# Leading the way

## Exploring modern CEO leadership

THE
PERSPECTIVE
SERIES

New insights into the UK workplace

This report is based on interviews with 11 of the UK's top CEOs.

October 2015

Circleresearch
The B2B experts

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# Foreword

**Jeroen Hoencamp**
CEO,
Vodafone UK

I feel very privileged to be writing this as the CEO of Vodafone UK. Leading a modern organisation isn't always easy but it is highly rewarding and I can honestly say that there is nowhere else I would prefer to be right now.

For me, the biggest reward comes from seeing those around me flourish and excel. Not long ago a CEO was viewed as a controlling authoritarian – someone who barked orders at trembling employees to deliver his strategy. Thankfully this is no longer the case! The world has moved on a lot in recent years and so too has leadership.

I believe my job – and the job of any CEO for that matter – is not to 'control' my team but to 'empower' them. Surrounded by thousands of hugely talented individuals from our Executive Leadership to our newest recruits, my objective is to create an environment which allows them achieve their potential and drive our business forward.

In doing so, my eyes continue to be opened to greater possibilities by conversations with the youngest members of our team, from those in our stores to our many graduates. To this generation, nourished by the wonders of technology from an early age, nothing is impossible. Where previously there were strict hierarchies and formal chains of command, today's business structures are flatter than ever as we encourage all employees to work together and unlock the true potential of collaborative working.

At Vodafone, we are enabling this through our 'Better Ways of Working' approach. From the 'hardware' of open-plan offices, hot-desking for all employees and remote connection technology to the 'software' of open discussions, constructive challenging of the status quo and taking educated risks – 'Better Ways of Working' is all about harnessing the collective power of our people.

But what of becoming tomorrow's CEO? As businesses continue to develop new opportunities and ideas, the one piece of advice I would offer to any aspiring manager is to take advantage of new experiences whenever and wherever they present themselves.

Like many of the other CEOs in this report, becoming the head of a large organisation had not always been on my radar. Instead, my career has comprised of a string of exciting and evermore challenging experiences, of which being CEO is just the latest. There are few clearly signposted routes to the top, but there are many interesting and inspiring routes – so switch departments, work abroad and volunteer for 'that impossible assignment'! Yes, there will be risk involved and some experiences may turn out better than others: but ultimately you will gain credibility, learn through invaluable experiences and – most importantly – you will enjoy your career.

This is a very exciting time for UK businesses and as I look towards the coming months and years at Vodafone, I have found it fascinating to discover more about the attitudes and opinions of leaders from some of the country's most prominent organisations. I hope you enjoy exploring this report too.

**Jeroen Hoencamp**

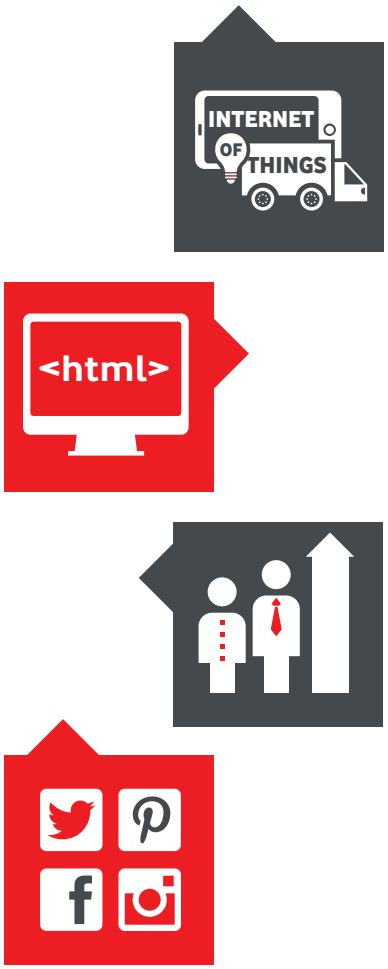
CEO, Vodafone UK

**More from the Perspective series**

The Perspective series gives you fresh insight into the world of work. Find this latest report at **www.yourreadybusiness.co.uk/perspective** and for other resources and insights **www.vodafone.co.uk/perspective**

# Executive Summary

**THE LEADERS OF TODAY ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY FLUENT IN TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION AS THEY SEEK TO CENTRE THEIR BUSINESS' OPERATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON DIGITAL CHANNELS**




## The future leader

Big business matters to the UK. The FTSE100, FTSE250 and Top Track 100 together generate around £1.5 trillion of annual revenue[1]. The success or failure of any of these top organisations can impact thousands of UK citizens. From staff and customers to suppliers and shareholders, big business affects us all.

At the helm of these organisations are CEOs; men and women with decades of managerial experience and unique exposure to our changing business landscape. By standing shoulder-to-shoulder with organisations up and down the country to share insights and learnings, these leaders are in a prime position to help drive our nation's future success.

This latest report in Perspective series looks at a modern wave of CEOs at top UK organisations to uncover the impact of technology on working practices and the skills required to be a great leader. What was discovered is fascinating.

Many top leaders did not set out with a plan to become CEO, but they are driven individuals with immense self-belief. As quick decision-makers who are willing to take risks, these leaders combine confidence with humility and an awareness of their own limitations. In some industries CEOs are also increasingly becoming industry specialists rather than general managers.

Today these CEOs lead their organisations through a period of flux. As working patterns and expectations shift, we are seeing the continued loss of hierarchical structures leading to an increased emphasis on collaboration. In turn this is impacting the skillsets of modern CEOs who must now possess the ability to engage, inspire and empower an entire workforce – perhaps the most important traits for running a successful modern company.

Alongside this, the leaders of today are becoming increasingly fluent in technological transformation as they seek to centre their business' operations, communications and customer engagement on digital channels. Whilst there is generally no need for all members of the Executive to be programmers and coders, the days appear to be numbered for anyone who is not at least comfortable in understanding the role that digital must play in modern organisations.

So as technology increasingly takes a seat at the main strategy table, CEOs are turning to Chief Information Officers (CIOs) and Chief Digital Officers (CDOs) to become collaborators, acting as the glue that binds together different departments and functions.

The world of big business is transforming rapidly, so too is its leadership. We hope that you find the thoughts of our modern corporate leaders engaging and thought-provoking.

# Contributors

**Craig Kreeger**
CEO of Virgin Atlantic

## Craig Kreeger, CEO of Virgin Atlantic

Craig was appointed CEO of Virgin Atlantic Airways in February 2013. With a fleet of 40 long haul aircraft, Virgin Atlantic flies six million passengers per year to destinations all over the world.

A veteran of the airline industry, Craig joined American Airlines (AA) in 1985 as an analyst, working his way up the organisation to become Senior Vice President. As Senior Vice President, International, Craig spent six years in London leading AA's operations and sales throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Pacific.

With three decades of experience in the aviation industry, Craig brings extensive knowledge of leading prominent brands with complex international operations.

**Jeff Van Der Eems**
CEO of United Biscuits

## Jeff Van Der Eems, CEO of United Biscuits

Jeff van der Eems was appointed CEO of United Biscuits in April 2015. A former Top Track 100 organisation prior to acquisition by Turkish-based Yildiz Holdings in 2014, United Biscuits is a leading international snack food organisation with brands including McVitie's, Jacob's and Go Ahead.

Following a career at PepsiCo that cumulated in the position of CFO for PepsiCo UK & Ireland, Jeff joined United Biscuits in 2005 as Chief Financial Officer. He has since held a number of positions across the business, including leading the International arm of the organisation since 2007.

Jeff has overseen a quadrupling of international business at United Biscuits through strong organic growth and strategic acquisitions and was also an integral part of the Executive team during the sale process of United Biscuits to Yildiz Holding in 2014.

**Rod McKie**
CEO of Welcome Break

## Rod McKie, CEO of Welcome Break

Rod's career has seen him shape some of top high street names in the UK, culminating with his position as CEO of Welcome Break.

Rod started his career as a kitchen manager at TGI Friday's, quickly rising through the ranks to become Operations Manager. As Operations Director at Prêt a Manager, Rod oversaw the growth of the business from 14 to 85 units across the UK, and as Managing Director of Coffee Republic he oversaw a similar 3-year expansion programme growing the business in the UK from 16 units to over 90 units.

