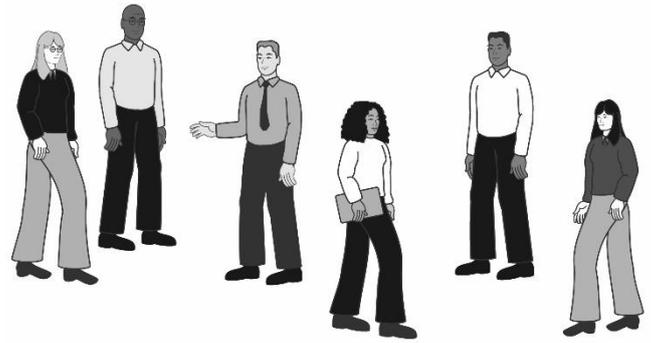


CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ROUNDTABLE BREAKFAST



This morning, I was privileged to host a group of 14 amazing professionals - 12 CEOs (with a few pursuing plural careers now) and 2 wonderful Chief People Officers in the private dining area of the Wolseley restaurant in central London. This was my 12th breakfast event on cultural transformation (that I have hosted) during my tenure as the CEO of the Jamestown Group over the last three years. And it's been amazing for me to watch as they have evolved in shape, caliber, and focus – starting from the first one back in July 2021 - when the world was just once again opening back up after the unprecedented and crazy COVID time of 2020 and 2021 lockdowns.



Today, my vision for the breakfast roundtable concept, both here in London but also in New York - where I also began hosting them last year – have become something that the business is becoming known for and the www.thejamestowngroup.com brand is becoming synonymous with (or so people keep telling me anyways). And this morning I was very proud to have assembled such an amazing and eclectic group of industry professionals around the table – with the only challenge being that it was packed, and elbow room was at an all-time premium. I think I might need to think about a bigger table for future events (my one in New York on February 27th has a capacity of 20 – and I think I will need it). In fact, this event even had a waiting list.

As I always promise my guests before and during the event - we will conduct the discussion and subsequent event follow up using strict Chatham house rules – and I will not publicly announce anyone by name or by company. For me, protecting the integrity of these events is essential for their success.



After the customary introductions were made, we kicked off the morning discussion around the concept of working from work – which practically speaking means getting back to 5 days in the office. Remember those days? They weren't that long ago. And it seems others agree. The reality is, moving back into this type of arrangement entails a bunch of cultural pain upfront, as people react and kick off, and your employee engagement scores plummet for a while. But ultimately, in the end, it leads to more productivity and a stronger working environment – according to

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those who have adopted this policy. I have been seeing it most frequently in New York – but have found London to be dragging behind a bit.

How do you change culture? Can you? What needs to happen, for a newly appointed CEO, to drive this change? Because invariably, it's the CEO who creates the culture – and cultures, good and bad, start at the top and trickle down. The role of the CPO (the Chief People Officer) also seems paramount to challenge the CEO – to keep him or her on track, and grounded, in the reality of what the business is, and what it isn't. The concept of the leadership team being held accountable for the culture – and defining culture as a set of values that you want to be known for and then truly living those values. And maybe it's not more than



one thing – but living to that one thing – and being accountable for that one thing. And defining what the culture is can also be defining what it isn't. And you should also be able to write it down and explain all of this. Because if you cannot define the culture and write it down, what's the point?

Does the Board have a role to play today in culture? It seems they are, in most instances, behind the times and not aware of the day-to-day reality of what's going on in the business. Should some form of cultural representative now be sitting on the Board? What about hiring processes and ensuring cultural fit when making a hire? We discussed Amazon who use cultural ambassadors at all levels of the organization – and they have a role in the hiring process – and they have a voice in determining cultural fit during these processes too. That seemed interesting to me. What about value-based hiring practices. What are your company values? What about hiring against these vs. hiring purely based on functional fit? Again, this concept seemed intriguing to me.

Have companies, coming out of COVID, become too kind? Have they sided too far with the employee and what he or she wants? Can we correct this 'kindnesses? Maybe we start by defining what being kind and nice means for your business and then work backwards from there...

Clearly one size will not fit all, and, in many instances, especially with global offices and global cultures, standardization of policies like summer Fridays just don't translate. But one thing that did stand out to me was instead of trying to become a business that is a 'great place to work', why not aim to be a place where your employees do the 'greatest work of their career'.

A special thanks to all my guests for making the effort to be in central London at 8:30am on a Tuesday on a grey and damp & windy day. I enjoyed the conversation and I sincerely believe that all the guests did too.