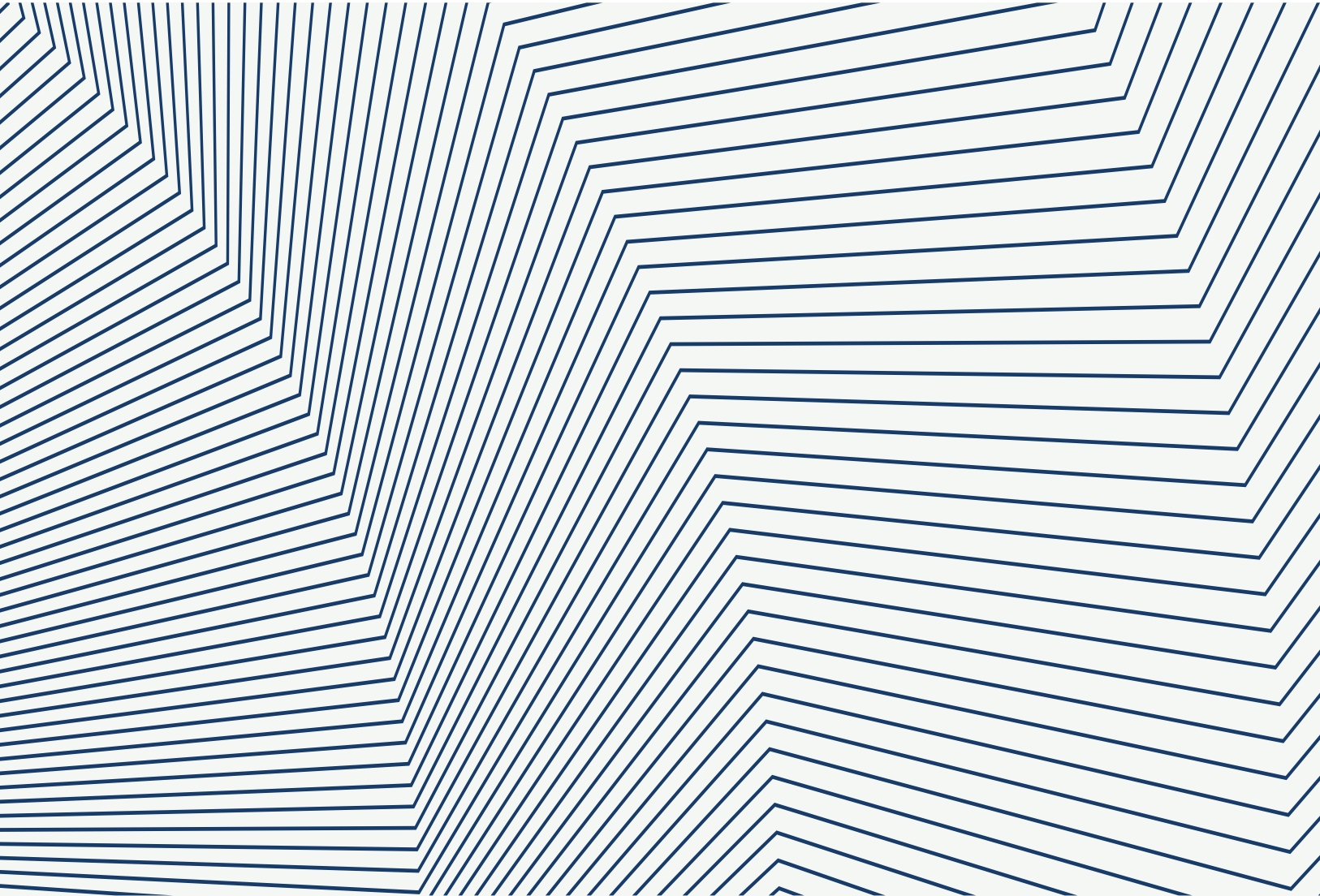


MBS Intelligence

Role Models in Consumer Goods and Grocery

Conversations with industry leaders driving change or inspiring progress on diversity and inclusion in 2020



Forewords

Right across the business community, the last year has been incredibly challenging. Putting food on the table and essentials in the hands of consumers has never been more stretching for the consumer goods and grocery sector – but the sector has proved resilient. At the forefront of the pandemic and all of its consequences – facing into disruption on a scale most of us have never seen before in our lifetimes – companies, individuals and industry bodies have truly stepped up.

Indeed, doing the right thing has long been at the heart of our sector, as we have seen in the way businesses have engaged with a host of societal and environmental issues over many years. Diversity and inclusion, or inclusion and diversity as it's increasingly becoming known, is one such issue that is progressively being viewed as business critical.

Initiatives such as the Hampton-Alexander Review and research on the positive impact of a more diverse workforce and leadership team from the likes of PwC and McKinsey continue to provide impetus. Meanwhile, in 2020, consumer pressure, the Black Lives Matter movement and the inequitable impact of Covid-19 on people's lives and livelihoods have served as acute reminders of why it really matters.

Last year, together with IGD and PwC, we launched a first-of-its-kind report into the state of D&I within the consumer goods and grocery sector. The report demonstrated that there is still a long way to go to achieve diversity in the sector, finding that more than half of companies did not have a coordinated diversity and inclusion strategy for example. However, the level of engagement from business leaders was hugely encouraging and the desire to want to move the dial was palpable.

Researching that report, role modelling was identified as one of the most successful tools for promoting D&I in the workplace. With this in mind, we have identified over 70 role models from the consumer goods and grocery sector, with the view to demonstrate the breadth and depth of inspiring talent in the sector. These role models were nominated and selected because of their inspiring leadership, their wider contribution to the sector or society, their success as a mentor or sponsor of D&I issues and their track record of supporting and publicly committing to D&I initiatives. In a difficult year, they are also leaders who have shown strength during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This publication has been a truly inclusive exercise that has encompassed all aspects of diversity including gender, ethnicity, social mobility, nationality, sexual orientation, age and disability. We are thrilled to share success stories of leaders who reflect the full spectrum of diversity that exists in the industry and the communities it serves. It has been a privilege to spend the last few months listening to each of these role models' phenomenal stories and thought-provoking philosophies around D&I, leadership and the sector. The conversations have been invigorating, colourful and, at times, heart-wrenching – but ultimately inspiring. Our hope is that these stories will not only inspire us all to dial-up our focus on D&I, but also encourage the next generation of talent to enter this exciting and inclusive sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners, Susan Barratt, Sarah Baldock, Fiona Miller and the rest of the team at IGD for their continued partnership and support on this critical issue. Thanks also to my colleagues, Moira Benigson, Elliott Goldstein and Scarlett Mayne for picking up the baton for several of these conversations, to the team who have pulled the report together, Simon More, Imogen Sewell and James Wardlaw, and a special tribute to Olga Gargan, whose dedication to the project has been instrumental.

