DEVELOPING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS LEADERS

SUMMARY

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

A Business in the Community programme

FriendsLife

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

ASHRIDGE business school

"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

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.

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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.

Concluding comment

Many of those with whom we spoke believed that the requirement for business to act responsibly towards their societies would only continue to grow. Our increasingly global economy, new technologies, greater transparency and the changing expectations of a new generation serve to compound the need to develop future leaders who are engaged in and committed to leading organisations which will support their communities in becoming healthier and better places to live.

It is essential therefore, that today's CEOs commit to action to developing the responsible business leaders of tomorrow.

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, whic 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 news-agents. *"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 enhances, 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.

Johns 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 permis¬sion 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 demon¬strate 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 Hodkinson, 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 other wise 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."*

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