan's thoughts on the role of business in society and the importance of business leadership is a sense of the importance of connectivity. He first developed this at his parent's newsagents and grew further away from it as he went through business school and moved into the corporate world., He was able to reconnect to these original ideas however, as his seniority grew, and along with it the recognition of the influence and responsibility that that seniority brought. His thinking was also shaped by experiences like participating in the Seeing is Believing programme.

"Until you can make the breakthrough that you link what I call the two sides of the business case, this is good for the society we happen to be in, or the community, and it's good for our financial performance. Until you can connect those two things together it's kind of just words. When you get both sides of the story, it's just beautiful. When you explain it to someone who's pretty cynical they have to go: 'I get it'. That's pretty hardwired between you being responsible and your business performance. And if you can't articulate it simply it's probably not real."

John Varley



Ideas about the role of business in society – early career

Early in his career, John Varley was among those leaders who had a strong sense of values, ethics and social consciousness, but saw this as something that was to be expressed as an individual, in private time, rather than through the company or through his capacity as an employee. At that time he held the view that the main contribution that business can make to society is through maximising profit, generating wealth, creating jobs and delivering goods and services: *“I was conscious of the importance of business in family life and the importance of business as a generator of wealth. And also the importance of business as a source of employment.”*

Experiences that subsequently shaped thinking

A combination of influences subsequently shaped John’s thinking over the course of his career, including first-hand experiences of people suffering, both in the UK and Africa, the culture of organisations he joined, and the influence of more senior business leaders and inspirational figures.

John’s work as a lawyer in the aviation insurance arena took him to Africa and the developing world on many occasions: *“The first time I went to Africa would have been in about, I should think, 1979, something like that. It was very, very obvious, the connection between business, economic growth and poverty.”*

The influence of the senior partners in the first organisation John worked for was also important: *“Their offices were in Lincoln’s Inn Fields – Lincoln’s Inn Fields even then was a place where homeless people would sleep rough. That was something that was on the mind and the consciousness of that particular partnership. I remember it well. And work was done by members of the firm to try to help with that situation.”*

John then joined Barclays, where a longstanding culture of social purpose also

had its influence on him: *“Barclays, by history, had been a non-conformist bank. It had been a bank set up in the 17th century for people who were not members of the Protestant faith and has, right at its heart, a sense of the role of business in the community.”*

The Seeing is Believing programme

Several of these influences came together when an influential role model figure took John on his own personal Seeing is Believing style visit: *“The reason I got involved was John Studzinski, the first chairman of Business Action on Homelessness. I didn’t know him really but he dug me out and took me to a few places. It was a sort of mini Seeing is Believing visit – just me – and we went to a few places and I was very struck by that. I was also struck by him. He was a very well-known, very successful figure in the banking industry. I was interested that he so clearly had this as an important part of this life. And I knew how incredibly busy he was. He was very articulate in talking about it and in persuading me to come and join him.”*

As well as the influence of John Studzinski as a role model, seeing the work done by the inspirational individuals working with homeless people was also very influential: *“John took me to The Passage. The Passage is a centre for homeless people in Westminster. There was a really inspirational nun – I’ve known several of the nuns who have led The Passage since then. He took me to meet the woman who was then running The Passage and she was absolutely remarkable. She really was. I would say that was also quite an important – that was formative in my view, that there is work to be done here and maybe I can be helpful.”*

For John, one of the things that makes the Seeing is Believing visits he has subsequently led so powerful is meeting people who are experiencing these challenges, first-hand: *“What I think the Seeing is Believing visit does is, it takes you beyond concept into reality. We can all conceptualise a homeless person who needs help. We can conceptualise that. But as we conceptualise it we’re sort of standing back from it and we’ve not crossed into their space.”*

Leading change across the business

Many of the leaders spoke about specific activities they had personally become involved with as a result of these combinations of experiences, but most of what the leaders described was really about leading cultural change in their own organisations to encourage others to act in different ways.