In 2001 Rod joined Welcome Break and in 2005 became Chief Executive Officer. He has since overseen a business improvement programme including the introduction of leading brands such as Waitrose, Starbucks, Burger King, KFC, Subway, Harry Ramsden's, Tossed and Papa John's.

**Jack Kirkland**
Director of Bowmer & Kirkland

## Jack Kirkland, Director of Bowmer & Kirkland

With 29 subsidiary companies and divisions together employing over 1,400 staff, Bowmer & Kirkland is one of the UK's largest construction, development and security conglomerates. Set-up in 1923, the organisation remains under family control today, chaired by John Kirkland (grandson of founder, Robert Kirkland) and with a board that includes four family directors.

Son of the current Group Chairman, Jack Kirkland is an Oxford history graduate, who also studied law at Westminster and BPP Law School. Initially forging his own path away from the family business, Jack joined the City law firm Lovells, and later moved into real estate and investment with the Abstract Group of Companies. Whilst at Abstract Group, Jack was invited to become a Non-Executive Director at Bowmer & Kirkland and six months later he entered the business full-time as Director, responsible for overseeing many of the Group's 29 subsidiaries. Jack also serves as Chairman of Nottingham Contemporary and as a trustee of the Bridget Riley Art Foundation.

**Ian Gorham**
CEO of Hargreaves Lansdown

## Ian Gorham, CEO of Hargreaves Lansdown

Ian Gorham is the Chief Executive Officer of Hargreaves Lansdown Plc, the UK's number one 'investment supermarket' for private investors. Operated entirely in the UK with headquarters in Bristol, more than 900 staff at Hargreaves Lansdown control around £55bn of investment from over 700,000 clients.

A qualified Chartered Accountant, Ian previously helped build Deloitte's financial services operations and was Head of Grant Thornton's UK financial services business, before joining Hargreaves Lansdown in 2009 as Chief Operating Officer.

Ian became Chief Executive Officer of Hargreaves Lansdown in September 2010 and, in the intervening 5 years, has overseen the company's rise from a FTSE 250 organisation to an established member of the FTSE100, jumping more than 50 places up the rankings.

**Rupert Pearce**
CEO of Inmarsat

## Rupert Pearce, CEO of Inmarsat

Rupert Pearce is the Chief Executive Officer of Inmarsat, a FTSE100 satellite communications company. He is also Chairman of the industry trade body ESOA (the EMEA Satellite Operators Association).

Rupert joined Inmarsat in 2005 as Group General Counsel, becoming Senior Vice President in 2009, before his promotion to CEO in 2012. During the three years for which Rupert has been CEO, Inmarsat's share price has more than doubled from £4.23 in January 2012 to £9.75 in August 2015.

Educated in Modern History at Oxford University (MA), Rupert began his professional career working in corporate finance at Linklaters and later at Atlas Venture, a transatlantic venture capital company, where he was a Partner with the firm's European and U.S. investment teams. He is a visiting fellow of the Imperial College Business School, where he lectures on the school's Entrepreneurship programme, and is also the co-author of 'Raising Venture Capital' (Wiley).

**André Lacroix**
CEO of Intertek

## André Lacroix, CEO of Intertek

André Lacroix is the CEO of Intertek, the leading provider of quality and safety services to businesses across the globe with over 38,000 employees across more than 100 different locations.

Appointed CEO of Intertek in May 2015, André is an experienced Chief Executive with a strong track record of delivering long-term growth strategies and shareholder value with global companies across diverse territories. André was previously Group Chief Executive of Inchcape Group plc from 2005 to 2015 and prior to this he was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Euro Disney S.C.A. From 1996 to 2003 he was the President of Burger King International, previously part of Diageo.

André is currently the Senior Independent Director of Reckitt Benckiser Group plc and Chairman of Good Restaurants AG.

**Simon Peckham**
CEO of Melrose Industries

## Simon Peckham, CEO of Melrose Industries

Simon Peckham is the Chief Executive Officer of Melrose Industries Plc. Melrose Industries specialises in the acquisition, performance improvement and profitable sale of good manufacturing businesses such as Elster: a company it acquired for £1.8bn in 2012 and has recently announced the sale of for £3.3bn (sale to Honeywell due to complete in Q1 2016).

The rise of Melrose Industries into the FTSE ranks has been rapid, growing from a market cap of £17m in 2003 to just under £3bn in 2015. A FTSE250 constituent, Melrose Industries was recently in the FTSE100 prior to an extraordinary dividend payment.

A qualified solicitor, Simon joined the conglomerate Wassall PLC in 1990, ultimately becoming an Executive Director in 1999. From 2000 until 2003, Simon then worked for the equity finance division of The Royal Bank of Scotland before leaving to set-up Melrose Industries with former Wassall colleagues Christopher Miller and David Roper. Simon initially took on the role of Chief Operations Officer before taking over as CEO in 2012.

**Andy Ransom**
CEO of Rentokil Initial

## Andy Ransom, CEO of Rentokil Initial

Andy is CEO of Rentokil Initial, one of the world's largest business services companies with operations in over 60 countries. Globally, the company employs 27,000 people and has revenues of more than €2bn.

A vastly experienced commercial operator, before joining Rentokil Initial Andy had a 20 year career at ICI plc. During this period he held a number of roles at Board level (General Counsel, Company Secretary, Global Head of Mergers & Acquisitions, EVP Regional and Industrial Chemicals) and was for many years ICI's senior commercial negotiator.

With a track record for driving profitable growth through focus on customer service and delivery at pace, Andy was first appointed to the Board of Rentokil Initial in 2008 and became CEO in 2013

**Patrick Coveney**
CEO of Greencore Group

## Patrick Coveney, CEO of Greencore Group

Patrick Coveney is CEO of Greencore Group, a billion pound multinational convenience food manufacturing organisation with over 10,000 employees.

Following several years of experience working alongside companies in the food and beverage industry as the Managing Partner for McKinsey in Ireland, Patrick joined Greencore Group as CFO, a position he held for two and a half years before being appointed CEO in December 2007.

Patrick is also a Non-Executive Director of Glanbia plc, the leading global performance nutrition and ingredients group with operations in 32 countries, and served as President of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce in 2012.

**Henry Birch**
CEO of Rank Group

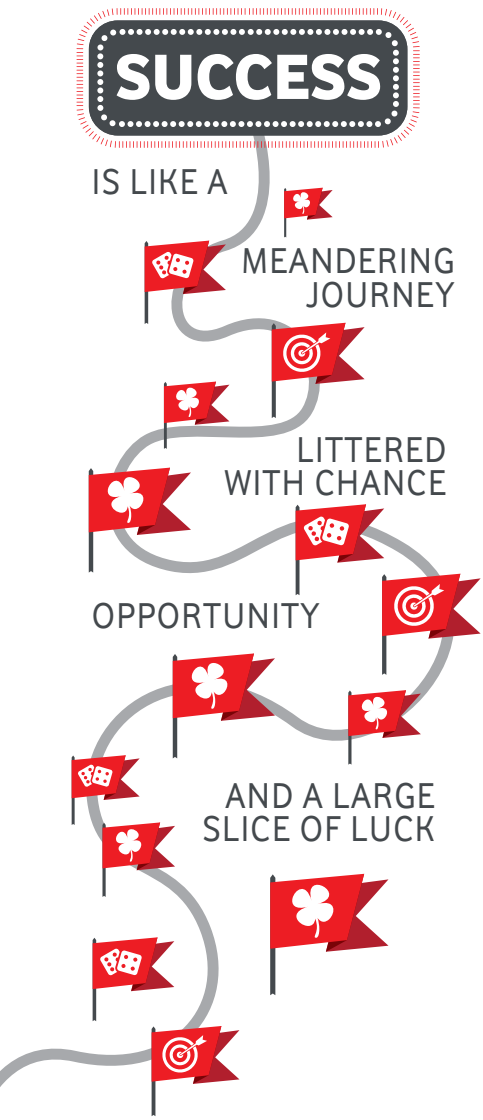
## Henry Birch, CEO of Rank Group

Henry Birch is CEO of Rank Group, a leading betting and gaming group with major brands including Mecca Bingo and Grosvenor Casinos.

Henry has more than 20 years of experience in the betting and gaming sector and in online and broadcast media. His roles have included non-executive director of PLUS 500 plc, CEO of William Hill Online, CEO of Leisure & Gaming plc and COO of Bettingcorp Ltd.

