

BROOME  
YASAR  
PARTNERSHIP

FROM CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
TO CORPORATE LEADER

TODAY'S CORPORATE  
AFFAIRS DIRECTOR,  
TOMORROW'S CEO?

TRUSTED PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

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BROOME YASAR PARTNERSHIP

## *Global Executive Recruitment in Corporate Affairs and Investor Relations*

*From Corporate Affairs to Corporate Leader:  
Today's Corporate Affairs Director, Tomorrow's CEO?*

# FOREWORD

TODAY'S CHIEF EXECUTIVES ARE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO CATEGORISE. REQUIRING SKILLS THAT THEIR PREDECESSORS A GENERATION AGO WOULD BARELY RECOGNISE, THEY ARE NO LONGER SIMPLY SCHOOLED IN THE RANKS OF ACCOUNTANTS AND CORPORATE LAWYERS.

They are drawn instead from a diverse range of backgrounds, from academia to industry and government to creative media. Yet there has been little research or commentary to date on another emerging route to the top of business: the developing path through senior corporate affairs roles in investor, corporate, public and media relations. This is the gap in understanding that this report is designed to address.

Industry studies estimate that one-third of a chief executive's time is now spent communicating. But where are CEOs expected to learn such skills? As an alignment grows between what is expected of successful CEOs and the vast experience in this field of corporate affairs heads, is there potential for a new generation of corporate leaders to spring from the tanks of professionals with a predominant background in corporate communications? Is it time for a more ambitious industry debate to raise the profile of our profession as a strong foundation for the potential CEOs of the future?

As a specialist executive search firm in corporate affairs and investor relations, we regularly advise and counsel senior corporate communications professionals looking for career advancement. From our own research conducted across 150 corporate affairs directors, one in five had considered progressing into a broader general management role. Clearly the ambition to make such a transition exists. Yet a comparative lack of industry role models to emulate who are known to have had a communications background could be responsible for this relatively low percentile.

The positive news is that the path, is beginning to be marked out by some high-profile pioneers. Indeed, Prime Minister David Cameron was once director of corporate affairs for television company Carlton, now part of ITV.

It was a period that he acknowledges formed his adult persona and earned him a reputation as a bright and able colleague. John Fallon, chief executive of educational publisher Pearson and profiled in this report, is arguably the most well-known example within a corporate setting, having progressed through senior public policy and communications positions at Westminster and in local Government to lead key corporate affairs roles at Powergen and then Pearson.

Yet there are other often less well documented individual case studies. This report focuses on a series of frank and insightful interviews with inspiring former corporate communications directors who have transitioned successfully to CEO and equivalent senior management roles. It aims to provide insight and direction directly from their experiences for corporate affairs professionals harbouring ambitions beyond communications.

Our report is deliberately broad, including discussions with leaders across major companies and public and third sector organisations, as well as trade associations. We also consider the alternative transition from corporate affairs to boardroom through non-executive positions – still a rare route but one that is expected to broaden as boards seek increasing diversity and cross-sector knowledge.

The leaders profiled here offer advice on how corporate affairs professionals can ensure they are credible contenders for broader leadership positions. Together, we explore the skills that they developed to reach the top.

At Broome Yasar Partnership, we work with clients to secure the best industry talent in corporate affairs and investor relations and nurture potential leaders of the future. Our hope is that by raising the profile of corporate affairs as a potential source for CEOs and NEDs, such a transition will become all the less remarkable in the future.

*Raising the profile of corporate affairs as a strong foundation for the potential CEOs of the future*



OSKAR YASAR  
MANAGING PARTNER



DAVID BROOME  
MANAGING PARTNER

# JOHN FALLON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE - PEARSON

JOHN FALLON FEELS LUCK PLAYS AN OFTEN UNHERALDED ROLE IN CAREER PROGRESSION. AFTER TEN YEARS OF WORKING IN POLITICS HAVING STARTED AS A RESEARCHER FOR JOHN PRESCOTT, HE RECEIVED A BRUSH-OFF FOR A CORPORATE AFFAIRS ROLE AT ENERGY GROUP POWERGEN. HE WROTE A STRONGLY-WORDED LETTER PRESSING HIS CASE BUT DIDN'T HEAR FOR A MONTH AND BELIEVES HE WAS ONLY GIVEN AN INTERVIEW DUE TO THE EMBARRASSMENT CAUSED BY THE DELAY.

He also did not initially aspire to climb all the way to chief executive. "I'm not sure I ever had anything as grand as a career strategy," he says. "When I ran Pearson's international education business, I was diagnosed with throat cancer and went through nine months of treatment. I came back to work and when I was first asked if I wanted to be part of the CEO succession process, I wasn't sure it was for me."

He had earlier decided, after a decade in corporate affairs at Powergen and Pearson, that he did want to "have a go at running a business and seeing what it was like". His ambition here was encouraged by a friend who urged him to have the courage to do something completely different every ten years, rather than view his career as a single linear path. He took a job running Pearson's education business in Europe, the Middle East and Africa but says the transition is not always straightforward.

"I went from being on the Pearson executive committee reporting directly to chief executive Marjorie Scardino, based between The Strand, London and a fantastic corner office on Sixth Avenue in

*"Doing the CEO job, you also need a resilience and a sense of perspective. You need to take the work seriously but not take yourself too seriously and not get all pompous and self-important"*

New York to working in Harlow running what was at the time a £250m business that was loss-making," he recalls. "I went from reporting directly to Marjorie to reporting to someone who reported to someone who reported to Marjorie. I've seen subsequently that people find that quite a difficult transition to make."

Fallon believes he was fortunate in taking over the operation at a time after the dotcom crash when it was in a poor state of profitability. He feels that one of the biggest challenges for corporate affairs directors looking to move into general management roles is learning not to be obsessed with status.

"As a corporate affairs director you get access to all areas so you are used to engaging with the board, the CEO, divisional P&L directors and non-executive directors," he says, "but I don't think there's any substitute for serving your time and improving yourself. I took over EMEA in 2003 and it wasn't until 2008 that I re-joined the executive committee in my own right. I would like to think colleagues felt I rolled up my sleeves and got stuck in and, being respectful and curious of others, learned a lot from the people around me. But it can be quite a big wrench. As a senior member of the executive, I essentially took a step backwards in compensation in the short-term to get a chance to prove myself. If you want to make the move, you do need to be willing to sacrifice that.

"I didn't see it as a step backwards but in terms of status and potentially in short-term income, it was certainly a step sideways. I remember getting a lot of solicitous emails asking if I was okay. But it wasn't seen like that by the people there. The first thing I had to deal with was the resignation of a colleague who thought he should have got that job. I persuaded him to stay as a senior member of my own executive team and he played a really important role. I like to think that my attitude made it easier for him to stay. I think it's important to be suitably respectful of the people around you when you make a move like that."

Fallon had prepared himself by spending time with the head of Pearson's North American education business while in corporate affairs in New York. He was curious about the business and wanted to know how Pearson developed new products and sold and marketed them. "I think you can do the corporate affairs job in a way that you really get into the substance of the business," he says. "Corporate affairs is a fantastic role because it gives you a chance to look at the whole business and get stuck in." He also feels the corporate affairs role gives executives a vital "willingness to ask questions and probe and not to be afraid to do that, or be worried that the questions may seem blindingly obvious".

"When you're in corporate affairs and are being asked to deal with an issue or a crisis, you can't work out how you're going to communicate it until you've really got to the absolute heart of the matter and

understood what the issue actually is," he says. "So I think one of the things a corporate affairs person should have is the ability to range widely and have an instinctive sense of when to push and when to ask. The ability to absorb and synthesise information from lots of different sources and communicate it externally can require the same sort of skills that are important to make decisions about people and where to allocate capital."

Fallon is a strong believer that corporate affairs directors and chief executives alike should be good at listening – something he admits colleagues in his early days said he wasn't skilled at. "I had to work at it because I think it's important," he says. "Clearly, a lot of the job these days is about clarity of message and communicating the employer vision and purpose internally and being able to do so externally as well and manage complex relationships with stakeholders. A really good corporate affairs person is someone who really understands the business strategy and products, what the business is doing worldwide and why it's doing well where it's doing well and why it's struggling where it's struggling."

Why then, have so few corporate affairs directors made the transition to senior management? Fallon feels it has to do with the changing nature of the job, which was once viewed as a transactional role dominated by ex-journalists and long boozy lunches. To some extent, he believes it is a "generational thing". Corporate affairs is now much more grounded inside businesses, with greater depth and substance, he says. "Doing the CEO job, you also need a resilience and a sense of perspective. You need to take the work seriously but not take yourself too seriously and not get all pompous and self-important."

Fallon also believes that it is possible to "over-obsess" about one's career path. "Clearly, it's important to be ambitious and have confidence in yourself and in the future," he says. "But when I joined Powergen, I remember thinking I was getting well-paid and got to read the newspapers and deal with journalists which I really loved. I got involved in politics every day and was getting to learn about the harder-edged side of business and the financial side of it. It's good to be ambitious and want to take on more but first and foremost you have to love what you do."