For John at Barclays, this meant working with and supporting the existing heritage and culture of social purpose: *“I well knew the traditions of Barclays in this area and it was always an important part of Barclays life. So when I was in a position to do something to encourage that I did encourage it because it was sort of going with the grain of the organisation. It didn’t actually need a lot of encouragement from me. People were naturally in that space.”*

Several of the leaders we spoke to talked about how they had come to realise that how they were seen to be as a leader, and what they were seen to do with their time were surprisingly influential. Building on this, one of the ways John nudged and pushed Barclay’s sense of social purpose was devoting a significant proportion of his time to initiatives addressing social challenges, as a way of legitimising that kind of behaviour for others in the organisation: *“I was the chief executive, I was very busy, and active in the not-for-profit sector. As a chief executive you can legitimise that sort of thing for your people so they don’t feel if they’re off doing some make-a-difference-day activity that that is some aberration from their working life. You want to make them feel that it is part of their working life and I hope that we managed to do some of that.”*

Leading change externally

John also talked about how he had come to recognise the need to play a wider leadership role more broadly by influencing peers in other organisations. One effective way of doing this was to invite them and lead them on Seeing is Believing visits: *“I think the task of the leader of the Seeing is Believing visit, the biggest task, is to get people there. That was what I was trying to do. The leader plays a very, very important role, I think, in establishing the credibility of the programme.”*

John also argued that Seeing is Believing visits can provide the basis for building a committed group of business leaders willing to work together to achieve more than they could individually, as demonstrated by Business Action on Homelessness, which traced its origins to a Seeing is Believing visit: *“The most powerful thing that business leaders can do is to create leverage out of a movement. Where you get synergy and leverage is through a number of businesses collaborating with each other. I very much see that about the Business Action on Homelessness table where we’ve got quite diverse businesses represented as our national partners, but they create leverage by collaboration. If you’ve got business leaders who are prepared to do that it is extremely powerful.”*

John also acted on this shift in perspective by taking a leadership role in collaborative multi-stakeholder initiatives. *“I certainly branched out as a result of the experience I had through Seeing is Believing and Business Action on Homelessness. So I did some things that were outside my comfort zone. I became president of the UK drugs policy commission, which was something I would never have done, I think, if I had not had these experiences. I became chairman of a gay and lesbian community group in the East End, which again I would never have done if it hadn’t have been for these experiences.”*

Shifts in thinking

John stressed how, in making sense of these various experiences over time, he had come to see a new kind of expectation from society about what would be deemed a successful business *“I think what society wants to see is business generating employment, generating economic growth, behaving responsibly to its customers, and being thoughtful about the space that it occupies in its communities. That might be thoughtful about the environment or it might be thoughtful about senior pay or it might be thoughtful about support for the local hospice. There are lots of ways it can – but we should be absolutely clear that there is an expectation. What matters is what society expects.”*

Ken McMeikan



Early thoughts and influences

When Ken McMeikan first started out in business his focus was very much on the customer, and how to keep them happy, rather than any real thoughts around the role the organisation may play in the community: *“In the early part of my career, I was being taught how to be successful in retail and most of the focus at this time was about customer service and what you needed to do as an individual, or what the company needed to do, to succeed by looking after its customers better than anyone else.”*

As his career progressed however, his thinking around the responsibility that business had to the community shifted: *“It was probably also around the time that CSR started to become much bigger with boardrooms, and annual reports started to have more written about corporate social responsibility. And it became sort of the in-vogue thing to do. You needed to be talking to shareholders as well as your employees about what your business was doing around the whole area of corporate social responsibility.”*

Personal experience however, also took an influential role in shaping his thinking: *“My mother particularly had a very strong set of values around looking after other people. If you were doing well you had almost a moral responsibility to help those who were disadvantaged. So I found very early on that I would get involved in anything to do with charitable fundraising, and that progressed into consciously spending time with my team looking at other ways we could do more.”*

Experiencing the personal trauma of losing his mother to cancer and enduring the pain of his daughter undergoing heart surgery at 18 months also brought home how difficult life can be for many people, *“I think when you’ve been personally touched by experiences like that it reminds you that when you’re not in that environment, when you’re back in the day-to-day of business life, there are many other people who are in the unfortunate position that they are experiencing something like open-heart surgery or cancer or something. Generally*

they all need funds, but they also need physical support in many different ways. I think when you’ve experienced events like that in your life it shapes your thinking about business life.”