Finally, a forever-indebted thank you to the role models themselves who gave up their precious time during a major crisis to share their experiences. Whilst these individuals' experiences have been incredibly varied – and they represent businesses that are at very different stages in their own D&I journey – this is clearly a united community calling powerfully and resoundingly for change. Those that enact that change will win and we hope to discover this in future studies.



Huw Llewellyn-Waters
Director, Consumer Goods
The MBS Group

The challenges of 2020 have been well documented, and the fallout from the pandemic and its subsequent economic and societal impacts will continue to be felt in the years ahead.

All organisations and individuals are reflecting and acting upon what that means for them, and how they, and their organisations, can continue to thrive in the world we are facing into. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that an inclusive and diverse organisation will help organisations prosper. Inclusion helps drive a community spirit, a feeling of social cohesion, and it helps foster talent and enable individuals to be the best and most authentic version of themselves. It also drives creative thinking and healthy challenge from individuals who see and feel things in an alternative way.

Last year, together with MBS and PwC we launched our report into diversity in consumer goods and grocery. We were encouraged by the level of engagement by business leaders. The report demonstrated that the industry was on the journey but had some way to go.

Specifically, we identified a gap in some organisations in our industry, who were committed to the challenge but were unsure how to start making a change towards building an inclusive and diverse organisation.

IGD are delighted to be involved in this inspiring and comprehensive report, championing role models in the consumer goods and grocery industry.

Working collaboratively, sharing learnings and best practice can only advance progress in this area. The personal stories and observations are insightful and will be helpful in inspiring individuals, leaders, and businesses to embrace the challenge. Individuals are often inspired by people they understand, people they can relate to and people like them: it helps them imagine what they could be and what they could achieve.

In October this year IGD also conducted a survey to check on progress one year on from our first report. We found that:

- 30% of businesses had a plan on D&I and were sprinting ahead
- 25% were new to embracing the challenge, but with the pandemic as the catalyst, were up and running and making good progress
- 45% were still on the starting blocks and unsure how to start on this journey, and
- The first reason quoted for lack of progress was "other priorities", the second reason was "no role models" to drive diversity.

We are sure this work will add value, we need to do more, and we are committed to trying to help businesses share practical ideas that will help them find the right path through this complex topic. We are determined to make sure we keep the conversation going.

Diversity and inclusion is a long-term journey. To accelerate it we must embrace it in all parts of our organisations, and tackle it in a multi-dimensional way.

We will continue our collaboration with MBS and PwC on diversity and inclusion in 2021. We will encourage a continuous conversation, support organisations as best we can and plan further interventions through the coming year.

Good luck with your own journeys on this critical topic and I hope that you are inspired by these conversations.



Susan Barratt
CEO, IGD



Sally Abbott

Sally is Managing Director, Weetabix

I was a languages student at university, and I had no clue what I wanted to do with my career. My father ran a factory, but he was in the aeronautical industry and that was of no interest to me. I came into the grocery industry through the milk round at university. Unilever had a stand and I was drawn to the fact that I recognised the brands they had on display.

I started out at Unilever on its graduate training scheme, which served me very well as somebody who was very naïve to the world of business. It helped me understand the basics and taught me skills, both in terms of the functional skill of working in business and also the softer side of how a business all hangs together.

“The braver you are, and the further out you are prepared to go, the more you learn about yourself

I then moved to Kraft Foods, where I spent many years in various different roles. As a marketing person, I spent a couple of years working in the sales team, which was a great move for me – a bit scary at the time, but a really good move just to see the business through a different lens.

After 14 years at Kraft, the role that I had moved to Zurich, and we didn't want to relocate as a family, so I jumped ship and ended up at Weetabix as marketing director. And then, three years ago, they invited me to step up into the managing director role, which is where I sit today.



What does great leadership mean to you?

It's all about servant leadership. All of my success has come because I've been surrounded by brilliant people. I've either been lucky to fall into a job with a great team, or I have created a team of brilliant people. Stepping out of my functional specialism of marketing and into the generalist role of managing director has been an amazing learning experience. I am nowhere near experienced enough to do the roles that my team do, perhaps with the exception of the marketing director, and even she's doing it better than I did! So, the only way I can succeed is to help my team and their teams be the best that they can.

What challenges have you learnt from?

One of the biggest challenges was taking the cross-functional step from marketing into sales. And I would urge anybody in their career to try that, because suddenly, you can't do the job yourself and you have to do the job through others. And that's a really great grounding for somebody who is going to go on to bigger leadership roles. You just can't get your arms around everything. You learn to build a team, to trust others and to challenge and support other people to deliver.

What advice would share with the next generation of leaders?

Push yourself a little bit out of your comfort zone. The braver you are, and the further out you are prepared to go, the more you learn about yourself and the more you learn about your future career.

What do you love most about the food and grocery sector?

It's just so dynamic and challenging, isn't it? People are always going to want to buy food, aren't they? I guess our challenge is how. Regardless of what category you're in, what brands you've got, whether you're a private label business or not, a retailer or manufacturer, we're all fighting to win the consumer's choice. So it's always exciting to try and figure out how we can win that battle.

What are the main benefits of having a diverse and inclusive workforce?

Fundamentally, it comes down to commercial success, if I'm honest. You know, it's good business sense to have the best people working in your company if you want to get the best business results. And the best people can be from any background, of any type, of any style. Of course, there's gender, age, ethnic background etc, but there's also personality type, and leadership style.



What are the challenges in preventing further progress around D&I?

We talk a lot about unconscious bias, and I'm delighted that, at Weetabix, every time we've done an assessment of our inclusion and diversity approach, we haven't seen any major issues. Nobody's actively feeling like they're being segregated or excluded. The risk is that there is an unconscious bias affecting how we behave, and how we might look for "like" rather than celebrate the fact that we're different.

Have you noticed different ownership structures influence the business's thinking around inclusivity?

We're more vocal about inclusion now, for sure. Whether it's the era we're in or the ownership structure we're in, I'm not sure. Inclusivity isn't a debate we would have had 10 years ago. That said, whilst I was the first female director in the company, I don't think that was a "thing" even in 2008, nobody was surprised by that. I think we talk about it more now because we're more conscious of it, more exposed to companies who get it wrong.

If you hadn't have trodden this path, what else would you have done?