## CAREER HISTORY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
PEARSON 2013 – Present

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, INTERNATIONAL  
EDUCATION BUSINESSES  
PEARSON 2008 – 2013

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION EMEA  
PEARSON 2003 – 2007

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
PEARSON 1997 – 2003

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
POWERGEN 1992 – 1997

# SUE CLARK

MANAGING DIRECTOR - SABMILLER EUROPE



SUE CLARK SAYS CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS WAS SEEN AS SOMETHING OF A “BACKWATER FOR FAILED SALES OR MARKETING PEOPLE” WHEN SHE BEGAN HER CAREER IN INVESTOR RELATIONS AT NATIONAL POWER. IN CONTRAST, SHE COULD NOW HARDLY HAVE A MORE CENTRAL ROLE AT BREWING GROUP SABMILLER.

The route she took was a relatively uncharted one to a very senior management position at a consumer goods manufacturer; through investor relations to corporate affairs roles at energy and rail utilities. Yet, Clark feels passionately that the deep experience she gained not simply of corporate reputation management but also of commercial operations very much honed her skills for the roles she now performs.

This is due to two parallel developments, she argues. On the one hand, senior corporate affairs roles have developed beyond recognition over the past 10-20 years, as the quality of recruits to the discipline has improved vastly and as the stakeholder environment shifted to recognise reputational risk. “The whole reputational management piece is finally very much understood by boards as a big risk, and it needs to be managed,” explains Clark. “Expectations of businesses have changed, together with the regulatory environment. This all plays into the heart of a communications director’s background.”

Secondly, Clark holds that corporate affairs managers and directors can no longer be dismissed as mere company spokespeople. Today’s corporate affairs directors have to operate in a much more visible environment, both internally and externally. They are also required to demonstrate a deep understanding of the commercial side of business, together with the ability to apply their judgment and acumen to complex stakeholder, regulatory and political interactions.

Clark’s own experience is testament to this. During her role leading communications at Scottish Power, her remit extended beyond privatisation and energy outages to the minutiae of corporate takeovers, synergy gains and merger integrations as the company went on an acquisitions spree, purchasing Manweb, Southern Water, and American energy business PacifiCorp.

At Railtrack, meanwhile, she gained in-depth crisis management expertise as the rail infrastructure provider experienced significant high-profile crises and a subsequent financial collapse, following which the operational part of the business was put into administration. Remaining with Railtrack, Clark played a key role in achieving a settlement with the Government for shareholders, following which the company was put into voluntary administration.

*“As a leader of a large business you have to deal with complexity, ambiguity - and to make decisions with imperfect information”*

If those roles constituted her corporate operations education, Clark’s 13 years at SABMiller have seen her embrace for the first time a consumer products environment and experience the winds of a rapidly globalising industry. Arriving as corporate affairs director, overseeing investor, media relations, sustainable development and public affairs with a wish to extend her international focus, she felt her role was a “perfect fit”. She joined at a time when the company had already experienced rapid growth from a regional, South African player to become a global business. Yet further transformative growth was planned and Clark’s appointment constituted a major plank in SABMiller’s objective to build a global corporate affairs function with the remit of raising its profile and reputation.

The nine years she spent in this role were a lengthy training for her current role as managing director, SABMiller Europe, overseeing a territory representing one fifth of the company’s global business. Again, she had to navigate a previously untrodden turf. No woman before Clark had ever held general management roles at the company, even at country level. Despite having to surmount the obstacles that the lack of a precursor presented, she claims that luck as well as ambition, played a part. “I always aspired to a senior management role although my career has always been serendipitous,” she says. “I started in corporate affairs more by luck than by design, and reached the executive committee table through corporate affairs.”

Although Clark always wanted to be a general manager, she admits having assumed that it would be a difficult leap to make. She was surprised to have found that while there are clearly differences some things are very much the same. “Leadership issues are the same, whether you are in charge of a larger corporate affairs team or elsewhere in an organisation,” she says. “It’s learning how to deal with them that is important.”

This is clearly more complicated than it sounds and Clark says it involves much more than the softer side of management, such as interpersonal skills, the ability to engage with employees and understand others’ opinions. “As a leader of a large business you have to deal with complexity, ambiguity – and to make decisions with imperfect information,” she says. “These are valuable capabilities that corporate affairs professionals bring to a management role.”

Another element of a corporate communicator’s remit is an ability to cut through complexity and create clarity for stakeholders. Clark feels this is an important skill that can also prepare communicators for the cut and thrust of senior corporate management roles. Instead of being viewed as a source of competitive advantage in job searches and promotions, however, she believes this is a skill that many communications professionals forget to highlight.

Once outside the corporate centre it’s also easy, she says, to “lose yourself in the drumbeat” of the operations and, aside from key customers, to lose an external stakeholder focus”. Corporate communicators need to recognise that they have a key role to play

in keeping operating management focused on the demands of their broader stakeholder group. One of the reasons Clark cites for a pretty relentless travel schedule is that it enmeshes her tightly in business operations and ensures that she is on top of local knowledge. She says she is happy to get her hands dirty. “You have to know the details of the situation: and understand what the people on the sharp end of that are going through.”

Clark’s advice for communications professionals keen to emulate her success is to make sure that they understand their organisation, its business model and strategy and are fluent with its financial details. By doing so, she claims, would be executives can hold their own against colleagues in other disciplines, such as sales and marketing, for example. “That will mark you out,” she says.

Despite her own success and that of others, Clark believes that there is still work to be done to convince not only senior management but also corporate communications professionals of the value that their unique set of skills and expertise bring to senior management. “Think of corporate affairs as being integral to the business,” she advises. “Of course, it contributes to value creation, particularly in regulated industries.”

Clark’s own unique experience and achievements within corporate affairs, at the heart of major, high-profile corporate crises and events, have been a major addition to her professional CV. For others on a similar path, she advocates gaining financial and commercial experience that goes well beyond that needed for a communications role.

Volunteering to help with acquisition planning and integration can augment formal training here. “If there are big M&A projects going this can be a good way of getting to grips with financials,” she says. “Become part of big integration projects – put yourself in the heart of the ‘value creation’ part of the business.”

“If I reflect back on my career, I don’t regret the things I’ve done; it’s the things I haven’t done that I regret. If in doubt, always do {it}. If you think you’ve a contribution, comment to make or want to be part of something, push yourself forward and challenge yourself.”

*“If you think you’ve a contribution, comment to make or want to be part of something, push yourself forward and challenge yourself”*

## CAREER HISTORY

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
SABMILLER EUROPE 2012 – Present

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
SABMILLER 2003 – 2012

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
RAILTRACK 2000 – 2003

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
SCOTTISH POWER 1996 – 2000

INVESTOR RELATIONS MANAGER  
SCOTTISH POWER 1992 – 1996

# LYNDA THOMAS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE - MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

LYNDA THOMAS IS ONE OF VERY FEW CHIEF EXECUTIVES WHO HAS SPENT MUCH OF HER CAREER IN A CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS JOB-SHARE.

She was appointed last year as chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, the well-known charity supporting people affected by cancer that consistently tops YouGov's Charity Index ranking based on consumer perceptions and was named The Marketing Society's brand of the year in 2014.

Yet Thomas, who is enthusiastic but self-effacing, began her career working in consumer PR moving into communications for charities including Action for Children and NSPCC and joined Macmillan in 2001 in a job-share role as head of media.

After developing the charity's campaigning arm and being part of the team that oversaw the progress of its award-winning brand, she was promoted to the board as director of external affairs in 2007.

"I'd never really had a career plan. It was a series of random happenings," admits Thomas, defining her "pivotal moment" as 2011 when she left communications and took on a fundraising role at the charity.

She led a 400-strong fundraising team, which has increased income by more than a third over the last three years, before becoming CEO on an interim basis in November 2014 and assuming the position permanently from April 2015. One of the first third sector CEOs to graduate from a communications role, she was also until recently a trustee at the Institute of Fundraising, Women's Sport & Fitness Foundation and a director on the Fundraising Standards Board.

Although hers is a highly-unusual path to the top, Thomas believes her background helped her transition to CEO, providing her with communications and reputation management skills as well as an adaptable mind-set and ability to spread herself across an organisation.

"You have to be able to talk to all sorts of people and have strong presentation skills – valuable assets for a chief executive," she reports. "I might be seeing a journalist one hour, a politician the next and a donor in the afternoon, and I need to understand how to talk effectively to all of them."

Thomas believes that there's always been a view in the third sector that the best people for a leadership role are the ones that have "grown up" delivering services. "Traditionally the fundraising and the communications people would generally never get the headhunter calls for CEO roles," she says. "This is gradually changing."

To move ahead in the third sector, Thomas recommends that communicators widen their skill bases to include commercial ability and budgetary and project management experience.

"A straight communications background isn't enough to get you to CEO," she admits. "You need to broaden your experience. If you are serious, go out of your comfort zone; do an MBA, or get involved in project management work that addresses the whole organisation."

Thomas developed her financial skills when she moved into the fundraising role. "You need to prove you can run a huge budget in terms of expenditure and money coming in" she says, "and you must be able to read a balance sheet."