Prior to working in the betting and gaming industry, Henry held management roles at Time Warner, Turner Broadcasting and Riffage (an early digital music operator based in Silicon Valley). With extensive experience running successful online operations, Henry has a keen eye for digital transformation.

# Research




## The journey to the top

Becoming a CEO is all one big game plan, right? Jump from university straight into a large multi-national, then work your way through finance and operations roles of increasing importance across a number of high profile businesses before, ultimately and inevitably, achieving the CEO role.

According to the CEOs interviewed for this report, this is not the case. Many we spoke to view their careers very differently. Far from being the accumulation of a perfectly planned chain of events, they see their rise to the top as being a meandering journey, littered with chance, opportunity, and a large slice of luck.

*“I joined Inmarsat with a view to becoming a better investor by getting some management experience at a hi-tech company. Somewhat to my amusement – and amazement – I am still here now! Most careers look planned and perfect in retrospect, but at the time it’s largely just making it up as you go along.”*

**Rupert Pearce** CEO Inmarsat

There are a few career paths that many top CEOs have trodden in common. One in five CEOs of the top 250 FTSE organisations completed a bachelor’s degree at Oxbridge, most likely in Engineering, Economics, Management or Law[2]. Together these four subject areas account for over half of the degrees studied by the CEOs. Once in the workplace, a CEO is also most likely to have climbed the ranks via a CFO or COO position.

However, the Oxbridge-finance-operations journey is far from compulsory. Between them, the top 250 CEOs at UK Plc have attended over 100 different Universities and studied a breadth of subjects ranging from Veterinary Medicine, to Psychology and Anthropology[3]. Once in the workplace they have also then advanced their careers through a variety of business functions from sales and marketing to IT and digital.

Overall, whilst some CEO careers do share common histories, there is no such thing as a ‘blueprint’ for success. Few make it to the top by sticking to a single path. In fact, many CEOs consider a diverse and varied career path, forged at a variety of different organisations and industries, as one of the key drivers behind their success.

*“It really helps if you’ve worked for several blue chip companies, operating globally across many different industries. If you have worked in that kind of environment and have proven you can move between industries, then I think it makes you a more interesting candidate when people look for a CEO. It means you have proved that you can adapt and transfer learnings from one industry to another.”*

**André Lacroix** CEO Intertek

## The rise of the sector expert

Management is an art form and the best preparation for leadership is often quoted to be previous leadership experience. When looking for a new CEO, many organisations will therefore often fix their recruitment gaze on existing CEOs; over half of FTSE100 CEOs previously held another CEO position before taking on their current role.

However, fuelled by the recent financial crisis, the archetypal 'cross-industry CEO' may face tough times ahead. CEOs we interviewed talked about the growing need for leaders to have specific sector experience, with a danger of 'falling down the gap' if you try to bridge too many changes at once.

*"Due to the way in which industries are evolving, it's now becoming more of a prerequisite that a CEO has specific experience of the industry in which they are working. I think the days of a generalist CEO who can wander from one industry to another may be on the decline."*

**Patrick Coveney** CEO Greencore

**AS BUSINESS BECOMES INCREASINGLY GLOBALISED, ONE TYPE OF EXPERIENCE IS CONSISTENTLY CITED AS ESSENTIAL AND THAT'S INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE.**

## International perspective unlocks new opportunities

Viewpoints differ between the relative benefits of changing industries compared to adopting a more linear career path. However, as business becomes increasingly globalised, one type of experience is consistently cited as essential – international experience.

In all aspects of careers, from education to senior management, today's leaders are not restrained by geographical boundaries. This is apparent when you consider the wide range of global universities that UK CEOs have attended. Whilst 1 in 5 CEOs at the UK's top 250 Plc's attended Oxbridge for their Bachelor's degrees, others studied much farther afield.

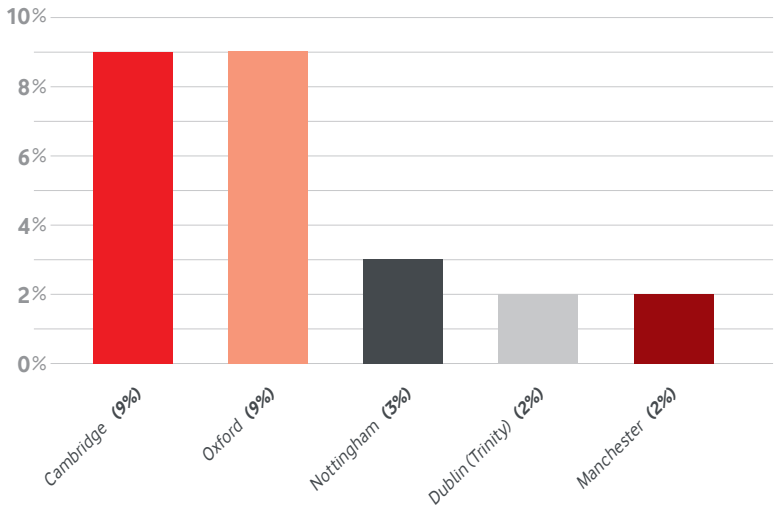
Becoming equipped to be a good CEO is a journey of continuous learning. Global experience bolsters exposure, presenting you with new challenges, new opportunities and chances to acquire new skills that are invaluable in management.

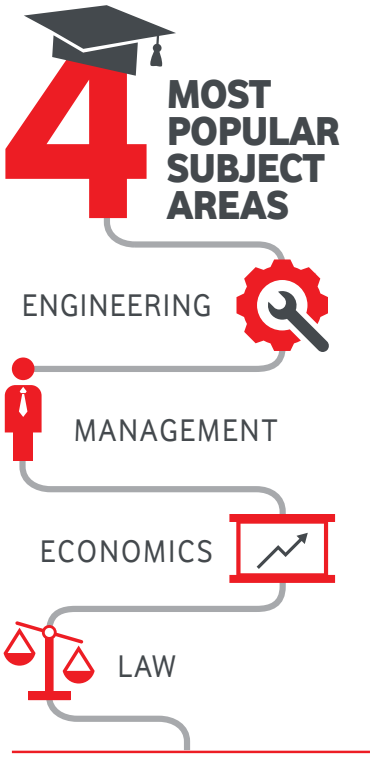
*"The beauty of international experience is that you get such broad exposure. You have multiple jurisdictions and multiple geographies to consider. So being in an international role is like having an accelerated learning curve."*

**Jeff Van Der Eems** CEO United Biscuits

To ascend to the top of the pyramid you have to be willing to push yourself out of your comfort zone. If you see a challenge, take it on. Deviate from the expected and instead eagerly advance into the unknown. Doing so will allow you to become a broad industry expert, someone with experience and in-depth knowledge of increasingly global and complex markets.

## One in five CEOs in the top 250 UK PLC studied for their bachelor's degree at Oxbridge




**THESE ACCOUNT FOR OVER HALF OF THE DEGREES STUDIED BY CEOS**

## Selection of universities attended by CEOs from UK's top 250 plcs

1. Richard Steeves, CEO Synergy Health, University of British Columbia, **Canada**
2. Bob Dudley, CEO BP, University of Illinois, **USA**
3. Octavio Alvidrez, CEO Fresnillo, Guanajuato University, **Mexico**
4. Nicandro Durante, CEO British American Tobacco, University of Sao Paulo, **Brazil**
5. Helge Lund, CEO BG Group, Norwegian School of Economics, **Norway**
6. Tidjane Thiam, CEO Prudential, University of Paris, **France**
7. Antonio Horta-Osorio, CEO Lloyds, Catholic University of Portugal, **Portugal**
8. Vittario Colao, CEO Vodafone, Bocconi University, **Italy**
9. Mor Weizer, CEO Playtech, Ben-Gurion University, **Israel**
10. Ashley Almanza, CEO G4S, Natal University, **South Africa**
11. Mark Wilson, CEO Aviva, Waikato University, **New Zealand**
12. Sam Walsh, CEO Rio Tinto, Melbourne University, **Australia**
13. Ivan Menezes, CEO Diageo, University of Delhi, **India**
14. Aloysius Lee Tse Sang, CEO Millennium and Copthorne Hotels, University of Hong Kong, **Hong Kong**
15. Alexander Frolov, CEO Evraz, University of Moscow, **Russia**
16. Erik Engstrom, CEO Reed Elsevier, Stockholm School of Economics, **Sweden**

# It's a digital knowledge economy

Together with global experience, a new leadership quality has also emerged – the need to possess digital skills. This is particularly the case in consumer-facing organisations, where the rise of the digital-native millennial consumer is forcing businesses to adapt or die.