If I wasn't in this job today, I think I would be applying for this job today. Honestly. It suits my style. What I really like is the excitement, the challenge, the setbacks, the battles to deliver results, the challenge of working with hundreds of fantastically different people. I wouldn't change it for the world!



Luciana Abreu

Luciana is Group General Manager Northern Europe, UK and Scandinavia, SC Johnson

I'm Brazilian. I was born in Rio de Janeiro, which is a wonderful city. My family had deep traditional roots but my parents were very young when I was born, and although for some they were not ready, there were no generational gap and they had a progressive mindset what was highly influential in my life. They always talked about the importance of standing up for who I am and for what I believe in, and that was incredibly empowering.

My mother has a pioneering spirit and took a role in the North of the country, part of the Amazonia that offered me an unorthodox childhood... spending time hacking down trees and keeping monkeys as pets. Seeing my mother having the courage to seek her dreams made her my first role model.

I went to live with my Grandmother, which meant a switch from a progressive to a classical mindset. People say 'every child deserves a champion',

she was mine. I am so incredibly grateful for the way she expressed her unconditional love and trust, and the way she believed that extra love would create a reservoir of strength to face and thrive in life. She was my second role model.

I went to Uni at 17 and concluded my MBA in marketing at 23. At 18, I started working at Coca-Cola. It was a full-time internship followed by university at night. I was all about learning, being independent and making my own choices, and I do believe that free will is the ultimate gift we have. I encourage us all to make wise choices and work hard to bring it to life.

I worked at Coca-Cola for eight years, starting in finance, strategic planning, until I reached marketing, which was my dream at that time, and where I invested most of my career.

Then a former Coca-Cola leader invited me to shape and lead one of the largest privately funded social programs in the largest telecommunications company in the country. And I made the move inspired by the dream of making a positive difference in thousands of people's lives. It was a rewarding experience.

“Why should women need to trade off precious things like a family to have a career?”

A new opportunity came up and SC Johnson invited me to join. And after 17 years, six countries, four continents and countless fantastic people and experiences, here I am. I started in Brazil, and then the opportunities opened

up. I went to North America, Argentina, made the move to General Management going to Costa Rica, Australia, and now UK.

I'm married with three kids, have best friends around the world and feel grateful for a fulfilling personal and professional life – so I'm a firm believer that we can have it all. Why should women need to trade off precious things like a family to have a career? I could not have predicted my journey, and I think in many ways I outpaced my most auspicious expectations.

How important were role models in your development and journey?

I think they were absolutely critical. A few common themes from my role models were the importance of values, standing up for themselves, the power of trust and I feel lucky some of them saw something in me, before I saw or believed myself.

In SC Johnson, I met one of my professional role models, Ana Dominguez, who was the Marketing Director at the time. I saw someone that I could aspire to. She was a happy and successful woman. She had a happy marriage, she had kids, she had friends, had a big job, had a social life, she had dreams and plans. And she just flowed naturally through all of that, enjoying life.

What does great leadership mean to you?

It's about inspiring and unleashing potential. It's also about guiding and supporting. When questioning myself about different paths to better help people in need, an inspiring coach from CCL once told me, "Hey, do you realise that you touch so many people's lives from where you are?"

I think that was a turning point for me, because I started being more intentional about going beyond leading the business and driving winning results, but also about connecting to people, understanding their dreams, understanding their potential. As time goes on, it becomes less about what I do, it's about the space I open up for others to come and realise their own potential. And that has been my leadership style helping people to unleash their potential and achieving winning results.

What would you say to your younger self just starting out in the industry?

Own your life. Own your destiny. Dream, thank, work, enjoy. The effort to dream small or dream big is the same. Make your choices and then put your thoughts, your words and your actions into bringing those dreams to life.

When it comes to diversity and inclusion, is the UK different to other markets that you've led in?

Each market has its own qualities. I find UK absolutely fascinating. Here, there's a real power in dialogue – people can agree or disagree but welcome the debate. I find a willingness to embrace or at least to respect the difference.

The said, the developed world seems to have evolved more in areas like openness, transparency and trust. And when trust is in place, it gives as far more space for collaboration.

Other parts of the world have other qualities and challenges. Latin America for example, is very creative and resilient, but also hierarchy and male dominance is far more apparent. I lost count of the situations when I was the only woman in the room, or where there were attempts to underestimate me – which I learnt to turn into a strength, or even have some fun with.

If you could have done anything else, what would it be?

I could not be a singer, I'm a terrible singer.

I would say this: the idea of building a better world for future generations moves me. I think I'd like to do something linked to people development and entrepreneurship, as it provides the opportunity for agility and risk-taking, which I love.





Natasha Adams

Natasha is Chief People Officer, Tesco



I was born in Ireland. I'm one of seven children, and I came to England in the early '80s in order for my parents to secure work. My parents have retired back to Ireland, and I consider Ireland home.

I embarked on university and wanted to be a schoolteacher, but very quickly realised that I didn't particularly like university life or teaching. So rather than carry on for three more years, I made the decision to join retail.

I started in a store in Twickenham, and I've now been with Tesco for 23 years. I have worked across store operations and people for most of my career, from the shop floor to the position that I hold today.

My career has taken me all over the UK. I've thoroughly enjoyed the mix of working in people in HR, but also broadening my experience in operations. I was the Customer Service Director for the UK and Ireland for a couple of years, and then I was an Operations Director, running our support centre for a couple of years, as well as my HR role. I am 43, I am married to Greig and I have two bonus sons who are 18 and 21 (they're my stepsons). And I've got two little girls that are eight and six.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce so important to you?

When I came to the UK, I spoke differently to all of the other people that I met. I used different terminology for things in school and felt very different, and was made to feel like an outsider. Not for long, because children are resilient, but I felt in those moments like I didn't fit. They were very defining moments. What's important to me is feeling like I belong, and helping others feel like they belong.

I am incredibly proud to work for Tesco. And one of the reasons is that no matter where you go, no matter what store you go into in Tesco, we reflect the community we serve and that's powerful for me. What I've found in the retail industry and in Tesco is a place where I belong – and others belong, too.

And how do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

I think everyone has the opportunity to make the world a bit more inclusive. If I think about my day job, empathy and curiosity are two important things that I make sure are part of my style.

It's super important that we are curious about others, about the lives they lead, the opinions they have, and the perspective they can bring to relationships, problems, and business needs.

I'm very deliberate about how I spend my time and where I spend my time, and I've never forgotten some of the brilliant people I've worked with. I try to incorporate that as a role model and as a leader.

“What's important to me is feeling like I belong, and helping others feel like they belong”

What are you doing to encourage a more diverse workforce?