Today, Macmillan has a spontaneous awareness rating of 29%, its highest ever level and significantly more than the 7%-8% it was achieving prior to its rebrand. Much of this is due to the charity putting people at the heart of its marketing and fundraising activity. However, with an increasing charity profile comes a greater profile of the chief executive.

*"You need to broaden your experience. If you are serious, go out of your comfort zone; do an MBA, or get involved in project management work that addresses the whole organisation"*

"I hadn't realised as a CEO you are in the spotlight the whole time," admits Thomas, who says it can be a lonely role. She believes that her fundraising experience helped her in this area as "you are analysed month-by-month, dealing with hard cash and you become used to being in the headlights".

Thomas's flair for fundraising put her firmly in the public eye. Macmillan is well known for the World's Biggest Coffee Morning concept, which Thomas transformed from a £7m initiative to one worth £20m annually over just three years. In 2013, Macmillan increased fundraising income by 22% to £187m, and raised a record £215.2m in 2014 allowing it to significantly increase spending on its services for people affected by cancer.

As a CEO you have to be able to measure impact and drive strategy, lead a team and bring them together, explains Thomas. "My consultancy role stood me in good stead," she says. "I could demonstrate that I can multi-task. As head of media you have to be able to think fast, to communicate succinctly and to build a team. For me, a valuable skill for a future CEO role was the influencing work in media. The ability to work with the Government is key for a senior third sector job. That gives you a broad grounding."

Macmillan's CEO before Thomas was a management consultant, with previous leaders either entering from a business route or already in the third sector. However, Thomas feels that more professionals with diverse profiles and experience are now taking CEO roles, and believes this trend will accelerate as the role of a charity CEO continues to change. Charities are nowadays expected to be run just like a private sector business, accounting for every single donation more than ever before. "It's quite right that people are looking for proof that we are doing good," acknowledges Thomas. "We should always demonstrate metrics."

Thomas obviously loves her job. "At the moment, I wouldn't be anywhere else," she says. And it doesn't look like Macmillan is going to let her go anywhere else fast.

## CAREER HISTORY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT  
2015 – PRESENT

DIRECTOR OF FUNDRAISING  
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT  
2011 – 2014

DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT  
2007 – 2010

HEAD OF MEDIA  
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT  
2001 – 2007

PR MANAGER  
NSPCC 1996-2001

PRESS OFFICER  
ACTION FOR CHILDREN 1994-1996

VARIOUS COMMUNICATION ROLES  
AT COMMERCIAL SPONSORSHIP  
MARKETING AND PR AGENCIES 1988-1994



*"A straight corporate affairs background isn't enough to get you a CEO job. You need to broaden your experience"*

# SIMON WALKER

DIRECTOR GENERAL - INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

**SIMON WALKER BELIEVES THAT COMMUNICATORS CAN BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN LAWYERS AND ACCOUNTANTS ON BRITISH COMPANY BOARDS AND THAT THEIR LACK OF NUMBERS THERE IS AN ALARMING WEAKNESS.**

Legal and accountancy personnel, he contends, rarely have an understanding of how communications works or an innate knowledge of how poor communication can break a company. Boards "lack people who have the breadth of understanding of communication," he affirms. "It is arguably more important than legal expertise."

This may seem a surprising view from a professional whose previous employers have included Buckingham Palace and 10 Downing Street, even though Walker, who began his career in television journalism, is noted for his charm, intellect and calmness in a crisis.

He is adamant, however, that business will "definitely see" more individuals progressing from a communications background into broader leadership roles and is scathing of some recent examples of corporate failings.

Take the once beleaguered travel group Thomas Cook, which he regards as having been "deeply sunk by communications ineptitude and a board failing to consider the reputational issues of what they did."

Volkswagen, the German car group beset with an emissions-rigging scandal, also fails on this count, according to Walker. "Everyone knows that it has been put through the wringer," he says, "but the fallout could have been mitigated if it had handled its communications better. You need people on boards who have EQ and can sniff out when trouble might be coming – not people who will be able to give you precise legal chapter and verse on what to do."

Walker, who was listed by GQ Magazine among Britain's 100 best-connected men last year, might appear to be an executive whose career moved effortlessly to his current position of director general at the Institute of Directors. However, he has taken a path less travelled, working in communications for most of his career. The exceptions are his former role at No 10's policy unit and his time as chief executive of the British Private Equity and Venture Capital Association, which he held directly before taking his current role.

Walker describes all this as "serendipitous and a natural progression," but, encouragingly for ambitious corporate affairs professionals, he also firmly believes that his move into senior management is "definitely reflective" of the fact that it has become important for CEOs to have strong communications abilities".

He recalls media training the chief executive of a car company more than 30 years ago in his TV journalism days. The CEO was "very competent but no good at simply communicating," says Walker. "This put him on the back foot. These days it would be much worse as businesses have become more exposed. It's a reality of the way the world now works."

With the 24/7 media culture and the internet and social media revolutions, news now travels much faster, creating a requirement, says Walker, for executives who can talk about any issues "sensitively" without damaging the way in which a company is viewed. "You can't be a good CEO if you have an inability to take public criticism or to engage with a broad audience," he states.

Walker, whose diverse roster of past employers also includes British Airways, Reuters, and PR agencies Brunswick and Hill & Knowlton, has also served on bodies ranging from the Better Regulation Commission, to The Queen's Golden Jubilee Trust and the New Zealand-UK Link Association. He is a council member of the European Policy Forum and a member of the Parliamentary Speaker's Advisory Committee on Public Engagement.

*"You need people on boards who have EQ and can sniff out when trouble might be coming - not people who will be able to give you precise legal chapter and verse on what to do"*

It has been said that 'nothing fazes him at all'. Much of the explanation, he believes, stems from the bedrock of competence that his background as a communicator has equipped him with. "It has helped me to develop a sense of how people are going to respond," he states. "If you are dealing with investors or politicians, as well as the public, it helps enormously in terms of maximising positive perceptions and minimising negative ones."

Former corporate affairs and PR specialists who become chief executives clearly have an advantage in knowing how to deal with the media, whether in times of corporate peace or turbulence, and being able to discern when best to advance their point of view. However, Walker believes CEOs must also be able to look outside their own point of view and recognise the contributions of others. "You have to be open to other people's ideas and the impact of reputation on your employees, customers and the company as a whole," he affirms. "You simply can't act indifferently to them – it will do you serious damage if you do."

The communications element within a senior executive role is always what has attracted Walker in his career path. "I would never be interested in a CEO role in an entity that no one had heard of or that has no exposure to industrial or reputational issues," he says. "That's what I do; it's what I've always found stimulating."

As for communicators who are serious about wanting to move into a leadership role, Walker says it is vital to gain experience in different industries and roles, broadening your interests as well as your knowledge of businesses and how they work. His own career path has taken a few lateral steps. But it has also been highly varied and he has never held the same job for more than five years, demonstrating a keen hunger to learn.

"It's important to recognise what you aren't good at or where your weaknesses are and try to supplement them," Walker advises. "To be acquiring knowledge almost for its own sake is a great idea."

Walker also admits that a past weakness in his personal portfolio was his understanding of corporate balance sheets. "Read avidly," he urges. "Get every bit of media exposure you can. Recognise that investing yourself in terms of knowledge of "gut feel" is the best thing you can do to advance your career."

As for his own career, he is committed to his plural career and is already considering his next move when his five-year stint at the IoD concludes soon. "I've always enjoyed what I've done and it's suited me down to the ground," he states. "I'd like to bring that expertise as a NED to a wider range of businesses and entities".

One word of warning though: Walker admits that the life of a CEO is not for everyone, and not everyone will succeed. "It comes down to this: do you want a leadership role?" he asks. "Can you cope with public exposure? If not, forget it."

## CAREER HISTORY

**DIRECTOR GENERAL**  
INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS  
2011 – PRESENT

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
BRITISH PRIVATE EQUITY AND VENTURE  
CAPITAL ASSOCIATION (BVCA)  
2007 – 2011

**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE  
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING**  
REUTERS 2003 – 2007

**COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY  
TO HM THE QUEEN**  
BUCKINGHAM PALACE 2000 – 2003

**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS**  
BRITISH AIRWAYS 1997 – 2000

**SPECIAL ADVISER**  
PRIME MINISTER'S POLICY UNIT  
10 DOWNING STREET 1996 – 1997

**PARTNER**  
BRUNSWICK 1994 – 1996

*"It comes down to this: do you want a leadership role? Can you cope with public exposure? If not, forget it"*

# BARONESS LUCY NEVILLE-ROLFE

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS, MINISTER FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

**BARONESS NEVILLE-ROLFE ADMITS THAT SHE IS AMBITIOUS AND HAS ALWAYS WANTED TO GET TO THE TOP. INDEED, THE MINISTER FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY BELIEVES THAT THIS QUALITY HAS ACTIVELY ASSISTED HER CAREER PROGRESSION.**

Her career has followed two inter-connected threads, beginning after university in the civil service at the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and progressing to the Prime Minister's Policy Unit and the Cabinet Office. Then in 1997 she joined Tesco, her first and so far only corporate executive role where she stayed for 16 years, moving from group director of corporate affairs and company secretary to executive director for corporate and legal affairs.