Similarly, exposure to and immersion in the realities of others’ lives helped him to understand the issues that needed attention, and the part that business could play: *“So walking around London you’ll see those who are homeless, if you keep your eyes open. You’ll see areas of great deprivation when crime is appallingly high, where drugs and other substance abuse is incredibly high, where unemployment is exceptionally high. So because the businesses that I’ve been in have tended to have customers and employees who come from all walks of life, my whole thinking has been much more greatly influenced and shaped because I’ve lived in amongst all of that.”*

Ken also described his Seeing is Believing visit as influential to his thinking around the responsibility of leaders, by opening his eyes to the *“reality and horror of some of the difficult issues in society that are easy to walk past and ignore.”* It helped target him into specific issues and spurred him to action through exposure to those issues: *“I was genuinely appalled and horrified at some of the things I saw, whether it was child poverty, homelessness, listening to people’s experiences about their lives. I went home after one visit and – it’s the greatest sense of guilt I think I’ve ever had in my life that as I was feeding my children I knew there would be millions of children who weren’t getting food. And that the need is great and that the funding wasn’t there.”*

Leading change across the business

Ken believes that we all can have an influence and an impact on society, not just those who operate at the top levels in business: *“Leadership is all relative. It doesn’t matter where you are in an organization, you have the same responsibilities. The difference is, I think, just the scale. So if you’re chief executive and you empower your people, or you decide to get involved in something, it’s just the relativity of the impact that can have on the number of people. The power of one multiplied can be as strong, if not stronger, as the power of one chief exec trying to get a whole organization*

behind something. So if you've got that responsibility at all levels I think the organisation can still be hugely influential and impactful, even if the chief executive doesn't seem to be that, well supportive of it. The difference, I think, is if you can line up both: where the chief executive is passionate and open and engaging and empowering and you've got managers at all levels doing the same. I think you get the sort of one-plus-one-equals-three."

For Ken, one of his responsibilities as CEO is to set the right example, and give permission through his actions, to behave responsibly, *"One of my biggest roles is developing people and developing leaders of the future, developing my own successor, developing the board of the future. My hope is that through personal example and through giving them permission they develop into the type of leader that I would like to see for the future. But it is a specific part of my responsibility."*

However, acting on this perspective, Ken believes, takes real courage and authenticity, *"I do think it takes time and it takes a degree of courage. The time's an easy one, you just prioritize it. The courage actually isn't so easy because – what I've found is that if you've got a large organization with a lot of people they tend to be doing a lot within the community without you realizing it. So the courage you have to have is often giving people permission to do more. Because the risk is that they become distracted from looking after customers. Or if your business isn't performing well you'll be criticized that you became distracted."*

Courage is even more important when trying to convince stakeholders to get involved in tackling challenging, stigmatised issues, *"One of the first barriers, interestingly, was that if you really get involved in some of the more challenging issues within society your people don't necessarily want to get involved. Will question why you get involved. A good example of that was when I said we'd get involved with women's prisons. There's a stigma. And the stigma was very clear. Why should we help people who have committed crimes when there are other people out there, like the young unemployed, who, in the words of my team, have done nothing wrong and who deserve our help. Why should we get involved?"*

Leading change across industry and society

Another of Ken's specific initiatives took his influence outside of his immediate organisation, engaging business leaders to work with him on collaborative initiatives around unemployment and child poverty, *"I'm really proud of what we did at Greggs with Greggs breakfast clubs, in the fact that I was asked by the Prime Minister and HRH the Prince of Wales to look at how other businesses could scale up breakfast clubs and tackle child poverty. When I left Greggs, we already had something like 30 new companies involved in running their own breakfast clubs in partnership with Greggs with ambition to get to 300 clubs feeding somewhere in the region of 15,000 to 20,000 children every morning with a free school breakfast."*

Shifts in thinking

For Ken, organisations have an intrinsic responsibility as members of society to help their societies become stronger, better places to be. *"Profits are absolutely right for a business and absolutely necessary because it's a measure of your success, but it's profit and the foundation that profit is built on is where society and community and environment all come into place. How proud are you, when you look back, at the quality of those profits? For me as an individual I've always been in big-people businesses. Society is about people. And therefore you can't disconnect business from society. Business is society. That's lost in some chief execs' understanding of their responsibility. So your responsibility in leading a business is actually leading a part of society and contributing to the wider society. So for me they're just inextricably linked. It's one and the same."*

At the same time however, he recognises that it can be incredibly difficult, with the pressure of competing stakeholder agendas, to engage in responsible leadership: *"For a chief executive you've got many stakeholders and you have to keep on board with what you're trying to do. You can see why for some chief executives, because it is hard, they would choose to put it lower down the priority list, or not do it at all. I think that's what people forget. It's not easy."*

Martin Baggs



Early thoughts, and influences that shaped thinking

A series of influences early in his career shaped Martin Baggs' thinking that business has a broad role to play in supporting the health of wider society, and that doing so was equally good for business.