I am very, very proud that our stores reflect the communities that they serve. We work continuously to make sure that we are attracting, retaining, motivating and developing the diversity of the workforce that we have.

Where I feel we have much more to do is making sure the diversity of our workforce is reflected in the whole workforce, and in the leadership of the organisation.



What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Grab every opportunity that's offered to you and go for it. I did, and Tesco and retail afforded me that amazing career. The advice I would give on top of it is to be more confident to be yourself through your journey.

Do you think in any way you were disadvantaged being a woman?

I have never felt disadvantaged at Tesco. I feel very fortunate, and that's why I feel incredibly motivated about affording others the opportunities that I have had.

Has the culture at Tesco changed as new leadership has come in?

Absolutely, it has changed dramatically. I think that the organisation we have now is very culturally inclusive. We've worked incredibly hard for it to be much more welcoming and much less hierarchical. It's an organisation now where being yourself is valued and celebrated. Although I know we've made progress, there is also lots more to do.

Have you had any mentors?

I've been very lucky. I've had a very strong mentor for most of my career and then I've had mentors with the support of Tesco, in the big moments of my career where I've made big transitions. When I moved into the job that I currently do – it's a massive step up, it's a huge responsibility – I had a mentor who quite frankly I consider a rock star, I feel lucky to have had that support.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I get so much energy from the opportunities that retail brings, and the dramatic impact it has on people's lives. Retail affords opportunity to everyone, from the shop floor employee with their first permanent job and income, to the 20-year-old girl from Ireland who started in Twickenham and is now of the ExCo of Tesco.

I just think that that's amazing, and being able to help create those types of opportunities for our colleagues, week in, week out, is the most rewarding part of my job.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I think I'd be a teacher.



Joanna Allen

Joanna is CEO, Graze

I began my career in food at Tate & Lyle, before moving into a series of marketing & commercial leadership roles at Coca-Cola and then Unilever, leading Hellmann's. I've been lucky enough to have some amazing experiences – living in Atlanta for seven years as part of the global marketing team on Coca-Cola and transforming Hellmann's into a contemporary and purposeful brand just at the time when food culture was starting to boom. Today, I'm immensely proud to be a female CEO at a tech-driven food business. The opportunity at graze demanded that I demonstrate myself as a commercial leader as much as a senior marketer – it compounded for me the importance of having an open mind when looking at talent, without holding assumptions about someone's skillset.

How important have role models been to you in your career?

Incredibly, they present you with a reference point for what is achievable and for the role they play in terms of mentoring you as a talent. It can be really powerful when you benefit from the perspective that the experiences you're going through are not so unique that someone has tackled them before.

Do you take an active role in trying to be a role model for others?

Yes – I've got a really good cohort of mentees, and I feel really grateful for that – hearing about the challenges they're facing, or how they're thinking about their careers. It's a great insight into the talent that you're leading.

As I reflect on the question, it raises in my mind how diverse that mentee base is and what can you do to make sure you're investing your time with a wide range of talent.

What do you think the benefits are of having a diverse and inclusive workforce?

The business case is well proven by the WEF – diverse and inclusive organisations are more innovation and realise greater impact. And in my mind, with a diverse and inclusive organisation, you naturally end up serving the consumers that are buying into your brand better.

It's too easy to design for yourself, rather than designing for the wider base of people that you're serving. graze is very much at the beginning of its D&I journey, which is exciting, because there's tons we can do. It's been amazing to see how much appetite there is in the company to be a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

What do you see as the major challenges preventing progress on D&I within food and grocery?

People find it a difficult conversation to have, in many cases because they don't want to

screw up. I can relate to that – I think we all can! Our son, James, was born with a hand missing and I remember when he was a baby, we were at a friend's house and one of the children came up and asked why didn't James have two hands. The parent was horrified and probably pretty embarrassed – and I insisted that it was fine, indeed good, for the child to ask. Everyone is different and not everyone will be so comfortable openly discussing a disability but by taking this approach we've found that James has approached it with that same level of confidence and it's a conversation he's really willing to have.

It's a much more positive for us to be engaging in a conversation than not – in our teams, as a company, across the food and grocery industry. I believe it's important to start with self-awareness. One of the first things I did when I joined graze as CEO was to set up a D&I squad. We've started by understanding how diverse and inclusive we are as a company, because only then can you really commit to making real progress.



Tell us about the disability network you chair at Unilever.

The vision of the Enable@Unilever network – for employees with disabilities and allies – is to enable employees with disability to thrive. Unilever has made a commitment to have 5% of our workforce represented by employees with disabilities by 2025 and the enable network plays an important role focused on creating awareness of the experiences of employees with disability and visibility of the support, workplace adjustments and learning available for disabled employees, line managers and site leaders. Ultimately, we want to make Unilever more 'disability confident'.

Have you learnt from any challenges during your career?

The experiences where you grow the most are those ones where you put yourself onto a really steep learning curve. Moving into a customer leadership role at Coca-Cola working with Burger King was incredibly challenging, demanding that I materially shifted how I assess business opportunities.

And the leadership position I took on Hellmann's – I was brought in to challenge conventions on innovation and to rapidly transform the growth momentum of the business.

What advice would you give to the next generation?

Put yourself into different cultures, because you both learn about the environments where you thrive and learn where you can contribute most. Always explore the less conventional paths – breadth of experience is often undervalued – and say yes at least once or twice in your career to what seems like a crazy idea.

What do you like most about what you do?

I'm a passionate foodie, I love to cook, we have a family allotment – I love the connection that growing your own creates to food culture.

And no matter how small a contribution I make, the businesses that I lead can make a positive impact on making the food system better. graze is an amazing food business with enormous potential – a crazy, eclectic and incredibly welcoming bunch of people who work super, super hard and know how to have a lot of fun in the process.

Have there been any books that have inspired you?

I'm a committed reader, reading at least one book a month – I love the depth that you can get into with a book. Looking for a recommendation – check out *Lost Connections* by Johann Har, which is all around depression – something we can all benefit from being more informed about.

If you hadn't have trodden this path, what else would you have done?

I considered a degree in Journalism, in the end Modern History at LSE trumped it. And I trained as a hippotherapist – equine therapy for people with special needs – and volunteered as an instructor for three years working with children in the US, which was one of the most rewarding things I've done in life.



