

**BOLD**  
**THINKING,**  
**BRAVE**  
**ACTION.**

Insights and inspiration from  
sustainability leaders

July 2020

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Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) and Forster Communications believe that businesses have a unique and critical role in creating transformational, sustainable change and are working together to help accelerate action.

We recognise the potential that exists within all businesses but know that many opportunities are stifled by complexity and lack of focus, which makes it difficult – and often intimidating – to turn ideas into action.

In May 2019 we ran a round table event to understand the changing role of sustainability leaders within business and ‘bravery’ was identified as core to success. Over the last year we have explored the topic of bravery further with leading practitioners and captured the insights in this report.

Our thanks goes to our contributors and voices of bravery, who gave up their time and experience so generously: Andy Brown, David Croft, Hil Berg, Julia Giannini, Kate Levine, Kirsty Britz, Leslie Johnston, Mark Cuddigan, Matthew Cole, Mike Barry and Sophi Tranchell.

# 1.0

## Foreword

**We are surrounded by enormous challenges. From the current impact of COVID-19 to the climate emergency, immediate action is required.**

While the pandemic has produced its own urgency, we are finally waking up to the reality of what the climate emergency is and will bring us, following the increasingly desperate reports and calls for action from climate scientists, NGOs and agencies and the very public actions of movements like Extinction Rebellion.

In this report, we set out to hear from leading voices in sustainability to help guide us as we work to shift sustainability from being a “nice to have” to being viewed as the opportunity that we know it to be.

We hear from our contributors who are leading change through well-known brands and businesses and reiterate that change demands deep breaths – it demands bravery.

We need to get this right – time is not on our side and while more people than ever are convinced of the need to act, far fewer are prepared for the implications of doing so. There will, inevitably, be added pressure as the pandemic eases for economic growth to be prioritised over sustainability, and possibly for current environmental standards to be watered down.

In terms of sustainability leadership, that is where bravery comes in. Bravery is what separates managing decline and mitigating impact from making progress and saving the world we live in.

Act timidly there is a danger that piecemeal efforts and activity around sustainability will achieve little; the moment to act will pass us by. Act with bravery and we may be in time to secure the future for generations to come.

Our hope is that this report brings to life some key insights on bravery in the context of sustainability leadership, drawn from the experience of those practitioners who are thinking and acting bravely, taking the big leaps and persuading others to join them.

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QUO

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## 2.0

# Summary

## Although the human fascination with bravery is ages old, it feels like it holds particular relevance today for sustainability professionals.

The aim of this report was to hear from a range of voices in the world of sustainability – all courageous in their own right – about what it means to be brave, and why bravery is so crucial now.

This report was made possible thanks to the openness of our contributors, who candidly shared the risks and rewards of bravery as well as their own regrets and aspirations. Their insights reveal that bravery has many faces. Through the sharing of their experiences we have discovered how we need to behave individually to act bravely; what the necessary conditions are for bravery to thrive; and why bravery is especially important in sustainability.

### What makes someone brave?

Our analysis identifies the five attributes of a brave sustainability professional:

**Conviction**

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**Humility**

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**Imagination**

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**Integrity**

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**Passion**

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As later pages of the report explain, these aren't a pick and mix – a brave person needs to consistently demonstrate all of these attributes to make an impact. Read through the attributes section to explore what they practically mean, along with some of the benefits and pitfalls to consider.

### What do I need to do to act bravely?

We aren't the first to tell you that bravery is about action. We have broken down brave action into five key behaviours:

**Creating a movement**

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**Taking on personal risk**

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**Thinking big**

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**Making things happen**

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**Giving your idea to others**

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Although these behaviours are often complementary, it can be unfeasible – or unproductive – to live out all of these behaviours at the same time or for the same groups of people. What version of bravery do you need to personify?

# "What if our actions had the power to directly and positively influence our business, our industry and our society, rather than them simply off-setting our behaviours?"

## What kind of brave do I need to be?

We often play different roles in our personal and professional lives depending on the impression we want to create and the impact we want to have. Bravery is no different.

We have developed five composite characters to help you think about which role you need to play in your organisation, and when. You may need to play a nurturing and empowering role with your team but agitate and challenge with leadership. Our characters provide a framework to think about how you can have the biggest impact in your organisation.

### Firebrand

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### Campaigner

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### Collectivist

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### Strategist

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### Wayfinder

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## How can I make the biggest impact?

We must all demonstrate bravery on a personal level. However, there are a number of organisational conditions that need to be in place to encourage brave thinking and behaviour.

We have grouped these conditions into three areas:

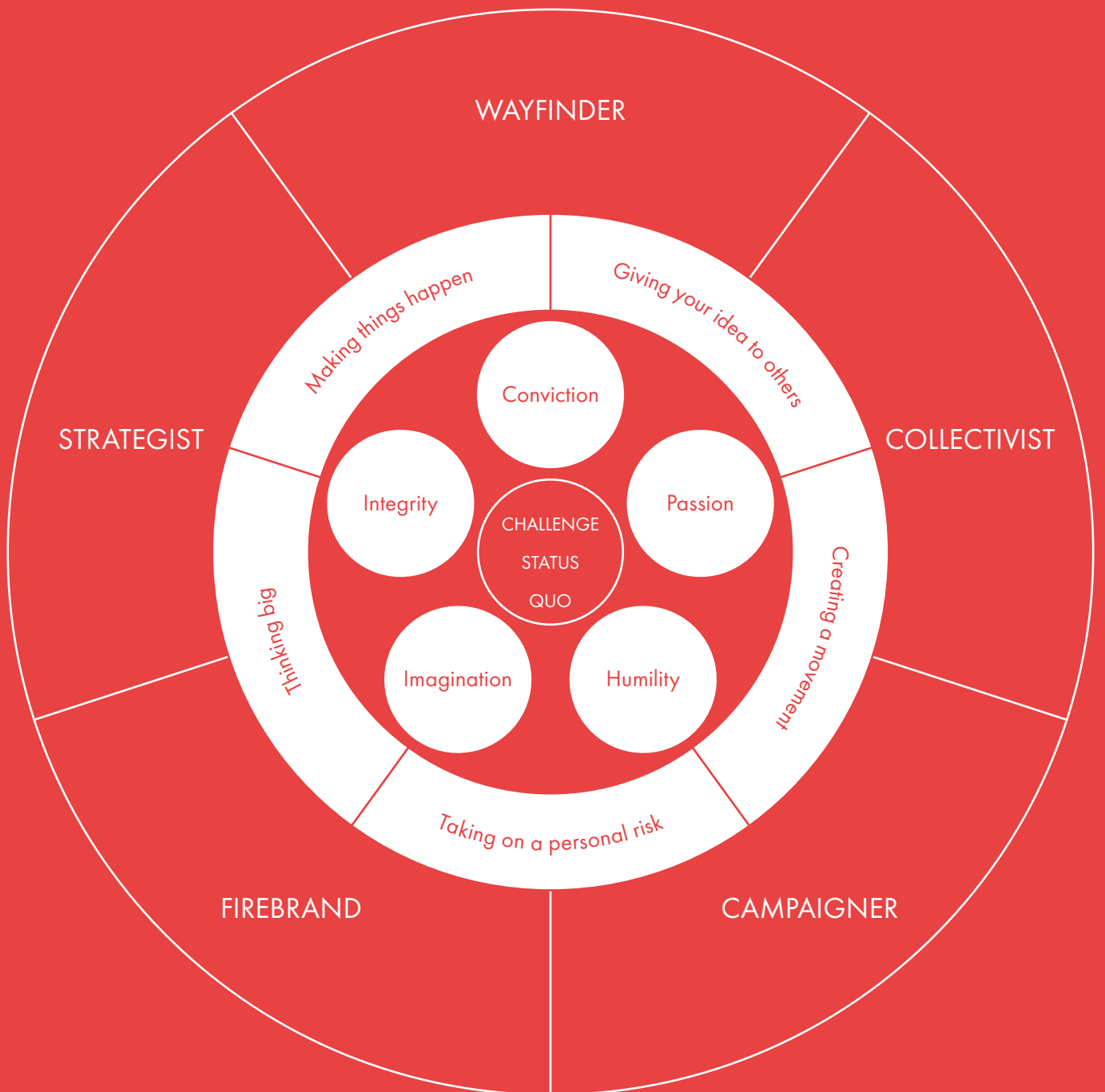
<p><b>Purpose</b> Why do we do what we do, and what makes us 'us'?</p>
<p><b>People</b> Who are we and what kind of culture do we want?</p>
<p><b>Practice</b> How do we do what we do, and what are our ways of working?</p>

It takes all of our five characters to bring about holistic, sustainable change in an organisation. We map the characters onto the organisational areas where they have greatest impact.

Bravery is personal to all of us and we each need to find our own voice. There is no prescribed way to read this report. Make it yours, pull out what resonates for you and challenge yourself where you can. We hope these voices inspire you to act bravely at a time when it really counts.

# How to challenge the status quo

Bravery is not a fixed form and sustainability leaders are likely to find they take on different characters and emphasise different behaviours across their career while consistently showing five key attributes that enable them to challenge the status quo.





IT'S

UP TO

US





## 3.0

# Characters

**‘Character’ is something of an old-fashioned term, but it is an important element in the jigsaw puzzle that makes up bravery in sustainability leadership. We have identified five character types, with many individuals displaying two or three types at one time.**

**Firebrand**

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**Campaigner**

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**Collectivist**

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**Strategist**

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**Wayfinder**

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## 3.1 Firebrand

Led by their strong sense of what is right and wrong, firebrands take great effort to stick to their moral compass – both outwardly and inwardly.

*"Part of corporate bravery is a willingness to confront orthodoxy. From the start of capitalism people have always rejected the status quo."*

Their driving desire to do the right thing can mean that the firebrand often comes up against the accepted way of doing things, especially when the norm isn't felt to be good enough. However, beyond challenging the status quo, firebrands' power lies in them standing up and saying things that others aren't prepared to say. By putting their heads above the parapet, they encourage others to do the same, creating a ripple effect for positive change.