These influences included spending his early career in a public sector organisation, working on engineering projects that integrated a community focus, going on early-career training programmes that had a community focus, working with young people through a Prince's Trust programme, and exposure to influential senior leaders who acted as role models:

"When I started my career, I was working for what was then a water authority, so you were very much in a public service organisation with strong links with the community to start with."

"If you work in a community on a major engineering project you also start to realise that you've got local links to the community in so many different ways. Now whether that's working with the local schools and the impact you're having on the local community, or whether it's because you're employing local people, or whether because the projects you're actually working on are actually going to make a difference to that local community."

"The next big thing for me, which I thought was fantastic, as a young junior manager, was the Prince's Trust programme. That to me was a real eye-opener in terms of the impact you can have on individuals, when you saw the impact on these youngsters after 10 or 12 weeks on that programme."

"I had the real pleasure, many years ago, of working for a fantastic managing director who was a real role model in so many ways because he did live and breathe the values and he had such strong integrity, and ethics, and values, and morals. The way that he operated, he set the behaviour for the business. He set the standards for the business. And quite frankly he had the knack of being able to engage with anyone at any level, which some people think is easy, but it's not."

Shifts in thinking

Over time as Martin's career progressed, building on his early convictions, his view on the kind of role business should play in society developed, as did his view of the role senior leaders needed to play in that themselves.

"You have got a responsibility to the wider community. You have got a responsibility to the environment. Directly we employ 5,000 staff, indirectly we've got another 15,000 contractors that work for us as well. We're providing a service that provides water and waste water to 14 million people out there. And so the responsibility that sits directly on your shoulders is far greater than what you do as your day job. We've got a big part to play in both the local and wider community and wider society. In the same way that you actually set the tone for your business, your business is also setting the tone for society."

Martin drew a parallel with 1960s and 1970s urban planning and argued that too much life and humanity had been driven out of business in the 1980s and 1990s, which is now being brought back in: *"I think in many respects we're going full circle. I think if you spoke to anyone we'd all have some fantastic examples of things that were done in years gone by, and you realise actually we've driven so much out, we need to bring the people side of life back into a business, you need to bring the community side of life back into it. It's a bit like a town or a city really that's gone through a regeneration programme. You see some of the cities that have gone through the 1960s or 1970s with great concrete tower blocks with all the soul taken out of them. What are those big projects about now? They're about putting the soul back into the community, aren't they? And I think you've got business almost mirroring the same thing."*

Leading change across the business

Martin, like many of the others, spoke about how he had come to recognise the power of the senior leaders' symbolic influence, the 'shadow they cast' and example they set. For Martin, senior leaders have a responsibility to set the tone for the business, and their own behaviour plays a significant part in this:

"One thing you've got to realize, and one thing I always try to encourage the guys on. You're always casting a shadow. The higher you get up in the business the bigger shadow you're going to cast. And people will watch you. People will watch you the whole day. They'll watch your behaviour, they'll watch what you do, they'll watch how you talk to people they'll watch how you respond to issues, and you set the tone for the business."

Leading change externally

Many of the leaders we spoke to also talked about how they had come to recognise the need to play a wider leadership role more broadly than just within their own organisation by influencing peers.

Martin talked about the greater importance of this external aspect to the senior leaders' role, and the importance of leading from the front to create the space for others in other organisations to follow: *"The pressure on the leader is far more the upward and outward looking aspects of the role rather than the inward and downward looking aspects of the role."*

"I think to take these things forward, I think the responsibility sits on my shoulders and on similar guys in organizations like Andrew Wyllie. If we're serious about this, and we're serious about the leadership side of it, you've got to be leading it from the front. You've got to demonstrate your own personal commitment into it. And I think if you can demonstrate your own personal commitment into it then people will follow. And that's the other thing that's really important."

The Seeing is Believing programme

For Martin, influencing and partnering with peers in other organisations is important because of the much greater impact that groups of organisations working together can have. The Seeing is Believing programme, Martin argued, plays a hugely important role in enabling business leaders to influence their peers and start to create these coalitions, something he was taking forward in leading visits himself for leaders from his contractors and suppliers.