Kate Allum

Kate is NED, Cranswick plc; Stock Spirits Group; SIG plc, and Origin Enterprises plc

My story's a slightly unusual one. I've had a diverse career, beginning in banking on a graduate recruitment scheme with Lloyds, before moving into pet food manufacturing at Mars. Not very many people move from commercial banking to the pet food industry, so it was a pretty brave move from the guy at Mars who took me on. I moved from manufacturing to HR at Mars, and continued in that field at OSI. I was technically HR Director there, but support from the organisation allowed me to take on other major roles which was fantastic. From OSI, I moved to McDonald's, where I was Head of European Supply, and then became Chief Executive of First Milk Limited and then CeDo Limited. Throughout this time, I've really found sustainability to be my point of difference – and today I'd be considered as a sustainability expert.

What do you think are the key benefits from achieving a diverse workforce?

From a management, leadership, and decision-making point of view, different perspectives are critical – because the world changes fast. You have to have a breadth of experience to understand your customer: what do they want; how do they buy things; how do they live their lives, what matters to them? I don't think you can fully understand your supply chain – and I think you'd struggle to fully understand your customer base across all demographics – if you don't have those different perspectives.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders entering the food and grocery sector?

If you're going to futureproof the sector, the most important thing is the calibre of people coming through.

“The businesses that are successful are the ones not afraid of showing their softer side

If I take the example of Cranswick, the quality of people coming through the graduate recruitment scheme and apprenticeships provides great opportunities for those individuals, but also a great future for the business in preserving the strength and depth of leadership and management.

How have you seen businesses' thinking around D&I change and evolve in recent years?

I still think we're a long way off where we need to be. I think there are enlightened businesses and individuals who are focused on this because they recognise the benefit and are prepared to do

things differently or try things out. My concern is that we will still need Chief Diversity Officers in 20 years unless we embrace this and make it part of the DNA of decision making. It happened with Health and Safety, is well underway with Sustainability, so hopefully D&I will be the same.

What do you think the main challenges and hurdles are that prevent progress?

Attitude. We can talk a lot about understanding what D&I means, but have we really seen the benefit of it? I'm being critical of some male colleagues here: I think for those men who have sat in the same meeting rooms with the same profile of people for years don't necessarily see the benefit D&I can bring.

How significant do you think your role model/mentor was in your career?

Very significant. Role models influence you and mentors are critical because they test and stretch your thinking. Both add to your ambition to succeed and deliver and in the best cases, they challenge what you want to be, not just what you want to do.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Great leadership is when you get extraordinary things out of ordinary people. As part of my leadership style, I have always had a focus on the culture and values of an organisation and for me, one of those values is always around belief. I've always thought that if you believe something is possible and if we collectively put our energy to it, we can and will make it happen.



What challenges have you personally learnt the most from?

The greatest challenge, and I think the greatest benefit, was learning how to work in a multicultural environment. It teaches you how to really listen and be more careful and thoughtful in your communications.

What is the most rewarding part of what you do now?

Working with businesses from a people and environmental perspective. Perhaps you could say the softer side of governance. The businesses that are successful are the ones not afraid of showing their softer side.

What has Covid-19 taught you?

Two things. The first is the realisation that when you spend your life on Zoom calls, the informal communication falls away. I think what I'm missing, and what I see other people are missing, is that chat over a cup of coffee – the opportunity to just talk without formality. I also believe that it's important for people to have a sense of community and belonging in a business – it's a key part of job satisfaction. In this environment, that is more difficult to achieve or maintain and is starting to take its toll.

In terms of progressive thinking, what companies or individuals do you admire for what they are doing?

Any company that is really tackling the ESG agenda has my admiration. Across all sectors there are great examples where business really has made a difference. As far as Covid is concerned, I think Tesco and Co-op have done an excellent job in-store and in customer communications.

Which books have inspired your thinking in the way you lead?

The most influential one around leadership is Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge*. I also have an article that sits on my desk called 'How to lead the teams so they notice'. It was on the back page of a magazine years ago, but I took a photocopy and have it as a reminder.

If you hadn't trodden this path, what would you have done otherwise as your career?

I'd be an animal rights activist... In my own way I already am!



Ash Amirahmadi

Ash is Managing Director,
Arla Foods UK



I was born in Iran to an English mother and an Iranian father. I had a fantastic first 10 years there before the revolution happened and my family and I moved to the UK. What came next was a classic mixed-race, early 1980s-type journey. I studied hard, went to the University of Nottingham where I got an engineering degree, and then joined Unilever as a graduate.

I spent 11 years there, in a variety of positions, though it wasn't until 1998 that I made the transition into commercial,

sales and marketing-type roles. For a big chunk of my career, I thrived in that environment. Those commercial roles continued, to start with at least, when I moved to Arla in 2004, but I joined the leadership team in 2010. I remember our CEO at the time probably only knew about 10 people in the business; he was very much a general in his labyrinth.

I used to have these fireside chats with him, even though he was quite hard on me, and I thought, "I don't even report in to him." It didn't dawn on me till later that he wasn't having fireside chats with many others. Then, one day, he called me in and said, "I want you on the leadership team. I want you to look after the farmers." That was a game-changer because it got me to a place that, earlier in my career, I'd thought wasn't accessible.

I see a thread there. I've been on the leadership team for 10 years and one of the key things to me,

as the leader of the business, is to be connected, and to feel connected to the business. It's been important to role model being accessible and to create an organisation where people feel they can talk to those in senior positions, and where ideas can happen in an inclusive place.

I'm also passionate about mental health. For Mental Health Awareness Week I made a video that was shown to everybody internally, about my journey with mental health. I've done a lot of work trying to understand myself, and to grasp why I'm consistently trying to prove myself. The point of the video was to show the head of the organisation talking openly, to demonstrate to our team that mental health struggles are permissible, normal and not to be ashamed of.

“A benefit of inclusivity is that people will be more prepared to take risks and make decisions that drive performance

What are the benefits of having a strong diversity and inclusion strategy?

A strong D&I agenda will benefit businesses through sustained performance – and in attracting the best talent. We are not a diverse organisation by the basic metrics, but Arla does have an interesting culture. However, I feel that you have to be able to consider diversity in order to do the inclusivity part. Inclusivity is an area that I've been working on: how do I create an environment where not only are you made to feel welcome, but you get a proper seat at the table to share ideas? A benefit of inclusivity is that people will be more prepared to take risks and make decisions that drive performance.

Since you've been leading the UK business what D&I changes have you noticed?

More ideas. To give you an example, in Denmark, where we're an established business, we've just opened our second school. Our first opened a few years ago and is a residential school for 11- and 12-year-olds. They stay for a week and learn good food habits. There's quite a developed CSR-type of agenda in Denmark and we've been talking about doing something like it in the UK. We're also involved with the Magic



Breakfast charity, which provides healthy school breakfasts to children at risk of hunger.

What advice would you share with the next generation coming into the sector?