*"I'm proud of the fact I don't keep this stuff to myself, I put myself out there to persuade others to drink from the same cup."*

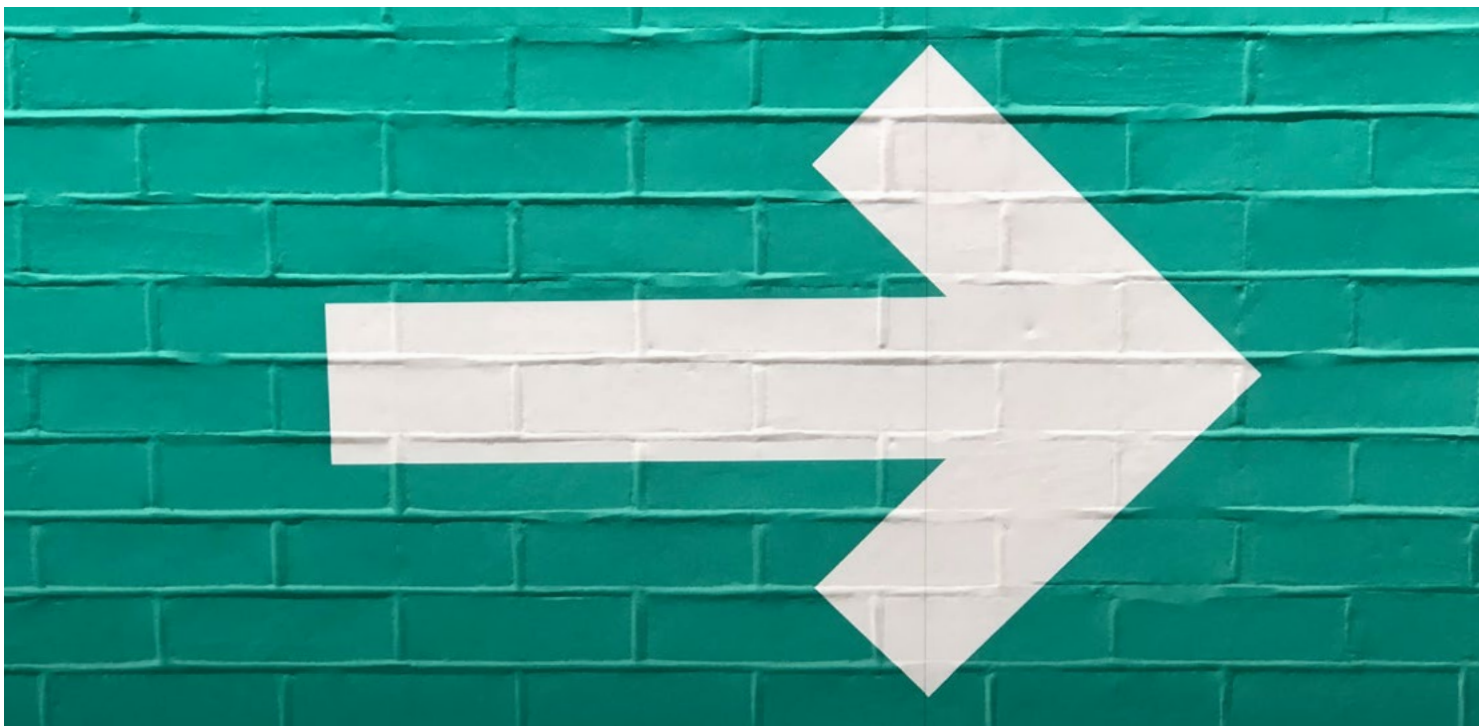
### Personal risk

The most familiar way of acting bravely for the firebrand is to put themselves out there. Their combination of personal attributes can sometimes make it seem like it's their personal calling or mission to shake things up. Their zeal means that they place more stock in their overall purpose than in the potential hazards of being perceived as an agitator.

*"Some believe there is a cost to being brave like that, but that's completely wrong."*

However, even if they feel compelled to be the voice for sustainable change regardless of the consequences, they are not blind to the risks they take on:

*"This might get me fired but this insatiable desire for more needs to be challenged."*



## "I'm proud of the fact I don't keep this stuff to myself, I put myself out there to persuade others to drink from the same cup."

As expected, the firebrand's belief in better leads to a clear sense of duty for leadership. Knowing what we know now about our social and environmental context, leaders need to demonstrate agency and step up and lead proactively. For firebrands, even if their candour isn't to everyone's liking, the solution is clear:

*"And that's where a form of bravery comes in – leaders need to set course for that and steer the business in that direction."*

### Thinking big

The firebrand's urge to act bravely is driven by a belief in something bigger:

*"They can't be thinking it isn't their problem, someone else will fix it – no one is going to do it, it is up to us [...] If you believe that we need to take care of the planet and your business doesn't, then leave – they will soon realise that it isn't sustainable, and they will need to change."*

For the firebrand, when individuals or organisations fail to act bravely, it is because they are so immersed in their current reality that they can't see the bigger picture:

*"Maybe [it's because of] a lack of bravery, a lack of foresight, maybe that we have been programmed to look at the world in the wrong way and are measuring and valuing the wrong things."*

Although they push against what they experience in the here and now, the real value for firebrands is achieving change on a bigger scale, such as reforming the way businesses are taxed and phasing out major investments in non-renewable energy. The firebrand challenges others to square their everyday actions with their sense of personal purpose:

*"Putting your personal interest above others does not make you happy. I remember once challenging a boss of mine on what was going to be his nursing home moment – the point of pride from his career. Pretty sure it wouldn't be because he doubled EBITDA."*

These constant acts of bravery on behalf of people and planet are what's needed to trigger a positive chain reaction for large-scale change:

*"Bravery comes from looking beyond our own footprint and seeking to inspire companies that are much bigger than you to go down the same path. [...] Our creative agency, part of the one of the largest agency networks globally, have certified [as a B Corp] and it was one of the proudest moments of my life because of the role I played and the impact it will have with a significant business like that going on to influence others."*

## 3.2 Campaigner

Campaigners often act like an organisation's conscience. Driven by a strong sense of values, the campaigner constantly pushes for change.

*"I told a group of colleagues that we are going to be the first generation of leaders who cannot turn around and say we didn't know – so what are we going to do?"*

The idea of action lies at the heart of what they strive for. One respondent returns to a quote from the celebrated business leader and activist Anita Roddick:

*"Get informed, get outraged, get inspired, get active."*

One of the campaigner's ambitions is to move beyond personal action towards group action – as one respondent puts it, the importance of "losing the ego and not acting as an individual entity".

*"[Bravery is] challenging orthodoxy, making difficult decisions and taking risks, but also bringing people along with you."*

### Personal risk

Campaigners feel that they have a responsibility to take risks that other parts of the organisation are not in a position to take. They value integrity more than the comfort that comes with keeping everyone happy.

*"Professionally, bravery means staying true to the vision and mission even if it goes against stakeholder interests."*

Although this type of bravery can bring discomfort, a broader sense of safety is essential for the campaigner – whether that is provided by mission, role, or consensus. One respondent talks about the agency that is provided through working in a challenger brand, saying: "I've been given licence to be as challenging as I've needed to be." Several others identify the importance of the first 'yes' they received which gave them the security they needed to drive more change.

*"Bravery requires safety to feel confident about taking risks."*

A huge part of the campaigner's bravery lies in being courageous on behalf of others to forge a space for them to feel empowered. To be able to do this, a sense of safety is essential for the campaigner.

*"It also takes bravery to support my team, which requires me to put my reputation and my whole self on the line."*

### Creating a movement

Campaigners have the ability to create a climate of safety for others, which is largely down to the positive example they demonstrate through their actions.

*"[It's the] conviction that – by taking action yourself – you can bring others along, which also should lead to a stronger appetite for collaboration."*

**"[It's the] conviction that – by taking action yourself – you can bring others along, which also should lead to a stronger appetite for collaboration."**

For the campaigner, there are two factors in bringing others along. Firstly, it requires engagement with other parts of the organisation through genuine dialogue. This involves, as one respondent puts it, "agreeing what the problems are, what the solutions are and what steps are needed." Done right, it's about being a mouthpiece for others to advocate for change.

The second factor in building a movement is creating a compelling narrative. As one respondent asserts, everyone likes stories:

*"You keep imagination alive by giving everyone the inspiration that everything is possible."*

As a legitimate ambassador for change, armed with a powerful story, the campaigner can spur a collective into action.

*"This has something to do with you and you can do something about it [...] We need to make meaningful choices and recognise the things we hold dear and do something about them."*



## 3.3 Collectivist

The hallmark of the collectivist is people-centred change. Collectivists are believers in the power of people and set out to achieve outcomes that benefit everyone.

Beyond working collaboratively with colleagues, they strive to bring overlooked stakeholders into the way business decisions are made – something one respondent called “moving from the theory to the lived experience” of others.

*"It can be an uncomfortable thing to do but it is really important to stand up and say that businesses are run by and for people, built on society for the purpose of providing a service to our communities."*

Collectivists remind organisations of the power of people through a consistent sense of inclusion, bringing the outside world in. A belief in the power of others results in a humble sense of leadership for collectivists, who see their role in the crowd rather than in the spotlight. When talking about the next generation of change-makers, one respondent summarises: “My job will be to give them the platform they need to get on with it.”

### Creating a movement

For the collectivist, the way to bring people together isn't through the pull of the organisational mission or values; rather, it's learning what makes people tick and coalescing different personal values and motivations towards the same goal.

*"They are the experts on what they do, so discuss with them what is possible, what is important, where we can take things in their area of the business and*

*what the knock-on effects will be. It's crucial they feel they have a stake and a voice in what you are seeking to achieve."*

The movements that collectivists create are anchored in dialogue – not just with other members of the collective, but with the broader organisation. The humility of their leadership enables others to make personal connections, leading to an authentic and compelling sense of expression:

*"You achieve much more if people really get behind the cause. People will then communicate to others in a more natural way, from the heart. When people present passionately it's much more effective to get buy-in."*

### Giving your idea to others

It is the openness of the collectivist that allows others to espouse a cause as their own. Rather than hiding from colleagues who might disagree, or ignoring groups of stakeholders out of fear of what they might unearth, the collectivist sees nothing beneficial in running away from difficult conversations:

*"[It's] much better to have the courage to have an open conversation with them and see what you can do together to progress things. [...] They have their opinions and advice on everything we are looking at and doing and I certainly don't always get my own way – again, it's having the conversation that is the key to it all."*



**"You achieve much more if people really get behind the cause. People will then communicate to others in a more natural way, from the heart. When people present passionately it's much more effective to get buy-in."**

The collectivist's approach is collaborative and transparent – anything else would mean that some people's needs are misunderstood or overlooked. One respondent observes that, when an organisation conscientiously includes a broad range of stakeholders who are in tune with what is happening on the ground, "that intelligence comes straight back into the boardroom".