She believes her current role matches her experience of consumer understanding with a knowledge of Parliament, where she wants to develop a better understanding of the "customer" and consumer habits.

"All the experience I gained early in life was useful," she recalls. "It's important for any ambitious director of corporate affairs to be able to offer a range of background experiences if they are keen to advance to the top and to join the board."

Baroness Neville-Rolfe didn't start in communications. She learnt and grew the role after arriving at Tesco at a time when the company was comparatively "small and challenging". She advanced within the group, grew with the company and expanded her role, serving in senior positions and expanding her range of abilities.

"I was lucky the Tesco CEO at the time decided to improve my skillset and made me company secretary as well as communications director," she reminisces. "I took the equivalent of an MA while I was still working, on a Friday afternoon. It got me the chartered company secretary qualification, but more important was what I learnt. For example, I gained knowledge of intellectual property and I'm now IP minister."

Baroness Neville-Rolfe's fifteen years at Tesco and on its main board from 2006, saw the supermarkets group transformed from a largely domestic company with core UK grocery roots into a much larger retailer spanning home products, clothes and other non-food items and services and building operations in 13 overseas markets, largely across Asia and Eastern Europe.

She says that much of her impressive CV is down to luck and an encouraging CEO. "I joined Tesco at the right time," she claims. "You need a CEO that will give you a secondment, project, overseas or acquisition work, or commercial experience. They all feed into the basic need for breadth of experience. And experience teaches you to challenge."

Without a broad background, she warns that would-be executives may find their options to develop restricted. Communicators who have only ever worked for newspapers and in PR may find their paths blocked or limited. Adding more skills and experience along the way is therefore paramount.

She believes her own driving personal ambition helped her progress through developing her experience and abilities. "At Tesco, while I was a communications director and company secretary I was given responsibility for anti-trust work, which led to much better recognition with the board of the value that I added to the company," she maintains.

*"It's key to make sure your career is an area where there is a measure of success"*

Gaining experience in other areas will also serve aspirant business executives well. "You need to ensure that you can establish yourself in a role," advises Baroness Neville-Rolfe. "Loyalty can be a key value. It certainly was at Tesco."

She also advises ambitious heads of corporate affairs to choose with great care the industry in which they want to operate as their communications skills will be suited to some areas better than others. "At Tesco, all our business and values were about serving the consumer; following trends, being led by the internet," she recalls. "This gave me a good starting-off point. It's key to make sure your career is an area where there is a measure of success."

Finally, she recommends that communicators bolster their experience through professional qualifications gained from continued learning. Non-executive director roles can also be important by providing insight into new industries and issues. This adds a valued dimension to help corporate affairs specialists transition in their career.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe says this approach for her was "extremely helpful" for her own career, with stints as a non-executive director at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and ITV whilst at Tesco. Later roles included being a member of the supervisory board of international retailer and wholesaler Metro Group in Dusseldorf. This overseas role added to her capabilities and experience. She also served as president of EuroCommerce, the pan-European retail trade association, and sat



*"You need a CEO that will give you a secondment, project, overseas or acquisition work, or commercial experience. They all feed into the basic need for breadth of experience. And experience teaches you to challenge."*

on the boards of 2 Sisters Food Group and Hermes Equity Ownership Services as well as on the advisory board of accountants PwC.

Nevertheless, she views her return to Westminster as somewhat inevitable. She became a life peer in the House of Lords in 2013 and was appointed parliamentary under-secretary of state and minister for intellectual property in 2014 with new duties added at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 2015.

"When I left the civil service to go into business, I knew I would probably go back at some stage," she says. "In due course, once I have done my bit as a Minister, I want to go back to another business leadership role."

By her own admission, business is in her "DNA". "My ambition to lead a company hasn't gone away," she proclaims.

## CAREER HISTORY

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS, MINISTER FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT (ADDED MAY 2015)  
2014 – PRESENT

CONSERVATIVE PEER  
HOUSE OF LORDS 2013 – PRESENT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & LEGAL AFFAIRS  
TESCO 2006 – 2013

GROUP DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
TESCO (ALSO COMPANY SECRETARY, 2004 – 2006)  
1997 – 2006

DIRECTOR OF DEREGULATION UNIT  
CABINET OFFICE 1995 – 1997

PRIME MINISTER'S POLICY UNIT 1992 – 1994

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE  
FISHERIES & FOOD 1973 – 1992

# PHIL WILSON-BROWN

## MANAGING DIRECTOR - MORE THAN

### PHIL WILSON-BROWN BELIEVES THAT A CORPORATE AFFAIRS BACKGROUND CAN BE BOTH A HELP AND A HINDRANCE TO GETTING TO THE TOP OF THE CORPORATE BUSINESS LADDER.

Communications professionals may be overlooked within their organisation due to a lack of understanding about what their roles involve, he warns, adding that many people "don't see all the behind the scenes work that goes on".

Better news, however, is that, with the rise in data traffic and the meteoric increase in content consumption, the ability and skill-sets that good communicators possess is increasingly in demand in the general business environment.

Wilson-Brown's personal experience demonstrates that from starting in a PR agency, it is possible to climb to the top of a multinational company.

The straight-talking Australian has been managing director of More Than, the personal lines insurer, for 12 months. With a decade of experience honed at insurance group RSA and before that during stints at the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) and London Stock Exchange (LSE), Wilson-Brown also believes that his work in both PR agencies and in-house corporate communications have contributed to his current business role.

Despite this, he warns that the path to the top may not be straightforward and can involve a sideways move that might not involve reporting directly to the chief executive and could therefore feel as if executives are moving back a level. Wilson-Brown cautions against undue worries on this score. "If you are obsessed about status you won't develop your professional CV," he warns. "It should be all about the job you eventually want."

Wilson-Brown, who says his philosophy is that "the journey takes you there and opportunities will come," began his career at Edelman in Australia, moving to the ASX when it demutualised in 2000, which he describes as 'an interesting cultural change'. It was his first in-house role and he believes that: "If you want to get into an executive role you have to take that transition in-house at some point. It's inevitable."

He came to the UK in 2001 to take a second masters degree and then moved through positions at the LSE and PR agency College Hill, before joining RSA as group head of external communications in 2004 when it was in the midst of a restructuring that he describes as probably the company's "darkest hour".

"We had to rebuild the reputation of the company; mapping out its future and rebuilding internal and external trust in the organisation," he recalls.

He progressed to RSA's director of strategy, marketing and customer international, and then moved to take the same role in Scandinavia, where he was instrumental in re-launching of RSA's brands in Sweden, Denmark and Norway as well as masterminding the business's online strategy and driving its focus on improving customer service.

"I was lucky," he says. "From the international role, I learned the cultural differences about communicating and engaging. From a job satisfaction perspective, I had many challenges that covered the whole business."

His role in Scandinavia covered broader business strategy, as well as marketing, brand and customer strategy and communication, which he says enabled him to develop an end-to-end focus. "To me, that was an important learning curve," he says. "It allowed me to play 'connecting the dots' through the business. In many ways, my role was the glue that held the fabric of the business together."

*"If you are obsessed about status you won't develop your professional CV, it should be all about the job you eventually want"*

Whilst forging his way in the company and industry, Wilson-Brown says he benefited from a strong personal relationship with RSA's chief executive at the time, Andy Haste, who became his mentor and champion.

"You have to find the company and stick with it for a while," he explains. "They need the open-mindedness to take on people from different walks of life and an open culture. You need to get to know how the company works. This is often intuitive and logical. Then you can broaden out your role."

Wilson-Brown holds that key skills that corporate communications professionals can bring to benefit broader executive roles include the ability to build a narrative and a strong sense of empathy. The list also features excellent verbal and non-verbal communication and the ability to manage crises, staying cool under pressure and assessing the issue thoroughly.

With his own journey continuing, he believes that such skills, in addition to the abilities he has developed as More Than managing director will allow him to take on bigger MD roles.

For communicators who have still to cross over into general management, he advises: "You need to ask yourself: where does communications sit in this organisation? What's the leadership like? How open are they to development and opportunities? And how open are you to doing new things? If people can trust you as someone who delivers, works hard and understands the business, there's no reason you can't make the transition."