I'd tell them that the food industry is ripe, and is being disrupted: whether that's the rise of plant power or the ability to succeed without being a scale player. It may seem like an industry that's really agricultural and not exciting to young people, but there is development, and changes in technology, happening here that are engaging. I recently visited our innovation farm near Oxford and saw tech being developed to help cattle contentment, production and data analysis.

Who have been your career role models?

Hanne Søndergaard. She's on the main board of Arla and is a remarkable woman. I've always been ambitious and have assumed that sacrifices, or compromises, around your values and integrity have to be made when you get into senior roles. By seeing her get to such a high level, I've actually learned that you don't have to compromise

those things to succeed. Within the industry, I'm impressed with Steve Murrells. I don't know him well, but I've been watching his career – you know, back to his Tesco days. I think he's done good stuff in the way he's created a strong team around him and in the transformation Co-op has gone through – and also when he went on Twitter and showed courage, and gave his opinion, about the Black Lives Matter movement.

If you hadn't trodden this path, what else would you have done with your career?

I should say I didn't stumble into this; it's what I wanted. Not the food industry in particular, but being in business, doing this type of thing is what I wanted from a very young age. However, if I could live my life again, I would like to think that I would be brave enough to make choices not based on commercial and vocational reasons and follow my passions. Which, when I was younger, was a lot of creative things, such as drawing and cooking. Two years ago, I started writing poetry and during the Covid-19 pandemic I've started drawing again.



Rooney Anand

Rooney is Senior Independent Director, Morrisons and Chair of Purity Soft Drinks, Away Resorts and the charity WorldSkills UK

I spent 14 years in the food and grocery business and then 18 years in pubs and brewing.

At the outset of my career, I knew I wanted to go into marketing and did a MBA at Aston Business School. During my MBA placement with United Biscuits they wanted me to stay, so I did... for nine years. I've been an operating executive for most of my career and, latterly, a non-executive at Morrisons and a couple of other NED roles. I find the differences in those roles are more manifest than I thought they'd be, but that's the fun of a plural career and I've loved seeing both sides of the fence.

I still try to work like an executive in terms of speed, pace and efficiency but I don't want to be the guy 'behind the wheel' anymore. I'm happy chairing and advising, which is why my list of roles now looks like this: I'm a senior independent director on the Morrisons board, I'm chairman at two private equity backed

businesses: Purity Soft Drinks, and Away Resorts, which is a holiday parks business. I am a senior advisor at the US private equity firm KKR, and I also chair a charity called WorldSkills UK, which helps young people develop their skills and to help them get employed.

Looking back, I wish I'd been able to tell myself not to spend too long in one role. It's something I regret in hindsight. Even though I've always been an impatient person, the companies I worked for would always give me something else to do. I was at my first company, United Biscuits, for nine years and stayed for five at my second employer, Sara Lee – and then spent 18 years at Greene King. Given a second chance, I would have liked to have worked at more than three companies, and to have experienced more than three corporate cultures.

“The business environment is changing, so don't follow the herd or play by the rules

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

It helps avoid group-think. The most dangerous thing a group of people can do when they work together is conclude too quickly and all head off in the same direction, as it may be the wrong direction.

When you were an executive, what did you do to encourage a more diverse workforce?

I wanted to bring people into the organisation with a contribution to make, irrespective of background. I hired the brewing industry's first female marketing director back in 2001, Sue Thomas-Taylor, who

is still at Greene King. I hired her because I thought she'd be fantastic, which she was, and the belief that she would bring a different dimension to a male dominated sector. I've hired women all through my career not because I was aware of a requirement to do so, but because when I did, because they were the best candidate for the job. Often, women don't come at things with their ego – they bring their brain to the problem and can be very practical about how to get things done. Diversity is key – but it should never trump merit.

How do you role model in an inclusive leadership style?

I see communication and visibility as essential. The first is the most important because there's no point being visible without finding out what's on people's minds. You need to encourage the questioning and feedback style of communication. With visibility, it's about applying that to all parts of the business, and never being seen as someone who's 'sat in their bunker'. I found that in a field-based organisation, such as Greene King with 3,000 pubs, it was critical that I was in the

field as much as I could be – and visible to and communicating well with the 'beating heart' of the business... the frontline team.

What advice would you give to the next generation of food and grocery sector leaders?

The business environment is changing, so don't follow the herd or play by the rules. Don't take the easy option and just follow others or 'join the queue', and these days, instead of looking like a maverick or a troublemaker, you'll look like one of the innovators or enlightened ones.

What is the career challenge you've learned the most from?

To start, I'd simply say that you can't achieve anything without people wanting to follow you, listen to you, and challenge you. A lot of young executives are in a hurry and on a corporate fast track as I was when I was a young executive... but the real learning comes from doing things and then seeing and thinking about what worked and what didn't (especially the latter!) and checking in with the relevant people around you – that way over time, your business

acumen and leadership skills get better, and trust me, when you're running a business those two skills are what you need in buckets!

What does great leadership mean to you?

It means helping people achieve the things they didn't think they could. A while back, I was playing golf with a guy who reminded me that when he was an Ops Director at Greene King I'd pushed him to apply to become MD of one of its divisions. I pushed him to go for it and to go London Business School and now he's now a CEO of his own business. Seeing and helping folks surpass their own career aspirations is a big positive from a career in business.

If you hadn't been in the food and grocery business what would you have done?

I would have followed my passions... and would have screwed them all up. I'd have either have been a failed guitarist, failed tennis player or failed restaurateur. Maybe I'd have made it as a restaurateur – but I think I'd have lost a lot of money along the way!





Rachel Baldwin

Rachel is Vice President – HR,
Pilgrim's Pride Ltd (formally Tulip Ltd)

I did a sports science degree, something I was passionate about. I didn't really know what I wanted to do after university and "fell" into a customer service role for a FMCG company to start earning. Within six months I had moved into personnel (as it was known then). I agreed to go back to university, to get my qualifications, including a work-funded master's degree. I progressed through a number of roles and was given some fantastic experiences; every opportunity I had I grabbed by the horns and had a go – a key to success.

After four and a half years, I knew I wanted to see how other companies managed HR and secured a role with Heinz. It was an amazing experience to be on a site with more than 1,000 employees. It was the role that pushed me to the next level.

After four years, I landed a new job with Dairy Crest (now Saputo Dairy UK), starting as a Regional HR Manager and ultimately securing

my first HR Director position within three years. The Divisional MD promoted me into the role which was a leap of faith by him and huge opportunity for me.

After three years in the Divisional HR Director role, Dairy Crest was going through some challenging times and I was made redundant. At that time, my husband was extremely poorly but Dairy Crest were amazing and supported me which I will always be grateful for.

