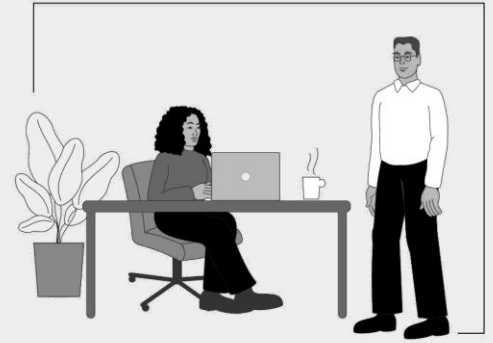
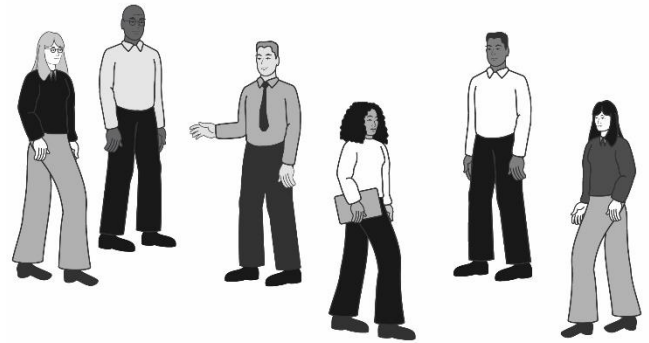


CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ROUNDTABLE BREAKFAST



This morning I took my breakfast roundtable concept on the road (like I did in March 2023) to New York as I hosted another event on **cultural transformation**. I figured why not, I am spending almost half my time here, I have multiple clients in New York already, why wouldn't this concept translate across the ocean once more.

For this event, like with the previous one, the wonderful private dining area at Sarabeth's on Park Avenue was the venue. I must also confess that I was truly proud to have had such an amazing array of guests attend this event as well.



And, like with all the others that have come before, I was also fortunate to have a compelling co-host for the event and this time it was **Nataki Williams, the CFO at the Guardian Newspaper** who provided all of us with a really unique perspective on industry agnostic skill sets at the 'C' suite level. Coming from pharma during the beginning of her career, then cutting her teeth in media, before moving into transportation and most recently she transitioned back into media with the Guardian Newspaper for the last 2 years. She eloquently shared an insightful and thought provoking take on the challenges and opportunities she faced in her business today, including how she benefited from being classically trained at J&J early on which subsequently would prove useful to her in less corporate / and more start-up environments down the line.

As promised to the wider group, and keeping to strict Chatham House Rules, no names, job titles or companies will be mentioned - as it is important for me to protect the integrity of the conversation. But what I can say is that industries such as Luxury, Media, Apparel, Hospitality, Technology, F&B, Jewellery, Private Equity, Real Estate and Leisure were all represented – as were the leaders of such – CEOs and Chief People Officers.

I got the ball rolling by asking the group their thoughts on whether or not, at the 'C' suite level, bringing a perspective to the table from outside of the normal industry perspective can harm, or help, the culture of the business.

We then transitioned into a detailed and far ranging discussion on culture, and what it really means, and what it actually doesn't mean.

For me, having hosted many of these events before, combined with working with a variety of different businesses, it seems that **culture is defined not necessarily by a set of fancy words you pin up on the walls, but rather, by how you actually act when things go wrong – not during the good times.**



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What followed was a truly interesting 90-minute debate focussed on the roles and responsibilities at the leadership level to articulate, formulate and ultimately deliver the values of the company. It felt that culture is something lived by everyone, at all levels. You have to have a really honest platform to describe who you are and what you stand for and this platform never stops, it is living, it is fluid and it is forever evolving (good or bad).

We then moved into the concept of onboarding, and how, when done right, at all levels, it can pay off in the long run; however, when done wrong, it will hurt you in short, medium and long term. People are leaving now, more so than ever, and citing a bad working culture as the main reason for their departure.



Bringing a sense of balanced empathy to the table when thinking about re-defining the rules of hybrid working. Who has this responsibility? At one business it was the individual line manager, at another it was a collective effort, and again at another one the CEO said that everyone comes back five days – bottom line and too bad if you don't like it – others will, and we will find them and hire them.

Surprisingly, and pleasantly, for me, a great deal of time was next spent on recruitment and how, generally speaking, almost everyone around the table discussed poor experiences with recruiters. None of them seem to invest the time upfront to learn the brief, to ask the questions that need to be asked and to ensure internal and political alignment for the upcoming hiring. Most regarded the recruitment business as a commodity based business – more interested in the quick buck vs. the long term investment in partnering. I found this to be quite interesting – and actually surprising – that people are still having the same experience within the recruitment profession. I would have thought that we'd moved on a bit from this reality – maybe some have – but clearly lots haven't.

Talent development and bringing a sense of responsibility to help educate and build towards the next generation of leaders, not just managers, but leaders - added to this compelling debate. Companies retention rates being defined by clear pathways towards growth are vital. Conversely, a few thought that this didn't make sense either – why invest all the time to train and grow when the competitors will just steal your key talent anyways? It is simply not a worthwhile investment. Within the space of talent development, I am not sure we found an aligned voice – rather a very separated and disconnected one. Again this surprised me.

This was a great breakfast discussion and validated that the concept I built three years ago does indeed transcend the Atlantic – and I will be bringing it back with me next quarter when I return to NYC. As usual, the flow of ideas had to be stopped at 10am to ensure everyone got on their way (as I always promise to do) – although I felt like we had only just scratched the surface....