*"I view that as a type of open source sustainability, with all the people who matter fully involved in the development of our sustainability plan – not something dreamed up by a small coterie of sustainability leads in head office and then marketed to employees and customers."*

## 3.4 Strategist

Strategists process a lot of information before acting. Their reflective approach enables them to identify the important changes, prioritise them, and find the most effective ways to bring them about.

This makes them well-suited to implementing sustainable change:

*"For me, sustainability is about great strategy – thinking about the long-term health of your organisation. Bravery is needed to project that out."*

For the strategist, long-term organisational health hinges on thinking about the bigger picture, particularly with regards to societal and environmental challenges. The strategist's concept of bravery pushes business to see itself as part of a bigger ecosystem:

*"[It's] being prepared to look beyond the immediate business and stand up for what you think is right. It's making changes for what can have impact for the business and beyond the business."*

Even though the strategist thinks about the bigger picture, any change has to have practical application:

*"Expecting technology to solve the problem is optimistically naïve. Bravery is saying, no, that's not enough. How do I balance what I'm doing with ecological and social issues?"*

### Thinking big

The strategist thinks about the big picture and big scale. It's only when we look outward from our own organisation that we find that the challenges that affect our longevity also affect others:

*"Most organisations are quite introspective and focused on one issue, but those issues don't exist in isolation."*

As a first step, as one respondent asserts, "We need to start thinking of everyone as a stakeholder in society." Although this is a simple premise, it will require business to recalibrate to become more inclusive and to go beyond delivering an immediate and limited sense of value:

*"Business has a role to play in society in a much broader sense – you need to balance the variety of all its stakeholders' needs. [...] Today, it's about occupying a space in which business recognises it doesn't exist in isolation."*

What the strategist sees in business is the potential to bring about change at scale and the concept of leverage becomes crucial. Whilst it's impossible to fundamentally change the nature of business, a precise and tangible adjustment can create a significant impact:

*"You can make a shift to how business can work by changing a relatively small degree, not an about-face. Shifting the direction of travel of business by one or two degrees can have vastly more impact than the millions of pounds leveraged through philanthropy."*

### Making things happen

Strategists prioritise adjustments that leverage the organisation's momentum, favouring changes that have a high likelihood of success and a large impact. The biggest battle to win in this regard is updating the way the organisation views sustainability:



## "For me, sustainability is about great strategy – thinking about the long-term health of your organisation. Bravery is needed to project that out."

*"In terms of placing sustainability, the most important yes you can receive is the one that says, 'yes, we will recognise social value in the same way we recognise financial value'. To get that principle agreed you have to place sustainability on a level with strategy."*

As one respondent puts it, "sustainability professionals now have to be able to out-strategise the business strategists." One critical area for raising the profile of sustainability within the organisation is through governance.

*"Do you have the right set of people in the right parts of the organisation asking the right questions? How often do you meet, is there an independent chair of the committee, do the decisions get cascaded to all parts of the organisation?"*

These might seem like small changes but for the strategist, these are the kinds of technical and structural changes that can end up altering the course of an entire business – and industry – for the better.

*"And then there is the yes to an individual policy change or a yes to change the status quo. These seem like relatively small changes, but if you make these you can re-set the bar in your sector and set a new baseline to shift things in the right direction."*



## 3.5 Wayfinder

Disciplined and diligent, the wayfinder is often the person working quietly behind the scenes so the organisation can move at speed when the time is right.

One respondent explains that, before the company's CEO launched a major five-year sustainability plan, the sustainability team had been getting into shape for the previous five years. When the commitment was made, the organisation was able to deliver the plan in 100 days.

The bravery of the wayfinder is a sense of quiet, unwavering determination that is essential in converting big ambitions into tangible progress. Alongside every bold CEO there needs to be a wayfinder to provide "confidence that this [is] ambitious but doable".

*"Of course, there are bumps along the road in delivering ambitious goals, and we have had our fair share of those. That's when another form of bravery kicks in – to stick to the plan."*

### Giving your idea to others

Their diligence and humility means that wayfinders are experts in co-operation. For the wayfinder, the only way to make it through challenging times is to have conviction in your overall plan and to do your bit in achieving that:

*"You need to have the right culture in place to do that – collaborative and mutually supportive, one that encourages and rewards working closely with others to solve problems, innovate and deliver shared goals."*

This co-operative culture is one that is couched in humility. Although there is a need for passion, boldness and provocation in sustainability, for the wayfinder, your most effective idea is the one that you let go. Any concept of sustainability must also include longevity – something that is delivered through constancy and patience.

*"Long-term change comes through building relationships and trust, through demonstrating the value of sustainability rather than constantly shouting and wondering why no-one else gets it."*

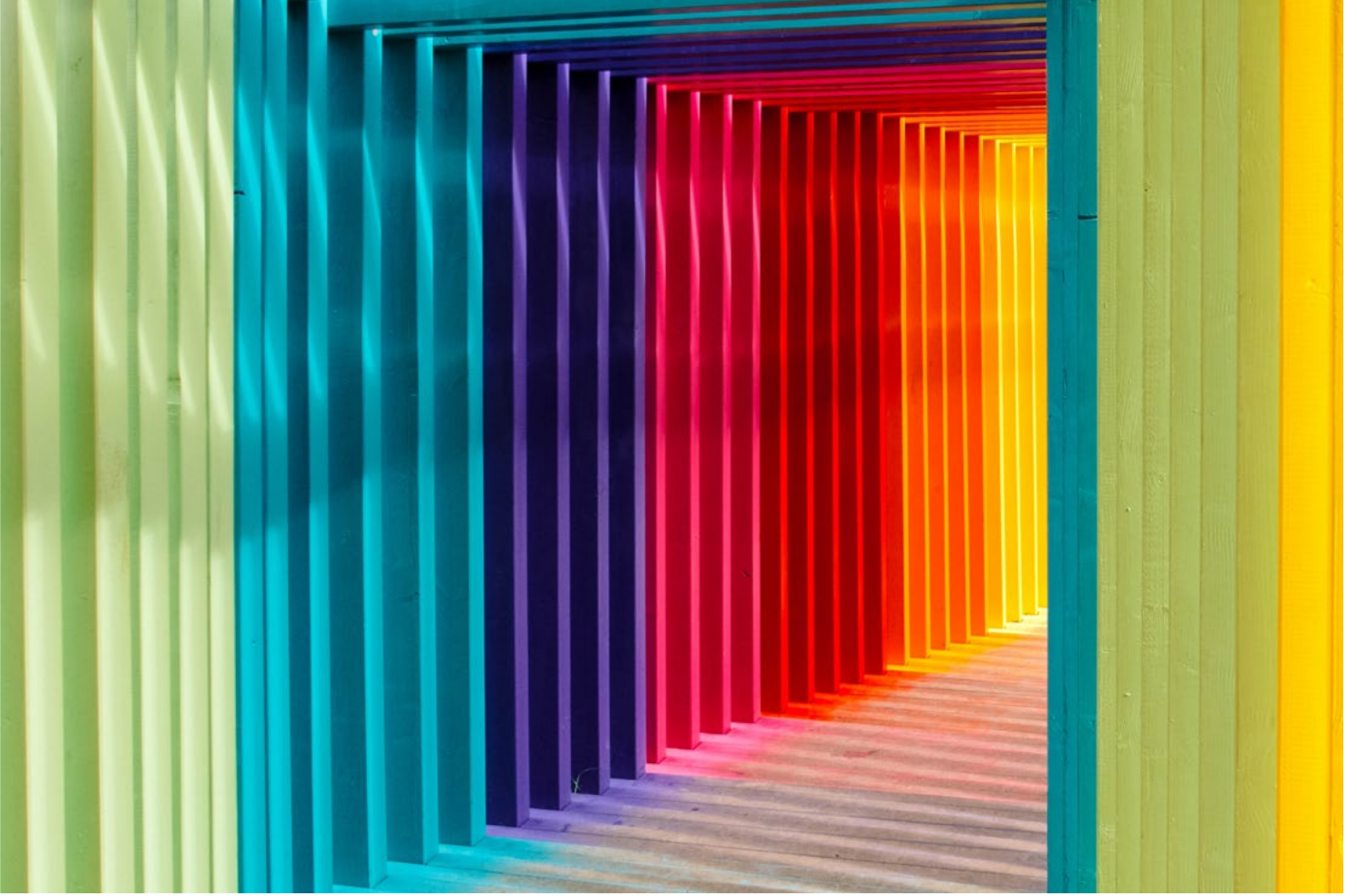
### Making things happen

The wayfinder's conscientiousness acts as a safeguard preventing the organisation running before it can walk. This serves as the bedrock for future, pioneering sustainability efforts.

*"Of course, being brave [...] is easier when you are being successful. We have a mantra that drives us in that area – do the basics brilliantly. Practise that, and you have the stable platform to deliver real change in sustainability."*

The wayfinder's constancy not only allows others to pioneer, but also helps them to implement seemingly far-fetched ideas. One respondent mentions a company's decision to change its articles of association to take account of environmental and social impacts:

*"A radical change like that needs a lot of planning and you need to take everyone with you, but it was done from a position of not whether we should make the change but how we do so in the most effective way."*



**"Of course, being brave [...] is easier when you are being successful. We have a mantra that drives us in that area – do the basics brilliantly. Practise that, and you have the stable platform to deliver real change in sustainability."**

Wayfinders risk being typecast as a 'safe pair of hands' but they are long-standing advocates for change, driven by a sense of accountability, who grapple with massive challenges by chipping away at them a little every day. In some organisations, these small changes have resulted in a big shift in the way sustainability is seen:

*"Shifting from a risk narrative to an opportunity narrative has helped destroy the 40-year cycle of 'the business of business is to do business'."*

For the wayfinder, a brave organisation is not necessarily one that makes a bold commitment once a tipping point is reached; but one that grapples with a challenge from the outset and breaks it down bit by bit:

*"That is where bravery comes in. Businesses need to tackle issues for which we do not have all the answers, but a brave one presses ahead anyway, because it is the right thing to do".*

**#ACTIONS**

**SPEAK**

**LOUDER**

**THAN**

**#WORDS**

## 4.0

# Attributes

**So, what attributes do our sustainability leaders have in common that underpins their bravery? Through the interviews we've identified five main elements that shine through in different ways.**

**Passion**

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**Conviction**

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**Humility**

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**Imagination**

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**Integrity**

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## 4.1 Passion

Although it is a regularly cited leadership trait, passion has a unique role to play in bravery. If bravery is a combination of the head and the heart, passion is the heart, but it is also a tool for bringing the logic of the head to life, the extra ingredient that can inspire others.