Sometime later an opportunity at Arriva came up as HR Director for the UK. The role covered their biggest two divisions which was daunting and exciting at the same time. I had consciously looked for something outside of the food industry on purpose, to broaden my experiences and enjoy new challenges.

In 2017, I started to look for my next opportunity and I saw a role with Tulip.



As much as I loved my four years in transport, as soon as I came back into food sector, I realised I'd missed it. Seeing a physical product and the care and attention that goes into it is rewarding and motivating. I remember going to Ruskington, our snacking site, where we make cocktail sausages and scotch eggs and being fascinated. I remember talking to an employee who found it odd because I was so curious about the whole production process. But he also thought it was brilliant that somebody was actually interested in the whole process and showing so much passion.

Food is definitely where my passion is. From a business point of view, the people and the opportunities you get to meet and make are rewarding.

What are the biggest challenges in terms of D&I?

In our industry, I think part of the challenge is still that it's a man's world and some of the people in senior roles have worked in the industry for many years. This can at times prevent people from looking at other individuals who might not have industry experience but other valuable skills. Part of my role is to create opportunities for people who do not simply slot in within the industry standard and look like a safe option. I want to help break down those barriers and open

opportunities for people from all backgrounds and not just the old boy's network. I firmly believe there is a great deal of talent which we can utilise but that means not restricting ourselves to just the norm.

What are the main benefits of a more diverse workforce?

For me, it's about bringing in people with different ideas and perspectives. We are a consumer business and our customers should reflect our workforce. Our consumers are not all white, middle-aged men who have only ever worked in the meat industry. Thinking about what the consumer and relating it to our marketing is vital. Having that diverse insight in your business is really important. It is not as simple as a tick box exercise, a team which reflects our society means we have the best of what's on offer.

Have you had role models, and how important have they been?

My boss at Dairy Crest was inspirational and a great leader. He would challenge you and although it seemed hard at times, he was there to guide you and was supportive. He knew the role you played within the senior team and the valued what that you brought to the table. In the first instance, we were all seen as business leaders and then we had our functional expertise within which our opinions mattered.

It's about seeing people who are good leaders, who demonstrate values which are important to the business and challenge others. But it's also important to be yourself and not pretend to be something you're not – letting people know that we're not superhuman.

What advice would you give to future generations?

Take every opportunity, try different projects at work. This is where you learn the best experiences and, as tough as it may feel at that moment, you will get something from it. In addition, be like a sponge – absorb what you can from different people and opportunities.

“It's important to be yourself and not pretend to be something you're not

What do you think great leadership means?

Two of our company values are humility and sincerity, which reflect traits close to my heart. Actually, showing that you care, having empathy, is very important as a leader — it shows you can relate and understand others. Make sure you listen to people and see things from their perspective, but also know when to make tough decisions.

If you'd had a different career, what would you have done?

My passion outside of work is sport. And I am in no doubt I would have been working within a sport related industry if I was not doing what I am now. In the past I've looked at considering roles within governing bodies, organising events and Sport England. Since I was young sport has been a big part of my life and still is. I would still like to follow this dream even as a side project.



Judith Batchelar

Judith is Director of Sainsbury's Brand, Sainsbury's

What was your pathway into food and grocery?

I grew up in a family of teachers, apart from my grandparents, who were bakers and shopkeepers. My mother, my grandmother and my great grandmother were all working mums. As a child, I'd help my grandfather in the bakery in the school holidays. My job was to put the jam in the doughnuts. I loved it – although I was always putting too much jam in, if I'm honest! I thought my destiny was to be a doctor. I had a place at medical school, but didn't get the grades and ended up studying medical biochemistry instead. Part of that was nutrition. I worked for a pharmaceutical company in research, which I didn't enjoy. Then my mother suggested I train as a teacher, but I didn't last long!

Then I joined Bass as a management trainee, and ended up as training manager in Bass for food and beverages. I loved that role because it combined the teacher in me with the piece around food and drink.

After that, I applied for a role as a brand manager for a lager brand, and the marketing manager said, "Judith, great interview. I have no doubt that you are the best person for the job, but I can't give this role to a woman because it's a bloke's lager brand." And I absolutely understood that at the time, because it was the nature of the industry at that time. And so I went to work for Mars, I went through a panel process for a role in personnel, as it was known then, and they said, "Really love to employ you Judith, but you should be working in sales and marketing."

“I hope that we can attract and retain the talent we need to solve of the biggest crises of our time

So I was recruited as an account manager in sales and marketing, working with the most amazing group of people. They were all really smart, savvy and intellectually challenging. It taught me two things: one is that I could cope hanging out with really clever people, and the other was that you perform to the standards around you. That has stuck with me forever, actually.

Over the years, who have your mentors been?

The person who had the most impact on my career was a woman I worked for at Marks & Spencer, Linda Shepherd. She was a very successful executive, and she had two young children. When I worked for her I was expecting my twins, and I remember her saying to me, "If I can possibly help you when you've had your children, I'd love to, I missed my children growing up because part time working wasn't available when I had my children" And I remember thinking that was an amazing thing to say, as many people would have said, "I never had that support – why should you?" But she was the complete opposite. She wanted to make things better for other people. I worked three days a week for five years until my kids went to school, and in that time I was promoted. I will forever be indebted to her.

What do you think are the biggest challenges in the grocery sector around D&I?

There are two problems at both ends of the spectrum. One is the pipeline of young people and the careers they're choosing. If I take my particular discipline – food science and technology – the number of diverse graduates coming through is very small. It's a very homogenous cohort. We've got to do something about that, we've got to get out there and make it clear that a career in our sector can be exciting. The second big challenge is the lack of role models for these young people.

What's your hope for food and grocery in five years' time?

I hope that we can attract and retain the talent that we need to solve some of the biggest crises

of our time. The climate crisis, the nature crisis and the crisis around the levelling-up agenda. For many people, working for Sainsbury's is the first job they ever have on a Saturday or in the school holidays. Some of those people stay, potentially they have the ability to become the next Chief Exec or the next Director of Sainsbury's Brands. And that is a great opportunity, but only if you can see those possibilities. I never even knew my job existed. When I was at school, I was just told, "You'll be a doctor, Judith" – and in hindsight that would have been a disaster.

Talk to us about diversity...

Well, one of the challenges that we're addressing in Sainsbury's is around diversity and inclusion. I'm lucky that I have a lot of women in my team. We do a lot to champion women, we do a huge amount around diversity and inclusion more broadly, and we have a fabulous programme called "I am Me", which is acknowledging, supporting and celebrating our differences as individuals.