"Over the last years, 25 plus years I've got to know some great people across the industry, both on a business basis and also on a personal basis, and the real thing for me is that rather than just one business working on its own, if you get two or three, four, five or six businesses joined together, you can achieve a hell of a lot. And so for the visit that we ran last year, with the group of contractors and suppliers that we work with, I thought that was really good in terms of actually being able to get a group of guys together and look at something which you could almost work on together with a common cause."

Part of the power of Seeing is Believing visits for Martin is their power to give other leaders first hand experiences of some of the most pressing challenges in society:

"Some of the guys you meet in business, quite frankly, when you chat to them they haven't got a clue what goes on on the ground. So the more opportunities we get to get these guys out there and actually see what happens in reality – for me it almost needs to be like shock treatment. You want people going home at the end of that day thinking, wow, what the hell have we just seen?"

Mike Wareing



Early thoughts

At the start of Mike Wareing's career, in regards to the responsible business agenda, he acknowledges that *"the harsh and truthful reality is that it just didn't seem to be on the psyche at all."*

He describes having a social consciousness, but he saw this as a *"personal thing"* rather than something that was expressed in the business environment.

This is a behavior he saw repeated across the business, as when he later started to get KPMG involved with Business in the Community, he was overwhelmed with the response from colleagues and discovered that many of them were doing remarkable things in their personal time. He reflects: *"It wasn't joined up at all and it wasn't in any way directed, corralled or indeed, I'm embarrassed to say, in many ways even encouraged by the organisation."*

Experiences that challenged this way of thinking

Mike describes his changing attitude towards business as a kind of awakening that happened over a period of time. It started with a *"nagging thing in the back of my mind for really quite a while about homelessness."* This came to the forefront when Mike started travelling from Birmingham to London and he was shocked by the level of rough sleeping he saw and the attitudes he encountered: *"The biggest shock, and I guess dismay, was the extent to which these people were just lying there or sitting there with the rest of humanity walking straight past. They could have been dead or seriously ill or actually not rough sleeping but just having fallen over. I found that really quite shocking in many ways. It wasn't something I'd been used to. It was gnawing at me for quite a long period of time."*

This growing awareness of social injustice was brought to a head for Mike during a chance encounter on the streets of London. He recounts: *"I was in my very nice, quite large, chauffeur-driven car in London...as I was sat there I looked out of the side window and there was a young girl sat in the corner, absolutely white as a sheet, with a blanket over her. It looked very much like she'd got a major drug*

problem just by the look and the colour of her. And she was just sat there...She looked at me and I looked at her and I – it's just one of those things where you think, well, ..., here I am, in my nice car in my nice suit with somebody driving me and all the rest of it and there's she a few yards away, early in her life and – the gulf between us was just extraordinary."

As a result of this encounter, Mike resolved that he should take action but he reports feeling overwhelmed by the problem and confused about where to start, thinking: *"Where the hell do you start and what do you and who do you talk with and where do you go and will it be safe?"*

The Seeing is Believing programme

About the same time that Mike was struggling with how to respond to the homelessness problem that he had become aware of, he was fortuitously invited to attend a Seeing is Believing visit on that topic. He reports that what they saw on the visit was quite shocking, but probably more importantly for Mike it helped him to make sense of the solution. As he recollects: *"I was extremely encouraged, motivated, with: you can do something, but even more surprising in some respects some of the help you can give is very relevant to the sort of skills and experiences that you've got in the business world."*

He found it very inspiring to rub shoulders with *"amazing individuals who are absolutely not motivated by status or money or career paths but actually are only really motivated by genuinely helping people."* This was a type of leadership that he had rarely, if ever, come across in the business world.

For him the visit was powerful because it took him out of the environment he was used to operating in, into a homelessness shelter and brought him face-to-face with the challenges people faced. And as Mike stated: *"There's absolutely no substitute for that. You can send emails, attend presentations, all the rest of it, but I think there's something about people getting out of their comfort zone and actually into that other world which is uniquely moving and motivating."*

Leading change across the business

Once Mike had been on a Seeing is Believing visit he was determined to take action on the homelessness agenda within KPMG. Back in the business, he did encounter some resistance from the CSR department as it was not at that time an issue that was part of their strategy, which meant Mike had to champion the cause individually and work to build momentum internally. The tipping point came when Mike invited colleagues to attend a meeting on the issue and was overwhelmed by the number of people who showed an interest. During the meeting Mike asked a homeless person who he had met on the visit to speak which had an “*amazing impact*” and meant that the organisation had to respond “*by popular vote*”.