As one respondent puts it:

*"Being brave has got a lot to do with being credible and well-versed in the subjects you're talking about, but also about personal feelings and instinct and marrying those things together to act intelligently."*

As an attribute it helps others engage with things that they would otherwise feel dispassionately about – for example, through story telling:

*"I've been telling stories for 20 years and even the most hard-nosed people can change their minds."*

By showing that we care we are able to unlock that sense of care in others. Passion helps us create a bridge between our personal values and what others care about, spurring everyone into action. Passion can also be a driving force, helping fuel tenacity and keep momentum when you encounter obstacles:

*"Because of the passion, emotion and values that go into the role, you also need to be resilient and to be positive about opportunities. Enthusiasm sells."*

The term 'passion' has its roots in the Latin term for 'to suffer'. Although the modern interpretation has lost that sense it could be seen as something felt so strongly that you are willing to suffer for it. Passionate change-makers are well positioned to ignite others, although this comes with its own caveats:

*"When you're known for being passionate or an expert, you can be perceived differently – and that also comes with a risk."*

As a leadership attribute it is best exercised in critical moments for maximum effect – if overused it can disengage others. Equally, it needs to be used in tandem with substance, good thinking or great ideas, otherwise it becomes too easy to dismiss as empty emotion:

*"Being passionate and having a strong level of commitment is needed to be impactful and influential; as well as knowing when to apply that to its maximum and when not to."*

## 4.2 Conviction

It's virtually impossible to be brave without a strong sense of conviction, a belief in what you are doing or seeking to achieve. Like passion, it is a long-recognised attribute of good leadership and much needed when it comes to driving through change around sustainability.

*"In terms of bravery in sustainability, it depends on the business you are in. But, at its heart, it is about the fundamentals – standing up for your beliefs, acting with integrity and doing the right thing when no one is looking."*

It's an essential characteristic when trying to persuade the sceptical or the self-interested to switch course, change their approach or value different outcomes, all of which are paramount for making impact around sustainability:

*"Voicing an alternative opinion to people you respect is challenging. Respect is important but don't let it temper what you believe is right."*

Sustainability is moving from the margins to the centre of how many progressive organisations operate, in part, fuelled by conviction and the necessary confidence to overcome the imposter syndrome that can afflict practitioners working in this area:

*"From my early experience, I found that being brave is about having courage for yourself. It's about making your voice heard. That could be in a group of five to six very important people who are 20-30 years older than you or getting up to talk in front of 500 people."*

There are challenges on what is the right thing to do and challenges to current orthodoxies or approaches. That means there will be key moments where conviction can play a role in helping the individual and the organisation remain on course because the person involved has the confidence and belief it is the right one:

*"It's about being unafraid to say what you think and making sure your voice is heard at all parts of the organisation. It's also about seeing your opinion as valid."*

Of course, it is much easier to live your convictions when you know you have the support and permission of senior leaders, even when you need to challenge them directly.

In the end though, conviction is personal – the quality that allows you to act rather than react:

*"However, we cannot wait for behaviour to change, the businesses need to lead the charge and be the spark. Always being ahead, being progressive, wanting to do better and not waiting to be told what they need to do."*

## 4.3 Humility

Sustainability leadership isn't about being the keeper of the One True Way; it is about creating the focus, opportunities and space for others to bring their attributes and skills to bear.

*"This was a big step for us, and before committing, we needed to talk to people first about why we were doing it and why it was important. We acknowledged that people might not agree with us – and we needed to be sensitive about that and provide our reasons."*

Good leadership is generous by nature, seeing an organisation as a community and recognising the need to put the individual to one side, in service of getting impact across that community:

*"In business, you need to be incredibly careful about leadership. As soon as it becomes about you, you risk leaving people behind. You really have to leave ego behind to help the rest of the business buy in."*

Humility feeds on empathy – the ability to understand how other people think and feel, and to recognise the validity of their personal challenges or concerns on sustainability.

It then helps you to position the change you want to make in a way that will hit the right notes for them.

*"In the corporate world it's harder to be brave because of all the company's expectations and pressures. The company is a stakeholder. I take a portfolio approach, being disruptive in some areas to keep the common ground and sense of partnership with corporate colleagues."*

Progress in sustainability can be hard and is often incremental, so humility can play a powerful role in avoiding disenchantment and maintaining the focus on the big picture:

*"None of this has been easily won, and there have certainly been occasions when I could have been braver and shouted louder for more and more radical change."*

We shouldn't mistake humility for diffidence or a lack of confidence though. You can seek to inspire others while remaining humble about the successes you have had:

*"We are not shouting about it because we want to get on with quietly delivering against the target, but perhaps we do need to take a gulp and get a bit louder on it, so other industries are inspired to follow our lead."*

**"None of this has been easily won, and there have certainly been occasions when I could have been braver and shouted louder for more and more radical change."**



## 4.4 Imagination

Bravery in sustainability requires calculated leaps into the unknown and inspiring others to jump with you, which is where imagination comes in.

*"When it comes to the conditions of bravery, of course, having the right information to inform our decisions and actions is important, but sometimes there is a need to act quickly, 'jump off the cliff' or 'dive straight in' so to speak, and in that sense, bravery is learning to trust in your instincts."*

Sustainability often operates on the edges of what is possible. Where the numbers and the science cannot provide tangible models or projections, imagination can fill in the gap and bring it to life:

*"I do not believe we can create a better world if we don't imagine it first – that's why storytelling is so important. We've got quite muddled today but storytelling takes you to a different place to data. Data tells you where you are; stories help you imagine where to get to."*

Imagination goes hand in hand with restlessness and the need to question what is being done and push for what more can be done. It acts as a defence against apathy and complacency:

*"Our CEO is never satisfied; he is always looking at how to build on the good stuff, how we continue to take it further, precisely because he knows we are taking care of the basics."*

When you are challenging orthodoxy, needing to persuade others that there is another way or that they need to view impact and value in different ways, imagination will lift thinking out of the everyday and the reactive:

*"How can you re-join the dots in the existing system in a different way to deliver inclusive growth? It's about identifying real ways to make that happen, and using creativity to identify real ways, influencing, leading and motivating other people to get them along on the journey – to share a vision and drive the conversation."*

Imagination can also create bridges between diverse and sometimes opposing concepts or values, so others can see links they didn't know were there or have their own complacencies challenged:

*"It's about risk versus imagination – getting organisations to have more imagination, through better stories, to say, 'this is about you, here and now'. There are fundamental problems posed by things like soil degradation which are going to affect how we feed the population."*

## 4.5 Integrity

True sustainability leadership requires the questioning and challenging of every aspect of how an organisation or system operates, backed by a rock-solid set of values believed and acted upon.

*"Bravery for me is not just about doing the obvious: speaking up, challenging the status quo, and making a case for changing behaviour, it's about what more we can be doing to ensure our actions speak louder than our words."*

This sense of integrity will challenge how acceptable compromising or watering down a sustainable approach is seen to be:

*"You can often be the voice saying no when others say yes. You need to have the courage of your convictions, to be personally prepared to follow through whilst knowing that this can have changing implications."*

In sustainability, there is often a requirement for others to take their medicine and deal with some pain when it comes to implementing change. It is easier for them to do so when you are demonstrating your commitment to that change and leading through example. Integrity breeds confidence and trust because it underpins and strengthens the conviction you communicate:

*"There was backlash but the approach worked because Paul Polman has credibility in the industry – you can't just announce a bold move unless you have done the groundwork and have the credibility, he had earned the chance to act bravely at that level. Without that, it might be a brave act, but it will ultimately be a futile one."*



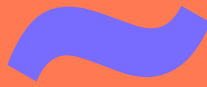


**BELIEVE**

**IN**

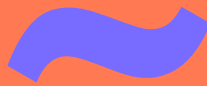
**BETTER**





WHAT

IF?



## 5.0

# Behaviours

**We are what we do. This is true in all aspects of life but particularly pertinent when it comes to sustainability. Put bluntly, in sustainability there is much public announcing of commitments, targets and ambitions but it isn't always matched by action.**

**Thinking big**

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**Making things happen**

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**Creating a movement**

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**Giving ideas to others**

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**Taking on personal risk**

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**Acting with purpose**

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## 5.1 Thinking big

If the sustainability leaders we interviewed had a slogan, it would probably be, 'don't die wondering'. They seek impact through their work, which means being ambitious about the changes they want to see happen.

*"In a personal capacity, particularly in a mission-led organisation like a corporate foundation, bravery means having a big vision and standing up for what you believe in – not being afraid to take risks to bring about catalytic change."*

It's about not placing limits on the ambitions being set or on the belief that you can contribute. The challenges faced are enormous, but you cannot be cowed by them or it will restrict your ability to innovate:

*"I ask myself 'how can I personally create most impact?' I know that I can magnify that impact through big global brands and companies. The private sector has the opportunity to deliver impact at scale."*

Of course, it helps if the desire and ability to think big go beyond the sustainability leader to the wider leadership in an organisation:

*"The big game changer for us on sustainability was when the management team set and published some big hairy goals."*

Thinking big also means thinking beyond the boundaries of your organisation and being dedicated to promoting impact and change in others:

*"Bravery also comes from reaching beyond your organisation. We collaborate with competitors in our sector because we see the bigger picture on sustainability ... collaboration for the greater good."*

**"The big game changer for us on sustainability was when the management team set and published some big hairy goals."**



## 5.2 Making things happen

To have impact you have to walk the talk and, crucially, have the skills and attributes to inspire and cajole others to do the same.

This is particularly important for sustainability leadership as it's an area where there is often cynicism about greenwash, or a sense that there's a lot of discussion and agreement but not enough decisive action:

*"I wish I would have pushed, and pushed, and pushed to circumvent these processes or find another way through ... I had the accountability to make it happen. I could have said 'I am taking the decision to make this happen'."*

However, it has to be the right action. What you are doing must itself be sustainable and deliver impact:

*"Bravery often gets expressed as how you react to something happening right now – fight or flight. For me, being brave in terms of sustainability isn't about instinctive reactions; it is about setting some long-term goals and sticking to them because it is the right thing to do."*



## 5.3 Creating a movement

The more people are involved and inspired, the more they will act and the greater the collective impact will be. Taking an initiative or approach to scale requires inspiring many others to come on board and get behind it as well.