*"If you want to get into an executive role you have to take that transition in-house at some point. It's inevitable."*

### CAREER HISTORY

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
MORE THAN 2015 – PRESENT

DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY  
MARKETING & CUSTOMER  
SCANDINAVIA, RSA 2011 – 2014

DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY,  
MARKETING & CUSTOMER  
INTERNATIONAL DIVISION, RSA  
2007 – 2010

GROUP HEAD OF EXTERNAL  
COMMUNICATIONS  
RSA 2004 – 2006

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR  
COLLEGE HILL 2003

MANAGER OF INVESTOR RELATIONS  
LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE 2002

MANAGER OF INVESTOR RELATIONS  
AUSTRALIAN SECURITIES EXCHANGE  
2000 – 2001

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR  
EDELMAN 1995 – 1999

# NICK VON SCHIRNDING

CHIEF EXECUTIVE – CARAJAS COPPER COMPANY

*“I will always value my background in corporate affairs and investor relations. They are vital skills to include in today’s boardroom”*

NICK VON SCHIRNDING KNOWS MORE THAN MOST THE COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES THAT CAN FACE A CHIEF EXECUTIVE. ON HIS FIRST DAY IN THAT ROLE AT FTSE-LISTED COAL MINING GROUP ASIA RESOURCE MINERALS (ARMS, PREVIOUSLY BUMI) IN 2013, HE RECEIVED A PETITION FROM HIGH-PROFILE SHAREHOLDER NAT ROTHSCHILD REQUESTING AN EGM TO OUST THE ENTIRE BOARD. HE HAS SINCE DESCRIBED THE SUBSEQUENT PROCESS AS A “FIRESTORM RAGING THROUGH THE BUILDING.”

He does feel that his background as a communicator from his 11 years as head of corporate affairs and investor relations at the much larger miner Anglo American stood him in good stead for dealing with one of the most colourful shareholder battles in recent times.

At Anglo American, von Schirnding, who started his career in finance and went on to run a venture capital firm and work as a financial manager for miners De Beers and Minorco, handled communications for the first time and played an integral role in the company’s listing in London.

This gave him a deep understanding of how to communicate effectively and engage with a range of stakeholders, helping him keep control of the ARMS situation and it is a skill that he feels is now a vital part of every CEO’s job description.

“I think that nowadays the ability to communicate well is vital for a CEO,” he says. “There must be a cohesive message for all stakeholders – internal and external - which ultimately links through to the common strategy of the group.

“It’s not just what you communicate; the way people communicate has become more sophisticated over the past few years. Thanks to technology, stakeholders read much more broadly about what is going on and have a better understanding of each company. That puts pressure on CEOs. As a company leader, you need to be able to anticipate that and to respond in the right way.”

At ARMS, he began as head of investor relations before being elevated to chief executive in 2012 at the height of the company’s crisis, which led to his job being referred to as the most difficult role in the mining industry. He left the London-listed group towards the end of 2014, having overseen a substantial overhaul and is now chief executive of Carajas Copper Company, a Brazilian mining business and is a director at Garrison Capital, which has successfully founded and listed 22 resource companies.

Von Schirnding’s calm disposition helped him cope in the spotlight but he says he also received invaluable support from his board of non-executive directors, which included heavyweights such as Sir Julian Horn-Smith, Sir Graham Hearne and Lord Renwick of Clifton.

“I found that senior people acted as a great counsel,” he recalls. “It can be lonely at the top, but I could expose my inner concerns to certain members of the board and have a constructive and supportive discussion.”

It is this willingness to learn from others that von Schirnding believes is vital for corporate affairs professionals who aspire to move into the C-suite.

He is passionate in believing that the role of communications isn’t just about “being a mouthpiece” but requires in-depth knowledge of an organisation. Indeed, this was something he spent a lot of time on prior to joining Anglo American when it floated in 1999.

“You need to understand the business,” he explains. “You need to know what the key drivers are in your business, facts and financials, the capital structure and the elements that make it up. People will give you a certain timeframe to work out if you know what you are talking about. If you pass, it is an empowered role. If not, you won’t get a second chance.”

Von Schirnding also believes that investor, public and media relations, reputation management and corporate affairs can all be a great stepping stone to learn about a business, thanks to their “bird’s eye view” of everything that goes on in an organisation. “In these roles you see everything that is going on,” he states. “From that perspective, it provides a great opportunity to immerse yourself in the business. Don’t stay on the periphery. Roll up your sleeves.”

When he joined Anglo American, he actively asked to be involved with other operating committees to gain a better understanding of the business. “I said: ‘I’m here to learn, not to interfere,’” he says. He believes Anglo American’s culture helped him to work towards his goals and that the company’s supporting management team was invaluable.

Von Schirnding was part of an initial small and close-knit group of people at Anglo American, and he worked closely with the management team of six. He says this gave him a taste for what it takes to run a large organisation, to understand the challenges of being a newcomer to the market and to appreciate the roles and responsibilities of the senior management.

Encouragingly, he sees an increasing trend of people moving from communications functions into general management. “The roles are increasingly seen as stepping stones,” he states. “The importance of understanding the role that communications plays in the overall structure of a business is growing. Let’s not forget, communications issues are serious when you get them wrong.

“In my various roles I’ve always said to managers if you don’t understand the strategy, rest assured no-one else will either. What you understand, you value. That is key. I have held onto this for years. We need to understand what we are trying to say and project it in a cohesive way.”

Von Schirnding’s career is comparatively unusual in that he has moved in and out of a key communications role with ease. However, he feels that this experience equips him well to cope with the rigours of being a CEO and that his future lies in management roles.

“I’ve moved from one CEO role to another,” he says. “But I will always value my background in corporate affairs and investor relations. They are vital skills to include in today’s boardroom.”



*“People will give you a certain timeframe to work out if you know what you are talking about. If you pass, it is an empowered role. If not, you won’t get a second chance”*

## CAREER HISTORY

**DIRECTOR**  
GARRISON CAPITAL 2016 – PRESENT

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
CARAJAS COPPER COMPANY 2015 – PRESENT

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
ASIA RESOURCE MINERALS (ARMS) PLC  
(FORMERLY BUMI PLC) 2012 – 2014

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STRATEGY  
AND INVESTOR RELATIONS**  
ASIA RESOURCE MINERALS (ARM) 2011 – 2012

**HEAD OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND INVESTOR RELATIONS**  
ANGLO AMERICAN 1999 – 2010

**FINANCIAL MANAGER**  
MINORCO 1994 – 1998

**FINANCIAL MANAGER**  
DE BEERS 1992 – 1993

**CEO OF VENTURE CAPITAL**  
LITET 1990 – 1991

**FINANCE MANAGEMENT TRAINEE**  
ANGLO AMERICAN 1988 – 1989

# CLAIRE JENKINS

NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - SPORTS DIRECT INTERNATIONAL



CLAIRE JENKINS' CAREER HAS SEEN HER ELEVATED FROM INVESTOR RELATIONS AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS ROLES IN THE TOBACCO AND ALUMINIUM CAN INDUSTRIES TO HER COMPARATIVELY RARE STATUS AS A COMMUNICATOR HOLDING A NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORSHIP AT A FTSE 100 COMPANY. AND SHE IS NO STRANGER TO STANDING UP FOR WHAT SHE BELIEVES AND ASKING FOR WHAT SHE WANTS.

"Unless you tell your mentor or management team: 'My job should be broader and I want to progress and grow,' it won't happen," she asserts. "You should be prepared to fight for what you want."

Jenkins is now NED at sports retailer Sports Direct International and also at the Media for Development organisation, in addition to being a trustee at Amicus, the UK-based charity that helps provide legal representation to people on death row in the US.

She started her career, however, as a stockbroker, joining Laing and Cruikshank in the City of London straight from the University of St Andrews. She was one of just two female professionals at that point.

In 1992, after seven years, she moved into investor relations as a consultant. Then in 1997 a subsidiary of American Brands was preparing to float its UK arm, Gallaher Group, on the London Stock Exchange and she was offered the post of head of investor relations.

"I was lucky to set off in in-house IR ahead of an IPO," she recalls. "Straightaway I said I wanted to get more involved, for example in AGMs. Most IR professionals didn't at the time. The other area was financial press. When I joined it wasn't part of the role. But it's the same messaging, just a different audience."

Her job morphed into director of IR and group planning at Gallaher, a development she says was due to her determination not to align herself as simply in the "corporate communications box" – and luck.

Jenkins is convinced that Gallaher's culture was a major contributing factor to her career development. The company didn't keep people in boxes and she relished the opportunities that this presented. "You need to stick up your hand and force yourself into new opportunities," she advises. "I grabbed everything with both hands. But I was kicking against an open door."

Jenkins was given increased responsibility, joining transaction teams as well as becoming involved in broader corporate communications messaging. "For any cross-functional project I'd volunteer my time," recalls Jenkins. "For example, for the last four years I was at Gallaher, I ran the strategic away days for the board. We wanted to make them unusual and interactive. I asked key managers to think and act as each of our competitors. They did a presentation as though they were chief executives of the competition and talk about how they were going to beat Gallaher. It gave us a very interesting perspective."

She firmly believes that it is important for ambitious corporate affairs individuals to do their own PR and make themselves useful throughout their organisation. Jenkins advises professionals to volunteer information to colleagues to be helpful and supportive. At Gallaher, she would go through brokers' notes on the group's competitors and drop the relevant managers a one-liner highlighting their thoughts.

*"You need to stick up your hand and force yourself into other areas. I grabbed everything with both hands - I was kicking against an open door."*

"Corporate affairs is unfortunately a classic non-revenue generating function that 90% of commercial people think is a waste of space," she says. "But if you can develop good relationships throughout the business and help people do their job, it's a win-win."