Leading change externally

As a result KPMG became founding members of the Business Action on Homelessness campaign which is still going strong today, and Mike sat on the Leadership Team. KPMG became involved in a range of activities to support the campaign and many of these activities made use of the business skills of the organisation. For example KPMG adapted their own training programme for the Ready For Work project that aims to help support disadvantaged groups into sustained employment.

Mike describes how invaluable the ongoing support of Business in the Community was in terms of moving from the initial experience of the visit to the long-term commitment of KPMG. This helped him make sense of the services already out there supporting homeless people and therefore discern what the private sector’s unique contribution was. Also important was BITC’s convening power which meant a powerful group of senior business people had come together through the Seeing is Believing process and were committed and able to working together to address the problems they saw.

Looking back at his journey through the Seeing is Believing programme, Mike reflects that “*it was absolutely pivotal. Beforehand the desire to do something was there but it’s a little bit like a nagging toothache. Something that you’re bothered about and you’re interested in but if*

you don’t have the catalyst and you don’t have the road map as to – how can I get involved? who do I talk to? where do I go? – Then you won’t do anything about it.”

Thoughts on business leadership

Speaking to Mike today about his views on the role of business and leadership it is clear that he has come a long way from the ‘brutal’ and ‘harsh’ truth he describes earlier in his career when it was not on his radar at all. He sees participation in a programme like Seeing is Believing as an “*essential part of personal development for being a successful leader of a business today.*” Aside from the social and ethical reasons for engagement “*there are enormous benefits for the individual in terms of taking them out of their own little world.*”

He is convinced of the power of business to bring about social change: “*The amazing thing is that you look at corporate organisations, many of which are BitC members, and quite a number of them are genuinely more powerful than a lot of governments in the world. When some of these organisations get together they really can do some really quite remarkable things because the firepower they’ve got is considerable. It’s not a money, philanthropy, thing; it’s actually having people on the ground in many of these countries actually motivated and organised to do these things.*”

At the same time he recognises that this power must be harnessed in the right way, as “*Business has got and has had some really big challenges and question marks over its ethics. So I think there still is quite a lot to do.*”

Rob Devey



Early thoughts

Early in his career Rob Devey believed trying to help address society's challenges through business was a distraction from the primary focus of his role - maximising commercial value, *"When I was running the HBOS Retail current account portfolio I was asked to give my input to our stance on social inclusion in banking. This was an area that not only was not contributing to our profits – it almost went completely against our commercial objectives. And I must admit I leaned towards our commercial objectives. Whilst I supported our social objectives to an extent I didn't really buy into the theory."*

Experiences that shaped thinking – The Seeing is Believing programme

Rob was clear that his first Seeing is Believing visit had a profound impact on his thinking. The invite from a respected business leader was crucial for persuading him to take part. And the transformational impact came from seeing first-hand that a real difference could actually be achieved, and that it required very little resource:

"I was called up by the CFO of HBOS, Phil Hodgkinson, and was asked to go on a Seeing is Believing visit. I must confess I looked at my long list of things that I had to do, heaved a sigh and said, "Well, OK, that will have to be another day. I'm going to have to work even harder the rest of my time to create the space for this visit."

"I turned up to a community centre in Manningham in Bradford with the mindset of "Never mind, it's only a day..." And I left that day literally transformed, having made commitments around what I was going to do. Having seen such powerful impact for such small cash sums, I said: 'This is incredible. What difference can I make?' Because a difference needs to be made."

Leading change across the business

When it came to acting on this shift in thinking, much of what the leaders described was really about leading cultural change in their own organisations to encourage others to act in different ways. Rob, like many of the others, spoke about how he had come to recognise the power of the senior leaders' symbolic influence, the 'shadow they cast' and example they set, and how he had sought to employ this to encourage others in the organisation to act in a different way:

"The biggest thing you can do is be an exemplar – doing it and talking about it. You've got to be credible when you say: "this is important". Every single leader has an enormous footprint, and this only increases the more senior you get. You cast an enormous shadow and it's down to you to choose where it falls. People say "If the boss is doing it, then it's OK for me to do it."