With the CEO ultimately responsible for setting the strategy, finding a CEO with digital nous can represent a significant competitive advantage. And whilst the importance of digital may be heightened in consumer-facing businesses, B2B industries are also feeling the pull.

*"Although as a B2B company we don't have any consumer brands, we have found that digital media is very important from the perspective of recruiting staff, engaging our colleagues and disseminating and sharing information. I think it's also important that the senior members of the business act as role models by getting stuck into digital themselves."*

**Patrick Coveney** CEO Greencore

## An effective workforce is a collaborative one

From internal innovation to external customer relations, digital innovation is changing businesses around the world, with every aspect of an organisation falling under its gaze. With this increasing digitisation come growing opportunities for new and innovative collaboration. As we lose hierarchies and enter into employee-employer relationships that are built less on 'owes and dues' and more on collaborations, CEOs are adamant that an effective and engaged workforce is one that collaborates well.

*"To adapt to the modern world, we're looking to make it easier in every way for people to collaborate. We're investing in next generation communications and collaboration capabilities so that people can collaborate remotely, including across borders in over 200 countries. We're opening up our networks by investing in core technology, whether products, services or applications. In every single part of our business we're running collaborative, open business models. Collaboration is our watchword."*

**Rupert Pearce** CEO Inmarsat

Working boundaries are blurring. The world is becoming faster, more agile and more connected. A successful organisation must be all of these things too. Employees should be able to work productively wherever they are, whenever they want. To do so, intelligent use of technology is essential. From conferencing and atomising documents, to apps and virtual workplaces, digital is key to enabling collaboration and overcoming challenges.

"In any consumer business, unless you adapt quickly to the digital world, you will be under threat. Digital must now be a key part of any consumer-facing company's strategy and having a CEO and Executive team with digital knowledge is becoming increasingly important."

**Henry Birch**
CEO
Rank Group

*“One of the big changes we’re making in how we run the business is that we’re having fewer face-to-face meetings and making much more use of video technology. The concept of an office, the concept of a branch, or even the concept of a team meeting, has changed quite a lot. We have virtual offices and virtual branches and virtual team meetings.*

*We’re also encouraging all of our people to be as entrepreneurial and creative as possible in their use of technology. Our technicians have all got smartphones and if one of them designs an app in their own time that we can then incorporate into the business, we pay them. Apps can be picked-up by anyone at any time, so all of a sudden, without an official rollout or deployment model, you can have a new technology solution working all around the world. It’s all about using technology to solve problems.”*

**Andy Ransom** CEO Rentokil Initial

Not long ago technology was a ‘silo’ understood by few and confusing to many. Now it is the go-to saviour whenever a new challenge rears its head.

# The technological collaboration hub

As the significance of technology continues to grow by the day, so too is the importance of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) and Chief Digital Officers (CDOs) growing, with an increasing presence of these roles at the overall strategy table[5].

*“A CIO is someone who should galvanise thinking around technology issues in powerful ways. They are a visible standard bearer; someone who should ask the tough strategic questions.”*

**Rupert Pearce** CEO Inmarsat

The role of the CIO used to be confined to a technological silo, responding to adhoc demands from the business for pieces of technology rather than leading and driving the strategy. Today we see a very different picture. As technology and digital become increasingly centric to organisational strategy, CEOs are turning to their CIOs to become a hub for collaborative working, coordinating departments, joining systems together and asking the big questions.

As such, it is vitally important that the CIO is not a stereotypical ‘techie’ as depicted in shows such as *The IT Crowd*, but a ‘people-person’, a ‘collaborator’ and someone who inspires.

*“The IT function needs to be at the heart of business strategy conversations. I do not believe that the IT function can be effective as an ‘order taker’. It needs to be pushing the business to look at ways in which technology can enhance the entire organisation based upon an understanding of the business as a whole.”*

**Craig Kreeger** CEO Virgin Atlantic

Like the hub at the centre of a wheel that is spinning faster and faster with new spokes added all the time, the CIO is becoming the glue that holds organisational operations together.

However, one person, or even one department, cannot oversee a company’s ‘digital success’ by themselves. Instead it requires everyone, from marketing and finance to HR and operations to be adept in digital and driving for positive change. And importantly, everyone in senior management must be comfortable and confident in this too.

The CEOs we spoke to indicated that there will be no place in 5 years’ time for senior management who are not confident with technology. Perhaps, there shouldn’t even be a place now.

**FINDINGS SUGGEST IN 5 YEARS’ TIME THERE WILL BE NO PLACE FOR SENIOR MANAGEMENT WHO ARE NOT CONFIDENT IN TECHNOLOGY**

*“If you want to be an executive, you need to make sure that you’re digital-savvy; social media-savvy; tech-savvy. This doesn’t mean you need to be the biggest technical guru, but you have to know how it works and be comfortable using it and deploying it in a strategy. If you can’t do that, there’s just not a place for you anymore.”*

**Rod McKie** CEO Welcome Break

The need for the Executive team to all have digital skills appears to be especially critical with consumer-facing organisations where brand and reputation are essential.

*“It’s important that everyone in our leadership team is able to think about how technology could make things better for our people and for our customers. I don’t need them to be true technology experts; but, especially when it comes to major trends like social media, I think your leadership has to be somewhat savvy regarding advancements that are changing the way in which people interact with technology and communicate with each other.”*

**Craig Kreeger** CEO Virgin Atlantic

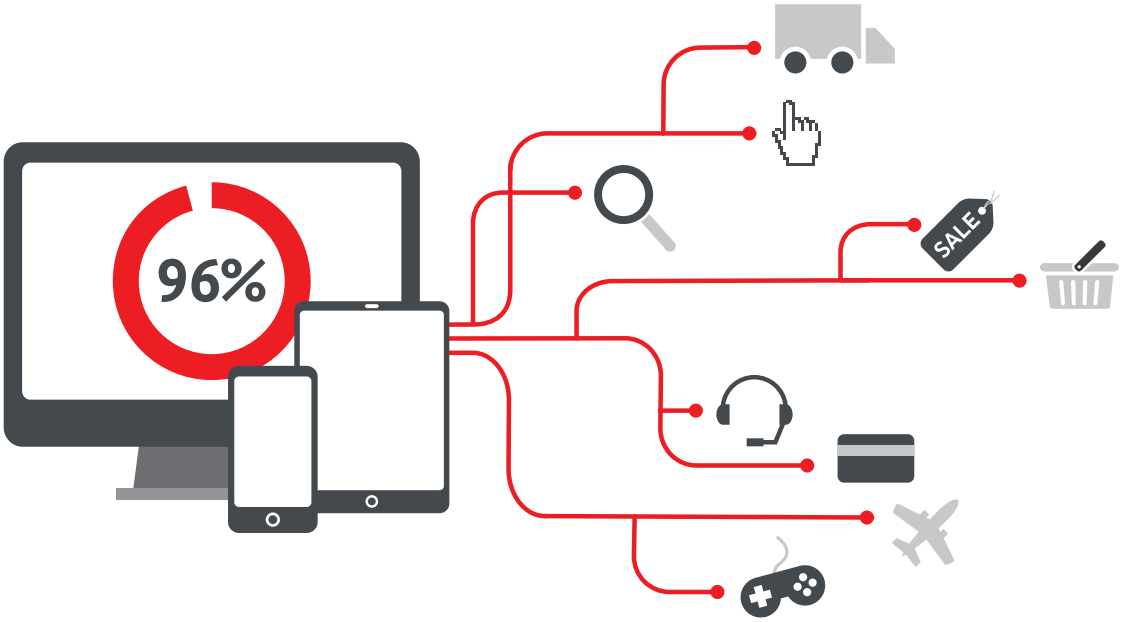
## Technology with a real purpose adds value

Across the customer journey, our most recent Perspective series study into the Connected Nation[6] found that 96% of consumers now use digital as part of their typical purchasing journey. Over half (52%) have even used a mobile device to find out extra

**96%**
OF CONSUMERS USE
**DIGITAL**
AS PART OF THEIR TYPICAL PURCHASING JOURNEY

AND EVERY DAY MILLIONS OF CONSUMERS ARE MAKING PURCHASE DECISIONS BASED ON DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

**ORGANISATIONAL**
**LEADERS**
NEED TO RECOGNISE THIS



information about a product, or compare prices, whilst in a retail store. Every day, millions of consumers are making purchasing decisions based on digital experiences. Organisational leadership needs to recognise and reflect this.