To do that, you need to give them agency and a voice in what you are trying to achieve. Shared ownership can unlock the change you're looking for:

*"Get informed, get outraged, get inspired, get active! Our job, as communicators and campaigners, is to inform and inspire, so our communities – whether they're our customers, our employees, our partners – can get outraged and then act."*

You need to provide leadership and focus while generating the space for others to have influence, to get involved, to express their own convictions through action, even if sometimes that action or the direction of travel isn't quite in line with your view of how to make progress:

*"It's about diverse thinking to ask how we do things differently. It's required to strike the right balance – engaging business is part of that. For example, the diversity of business boards doesn't necessarily engage diverse thinking. They desperately need to engage different thinkers. Businesses are changing – maybe not fast enough – but they are starting to bring the outside in. Young leaders coming in can hold business to account."*



## 5.4 Giving ideas to others

A perennial problem in sustainability has been the silo. One of the main challenges that people are faced with is how to integrate sustainability into the rest of the business and how to make others see that it should be a major component in what they do.

*"Historically Corporate Social Responsibility was often seen as a Head Office, Ivory Tower kind of function that was disjointed from the main business. [...] This old type of CSR felt very disconnected from our core business and how we related back to our customers."*

Making progress in sustainability is hard because it often challenges people to change the way they work or live and sometimes makes things more difficult for them. This is why it is so important to bring people with you by giving them a say and planting the seed for change with them:

*"I think one key aspect of bravery in this area is giving a much wider group of people a voice and a say."*

Bravery also comes from recognising the value and different perspectives and approaches that other players can bring to bear on an issue, and being open to working with them and contributing to collective action:

*"[A number of other] organisations were doing similar work around the same time. By forming partnerships and collaborating with people in those organisations that had imagination and courage is the reason we're here today."*

**"I think one key aspect of bravery in this area is giving a much wider group of people a voice and a say."**

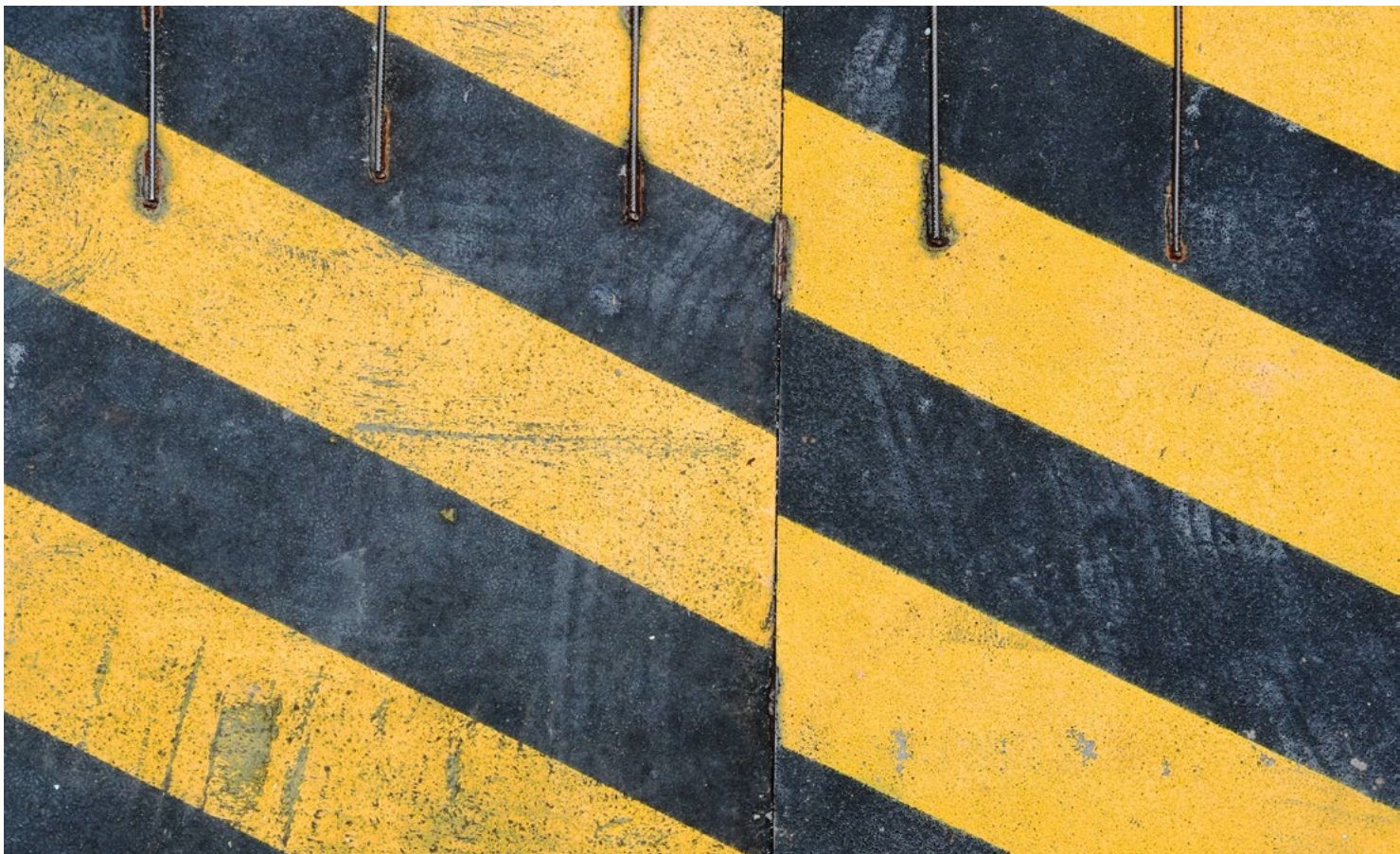
## 5.5 Taking on personal risk

All of the above require exposing yourself by going public about something you believe in, or something you believe needs to change, even if it isn't popular or might end in failure.

*"There can be a reluctance to put your head above the parapet to start to influence change and improve outcomes for everyone. I don't know if doing this is bravery or just how businesses need to operate."*

Reputations are hard won and easily lost, but a good reputation is only really valuable if it allows you to take more action and to drive more positive change through an organisation. Things will go wrong, approaches and innovations won't work or deliver the outcomes that were expected. An individual's standing may suffer as a result, but that's part and parcel of delivering against the desired purpose:

*"Some leaders cannot countenance failure as it doesn't fit with the narrative of constantly improving performance that is the drumbeat for so many organisations. I remember a boss from many years ago not wanting to have any public targets that there was even the slightest risk of failing to meet."*



## 5.6 Acting with purpose

All of the above behaviours are invaluable in being brave, but it is through action that you find the real purpose of bravery. You can't change things if you don't do something about them. And that's the entire point of being brave in relation to sustainability, a desire to change the way things are done translated into meaningful and purposeful action.

And, it often starts with two basic questions – “Why?” and “What if?”:

*"Why do we have to do this, why do we place growth above everything else? That just isn't sustainable as a way to run a company."*

Sustainability cannot be about business as usual, about just managing or mitigating the impact of “doing what we have always done”, it is about changing the ways things are done:

*"Bravery is not just accepting the status quo and that 'things may happen that aren't great for customers and society'. It's trying to unpick the ways things have been done before."*

Challenging in this way requires a voice, the appetite to speak out, but leavened with empathy and the recognition that just shouting that something needs to change won't make it happen – you need to take people with you:

*"It's about finding a consistent way to make the corporate aware, helping them understand things in a different way and bring it to life for them. A company will not be aware of everything that's going on, which is why it takes people to act bravely and bring these issues to their attention."*

It's also a willingness to look elsewhere for answers and different ways of approaching issues, to be open to challenge and learning from outside your immediate area of interest:

*"For me, bravery in terms of sustainability is about not being scared to look at radical solutions to environmental and social justice issues. As a progressive business, we have a moral responsibility to look for answers, backed by the demand from our customers to lead the way."*

But, at the heart of this behaviour is the gumption to get on and do something:

*"The private sector has a huge role to play – through resources, scale, and reach. Businesses need to understand the role of all of the actors and the change they can make. That way business can start to make the required changes and do things differently in being part of the solution, not the cause of the problem."*



**PURPOSE**

**/ PEOPLE /**

**PRACTICE**



## 6.0

# Organisational conditions

**Although bravery is something we can channel and exercise personally, there are organisational factors that either affect how bravely we can act; or what the most impactful form of bravery is for our situation.**

**Our respondents identify several enabling conditions for bravery to thrive, which fall into three groups.**

**Purpose – why do we do what we do, and what makes us ‘us’?**

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**People – who are we and what kind of culture do we want?**

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**Practice – how do we do what we do, and what are our ways of working?**

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## 6.1 Purpose

### Compelling vision

Vision, as one respondent puts it, is about how you can make your core values come to pass. This reinforces the importance of imagination and the role of stories in helping us visualise where we need to get to. An organisation's vision is the story it tells to get people to buy into its end goal.

Leaders must see themselves as custodians of the organisation's vision, which requires bravery. Without it, however, the rest of the organisation lacks a North Star for positive change, as well as the agency to make it happen. It can provide a common purpose that looks out to the future and engages a broad set of stakeholders. The questions a sustainability practitioner needs to reflect on are, "What's my role in that story?" and "How will I shape the future?"

*"You need a form of courage from the senior leaders to be prepared to commit to an ambitious target and back the people and ideas to help those be met or exceeded."*

A bold and compelling vision provides strategic clarity and means decisive action can be taken. The clearest commercial benefit is competitive advantage, particularly when being there first really matters.

*"Others who moved after us were always seen through the prism of our work – 'is it as good?' By putting your head above the parapet and making a commitment first, you're getting ahead and setting the direction of the marketplace that others will try and follow."*

The success of sustainability is dependent on this compelling vision. Without it, we can expect a business as usual approach to a set of problems that business is currently incapable of resolving, which would mean we're in serious trouble.