After 10 years at Gallaher, Jenkins joined cans manufacturer Rexam as group director of corporate affairs in 2010, attracted by the role as well as opportunities to get involved with other areas of the business. "Many of the IR roles on offer bored me to tears," she admits. "I'd done so much and been so heavily involved on the corporate communications side. I realised I needed a 'head of all communications' type role."

Rexam wanted Jenkins to lead corporate affairs, without any IR work, which constituted a fresh challenge for her; as well as an opportunity to get to grips with the burgeoning new area of sustainability. "I could demonstrate that I wasn't just a one-trick pony and could get involved with a new area," says Jenkins. She responded by immersing herself in the job and using her network to develop her knowledge.

Jenkins is brave and willing to throw herself wholeheartedly into new situations, but acknowledges that this also presents risk and that adopting this approach means being prepared to work hard. "You have to deliver," she insists. "You have to be prepared to make yourself visible. But it's also important that you have faith that you can learn from everything you do, including your mistakes. No one gets to the top without making mistakes."

Sports Direct was her first NED role, joining Mike Ashley's retailer in 2011. "I moved into plural roles sooner than I expected," she admits. "Getting your first NED role is the hardest. Almost everyone wants someone with previous board experience."

"It's doubly hard now because the pool of executive directors has shrunk so much. There is a very different dynamic between the executive committee and the board. Board level discussions think bigger picture. That's what you need to move into a CEO or executive role – the vision to think about the company as a whole and what is best for it."

Jenkins feels that using corporate affairs as a springboard to move through various executive roles is an excellent strategy for ambitious corporate communications professionals who are hungry to reach the top. She is also convinced that to get to CEO level, communicators need to demonstrate the ability to effectively run a business.

"You won't move from head of any function to CEO straight away," she warns. "You need a true understanding of the issues a board faces, such as financing and balance sheet requirements, and the nuts and bolts of what is involved."

Demonstrating a sound understanding of business, and the ability and eagerness to participate in cross-functional and strategic teams also helps this career path.

"You need to 'earn your spurs' at the table," Jenkins adds. "You don't get that unless you are co-operative and helpful and broaden your role whenever you get the chance. Whatever the job description is, tear it up. Make it your own."

*"Have faith that you can learn from everything you do - including your mistakes. No one gets to the top without making mistakes"*

## CAREER HISTORY

NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SPORTS DIRECT INTERNATIONAL  
2011 – PRESENT

GROUP DIRECTOR  
OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
REXAM 2010 – 2012

DIRECTOR, INVESTOR RELATIONS  
AND GROUP PLANNING  
GALLAHER GROUP 1997 – 2007

# SIMON LEWIS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE - ASSOCIATION FOR FINANCIAL MARKETS IN EUROPE

IF SIMON LEWIS WAS A CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF A QUOTED COMPANY, HE WOULD WANT AT LEAST ONE COMMUNICATOR IN HIS BOARDROOM. "I'D WANT SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS REPUTATION MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS," HE STATES. "DON'T BE AFRAID TO STATE YOUR AMBITION," HE ADVISES ASPIRING EXECUTIVES.

Actually, Lewis, who admits to having an "eclectic" career, is a CEO, but he has not yet been at the helm of a corporation. A former official spokesman for the Prime Minister and the first ever communications secretary to The Queen, he has led the Association for Financial Markets in Europe (AFME) since 2010. And he is unusual in that he has moved in and out of both communications and general management roles in his career.

Along the way, he has added corporate experience as director of corporate affairs at NatWest Group and Vodafone and as director of communications and public policy for British Gas's owner Centrica, where he also worked as managing director for Europe. He currently holds extra-curricular positions as a visiting fellow at Oxford University and a visiting professor at the Cardiff School of Journalism, while he is a patron and former chairman of the Fulbright Commission.

As for what has inspired his varied path, he cites "a few occasions when I've been given a real opportunity," adding that he has not necessarily always taken the conventional or expected next steps.

His time at NatWest is one example. After four years, the bank sent Lewis to the INSEAD business school in Paris to spend one month taking its advanced management programme. "It was fascinating and opened my eyes to how the commercial side of business works," he recalls.

At Centrica, he was seconded to Buckingham Palace in 1998, and on his return moved into general management, becoming director of international development. "Now that was an interesting opportunity," he says. "It really built on my core relationship skills and was a logical step."

On the back of increasing momentum for Centrica in Europe, he was appointed as the group's managing director for the continent, a remit that involved running a fledgling business, setting up a joint venture with local partners and opening a business in Spain.

Lewis relished the direct management experience. "The key difference between NatWest and Centrica was remaining part of the senior management team," he explains. "I would recommend an advanced management programme to anyone, but I think you have to be careful about the next step you take out of communications and be sure about what you want."

At AFME, the voice of Europe's wholesale financial markets, Lewis represents leading global and European banks and other significant capital market players. Even in his current executive position, he believes that communications remains at the core of his role.

"As a corporate communications professional, you can closely observe

what works well in management and effective ways of leading," he says. "I never set out to run an organisation but if you are successful in corporate affairs, it is almost inevitable."

Lewis believes that the ability to manage up, down and sideways is one of the most important skills that communications individuals bring to a senior role. "We now see people in corporate affairs functions who are significantly resourced and who might have 100 people around the world reporting to them," he says.

Lewis is adamant that being able to communicate effectively is a core skill for chief executives. "Every organisation is competing for their share of voice," he affirms. "If you can communicate a sense of purpose it is a distinguishing talent. And you need to be able to spot and nurture talent." Lewis also holds that any management role is about team-building, bringing together comparative skills and motivating a team.

For communications people looking to move into a senior role, Lewis believes that there are key pointers, starting with a broad understanding of the commercial side of an operation. "You are taking a risk on someone without these skills," he maintains. "Many decisions are based on showing a track record."

As for advice on how communicators can give themselves this experience in their careers, he advocates investing personally in management training. "You need to invest in this. Don't just wait for the opportunity," he urges. "An ambitious corporate affairs person needs to get themselves up to speed as soon as possible."

Lewis also advises communicators to broaden their curriculum vitae to include international experience, with the rejoinder that "just understanding one market isn't going to get you very far". At Vodafone he allocated staff in corporate affairs overseas to run international teams because he believes that "having a global sense can make a difference".

He believes that experiencing the "right kind of secondment" is also vital and can help reposition communications executives to re-emerge within the corporate team in a different way. He suggests that communicators considering such secondments should consider stints in strategy, investor relations, marketing and human resources. Having a mentor, such as a chief executive or somebody senior outside the company to talk to about career ambitions can also help.

Above all, Lewis believes that the best possible time to aspire to run an organisation starts now - and so does ensuring that you have the right business acumen, training and development for the opportunities ahead.

*"You need to invest in your management training - don't just wait for the opportunity. An ambitious corporate affairs person needs to get themselves up to speed"*

*"Every organisation is competing for their share of voice, if you can communicate a sense of purpose it is a distinguishing talent"*

## CAREER HISTORY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
ASSOCIATION FOR FINANCIAL  
MARKETS IN EUROPE 2010 – PRESENT

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
AND PM'S OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN  
10 DOWNING STREET 2009 - 2010

GROUP DIRECTOR  
OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
VODAFONE 2004 – 2009

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
AND PUBLIC POLICY  
CENTRICA 2004

MANAGING DIRECTOR EUROPE  
CENTRICA 2000 – 2003

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
BRITISH GAS/CENTRICA (INCLUDING  
SECONDMENT AS COMMUNICATIONS  
SECRETARY TO HM THE QUEEN, 1998)  
1996 – 1999

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS  
NATWEST GROUP 1992 – 1995

HEAD OF PR  
SG WARBURG GROUP 1987 – 1991

# KEN CRONIN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE - UNITED KINGDOM ONSHORE OIL AND GAS

KEN CRONIN BELIEVES THAT AN EXPERIENCE IN CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS CAN BE INVALUABLE TO CHIEF EXECUTIVES. "WHEN THINGS GO WRONG, BEING ABLE TO ADMIT YOU COULD HAVE DONE THINGS BETTER IS REALLY IMPORTANT," HE SAYS. "IN A CRISIS, CEOS WILL QUITE OFTEN TEND TO GO INTO THEIR SHELLS. IT'S THE WORST THING YOU CAN DO."

"Within a large organisation, very few people see everything that goes on. But communications people do, from both an outward and inward strategic outlook. This is incredibly interesting from an experience point of view, and, just as importantly, to prepare you if you are interested in taking the top job."

Cronin, a former managing partner and head of Kreab Gavin Anderson's global energy practice, became chief executive of the United Kingdom Onshore Oil and Gas Group (UKOOG), the representative body for the UK onshore oil and gas industry, in 2013 after a decade in PR. He also sees a background in communications rising in importance in the day-to-day operations of CEOs.

"We are definitely seeing CEOs becoming more involved in communications," he declares. "Over the last 10-15 years they've had to be. With the rise of digital communications, news can be around the world in 24 seconds, not 24 hours, and knowing how to respond to that in a timely fashion is vital."

