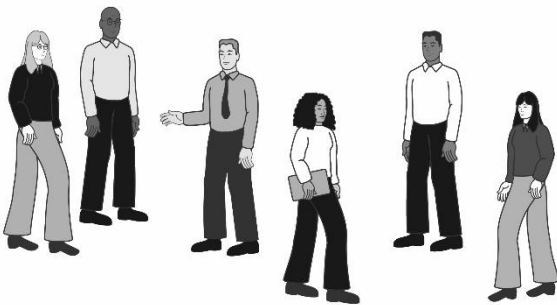


# CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER BREAKFAST



Yesterday morning I was very fortunate enough to be joined by **12 CEOs and Chief People Officers** for the next reiteration in my breakfast roundtable discussions – and again, as usual, the unique setting of the Wolseley Restaurant, in Green Park provided the venue. Unlike with previous events, where the assembled group had focussed on a specific ‘side’ or ‘aspect’ of transformation – such as Digital, Data or Technology – this time we went right to the source. To the place that enables and allows any transformation to succeed or to fail: the culture. Because no matter what you want to do, or how you want to change your business and its direction, if the people in the business don’t want to change, nothing will happen. Or this, at least, was my contention and the proposed theme for discussion.

For this breakfast, I was very pleased to welcome **Gary Wright** as my co-host. Gary has been the **Group HR Director at Hunter Boots** for the past six years and, to kick start the discussion, provided the group with an eloquent and well thought out perspective on his journey to date and some of the challenges and opportunities that face him in his role at Hunter.



As with previous events, the guest list was fairly industry agnostic, and included CEOs and CPOs from the footwear, travel, hospitality, media, leisure, creative, retail and luxury sectors and, as might have been expected, the challenges faced, seem to transcend the industries present. It seems people are people, and while no solution fits all, the problems discussed were consistent. And as is my policy for these events, and respecting Chatham House Rules, there will be no names mentioned.

Both Gary and I had a list of talking points and items to discuss, and I think we would both have said that the conversation flowed down an entirely different path. Which is totally fine – and, in fact, it was super interesting, very thought provoking and everyone had lots to say, to share, and not all opinions were aligned.

Some of the highlights from the 90 minutes (which honestly is starting to feel like NOT enough time) were:

- What is motivating company policy these days as it relates to employee policy? Is it internal or external pressures? If its external, is this the RIGHT thing for your culture or just a nice thing to say? Can you follow through with it if you say it? If its internal, is it 10% that want it, or 90% that do? Does one size need to fit all? What kind of can of worms could you be opening here?
- Sometimes employees just want to go to work, make their paycheque and get on with it. Do they ‘care’ about all this other stuff? Are we making policies for the wrong group of people?



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- Generational challenges as it relates to company culture – and its important to not ‘generalise’ when it comes to Gen Z or whoever. They are all not the same, nor are they all driven by the same motivations. We discussed how there seems to be a new reality, for kids delaying entering the workforce after university because they are realising that they’ve got nothing but time to make money. But, then again, it was pointed out that not all kids are delaying entering the workforce and some are still very keen to start working and making money right away



- Are employers worrying about the wrong things these days? How come we can’t worry more about making a profit and other commercial things that used to matter and dictate decisions. Not saying that employee well-being isn’t important, but making money still is important
- How to properly engage with employees in an emphatic way – not motivating by political or legislative realities taking place in other parts of the world (what should be your policy on abortion rights for your employees in the US – should you have one? Should you be making a statement on this?)