### Openness to change

*"Culturally the organisation needs to acknowledge that it needs to accept change."*

Reluctance to change and thinking of yourself in isolation is just bad business. Leaders are increasingly realising that the organisations that are open to change and take on pressing sustainability challenges "are the ones that are going to be around in 20 years' time and are going to be profitable." That openness to change starts from within, with many sustainability leaders recognising a defining moment in their careers in which they pivoted, harnessed bravery and began to drive transformation across their business.

It will take all types of sustainability leaders to translate the urgency for change. As a function, sustainability no longer has the luxury of trying to convince the business to act through a war of attrition. As one respondent concludes, "We have a lot to do in a very short space of time."

*"Granted that tangible change can take a long time, but for example, the climate crisis is now. There is an urgency to act."*

One positive is that business actually has the capacity and willingness to change:

*"Corporates generally have the ability and wherewithal to make change happen [...] I tend to find that, as well as the individual, the corporate also wants to drive change."*

A brave approach to openness must involve an appetite for risk and failure, including looking beyond your doorstep. Tackling industry-wide problems requires partnership with others and, even, collaboration with competitors. As one contributor says, our most pressing sustainability issues don't recognise corporate boundaries.

It's not, then, just about waiting for the business to embrace change – you also have to take change to the business:

*"If you don't speak up, you're missing an opportunity and you're not doing what they look to you to do."*

### **Core values**

A clear set of values is the foundation for everything an organisation does – from building a compelling vision and fostering a positive culture, through to implementing the right structures and processes.

*"The first condition for bravery is core values of fairness, equity, honesty and openness and trust."*

The imperative with core values is to demonstrate how the organisation lives them out, illustrated by the maxim "you either embody your values or they don't exist". Values play an inimitable role in signposting

what kind of organisation you are to all of your internal and external stakeholders. For one company, after fighting off an aggressive takeover bid, the CEO wanted a bold statement that they were back "with clear values – more relevant and more connected than ever before."

Core values are an invaluable hook that sustainability leaders can use to hang their work on, front and centre. This is most commonly done through 'purpose', which has become a shorthand term for demonstrating how core values are lived and breathed, internally and externally. Leaders who successfully embed sustainability do so by invoking the organisation's core values and using them as a scaffold to build on.

*"[Operating more sustainably] isn't seen as the responsibility of the sustainability team, it is owned by everyone and seen as a way of building a brand through purpose."*



## 6.2 People

### Passionate people

*"Did I stretch the elastic as close as possible to breaking point in terms of what I was asking of the organisation?"*

No significant social change has ever happened on account of the efforts of one person. In the same way, brave change requires much more than a visionary leader or one person who goes against the tide. Everyone can, and must, adopt a leadership role in sustainability – something the world has seen in the zeal, agency and impact of Greta Thunberg and the school climate marches.

A viable business approach to sustainability therefore needs sincere engagement from a much broader cohort of colleagues. Sustainability practitioners need access to the whole organisation and an ability to inspire and empower different audiences – from the boardroom to the shop floor – to break down resistance to change.

*"Garnering the respect from the people around you is paramount. Having a supportive leader yes, but also having supportive colleagues. They will be critical in putting plans into action, so you need to be on the same path."*

As organisations are made up of people, both the opportunities and inhibitors for change become human considerations.

*"A lot of this comes down to what motivates people and what their incentives are [...] Is it only maverick business leaders who can drive change, or can it be others like CSR leaders?"*

An enabler for bravery is giving people the space to feel passionately about their work, as well as the agency to put this passion into practice. An organisation that doesn't show that it cares – particularly about its people and the things they care about – will struggle to elicit passion and commitment, and runs a real risk of disengagement. The most visionary strategy is worthless without people to believe in it and bring it to life. As one contributor notes, "businesses need to think about the whole person."

### Psychological safety

*"This might get me fired, but..."*

Thanks to decades of bravery and persistence from leaders, practitioners and advocates, sustainability is now recognised as a legitimate business function. There is plenty more to do, and the pace of change in industry isn't fast enough to mitigate – let alone reverse – the most pressing sustainability impacts.

To truly rise to this challenge, organisations must eliminate the trepidation associated with speaking up and challenging the status quo. Companies have to reassure their people that they can act bravely without fear of recrimination, which requires creating a space of psychological safety.

*"The first condition is creating a climate of safety for people – not fearing for your job if you take risks."*



## "The first condition is creating a climate of safety for people – not fearing for your job if you take risks."

People won't have the confidence to act bravely if the organisation only pays lip service to courageousness and risk-taking. Organisations often fail to provide this psychological safety for its people precisely because of their own fear of uncertainty. They must acknowledge the inherent risk of trying things for the first time and that failure is inevitable and, even, necessary for progress to be made in an increasingly volatile world.

*"Fear of the unknown stymies progress and it is linked to another significant barrier – fear of failure. When you don't know all the answers, you are going to have to experiment and experimentation often leads to failure because that's how we learn what actually works."*

Creating a climate of safety is then dependent on trust. Organisations must demonstrate trustworthiness, showing its people that there are no consequences when they act bravely; and must also trust in its people to take the right decisions.

### **Enabling culture**

Whilst bravery is a way for all parts of an organisation to claim agency, there is no question of the value of senior buy-in in creating an enabling culture. Being vouched for by a senior "sponsor for change" creates a domino effect of permission.

*"Getting senior buy-in means that everyone puts skin in the game. [...] If the CEO or MD supports what you're doing it's very hard for others to say no."*

Beyond signalling a sense of obligation to others, nudging them to get on-side, it provides a powerful green light to be inquisitive, try new things and take risks.

*"For me, the most important yes was being given the ability to dabble and open Pandora's Box."*

Creating an enabling culture requires more than giving permission – it's about positive leadership. The right kind of leadership unlocks opportunities to learn and instil a solution-orientated mentality.

*"Good leaders will draw out opinions of those around them. It took me a while to realise that I kept my mouth shut for too long. I realised that they're looking to you to provide challenge – respect is important but don't let it stop you saying what you think is important."*

Sustainability change initiatives can come against a myriad of obstacles based on preconceptions, inertia and often panic. An enabling culture, topped off with a senior seal of approval, gives sustainability advocates licence to explore and understand these barriers and, crucially, to help the organisation learn from these insights and adapt.

## 6.3 Practice

### Robust governance

Although it can get lost in the bustle of a bold organisational commitment, one contributor reminds us that “governance is also a critical part of sustainability delivery”. Governance is the only mechanism to systematise an organisation’s commitments for change. It also serves as a backstop to make sure that the pace of internal change matches the outside world.

*“That’s what drove our investor board to change our articles of association, so we now take account of environmental and social impact alongside financial returns.”*

These are the types of behind-the-scenes changes that fundamentally recalibrate the organisation. Robust governance and transparency are the only ways for a business to demonstrate accountability and stick to the truths that emerge – whether inconvenient or welcome.

*“The big pushback at the time was that it would compromise our financial performance. But the management team believed it was the right thing to do for us and society, and they have been vindicated as we halved the embodied carbon in the business while cutting rather than increasing our costs.”*

Fortifying an organisation’s governance can be one of the most effective (if sometimes covert) tricks up the sustainability expert’s sleeve. If parts of the business don’t rush to embrace sustainability, hard coding it into the way the organisation works will make positive change inevitable. It can be a linchpin in sustainability strategy, helping organisations identify what is most material, where there are inherent risks and how to best manage them – ultimately enabling the business to pivot on more than one front to navigate its place in the world.

### Proven accountability

Due to the emotive nature of certain aspects of sustainability – think of the public furore brought on by palm oil and ocean plastics – it can often be more scrutinised than other parts of the business. Similarly, sustainability professionals often face a heavier burden of proof than other functions when demonstrating cost savings, return on investment or other business benefits. This creates an imperative to start acting, measuring and disclosing as a matter of immediacy.

One respondent told us of a CEO who made an organisational commitment to sustainability years before Unilever’s trailblazing Sustainable Living Plan. “Back in 2006, he was a very rare leader in putting his head above the parapet.” Having a proven track record not only positions your organisation on the right side of sustainability history; it also ingrains accountability towards society and the environment in the fabric of your organisation.

Businesses can use their foundations of proven accountability as a springboard to other brave behaviours – whether that’s quietly changing articles of association or vocally pushing for change.

*“Companies today are learning to have a voice – at a time when it’s easy to misstep.”*

The obvious pitfall is getting carried away with the promise of the future before having the required credibility and credentials.

*“Businesses are rightly being called out more when things don’t match up between the talk and walk.”*

### Permission to invest

Sustainability leaders are no strangers to the practicalities of trying to drive change. "You want to do stuff? You need to have a budget." An organisation that vocalises the importance of delivering sustainable change needs to put its money where its mouth is.

*"Bravery is placing this at the heart of the business and giving it the investment, time and focus it needs, in good times and bad, so it's not the first element that gets cut when costs are under pressure."*

Ring-fencing funding for this kind of work is essential, but investment also opens up new possibilities and opportunities:

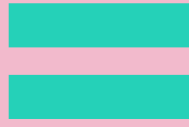
*"One condition for bravery is having access to some funding – not necessarily millions of pounds, but enough to enable innovation, testing and learning and help you have a way to act leanly and move with speed."*

Beyond the budgetary implications, gaining permission to invest is empowering. It creates new insights and helps build understanding, business cases and proof of concept to take the business into a new space.

*"Receiving that 'yes' in the first place opened the door for me to drive more change, to be bolder in asking for more budget to tackle some of the systemic issues at play."*

In spite of how crucial unlocking funds is to drive sustainable change, it's also the case that sustainability professionals will start lower down the pecking order than other functions and have to fight harder for investment. It takes bravery to force sustainability onto the agenda and have it considered alongside investment in IT, product development and marketing.

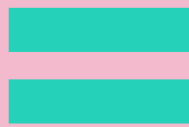




**SPEAKING**

**UP FOR**

**ALL**



## 7.0

# Bravery in the future

### **If not now, when?**

*"I worry that this is still side-lined in the business as a whole. It's more part of a narrow, risk-management conversation instead of one of optimism that having a sustainable business can make you fly."*

The climate emergency, despite being an unravelling phenomenon for several decades, has, since the Paris Agreement in 2016, become a constant reminder of our inability to change the course that we have found ourselves on. Balancing our commitment to progress and prosperity (some would argue at any cost) through economic growth with our duty to protect the planet and its people, presents businesses with an unprecedented set of challenges. Sustainability practitioners, often side-lined, are increasingly finding themselves centre stage but having to marshal alternating forces in their businesses to forge a realistic way forward whilst giving credence to imagination and hope.