Many of the people we spoke with recognised that, as first-hand experiences had been so influential in encouraging them to think and act differently, one of the most impactful things they could do to influence others was to create opportunities for them to have these kinds of first-hand experiences. Rob talked about how, after his first Seeing is Believing visit, he had taken his own team for their own Seeing is Believing visit:

"I led a Seeing is Believing visit for my own team near one of our own sites in Bristol and saw first hand the impact on them. You'd see the fragility of literally the other side of the road to our offices. It forces you to reflect: "I've ended up here, running this business, and someone very similar to me, for a whole set of consequences that nobody could have predicted, has ended up in a hostel, without his kids or his family around, literally living from day to day". From that two or three of my team then went on to volunteer themselves and so inspire others. When you see the impact between making those commitments and action, and then the leverage effect you get from that, it is totally inspiring."

Another way of influencing others in the organisation to act was by addressing this broader idea of what it takes to be successful

in business into the strategic goals of the organisation, and linking that to specific, measurable targets: *“In Prudential UK & Europe I chose to say: we’re going to make impacting on communities one of our really critical objectives for the organization. As the CEO you are in an incredibly privileged position because you can define the objectives for the organization.”*

Leading change externally

Many of the leaders we spoke to also talked about how they had come to recognise the need to play a wider leadership role more broadly than just within their own organisation. Rob talked about influencing and partnering with his peers in other organisations: *“I think where I’ve now moved to is the role that I can play as an advocate at the most senior levels, because influencing and change happens peer-to-peer.”*

Shifts in thinking

Rob joined many of the other leaders we spoke to in noting how he had come to realise how shifts in the wider environment – like the 2008 financial crash – had changed the expectations on business and how their success as business leaders would be judged.

“The reality financial crisis has been very bruising - we’ve been through the mill. However, I think that is a great opportunity because Boards and senior leaders in business are aware of the need to re-frame and re-set the conversation with society.”

Like others, Rob also spoke about how he had come to see that helping address social challenges didn’t have to be a source of cost but was very valuable in creating value, singling out its value in improving employee motivation:

“Financial results are critically important. However, the way to deliver them is not to bang on about them. Most people don’t care. What happens to motivate them is not cash, capital and profit, but rather the feeling of working for an organization that supports the individual in whatever they do, professionally, personally or within the community. That makes people hugely more effective. And all of those people being hugely more effective means better financial results.”

Rob also talked about coming to appreciate more about the political context within which business operates, and the need to earn a licence to operate: *“I think it was entirely understandable that when I was a 35-year-old up-and-coming senior manager in the organization I didn’t have the perspective – the political perspective in particular but also the social perspective – that it’s important that businesses give something back because this is part of their licence to operate.”*

Stephen Howard



Early thoughts and influences

In Stephen Howard's early career as a lawyer, community issues, and responsible leadership did not appear all that relevant: *"I started life as a lawyer but doing corporate work and M&A deals, so I was always in the transaction side of life. In those early days it didn't seem all that relevant actually."* As he moved into more general management roles, he became aware that these issues were important to his employees, and as such they became more important to him: *"It became clearer to me that my employees cared about that. So I wasn't thinking about it so much from the perspective of what do the communities need but more about what do my own people need and want."*

Stephen describes three key experiences as critical to shaping his later thinking around responsible leadership, the first of which was a chance encounter with Mother Theresa on an aeroplane: *"She asked the question: 'What do you do?' So I'm about to tell her I'm in international business, I'm this important guy. And she said: 'No no, that's not what I meant.' She says to me, 'What do you do that matters?' It's like, oh my, it's Mother Theresa, you can't lie to Mother Theresa! And it was this amazing conversation that we had then for the next hour and a half on this flight. Not about whether business is right or wrong or whether I should be doing this or that. It was this whole conversation about; I don't know who you are or why you are where you are. But you are where you are. So what are you going to do about it?"*

The second critical incident for Stephen was chancing upon a powerful book, which brought about the realisation that he was measuring his success in too narrow a manner, focusing on financial achievements rather than significance.