> *Trying to be a leader at a consumer-facing organisation nowadays without at least some acknowledgement and focus on the digital world would be very difficult. Whether you work in groceries, banking or fashion; finance, HR or marketing; every function within every industry will to some extent be touched by technology.*

**Henry Birch** CEO Rank Group

As consumers become increasingly dependent upon technology in their everyday lives, expectations of digital capabilities at consumer-facing business continue to rocket and every function within the business must be able to respond accordingly.

Using technology presents great opportunities for businesses to capitalise on the digital consumer. However, merely throwing a technology 'blanket' over a challenge will not solve it. Instead, using technology efficiently and effectively, enabled through true 'technological intelligence', is vital.

Pursuing 'data' and 'technology' initiatives without a clear objective can result in paralysis rather than progress. As a modern-day leader it's critical to understand not only what technology exists, but how you will use its capabilities to drive meaningful change.

> *The challenge with technology is that as it gets better and better, more and more information comes into existence. The trick is to work out what you really want, focus on that, and don't become distracted by the tons of other information that's out there.*

**Simon Peckham** CEO Melrose Industries

Digital must be at the heart of strategy, but it must also be implemented in a considered and effective manner, not as a rash reaction.

Going forwards, the need for intelligent use of technology in business strategy doesn't necessarily mean that the next wave of CEOs will all come from the ranks of CIO, but rather that management across the spectrum must increase their skills in digital.

Digital must be at the heart of strategy, but it must also be implemented in a considered and effective manner, not as a rash reaction.

# People with technology skills are vital for success

With technology increasingly at the heart of successful businesses, CEOs warn of the potential for a significant skills shortage to develop as the talent pipeline struggles to keep pace with demand. Across the EU, it is expected that there will be a 825,000 shortfall of employees with necessary IT skills by 2020[7].

*"Here in Bristol, our biggest challenge is getting enough technology people. We've got plenty of jobs for people who are developers or testers or project managers but we often struggle to find enough talent to meet the demand."*

**Ian Gorham** CEO Hargreaves Lansdown

Digital should be at the heart of our country's growth plans. From developing technological infrastructure to educating the next generation, we need our future management to be adept at digital.

And it's also important to make sure that the 'business environment' is optimised for digital innovation. Regulations should be in place to safeguard against dangers, whilst at the same time making sure that organisations are able to compete efficiently in a global digital economy.

*"When it comes to digital capabilities, UK companies in the gambling sector are quite well-positioned. Part of that is because we've got a pragmatic regulatory framework for gambling in the UK, so it means that a lot of big UK gambling companies are also successful overseas. Having less red tape and regulation allows companies to innovate and experiment more, which should ultimately lead to more success.*

*Of course, regulation is there for a reason so I'm not advocating that it should be done away with entirely; but we do need to ensure that where it exists, regulation is helping not hindering digital innovation."*

**Henry Birch** CEO Rank Group

As the UK continues to increasingly move towards a service economy – over 80% of the UK workforce is now employed within the service sector[8] – the importance of digital in the UK will continue to proliferate.

There are many great digital successes that the UK can be proud of, not least inventing the Internet itself. Moving forwards, we need to ensure that we continue to be at the forefront of this revolution, and big business has a big part to play.

"For me, the future of Financial Services, or any business, is going to be largely dependent on having the best technology. We need to be talking about how to keep Britain (not just London) at the forefront of financial services; and that conversation should primarily come back to technology."

**Ian Gorham**
CEO
Hargreaves Lansdown

virgin atlantic

# Building the brand through customer focus

## Craig Kreeger, CEO

"As a CEO, you need to set the strategic direction of the company, and create an environment where the people of the company are enabled in a way that allows them to deliver for your customers."

"In trying to do this, there are a couple of things that have taken more of my time than I anticipated. By far the biggest, and maybe this is because I place the most importance on it, is the amount of time I spend focused on internal communications and engagement with our employees; literally representing the leadership of our company to our people."

"We are a service business and the success or failure of our company is predicated on the way our people interact with our customers. So, having our people on-side is the number one criteria for long-term success of our brand and of our company."

"Our people want to know that the management of the company has their back; that we care about the customers as much as they do. And we have to prove this through our actions, not just words. We, the management, exist to make it easier for our people to do their jobs wonderfully for our customers. They're out there on the front-line interacting with customers every day; we've got to be behind the scenes making it easy for them."

"To convey this requires two qualities – openness and honesty. Openness is important because we want our people to be able to express their views in a way that they feel they're being heard in the context of decision-making. And honesty, because whatever we're doing we have to be clear with our people in a way that lets them believe in the direction we're going."

"We've avoided that death spiral throughout the financially difficult times and, certainly for my two years here, we've invested a lot of time and energy in reinforcing that we really do mean it when we say we care about the customer and we care about our people."

"This is vital. If the people of the company begin to believe that management care less about customers than they do, then problems start to occur. If a company cuts costs in a way that makes it harder to deliver excellent customer service, then the message that the people would get is that the company itself doesn't care as much about customers as they do, which reduces motivation. That is a death spiral for a company based on customer service and brand."

# A slow road to diversity in leadership

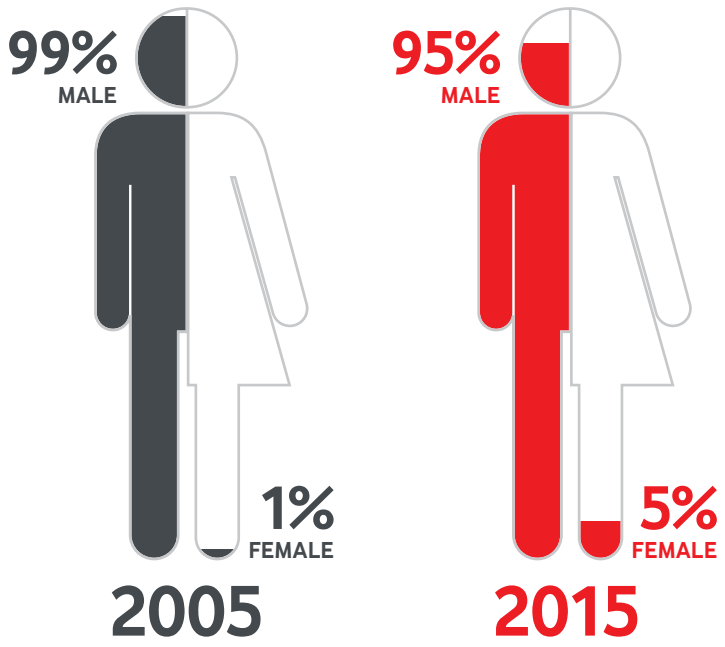
One inescapable and often commented on subject that's shared by the majority of UK businesses' top leadership is gender.

A study by the consultancy firm McKinsey found that when compared to male counterparts, female leaders tend to be better at developing their staff and providing inspiration[9]. We may therefore expect many CEOs to be women. Instead, we find that men still vastly dominate the top jobs.

On the other side of the Atlantic, a recent study by the New York Times found that there are more top-US business bosses called John than there are women. And it's not just John's, there's more David's too.[10]

The situation is just as pronounced in the UK. Of the FTSE100, only 5 CEOs are female. This is progress compared to 2005 when there was only 1, but it still leaves a significant disparity. And when you include Chairs of companies in the UK, there are more than twice as many John's as women in top FTSE roles![11]

## Gender of CEOs in the FTSE100



So why aren't there more female leaders? Unpicking the answer to this question is fraught with political agendas and strong opinions, with arguments ranging from prioritisation of family life to sexism and discrimination. This discrepancy in leadership is further compounded by gender pay gaps throughout the workforce. It is estimated that across the UK full time female employees earn on average 15% less than their male counterparts[12].

Whatever the root cause of the situation however, CEOs highlight a more practical challenge with getting women into top roles – a lack of candidates.