The voice of the younger generation – the future – is despairing at the sluggishness of change, which must be much quicker to steer the planet on a better course and avoid an above two degree rise in temperature and the dire consequences it entails.

At this prescient moment in time bravery is needed, more than anything, to set a clear course and drive towards it with urgency.

### **Adapt or die**

*"We recognise that the fourth cycle of capitalism has run its course – help us create a new model. Otherwise, there's the risk that the old guard will try and reinvent it and not end up changing the system."*

In this climatically unpredictable world, issues of social justice, protection of natural capital and ethical stewardship are increasingly seen as businesses' responsibility.

The very nature of business is evolving. Discussions on shareholder primacy and longer term, stakeholder value are being held as much in boardrooms as they are amongst people marching and carrying placards. As one contributor says, "The way we prioritise money over everything else, the exclusion of everything else, has had its day."

Businesses recognise that they are in a unique position to respond to this challenge from their global reach, "a global system that operates beyond borders" to their community and customer footprint. However, they need to embrace "open source sustainability", pre-competitive collaboration, increase their outward focus and allow for greater diversity in thinking.

In this environment, business has the potential to re-imagine itself – but does it have the bravery?

## "We recognise that the fourth cycle of capitalism has run its course – help us create a new model."

### A brave new world

*"We have to look at business as a system of potential. That's why I choose to work in big business. For anyone who wants to change the world and make things better, get inside and influence. Learn about the system of business, understand how to out-strategise the strategists."*

None of us alone has the solutions but we have come to fully realise the severe consequences of not doing enough. At this critical time, bravery is needed more than ever – to speak truth to power, to change the rules of engagement and to give voice to a new generation.

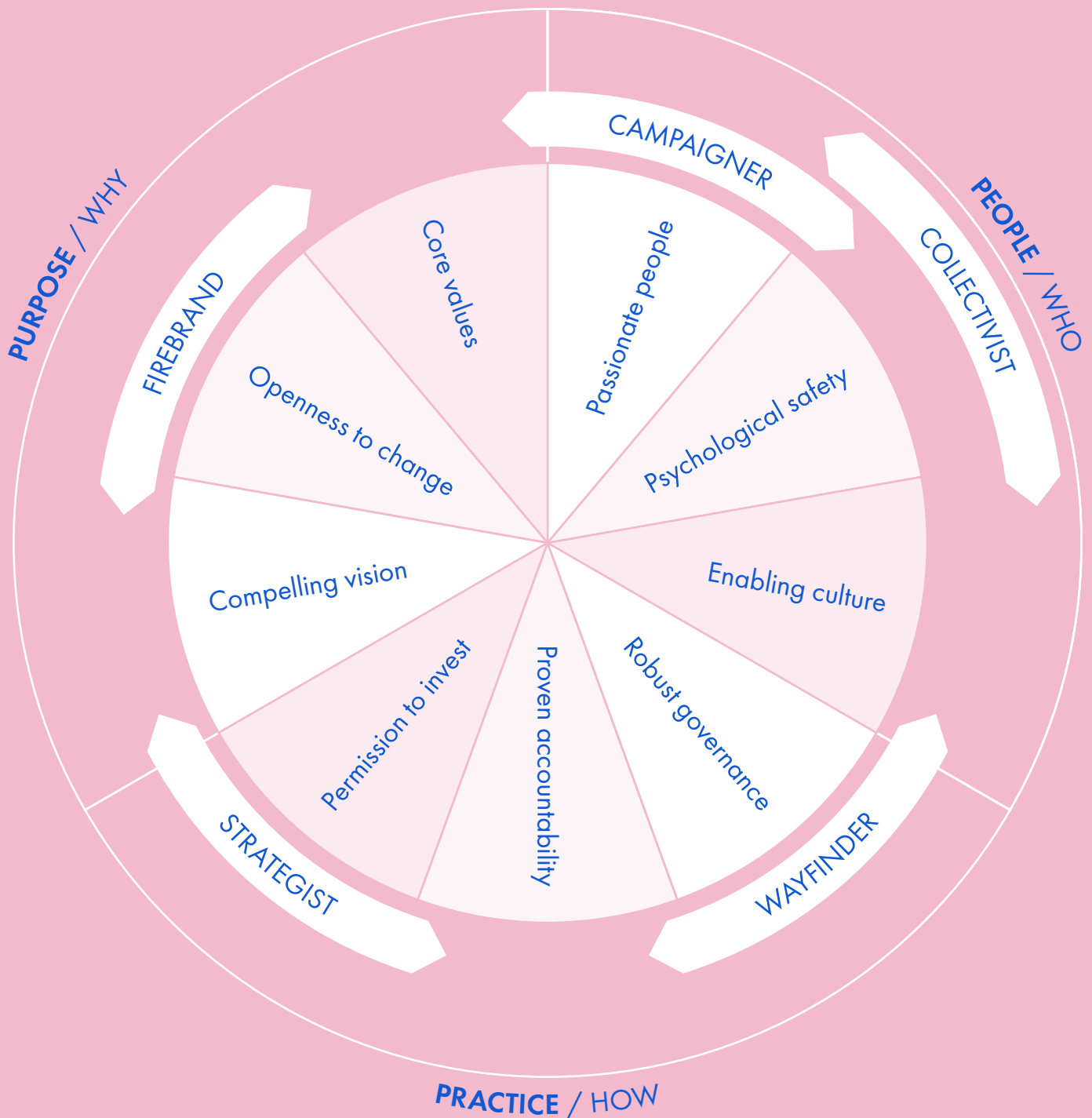
In a competitive world, sustainability still jostles alongside other business priorities. However, increasingly, business leaders are delivering bolder visions and commitments; framed in pluralistic language that acknowledges the role of business beyond financial value.

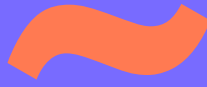
It is often the work of the brave and persistent sustainability practitioner that leads to major breakthroughs like a company committing to carbon neutrality, or even negativity, or halving plastic usage. Previously, this was "driven by choice rather than strategy", but we're now seeing businesses elevate and integrate sustainability, thereby unlocking its strategic capacity to scale the type of change that the world needs to see.

For fortune favours the brave.

## Where can I make the biggest impact?

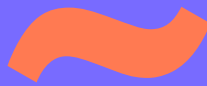
These conditions show us how many different factors need to be addressed, and it takes all of our five characters to bring about holistic, sustainable change in an organisation. This diagram maps the characters onto the organisational areas where they have the greatest impact.





**BE**

**BRAVE**





## 8.0

# Voices of bravery

### Andy Brown

Andy Brown is Head of Sustainability at Anglian Water Group and works with the board to oversee the delivery of their purpose, to bring environmental and social prosperity to the region served through its commitment to "Love Every Drop". In addition to embedding sustainability throughout the business he has direct responsibility for the teams delivering six capital and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals thinking, community education, employee engagement and volunteering programmes and the Anglian Centre for Water Studies – a partnership with the University of East Anglia.

*"It is hard to be progressive when you aren't prepared to set and be public about targets that challenge you to do better."*

Having worked in sustainability for the past 20 years he has led in the areas of natural environment, climate change adaptation and now sustainability. He is currently a member of Business in the Community's national Water Taskforce and Place Leadership Team. He is also an advisor on Tarmac's external Sustainability Panel.

*"Leadership is key to giving people permission to act bravely, leading by example, setting expectations and providing a path and inspiration."*

### David Croft

David is the Global Director Sustainability, Environment and Human Rights at Reckitt Benckiser. David is a recognised leader in big brand sustainability. His previous experience includes positions at Waitrose, Kraft Foods, Cadbury and the Co-Operative Group, included leading technical, quality and marketing functions across a range of retail and manufacturing businesses within global supply chain, environmental sustainability, ethical sourcing and retail standards.

*"It's about asking 'how can I leverage most impact?' I started off in environmental health, helping individuals. This made me ask myself 'how can you run your organisation so you benefit your business and its stakeholders, but also through the products they might buy which affects other people in the value chain. This is a very people-centric conversation – how can you use the organisation to play a broader role than the productionist approach?"*

David is a Trustee of the Food Ethics Council and a non-executive director of Divine Chocolate and contributed to the development of the UK fair trade market by developing consumer awareness with marketing campaigns. He has been involved in numerous initiatives to improve international supply chain standards across the food sector, working extensively with governments, international agencies and NGOs.

*"For me to prosper, somebody else has to prosper. It's enlightened self-interest."*

## "A commitment to sustainability used to mark you as progressive and pioneering but it is rapidly becoming an expected pillar of any large business."

### Hil Berg

Hil joined Iceland Foods as their Head of Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility in 2018, having advised the Board and leadership team for the previous 18 months.

A senior, award winning CSR professional and Chartered PR Practitioner, Hil is a specialist in social change communications with a track record in developing and running highly successful strategies, campaigns and teams.

*"When we talk about sustainability it is about future proofing our operation so we deliver against our purpose, thrive as a business and improve things for our colleagues, our customers and the communities we serve."*

Working previously as Head of PR for the business in the 90s and early 2000s, and one of a team of three (with the MD and Technical Director) responsible for corporate social responsibility, Hil has always been a passionate believer in purpose-led business and cross-section innovation, having now successfully led projects nationwide and as far afield as the US, Asia, Africa and Europe.

*"When I was much younger, I worked on projects that I personally didn't agree with. The real bravery would have been refusing to work on them at the outset. I wish I'd had the confidence in some instances in the past to do that and not to work on a project in the first place, I'm much clearer now about what I will and will not do."*

### Julia Giannini

Julia is a social purpose strategist, communicator, and practitioner, working at the interface of purpose, brand value and corporate responsibility. Leading the environmental agenda within ITV's Social Purpose team, Julia is activating ITV's new Social Purpose strategy and environmental targets within the business. Cutting through the complexity of the climate crisis with the creativity of content creation, Julia is enabling ITV to produce programmes with the biggest impact on the audience and the smallest impact on the planet.

*"It's a sign of the wider trend that is seeing sustainability move from a nice to have fringe pursuit to being fundamental to the running of a good business, an absolute fundamental for attracting the right talent and having a licence to operate."*

Julia is also an experienced corporate responsibility and brand purpose consultant, having developed strategies, stakeholder engagement programmes and communications for global businesses in the FMCG, financial services, telecommunications and service industry. Julia developed multi-channel brand marketing campaigns for the UK high street when at Unilever.