*"You don't just need a strategy - you also need the ability to be able to communicate it - and progress against it, good or bad"*

With chief executives now spending an increasing proportion of their time communicating to the City and the wider public, Cronin feels that companies need to become more vocal about their issues and challenges, and develop strategies to communicate them. Once upon a time, he says, "communications" was said to be what analysts thought and the Financial Times reported the following day. Now, it is far broader, encompassing reputation management, corporate affairs, public and investor relations, what employees are saying in the canteen and what's happening on Twitter.

"The reputation of companies and their brand has become so much more important," explains Cronin. "A brand can now be wrecked in 24 seconds. That's a sobering thought."

The ability to communicate quickly is universal, however, which creates challenges for those in public roles such as Cronin's, with politicians, lobby

groups, activists and bloggers all behaving in a much more vocal fashion, using social media to communicate instantly.

UKOOG's representative remit includes oil and gas exploration and production but the main part of Cronin's role is to lead work to promote the role of onshore oil and gas exploration within the energy sector. It's a newly-created role, but that doesn't daunt Cronin, who says it provides an opportunity to build on his communications background.

"My work is varied," he reports. "I'm acting on behalf of an industry, so on any one day I might be talking to the media, government, regulators or the general public. I firmly believe that the skills you obtain through communications roles provide a very good basis for building a particularly strong foundation to develop into a more operational function."

It has not all been plain sailing, however. While Cronin was used to running companies from a logistical and financial sense, he admits that getting to grips with operational issues around an industry has proved more challenging. "Understanding the background to different issues such as environmental, and health and safety, for example, has been a real change," he says. "But I welcome the challenge. I've always been ambitious and I've had a good grounding."

Cronin adds that one of the most important elements has involved building relationships within his industry. With nearly 70 companies belonging to UKOOG, finding consensus on issues can be difficult.

He believes that CEOs increasingly need to be able to multi-task, developing a deep sense of emotional intelligence and literacy as well as an encyclopaedic knowledge of the business they are in and its operations. "CEOs nowadays must have the ability to stand in place of the consumer or employee, and understand their thinking and point of view," he states.

This has strong implications for the future importance of corporate affairs specialists and Cronin argues that it will lead to more reputation management and communications professionals taking senior operational roles.

He also believes that FTSE100 and FTSE250 companies will start to elevate communications specialists to their main boards - something that is currently extremely rare, saying that well over half the issues he faces as a CEO end up being about communications.

This is good news for communications specialists but Cronin cautions that skills in other areas are vital too and that corporate communicators must develop abilities in finance and operations.

"Firstly, it's important to have a strategy across a number of areas, such as finance and operations," he says. "You need to ensure the people surrounding you understand the strategy too, and you must have the ability to discuss and change it if required."

"Secondly, if issues arise it generally comes down to communication. You don't just need a strategy - you also need the ability to be able to communicate it - and progress against it, good or bad."

*"I think we will see a trend towards FTSE companies with communications specialists on the board"*

## CAREER HISTORY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
UNITED KINGDOM ONSHORE OIL AND GAS (UKOOG)  
2013 – PRESENT

SENIOR PARTNER, HEAD OF GLOBAL ENERGY PRACTISE  
KREAB GAVIN ANDERSON 2003 – 2012

INVESTOR RELATIONS MANAGER AND EXECUTIVE  
ASSISTANT TO THE CHAIRMAN & CEO  
BRITISH ENERGY – BUSINESS REVIEW 1997 – 2003

FINANCE MANAGER  
LADBROKE RACING 1993 – 1997

GRADUATE TRAINEE TO FINANCIAL ACCOUNTANT  
BRITISH GAS 1989 – 1993

*From Corporate Affairs to Corporate Leader:  
Today's Corporate Affairs Director, Tomorrow's CEO?*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IT IS NOT COMMON TO ENVISAGE CORPORATE AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS AS FUTURE LEADERS. COMMUNICATIONS IS STILL OFTEN REGARDED AS LACKING A DIRECT LINK TO REVENUE GENERATION AND INCAPABLE OF CONTRIBUTING TO BROADER BUSINESS DECISIONS. IN THE SEARCH FOR LEADERS WITH THE DEPTH AND DIVERSITY OF SKILLS NEEDED TO RUN OUR LARGEST, MOST IMPORTANT COMPANIES, INDUSTRIES AND INDEED THE GOVERNMENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN CONSIDERED AS FRUITFUL PLACES TO EXPLORE.

There are some valid reasons for this historical oversight. In past decades, the communications marketplace was dominated by specialist consultancies, with few significant in-house roles as a route into senior management. It was even rarer for a corporate affairs professional to have a seat on a corporate executive committee. Other functions such as finance were viewed as a more natural route, due to their ability to dissect operations, apply financial acumen and direct resources. Lacking direct attribution to corporate successes and commercial benefit, corporate affairs was overlooked as a source of talent by executives considering succession planning. It was consequently ignored by headhunters looking to fill senior management roles.

A rapidly changing market for senior roles is challenging this status quo. A new generation of leaders have developed their skills and outlooks in a digitally-connected, always-on world. Dramatic increases have taken place in the speed at which information is exchanged on a perplexing range of media and platforms. Communication is no longer a minor but necessary aspect of corporate life. With an ever greater complexity of audiences and stakeholder groups, CEOs have no choice but to spend more time communicating and the market has little time for those who get it wrong.

*"The stakeholder environment has become more complex; with more activism, more opinions and greater connectivity, which in itself requires a more connected form of leadership,"* explains Rupert Younger, co-founder of Finsbury and now director of Oxford University's Centre for Corporate Reputation, a research centre based at the Saïd Business School.

In response, organisations have become more focused on their own reputation management. Many now state publicly that they consider their robust name or reputation to be their greatest asset. Countless corporate studies demonstrate that the loss of reputation exacts a high cost. Yet, organisations cannot actively control their own reputations. Rather, these are an output, reflecting consistency and integrity of actions, intent and style. Whilst reputation is conferred on you by others, an effective reputation engagement strategy is now viewed as business critical.

## TRANSLATING CORPORATE AFFAIRS SKILLS INTO MANAGEMENT TALENT

While the path from corporate affairs roles to general management and leadership positions has been pioneered by the individuals we have profiled, it remains virgin territory at many organisations.

The good news is that for corporate affairs and reputation management professionals who are still keen to reach the top, their wide-angle view of an organisation, core skills of engaging and making people believe and their ability to articulate and deliver a message are increasingly in demand. There's huge potential for such individuals to succeed, whether their communications background is in Westminster, a publicly-listed company or a trade association.

As a result, we are witnessing more corporate affairs and reputation management figureheads developing into business leaders. Senior communications professionals possess increasing influence within organisations and enjoy wider exposure to business decisions and strategy. An estimated 50% of corporate communications directors now sit on executive committees. Communications is emerging as a business-critical function and as a valid and respected management discipline. Furthermore, it is increasingly common for potential business leaders to be expected to spend some time in the communications function.

It is unsurprising that the range of skills required in a communications role can translate effectively into management talent. Through their everyday tasks, corporate affairs professionals are honing core CEO skills such as the ability to build a narrative, remain calm in a crisis, multi-task, think fast and communicate succinctly and quickly.

*"To do well in communications, you need a combination of high IQ and EQ - a tricky balance,"* adds Younger. *"You need to understand key business drivers, talk in extreme detail and be a useful antenna for the company."*

## DEVELOP BROADER SKILLS IN COMMERCE, FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Communications skills alone are not sufficient to progress professionals into senior executive or CEO roles. While corporate affairs is increasingly attracting people with broad skill-sets from diverse backgrounds, resulting in a broad portfolio of experience, a need remains for professionals starting in the industry to proactively widen their portfolios. Without commercial acumen and financial management knowledge, an ambitious communicator may find it difficult to progress across organisational departments and become stuck in a career rut.

*"It's vital to develop broad management and commercial skills, the ability to read a balance sheet, a broader background beyond one kind of market and product,"* says Pierre Goad, whose role at HSBC recently expanded to include leading the group's human resources function after a long career in communications.

## BROADEN YOUR BUSINESS PORTFOLIO; VOLUNTEER TO LEAD NEW PROJECTS

All interviewees in our report stressed the importance of volunteering for new opportunities and wider involvement throughout an organisation. Managerial training at institutions such as business schools and MBAs can help fill financial "gaps", while there are myriad opportunities to gain experience through volunteer board roles.

By gaining cross-functional and broader experience, and becoming involved in wider strategy deliberations, many corporate communications professionals have found that their own profile is raised within a business, as well as their efforts being rewarded by increased interest externally.

As Anna Mitchell who recently transitioned from group director of communications at Coats to lead the UK Crafts business as managing director explains, *"The new parts of my current role involved getting to grips with the supply chain and how products get to the customer, as well as overseeing pricing, costs and margins. If you wish to be considered for a broader remit, you need to put your hand up and get involved in projects that aren't directly related to your communications role, and build internal relationships in a non-self-serving way"*.