*"The business world is still playing catch-up on diversity. When you're looking for very senior people, you're looking for people who already have significant managerial experience; historically, more men have acquired this experience than women."*

**Patrick Coveney** CEO Greencore

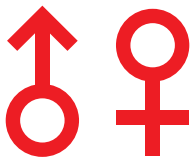
A lack of historical opportunities for women seems to be impacting the talent pipeline at present, something that will perhaps naturally begin to balance itself out over the coming years. However, there is also concern that an 'old boys club' may still hold sway in certain corners.

*"I think UK Plc has got a problem in that the recruitment of Directors is a bit of a merry-go-round. It's heavily controlled by head-hunters in the City. These people build relationships with clients and put them forward for jobs time and again. There's an analogy with football managers where you can be sacked one day for being bottom of the table with team A and five days later you're being announced triumphantly as the manager of team B!*

*I think we need a more diverse pool of candidates. There are lots of good, young people out there and we need to give them a way to break into these roles."*

**Ian Gorham** CEO Hargreaves Lansdown

Regardless of what you attribute to be the cause of gender disparity in leadership roles, it is clear that CEOs see increased diversity as a good thing, but an area in which progress still seems likely to be slower-paced than many may prefer.



"Diversity on the board is very important. We recently appointed two brilliant female Non-Executive Directors and the board has been much stronger in the quality of its decision-making as a result. That said, it takes longer to find high quality female directors than it does to find male ones."

**Patrick Coveney**
CEO
Greencore

# A career path built on self-belief

Whilst there is no such thing as a 'blueprint' career path for getting to the top, having the ambition and self-belief to drive you there are pre-requisites. A study of an MBA class at Harvard found that whilst only 3% of students had created a list of career goals, ten years later that same 3% were earning on average ten times as much as the other 97% of the class![13]

*"I have always had an inner drive to consistently run something bigger and better. I think all successful people, including CEOs, have got that one thing in common: they are driven. They want to succeed and will improvise and adapt as necessary to overcome whatever is put in their path; they have the energy levels and passion to want to continue and keep going despite setbacks."*

**Rod McKie** CEO Welcome Break

To become a leader, you need to believe in yourself, believe that you can and will achieve something great. You must not be scared of taking a risk and never be willing to settle. Instead you need to be ready to grasp opportunity when it presents itself.

## KEY QUALITIES OF A CEO

- ☑ INSPIRING
- ☑ CAPTIVATING
- ☑ DETERMINED
- ☑ HIGH ENERGY LEVELS
- ☑ PASSIONATE
- ☑ ADAPTABLE
- ☑ IMPROVISATION
- ☑ NEED TO SUCCEED
- ☑ INNER DRIVE
- ☑ SELF-BELIEF
- ☑ AMBITIOUS

## Actions speak louder than words in the business world

Of course, this drive and ambition requires testing on the business stage. Words can only take you so far; after that, actions take over.

*“Did I always want to join the family business? No! I needed to prove myself first. When I became a Director of the business I think it was very important – to me at least – that I had already demonstrated that I could forge a successful career elsewhere on my own.”*

**Jack Kirkland** Director, Bowmer & Kirkland

We respond to confident personalities and a CEO must be able to captivate and inspire their workforce; but objectively demonstrating skill behind the confidence is also essential for gaining the trust and respect of those around you.

In doing so, there will be times in a career where things get tough so it’s also important to be resilient. Many of the CEOs we interviewed spoke of the challenges, both expected and unexpected, of becoming a CEO. In order to succeed you have to be willing to accept that you may not always be perfectly prepared for the role you are embarking on, but that you still want to take on the challenge, to learn quickly and not let difficult times get you down.

*“Looking back, it’s amazing how ill-prepared I was emotionally for the CEO role – it’s a burdensome job and learning to live with the level of responsibility is very challenging.*

*You feel heightened levels of responsibility, scrutiny and pressure; but these don’t come from the organisation, or from the wider world. It’s something that comes from within you, which is why I use the word ‘emotional’.”*

**Craig Kreeger** CEO Virgin Atlantic

“I’m constantly driving for improvement, never satisfied with where I am, or where the organisation is, today. It’s like a constant agitation. To be candid, I think this is in part a strong competitive desire to win and in part a fear of failure or a strong desire not to lose. It’s two sides of the same coin really, we want to be successful for lots of good reasons, but we also don’t want things to go backwards or to mess things up.”

**Andy Ransom**
CEO
Rentokil Initial

# Soft skills are needed to go far

Digital skills, global experience and personal confidence can certainly help you to climb to the top of an organisation. However, in addition there is also a further range of soft skills that is increasingly becoming a prerequisite. In particular, a leader should:

- **Value people**
- **Care passionately**
- **Balance confidence and humility**
- **Make quick decisions (and take risks!)**

## Value people

As technology continues to revolutionise our businesses, bringing with it a wealth of improvements, it's vital not to forget what a business actually is – a network of people. Businesses are funded by people, operated by people and sell to people. As a leader, it is therefore critically important to acknowledge and value every relationship.

*"Setting the tone from the top – the culture – is incredibly important. I'm in a people business and trying to articulate our ethos and culture is very, very important.*

*We need to get 28,000 people out of bed in the morning, keep them happy, keep them doing a great job and ensure that they get home safely. To do this, culture – and letting people know they're appreciated – is very important."*

**Andy Ransom** CEO Rentokil Initial

One notable trait shared by great leaders is an ability to make others feel special. Despite how busy they may be, when talking to a great leader you feel as though you have 100% of their attention. Nothing else matters at that moment in time, and, as a result, you engage with, and believe in, them.

## Care passionately

One way to destroy a business is to try and 'make a quick buck' without considering the consequences. Whilst reporting positive quarterly results are important, a CEO who adopts a position with a view that doesn't extend any further than the next three months, risks doing irreparable damage to the long-term future of the organisation.

Adopting a long-term, sustainable approach requires an ability to look at the big picture, an awareness of all of the stakeholders your actions affect, and the trust and commitment of employees throughout the business to back you on this journey.

*“The CEO gets a chance to foster, grow and sustain the company’s core values such that they define why we can be proud when we go home. By doing this, a company has the ability to rise above the minutiae of the next quarter or any kind of short-term financial performance.*

*To do so, the CEO needs to manage the inherent tension between four vital constituencies – staff, shareholders, customers and the wider community. As a CEO you always need to be thinking about the long-term success of your company.”*

**Rupert Pearce** CEO Inmarsat

Spending a moment thinking about all of the lives that the fortunes of large companies can impact, from employees and shareholders to customers and suppliers, quickly makes it apparent how in many ways large companies are themselves communities.

Rhetoric has often taken an ‘us vs. them’ stance when it comes to the relationship between big business and society. In reality, it is just ‘us’; even if you don’t work in a big business, as suppliers and consumers, we all have a stake.

*“With a family business the people running it will have that long-term vision – after all, it’s their family’s future. This means you can get through the tough times.*

*During the recession, even though times were tough, I don’t think our people felt any need to chase turnover for its own sake. The truth is that we do care passionately about the business and we want it, and our people, to succeed in the long-term.”*

**Jack Kirkland** Director, Bowmer & Kirkland

Large organisations have an essential role to play in the nurturing of a healthy, happy and productive society. So having sustainable large businesses is critical, and caring passionately about the organisation must surely be an inherent part of this.

## Balance confidence and humility

If you don’t believe in yourself, why should anyone else? To be a good CEO you need to have confidence in your own abilities and believe you will be successful.

But good CEOs also recognise that the sum of the whole is far greater than any individual, and that they ultimately exist to serve the organisation, not themselves.

*“As CEO you have to be really careful about remaining humble and not falling for all the hype. You get invited to every fancy event in the world, to attend this function, to give a speech on that issue... It would be easy to start believing that you’re something really special; the important thing is to remember you’re actually just like anybody else.*

*You have to be quite disciplined about these things and not suddenly start spending more time on things that suit you rather than the company.”*

**Ian Gorham** CEO Hargreaves Lansdown

Remaining humble can require considerable focus. Organisational structures typically promote people who are ultra-confident, always looking to take the lead and willing to be vocal in their opinions. These are personalities that could naturally lend themselves to self-aggrandisement if not careful. Adapting to a more humble approach can be tricky, but it is vital for fostering a good working environment.