*"When it comes to sustainability in businesses, bravery is not being afraid to value and promote the human as well as the commercial perspective of how a business is operating."*

**Kate Levine**

Kate has worked at the forefront of campaigning since joining The Body Shop, as their Global Director of Activism and Communications, in 2015. Previously a partner at Pagefield, an independent campaigning, and public affairs consultancy, and holding sustainability and corporate communications roles at the likes of global agency, Hill+Knowlton, Kate has always been an awesome campaigner, bucking convention and dedicated to being collective, tenacious and, above all, brave.

*"We're old kids on the block when it comes to sustainability and ethical behaviour. But it's important to respond to the modern-day consumer and make your ideas relevant (or re-relevant in our case). Understand what makes them tick and tap into that."*

Kate's role largely involves influencing the behaviours of her entire international organisation and its customers, encouraging them to support the company's activism and to unleash their own activist spirit.

*"When reflecting on moments of bravery from my personal career, actually, it's wishing I had been braver in seeking a life balance to spend more time with my children. That takes a kind of bravery too, to say no to work commitments. It can be hard to be bold in this aspect of your life, but it's important."*

**Kirsty Britz**

Kirsty is Director of Sustainable Banking at Royal Bank of Scotland. Having recently announced a group-wide intention to become a 'Purpose-Led' bank, RBS has a firm commitment to sustainability. Pledging to help people, families and businesses to thrive and to contribute to social, economic and environmental progress for the UK, the bank has identified three areas of focus where it can make a substantial impact in addressing challenges that threaten to hold people, families and businesses back. Enterprise, and the barriers that too many face to starting a business; Learning, and what can be done to improve financial capability and confidence for customers as well as establishing a dynamic learning culture for employees; and Climate, being a leading UK bank in addressing the climate challenge.

*"For good businesses, sustainability is now recognised as a central strategic function, where core strategy considers the creation of both financial and societal value, hand in hand. Those with a sustainability angle to their work (which should be everyone) now play a critical role in engaging the incredible machinery of their institutions to drive progress that directly contributes to the national and international frameworks like Paris and the Sustainable Development Goals."*

Kirsty is a seasoned figure in sustainability and has previously led sustainability for other multinationals like Barclays, Telefonica O2 and Nokia.

*"There is no time to lose. Sustainability professionals (which should be everyone) need to have the confidence, the bravery, to push on and drive strategy, not just fit within it. The door is now open, and what a waste for all of us if we don't get our heads up and see what we can do."*



### **Leslie Johnston**

Leslie launched Laudes Foundation as its first Chief Executive Officer in January 2020, bringing over 20 years of management experience across multiple sectors. At Laudes Foundation, she is leading the development of its initial vision, strategy and operating model to deliver on its aspiration for global markets that value all people and respect nature. Prior to this, Leslie was the first Executive Director at C&A Foundation where she led the development of the foundation's first global vision, mission, and strategy, anchored on making fashion a force for good.

*"The Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh was a moment of awakening for us as a corporate foundation. Beyond providing a response to the disaster, the foundation asked itself 'what can we do so that this never happens again?' and that meant tackling, head-on, the industry's big, systemic issues. While the industry – including retailers and brands – started to collaborate more and make material changes to their supply chains, we started looking at root causes. And now, as Laudes Foundation, we are going even bigger, looking at how we can fundamentally change the global economic system which perpetuates these issues."*

Leslie's career has embodied a commitment to help enterprising people to help themselves. She currently serves on the boards of COFRA Foundation (Switzerland), GoodWeave International (US), the European Venture Philanthropy Association (BE), and Fashion for Good BV (NL). She previously served on the Executive Committee of the Aspen Network for Development Entrepreneurs and the boards of CottonConnect (UK) and Organic Cotton Accelerator (NL).

*"Companies increasingly see how important sustainability is, but, in my humble view, they're not making bold enough moves. It's often like putting lipstick on a pig, where companies tout the handful of inspiring sustainable practices they have, but rarely question their underlying business models. The vocabulary is changing but the deep-set attitudes aren't. Businesses are often still driven by short term profits without accounting for their impact on people or nature."*

### Mark Cuddigan

As both an entrepreneur, and CEO of the number one baby food company in the UK, Ella's Kitchen, Mark builds brands with purpose. An early adopter and advocate of B Corp certification, Mark is passionate about driving behavioural change and has seen the company become pioneering in social business. Alongside his role as CEO, Mark is also the Head of Sustainability for the Hain Celestial Group.

*"We cannot wait for behaviour to change; businesses need to lead the change and be the spark. For me, bravery comes from looking beyond our own footprint and seeking to inspire companies that are much bigger than you to go down the same path."*

A strong believer that businesses are uniquely placed to drive positive change, Mark strives to create a culture of strong leadership and autonomy. And it is paying off, with Ella's Kitchen making The Sunday Times 100 Best Small Companies to Work For list for the third year running.

*"It's why I love the B Corp approach because it provides a formal framework for doing business in a different, much more sustainable way. It simply puts all the things that matter – society, people, the environment, financial performance – on the same level."*

### Matthew Cole

Matthew spent the bulk of his career at npower, where he held a variety of roles over a 19-year period. Most recently he was responsible for npower's corporate response to evolving public policy plus defining and commissioning services to support npower customers most in need. As a passionate change manager and self-confessed policy geek, Matthew took npower on a multi-year journey to redefine the company's charitable projects and partnerships, generating greater business buy-in and advocacy by aligning them alongside npower's main business activities. Matthew still serves as the Chair of The Fuel Bank Foundation, which aims to help as many people as possible benefit from fuel crisis support so fewer people are left without access to energy for the basics.

*"Some corporates can be naturally quite risk averse, which means that decision making processes can take longer than wanted. I wish I would have unpicked the issues more quickly to circumvent these processes or find another way through. This would have allowed me to get to the Foundation quicker."*

Recently two of Matthew's key initiatives, the npower Fuel Bank™ (a project with the Trussell Trust to tackle the 'heat or eat' choice that some families have to make) and npower's Macmillan Fund have won prestigious awards recognising both their innovative nature and the positive outcomes delivered for clients. He has recently launched Matthew Cole Consulting which aims to support companies and charities in coming together to tackle issues and deliver better outcomes for some of the most vulnerable in society, whilst continuing to advocate for families who struggle to heat their homes.

*"Pushing the envelope means you might be pushing yourself into a different space or a different organisation – you need to be okay with that if you're acting bravely."*

**Mike Barry**

Mike is best known as the linchpin of M&S's ground-breaking sustainability strategy, 'Plan A'. Launched in 2007 it is still being reinvigorated today and has served as the bedrock for countless sustainability strategies. Mike first joined M&S in 2000 as Head of Sustainable Business, and by the time he left in 2019 the company had (amongst many other achievements) gained zero-waste-to-landfill status, switched to 100% renewable electricity and achieved carbon neutrality across its UK stores, offices and warehouses.

*"I helped create Plan A, build it and drive it. But in the last 2-3 years, I wish I had done something differently. It's the sense of destroying your own creation to create something new; like letting your teenager leave home and become their own person. If I had been brave, I would have re-invented it."*

Mike is committed to driving sustainable change and creating the right conditions for a new business cycle that has the potential to create a more balanced society and supporting economy. He is currently co-chair of Environmental Sustainability at the Consumer Goods Forum; a trustee of A Blueprint for a Better Business; and a Senior Associate at the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. Mike's next big project is launching Mikebarryeco, offering consultancy support to start-ups through to business leaders, with a focus on sector transformation and building a new sustainable economy.

*"I would say that I recognise what you're calling for. We are facing environmental and climate crisis; and we're also facing a social crisis, which is just as frightening. People are feeling dispossessed as a result of globalisation. We recognise that the 4th cycle of capitalism has run its course – help us create the new model."*

**Sophi Tranchell MBE**

Sophi joined Divine Chocolate as MD in 1999 and has since led the company to become an international, household brand turning over £15m. Beyond being a pioneer in the Fairtrade movement, Divine Chocolate's trading system is unique in that it is 44% owned by Kuapa Kokoo cocoa farmers' co-operative in Ghana, meaning that the farmers own the biggest stake in the company and share its profit. For over 20 years Sophi has used the power of chocolate to engage with people in all walks of life – a power she has wielded to great effect in campaigning for better trade terms for small-scale producers, and championing social enterprise.

*"There is so much information now that you're going to have to do more than look for the label. Are there enough organisations that call companies out? Most companies with good CSR initiatives will have been outed at some stage for getting something wrong. Through our pensions and mortgages most of us are complicit in profit maximisation and we need to approach it differently."*

Sophi is a passionate advocate for gender equality in food supply chains and is challenging businesses worldwide to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Her work has been recognised with a number of prestigious awards including an MBE for services to the food industry, and Schwab Social Entrepreneur of the Year 2016.

*"I was a campaigner as a young person. You are right to worry about CSR initiatives. What's complicated is that businesses have picked one thing to talk about and improve. So, for an airline, they may do good charity and community work whilst still being a major polluter. What you need to consider is what's the important thing that they do? What is material to their business? It's very easy to sanitise what they're talking about."*

# 9.0

## Further information

CAF Advisory and Forster Communications are focused on driving sustainability action. Our combined skills of strategy, impact development and communications help businesses who want to define their sustainability priority and bring it to life. Please contact us for further information and a deeper discussion.

Charities Aid Foundation works with the world's leading brands to deliver corporate giving with impact. We believe that by working together, businesses can achieve transformational change and address key sustainability challenges, such as those outlined by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Our ultimate aim is to inspire and enable you and your company to help transform lives and communities around the world. We're unique in bringing a complete end-to-end service and have particular strengths in disbursing charitable funds, corporate giving and sustainability strategies, business-aligned impact frameworks, stakeholder management and charity verification.

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Forster Communications helps organisations turn their sustainability ambitions into action. Our specialist communications services bring together experience, insights and connections to tackle the barriers that are preventing progress, change policies into practice, and create tangible value for our clients, their stakeholders and society.

We are a founding UK B Corp and work with progressive businesses to accelerate positive social and environmental impact through strategic planning, thought leadership programmes and flagship campaigns. Partnership and collaboration sit at the heart of our approach to informing and inspiring action and results.

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