## IDENTIFY A MENTOR

Being vocal about one's ambitions is of paramount importance. Most of our current crop of leaders admit to having had close senior support, including mentors who were prepared to guide and to challenge them into trying new roles. Many of our interviewees suggested considering a move to another organisation if that support culture does not exist within an existing employer. An open-minded environment is needed to facilitate a transition out of corporate affairs.

## BUILD PERSONAL NETWORKS; CONSIDER LESS HIGH PROFILE ROLES

While ambitious and hungry potential leaders might want to move upwards quickly, the journey to leadership may not be straightforward. As some of our interviewees point out, sometimes it is necessary or expedient to move sideways into a role that may not be high-profile or report directly to a chief executive. Such moves can equip individuals with new skills, vastly improve their operational knowledge and help them make connections that may fuel future progress. This process can build personal networks and add direct experience of an array of different functions, geographies and business areas to an executive's communications prowess. As Andrew Davis who now leads a European market at Smiths Detection but was previously its director of communications says, "Don't assume you fully understand every aspect of a business. You have to be humble and learn how to manage the details of a balance sheet. You also need to get used to dealing with ambiguity that often exists around the decision making process".

Some of our interviewees found invaluable experience from gaining NED positions, though there remains concern that corporate affairs professionals are not often considered for such roles.

## ARTICULATE THE BENEFITS CORPORATE AFFAIRS LEADERS BRING

"I consider myself first and foremost a business leader," says Charlotte Lambkin, corporate relations director at Diageo. "As a member of the group executive committee, my role is much more than just about communications.

"Corporate relations is a much wider remit. I have a director of communications reporting to me. Corporate relations makes an important contribution to the bottom line because of its public affairs and regulation remit, and the role of CSR to boards. The value is not just in the issues you manage with boards. My role is about pro-active political risk mapping and forecasting. We need to articulate what benefits we bring."

Others in trade and professional bodies have made fruitful transitions to leadership roles. This may be explained by the campaigning nature and mind-set of many such organisations, which aligns leadership closely to communications. Yet, such organisations, like third sector groups, can be large and diverse concerns and increasingly operate on extremely commercial lines, so skills other than communications are in demand there as much as they are at limited companies.

## IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

In the near term, the increasing numbers of corporate affairs leaders in executive committee roles and the encouraging level of support that now exists within businesses can make this ambition a reality. At Broome Yasar Partnership, we are sure that the market will see more communications professionals making this transition, but careful planning and ambition are prerequisites to tread the path to leadership.

Of course, the chief executive position does come with a health warning. It can be a lonely existence and operating in the spotlight is not for everyone. For those who wish to travel in this direction, however, the good news is that the route is becoming well-established, there are signposts along the way and support now exists for the journey. Bon voyage.

## *From Corporate Affairs to Corporate Leader:*

- ENSURE YOUR ORGANISATION IS SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR AMBITIONS – IF IT ISN'T, MOVE
- DO YOUR OWN PR WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS AND GET TO KNOW AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT HOW IT WORKS
- DON'T UNDERRATE YOUR EXISTING SKILLS
- VOLUNTEER FOR STRATEGIC AND OTHER MANAGERIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND KEEP YOURSELF VISIBLE
- LOOK TO GAIN COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE
- FIND A SUPPORTIVE SENIOR MENTOR
- CONSIDER A MOVE SIDWAYS IF IT HELPS BUILD EXPERIENCE
- BUILD YOUR NETWORK OUTSIDE YOUR ORGANISATION
- CONSIDER EXTERNAL MANAGEMENT TRAINING E.G. AN MBA, NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR TO ADD SKILLS
- UNDERSTAND THE TRUE NATURE OF A LEADERSHIP ROLE AND ENSURE YOU REALLY WANT IT



## ABOUT BROOME YASAR PARTNERSHIP

WE ARE SPECIALISTS - WE FOCUS EXCLUSIVELY ON SENIOR EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT IN CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND INVESTOR RELATIONS.

Our Partners have been instrumental in the appointment of over 500 senior communications leadership roles across multiple global markets for both corporate clients and consultancies.

We are proud to be boutique and niche, combined with a truly global reach – it reflects our collaborative and personalised approach.

For more information on Broome Yasar Partnership, please visit [www.broomeyasar.com](http://www.broomeyasar.com)

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## WHY THE PARTNERSHIP?

### TRUSTED PARTNERSHIP

We listen and we challenge, ensuring an honest and transparent search process.

We work hard to continually maintain and grow our network of loyal candidate relationships and genuine client partnerships.

### GLOBAL NETWORK

Our clients operate globally and so do we. Reflecting today's global workforce, we attract the best talent worldwide regardless of territory.

Part of BAY Partnership, the global corporate affairs executive recruiter, our Partners have successfully helped appoint corporate affairs and investor relations leadership roles across Europe, Asia Pacific and North America.

### INDUSTRY INSIGHT

We like to share our vast industry knowledge and experience.

We remain at the forefront of the latest thinking in this fast evolving function, an established authority with a unique insight into the profession.

We regularly bring together our communications community through thought-provoking networking forums and industry leading content.

### SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE

There is no substitute for knowing an industry inside and out – each of our Partners has at least 20 years' corporate affairs or investor relations industry experience.

The result? Trusted, personal relationships with the industry's top-performing professionals.

### BESPOKE SERVICE

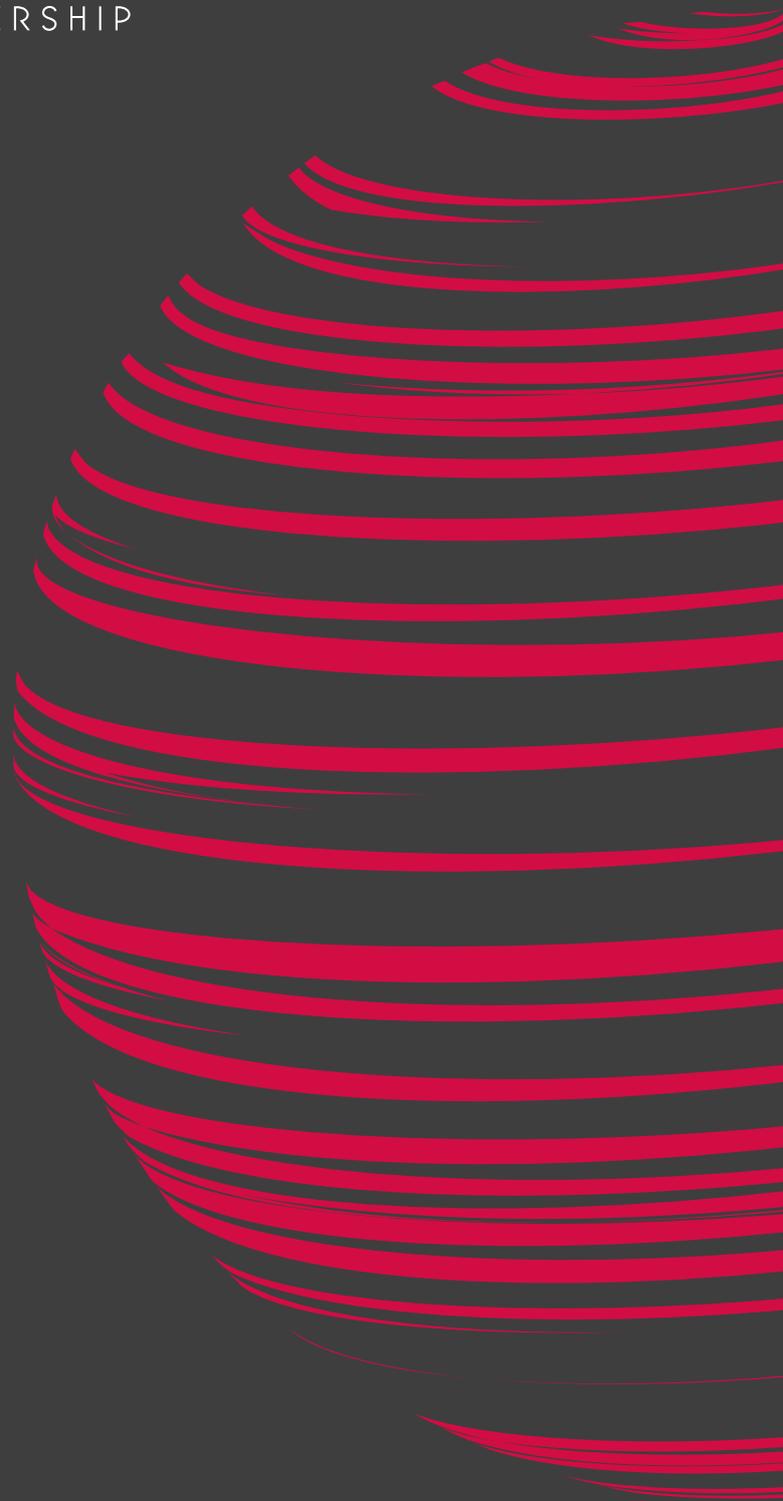
Every search is unique and we believe in a bespoke solution to each and every assignment we undertake.

This has ensured a 100% success rate since our business was established – an achievement we are determined to continue.

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