*“Most people who make CEO have got there because they are business galvanisers. They are people who walk into a room and by force of personality shape debates, raise issues and move things forward. If you continue to be that kind of personality as a CEO then stuff only happens when you show up, which is completely sub-optimal.*

*What you’ve got to do is take all of these things that you’ve got used to doing – galvanising and shaping debates, pushing, cajoling and leading – and realise that leadership as a CEO is completely different. You have to step back and create an environment where others can come in and shape the debate.”*

**Rupert Pearce** CEO Inmarsat.

One trick is to step backwards and let others take the limelight, quietly guiding and overseeing from the side-lines. Another solution lies in promoting a very ‘flat’ structure.

*“We have big arguments with each other all the time – I would be very disappointed if the most junior person in the company didn’t feel they could have a good argument with me!*

*We are very sociable, very open, very non-hierarchical. Our doors are always open. If you met us in the pub you probably wouldn’t be able to tell who had what position in the organisation.”*

**Simon Peckham** CEO Melrose Industries

Whatever approach you take, it is vital to create an environment whereby the CEO demonstrates as much humility as confidence.

“If you want to develop and be successful then you have to take risks. You have to make decisions, adjust and live with the consequences – whether that means you prosper or fail.”

**Jeff Van Der Eems**
CEO
United Biscuits

It is also important to note though, that humility does not mean self-deprecation. Humility means realising you may not always be right; but CEOs also recognise that it's still vitally important that you have the confidence to make decisions.

## Make calculated decisions and take calculated risks!

CEOs make many decisions, but more than that, they make them quickly and they stick with them. To coin a cliché, nothing ventured, nothing gained. This view certainly seems to be held by the UK's top CEOs, who believe we live in a world where it's vital to go forwards at pace to avoid being left behind

*"If you want to develop and be successful then you have to take risks. You have to make decisions, adjust and live with the consequences – whether that means you prosper or fail. That's the only way you develop. If you abdicate responsibility or delay making decisions then you become too slow, you fall behind and you don't develop your talent."*

**Jeff Van Der Eems** CEO United Biscuits

"It all comes down to basic human nature. If there was always someone else sitting next to you, controlling what you do and overseeing every decision you make, you wouldn't like it! You want to do it yourself. Very often we see that responsibility is a more powerful driver than money.

A lot of good management is just about freeing the people who should be making decisions to make those decisions and telling them to get on with it!"

**Simon Peckham**
CEO
Melrose Industries

It is often said that the biggest successes only emerge from failures.
In 1985 Steve Jobs was famously sacked from Apple – the company he set-up in his garage – and for the next ten years the organisation continued to battle against falling sales and near bankruptcy.

With this chequered history it would have been easy to become cautious. Instead though, with Jobs back in the fold, Apple noted the advancements being made in mobile internet connectivity and acted decisively. A company that for three decades had 'only sold computers' rapidly created the iPod, iPhone, iPad and now even the iWatch. Without these quick decisions, who knows if Apple would even still exist today?

## There's no 'I' in 'team'

It is vitally important for the CEO to possess a number of attributes; but any organisation that relies solely upon its CEO will fail. Successful businesses empower their staff, they make them feel valued, rewarded and 'allowed' to take risks.

*"As CEO it's your job to put a plan in place that's clear and concise. But just doing that isn't enough. You then need to follow up on that plan at all the various levels throughout the business to encourage people to achieve the plan... and also to spread a bit of cheer! You need to recognise, motivate and inspire people.*

*Leadership is about letting people know the bigger picture; about why they should be excited about the future and how their daily actions feed into this."*

**Rod McKie** CEO Welcome Break

Empowerment of employees isn't just a management ideal, it's also something that is increasingly being demanded by the workforce.

*"We live in a world that is much less hierarchical than ever before. Young employees aren't looking to stay at the same company for 40 years anymore; instead they are looking for places to work that enrich them, develop their skills, and make the most of what they can add at a particular moment.*

*As a result you're looking at a different relationship between the manager and the managed; a need for much flatter, more collaborative structures."*

**Rupert Pearce** CEO Inmarsat

Good CEOs understand that employees must be given responsibility, autonomy and trust. Making a company more successful rarely requires large-scale changes in personnel. Creating success is not about drastic changes, it's about inspiring and empowering the many highly intelligent, passionate people who already work within our organisations.

Given time, employees will often find they already know the best solution to a problem. Business leaders hire employees for their talent and specialism. What these people therefore need from management is not to be told what told do, but empowerment to discover answers for themselves.

*"Listening is key. One of the things I learnt early on was to keep my Friday nights clear. If it's nice weather, I'll sit on the stoop leading down from my house to the garden, open a beer and put my phone next to me.*

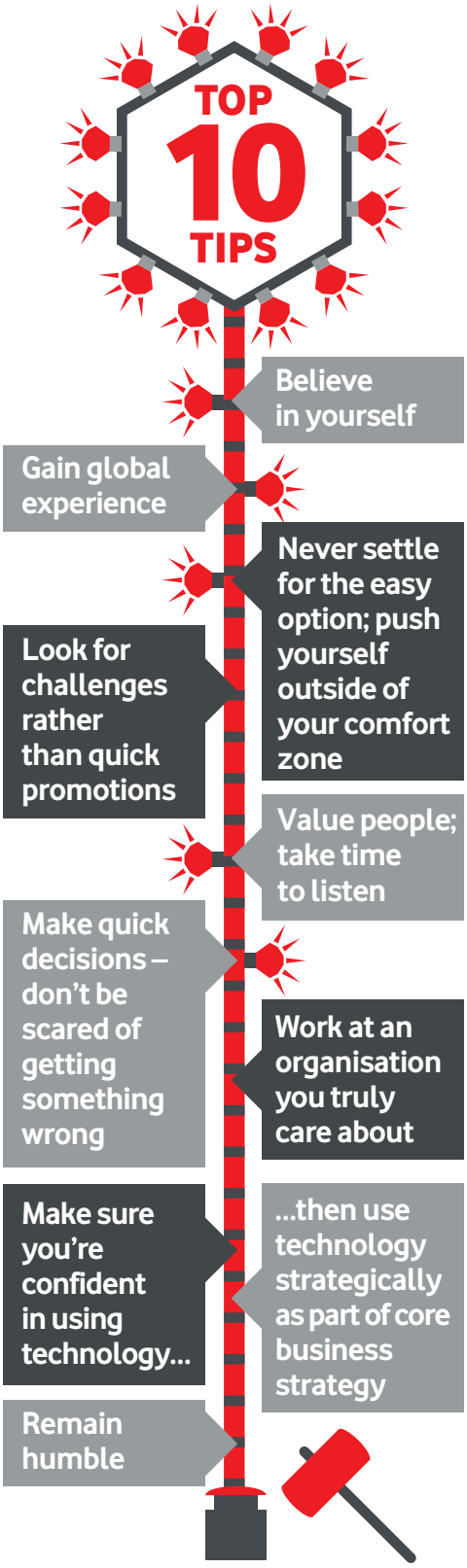
*Invariably on these Friday evenings I'll get call after call from people at the different businesses I oversee. In some ways, it's a bit like therapy. I find that the person calling me will often arrive at the answer themselves; they just need to talk it through."*

**Jack Kirkland** Director, Bowmer & Kirkland

A business is a powerful, organic entity containing immense potential and people with skills and ideas. The role of management is to guide and nurture this potential, ensuring it is unleashed in the right direction.

As markets become increasingly globalised, the UK must play to its strengths to ensure that it remains competitive. These strengths are not cheap labour or an abundance of raw materials. The strengths of the UK market reside in a highly intelligent, sophisticated-workforce. To play to these strengths, that workforce must be empowered.