The third influential experience was Stephen's participation in a Seeing is Believing visit, which exposed him, first-hand, to the realities of some people's worlds, simultaneously providing both the emotional spark and the realisation that there are solutions, those solutions are within the grasp of business, and that they can have

a tangible impact: *"We started in a wet hostel, which means they can drink. So it's eight o'clock in the morning, everybody's pissed and rowdy and slightly dangerous. We go then, mid-morning, to another programme that's working at helping people dry out, training, a little bit of support, coaching. The third stop in the morning is our Ready for Work programme, seeing guys who've come through the cycle. And people go, oh! This works! We can help people! There's actually a solution here. Because it seemed so hopeless when – it's those drunk, scary people in there that you see on the street that you walk across the street from them. This is hopeless, this is a million miles away from my comfort zone, to two hours later going – I could do that! I could help!"*

Leading change with the organisation

Stephen's encounter with Mother Theresa helped him to recognise the power and influence of leadership: *"It shocked me into this realisation that I was given a platform to do some interesting things. My voice would broadcast in a way that it wouldn't otherwise because of this job. And therefore what should I do with that and how should I do it in a way that matters."*

An important role of a leader, Stephen believes, is to find a way to meet the often competing needs of the various stakeholders: *"What are the things that I can do that will really make a difference? Try to remember all the different voices that have to be heard as part of this. How can I do it in a way that satisfies as many of those constituencies at once if not all. How do you use this position, this privileged position that you've been given, to do something lasting and of significance?"*

For Stephen leaders also need to be seen to walk the walk if they are to be able to influence their organisations. Through getting involved himself, he gave a clear message about what was important for him and the business, *"Going on Habitat for Humanity house builds, for example, where I could show you I had a great time in Sri Lanka, we were off doing this thing with friends, it was really fun and rewarding to see. So without preaching, just something about getting the message out there that my job as a leader was more than simply whipping them to hit their numbers."*

Another means of encouraging such activities that Stephen employed was celebrating individual efforts and sharing their stories: *“We started having contests within the organisation, nation against nation and region against region, who’s got a good idea, who’s doing something, how do we begin to celebrate people, not just the well-known leaders in the place but people deeper into the organisation – ordinary people doing extraordinary things. And beginning to share those kinds of stories within the organisation.”*

Leading change across businesses and industry

For Stephen one way of leading change across business is to work with peers to establish a collaborative programme on homelessness, *“And it was a group of people that after this visit we all said maybe we should meet again. And we did. And then there was, well maybe what we should do is everybody just kick in a little bit so we can, employ a secretariat, who could keep us organized and help us develop the thinking. And we did. And it just built from there.”*

Shifts in thinking

Stephen contends that what it means to be a successful business leader has changed, and that success as a leader is no longer purely about profit, but about legacy, long-term impact, and creating value for a wide group of stakeholders: *“There are your shareholders, your customers, your employees, the communities in which you operate, all of whom have a say... Some have a more direct say. Your shareholders can turf you out quickly if they don’t like what you’re doing. Your communities will take longer. But if you don’t bring all of those constituencies with you, life’s going to be harder. It was this kind of eye-opening moment that this isn’t just about hitting the numbers, or the short-term numbers, even though you’re rewarded on hitting the short-term numbers. The success, as I would define it, of the job would be your long-term numbers. And your long-term numbers are measured in profit and earnings per share but in all the other metrics that we use as well.”*

Part of this changing expectation, Stephen believes, results from the greater transparency driven by technological change which has

increased awareness of how businesses are behaving: *“The world is a much more transparent place than it was. That’s a good thing because people got away with all kinds of stuff in the old days. Shocking, when I think – even in my time! Let alone 100 years ago. Our attitude on bribing to get things across borders, things that simply – that’s how it was, that’s the way it had to be. And you think, well, no, it doesn’t have to be that way. It shouldn’t be that way. So transparency is a very positive thing.”*

Stephen also recognises a need for a new kind of collaborative leadership of government, business and society: *“It probably wasn’t until I got into more senior roles that I began to think about this sort of ability that we had as business to influence change in ways that others didn’t. The thing about being with a large company, this is probably true of any business but I happened to be in large companies, you have to think beyond borders and election cycles because my business plan crossed borders and crossed election cycles. And I also realised if you wait for politicians and others to do it you’re probably going to wait a long time. But I know that there is something that business can do that government and other non-profits can’t because of the scale, the resource, the number of employees they have.”*

Ashridge Business School
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
HP4 1NS
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1442 841178
Email: research@ashridge.org.uk
www.ashridge.org.uk/research

*Printed on paper that is 100% recycled or from sustainable sources.
Ashridge is committed to sustainable development: www.ashridge.org.uk/sustainability*



ASHRIDGE
business school

Registered as Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust.
Charity number 311096.