# Becoming a future leader – careers advice from today's CEOs



**Craig Kreeger**
CEO Virgin Atlantic

*My advice is broadly based on something I once heard from my American Airlines CEO:*

1. *Change job roles as often as you can. There is no substitute for breadth of experience and the ability to look at problems from different angles. Get outside your comfort zone, learn and then go onto the next thing.*
2. *Learn to communicate effectively. The best idea poorly communicated never goes anywhere. That used to mean learning how to hold a good phone call or write a good memo; maybe it now means learning how to write a good email!*
3. *Solve problems. Whenever you see something that could be done better, do something about it (even if it's not your area).Become known as a problem solver.*

**Jeff Van Der Eems**
CEO United Biscuits

*Always go for critical experiences rather than titles and quick promotions. Don't necessarily follow a functional path. The best thing you can do is get experiences right across the piece.*

*If you're in marketing – go and do sales, go and work in a factory, go and do finance! Do different things to build a breadth of knowledge. You may then decide you love marketing and you want to be CMO, or that you love being a general manager. The best thing you can do when you're young is get critical experiences, not titles.*

**Andre Lacroix**
CEO Intertek

*Firstly, have a plan of how you're going to get there. It doesn't need to be linear, but you need to have a broad idea on how you want to build your skill set – functionally, geographically or industry-wise.*

*Secondly, never stop working on your own personal goals. Don't say 'I'm too busy', make time.*

*Finally, always go for opportunities that are going to be truly enjoyable and rewarding – not only in monetary terms but also in terms of personal satisfaction. If you get energy from what you do then you are going to be much better at it and grow much faster.*

# Perspectives

**Rupert Pearce**
CEO of Inmarsat

## My thoughts on leadership and digital

I joined Inmarsat as group General Counsel in 2005 before becoming Chief Executive Officer in 2012. In my three years as CEO I have seen our share price rise from £4 in January 2012 to £10 in August 2015 and we recently entered the FTSE100 with a market capitalisation of over £4 billion.

**A good leader is a leader who delegates**

One of the great mistakes made by CEOs, is wanting everything to be done their way and not being able to delegate effectively. It is vital as a leader to recognise that it is better that ten tasks are completed at pace to an acceptable standard than just the one task is completed to one's own 'exacting' standards! If that doesn't happen then the organisation can only move at the pace at which issues gain the personal attention of the CEO – and that is not good enough. It takes humility and an ability to recognise that you cannot control everything, to be able to genuinely leverage management talent.

As such, giving away responsibility but maintaining strong support and mentorship is key for a good leader. In every single part of our business we run collaborative, open business models. We are very simply saying to every employee, "go and change the world. Do not ask for permission and dare to fail".

Indeed, as a leader, it's vital to recognise that one has to accept occasional failure along the road to sustained success. You cannot expect to be a high growth, agile, successful company in a demanding competitive environment and get decisions right every time. As such, recognising that failure is 'normal', I believe that successful organisations are in part defined by how they deal with failure. This means encouraging staff to dare to fail and reacting humanely and constructively when they inevitably do – ensuring that decisions that failed are reworked into new good decisions, that failure is owned by the team and above by you as a leader, and that failure leads to strong professional and personal growth.

**A collaborative way of working**

At Inmarsat, I try to encourage collaboration as much as possible, both within the company and with our suppliers, business partners and customers. As we are a global organisation doing business in over 200 countries and with 62 different office locations around the world, going to market through 700 partner organisations – open communication lines and a win/win approach to doing business is absolutely vital. Indeed, as a technology company our future is highly determined by R&D, innovation and technology disruption – and increasingly we are seeing that technology development models are becoming more open, collaborative and iterative, meaning that it is no longer sufficient to seek to control all aspects of R&D or to look inwards for inspiration. So, we're in the process of changing the layout of the offices and are investing in a next-generation digital communications platforms to help us collaborate better in every aspect of our commercial activities.

If you're an organisation that works in silos or thinks of itself as having solid organisational structures that are immutable, that could spell danger in today's e-enabled, global world without borders. In 2015, organisations have to be willing to embrace change and understand that it is constant – indeed to define their competitiveness through their agility and aptitude to change dynamically as the need arises. This again places a huge onus on open and collaborative working practices, as well as the ability of an organisation to devolve power and decision-making to the 'edge' where staff can be agile, fast-moving and intelligent, as the corporate plan meets 'engagement with the enemy'.

**Digital is the key to collaboration**

Digital is intrinsic to any modern organisation. It's very important that everybody is comfortable with the deployment of digital technology, with virtual working environments, and with international collaborative working environments.

**Rod McKie**
CEO Welcome Break

## Good leadership and technology go hand in hand

### The drive to be successful

Did I ever think I'd be running a £670m company? No. For me it has just always been a drive to be successful in whatever I was doing, whether that's small business or big business. The opportunity to be CEO of a large company was never the burning light at the end of the tunnel, the end goal was to be successful.

### From Captain to Coach

Most successful leaders tend to have a vision and clarity of purpose, but also the ability to constantly adapt and evolve according to change in the market. They will also make sure that they have a team around them that can help realise the vision of the organisation.

In a business of our size, my leadership has evolved to be less about being captain and leader at the front and more about being coach. With nearly 5,000 employees, it is important to spend my time building a leadership team that allows me to utilise my time doing the things that really add value. I travel 50,000 miles a year because it is more important for me to be out with the business seeing what we are doing and why we are doing it. A great leader should know from day one that you cannot do it alone, you have to do it through an engaging and successful team.

### Adopt tech too late and you've missed the boat

The importance of technology to business is undeniable. As we have seen with so many companies, you cannot afford to be left on the shelf by not planning in advance. To only think about what you need right now is too shortsighted.

This goes back to the attributes of a great leader. You need a compelling vision for the future and be able to engage others around you in order to deliver. Technology is a vehicle that drives this vision. As a leader in a business like ours today, I don't think you can afford not to be technology literate. The excuse that you're not technology-savvy can no longer stand for a modern executive anymore because the world is moving so quickly.

### Tech enabling internal communications

The biggest tech investment we've made at Welcome Break is a new HR database. I'd describe it as an HR database on steroids. Not only can you do the basics, but it's also possible to interact with employees. The system is in fact a communication vehicle and we like to think it's our own internal Facebook.

With this tool, I can pass the compelling vision I have for the business for the next year or next three years down to every single employee in the business and know whether he or she reads it. The system makes communicating with all employees immediate. If I see say Billy in Starbucks doing something amazing, I can ping it out straight away and say, look at this guy and the magnificent thing he's done to all 5,000 employees instantaneously. That can be quite inspirational leadership.

# Methodology

## Methodology

This report is based upon a series of eleven interviews with business leaders at top UK public and private organisations :

**Top Track 100**

- Craig Kreeger, CEO of Virgin Atlantic
- Jeff Van Der Eems, CEO of United Biscuits*
- Rod McKie, CEO of Welcome Break
- Jack Kirkland, Director of Bowmer & Kirkland

**FTSE 100**

- Ian Gorham, CEO of Hargreaves Lansdown
- Rupert Pearce, CEO of Inmarsat
- André Lacroix, CEO of Intertek

**FTSE 250**

- Simon Peckham, CEO of Melrose Industries
- Andy Ransom, CEO of Rentokil Initial
- Patrick Coveney, CEO of Greencore Group
- Henry Birch, CEO of Rank Group

Interviews were conducted face-to-face or via telephone by Circle Research during June and July 2015, and have been complemented by findings from previous Perspective series reports and desk research conducted during June 2015.

Where attributed, all quotes are direct quotes from interviewees. Supporting commentary is based upon interpretation and desk research, and is not necessarily the view of the interviewees.

We would like to thank all of our interviewees for their invaluable contributions to the report.

## About the Vodafone Perspective series

The Perspective series is designed to help businesses and public sector organisations find better ways of working. Researched independently, the series explores the biggest challenges facing UK Plc and Government today and provides new perspectives from independent thought leaders.

There are currently ten other reports in the Perspective series:

- What if?... exploring attitudes to risk
- Great expectations in hard times. Citizen service beyond today
- Have a nice day. Customer service beyond today
- Exploring the shift in employee expectation
- The perfect storm. The role of 4G in the 'age of me'
- The new IT crowd. The role of the IT Director in simplifying complexity
- The fluid society. Working without boundaries
- Connected Nation. A digital Government for everyone
- Connected Nation. The digital impact on buying behaviour
- Unleashing the Mega Trends

The Perspective series gives you fresh insight into the world of work. Find this latest report at **www.yourreadybusiness.co.uk/perspective** and for other resources and insights **www.vodafone.co.uk/perspective**

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2 Based upon research of company websites, press articles, LinkedIn profiles and similar secondary research sources conducted during June 2015

3 Source: Based upon research of company websites, press articles, LinkedIn profiles and similar secondary research sources conducted during June 2015

4 Based on analysis of conversations with CEOs

5 Based on analysis of conversations with CEOs

6 Source: Vodafone and Circle Research: http://www.yourreadybusiness.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Perspective_Series_Britain_Private2gb_10.pdf

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Research was commissioned by Vodafone UK.
All statistics are true according to our research, March 2015.