We also initiated an excellent skills project with our South African suppliers called Top of The Class, in partnership with the Department for International Development. We ran courses for those working in our supply chain, focused around upskilling and improving Black economic empowerment in the farming and food production sector. It was a great success: 91% of trainees were 'more satisfied' with their jobs, and 43% were promoted within 3 months of graduating.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

Oh crikey. Don't know, I am curious about people and things so it would have to be a people centric role as I get a lot of my energy from others. But, I also love the science, and the actionable insights that evidence-based thinking brings to help remedy the grand challenges of our time.





Alessandra Bellini

Alessandra is Chief Customer Officer, Tesco

I thought I was going to go to university, but straight out of high school I got a scholarship in advertising at JWT in Milan – we’d call it an apprenticeship now. I worked as a trainee and then I was offered a job working on our client account, De Beers. I worked in advertising for 12 years, at several different agencies, across several countries.

I was born in Rome and brought up in Milan, but by 23 I was living abroad and working at a British agency (in a local and international role). I mention it because it contributed to my understanding of diversity and inclusion. Or rather, of me being diverse, in terms of my background, and how I came into the industry.

After those 12 years in advertising, I was asked to join one of our major clients, Unilever, as a mid-career recruit. In a way, I felt that was strange: to recruit someone without a business degree and mid-career from an

agency. It was described to me as an “experiment”, but it worked, because I was at Unilever for 21 years in various marketing roles.

I worked in Italy, but also in Central and Eastern Europe, and in North America as well. At the end of that wonderful time, my ex-boss from Unilever, Dave Lewis, asked me if I wanted to join Tesco. I joined three years ago – and went back to the UK and into the retail industry. It’s my third change of industry, albeit within the consumer world, but still a big change. I haven’t looked back, though. I’m the D&I sponsor for Tesco – and in my day job I’m the Chief Customer Officer.



What to you are the benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce?

What I think makes people, companies and countries richer is different perspectives. It’s important to have the ability to retain your identity as a person, as a company, as a nation but, at the same time, be enriched by others who are part of it. The measures that we’ve called for at Tesco, make for a better workplace for everyone, not just those who they are specifically intended for.

How do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

My background has always made me a bit different, wherever I was. When I was young, I studied abroad and then worked as an au pair. That was unusual for Italy, where nobody went anywhere. Being a little different has always been a feature of my life – and I’ve learnt to love it. I bring a fresh perspective and that helps protect

against group-think. To me, the essence of role modelling is about remembering that group-think is not the only way.

What are you doing to encourage a more diverse workplace, or workforce?

A watershed moment for us at Tesco was deciding to engage our exec colleagues more broadly, so that our D&I strategy was embedded and sponsored by every member of the executive. It then became a broader, more important topic of business performance, as opposed to a passion project for one or two people. I think that’s important because then the policies and measures become an owned and shared responsibility.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love the fact that I work on simple products that seemingly don’t matter; the everyday things that when you add them up, make a big difference to people’s lives. I love selling soap and bananas... and deodorants and sandwiches. When I’m out shopping, I like to observe what’s in people’s baskets or what my friends have in their cupboards when I go around for dinner. I love being involved in those elements of day-to-day life – I’m a bit of a geek like that!

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders entering into food and grocery?

Remember this market really matters to people’s lives. And, at the same time, that it doesn’t: sometimes, it’s only a banana or a bit of shopping! You should listen to customers, but you shouldn’t do exactly as they say; you should understand why they’re saying it and then use that insight to innovate.

What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Be kind to yourself and learn to ask for help. I always thought that whenever I had a problem or made a mistake, I had to solve it by myself. Socialise the problem; get everyone else to pitch in and help!

How important have role models been to you?

I’ve discovered just how many amazing women there are around the world, the more I work in D&I. I grew up in a business where they used to say women didn’t network. I’ve made a point of reaching out and making friendships and building networks. I have loads of business friends now, women and men.

If you weren’t doing this job today, what would you be doing?

I’ve always wanted to sit behind a supermarket till. I’m not joking. I’ve always thought it was a fascinating job. That way, I’d see what people buy. It’s almost like the closing of the sale. All my life’s work is in that act of scanning that ice-cream or deodorant.

“Being a little different has always been a feature of my life – and I’ve learnt to love it





Sacha Berendji

Sacha is Retail, Operations and Property Director, M&S

I was lucky enough to grow up with my parents working abroad, while I went to school in England, I spent my holidays in the Middle East, France and Spain. I feel very fortunate to have had the chance to live in different countries and the opportunity to experience different cultures.

After school, I went to University and studied economics before joining M&S on the graduate training scheme in finance. I continued my studies while working and was supported by M&S to complete my accountancy exams.

While I am glad that I completed my accountancy qualification, I knew quite quickly after joining M&S that my passion was being on the sales floor selling products to customers, taking money was a real buzz for me then and still is today.

I have worked in many stores around the country all of which I loved, but the highlight has to

be the amazing five years I spent working in our flagship store at Marble Arch. After leaving Marble Arch I became Head of Region for Central London experiencing my first taste of multi-site management.

I was delighted when an opportunity arose to work in our Property Division. I was keen to learn about a different part of the business and develop a new skillset. My role allowed me the chance to gain experience in both property and construction.

Following my time in property, I was appointed as Stuart Rose's executive assistant, and continued in this role when Marc Bolland became CEO. This was a fantastic role giving a detailed insight into exactly how M&S operates, I would say this role was the steepest learning curve in my career and the experience I gained has proved invaluable.

Following this role I was appointed to Director of

Merchandising for Clothing & Home responsible for stock planning and management before being appointed as Retail Director in 2012. Property was added to my responsibilities in 2017 to form my current role – Retail Operations & Property Director responsible for all of our stores in the UK and Ireland.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

I enjoy working with people and I love being around people with different perspectives. Everyone has their own personality and brings something different to the team. An inclusive workforce is important to me because a diverse range of views definitely makes for richer debate and ultimately will drive better decisions. The best teams allow everyone to feel they can be themselves at work and share their opinions openly. If people feel they are able to give their best the business will clearly benefit but it isn't just about the business, it's

“As leaders, we have to make sure that we're not just approachable, but that we also get out there and find out what's going on

important on personal level too. A happy and motivated team is the best kind of team to work in!

How do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

I try to be an open and approachable leader taking on board different views and opinions. I listen to my team and try to be curious about different points of view. I am involved in M&S's inclusion group where all the different network groups come together to talk about the issues and challenges we face as a business. This has been really helpful in helping me role model the right leadership behaviours in my area. My involvement in the group has also helped me improve my understanding of the issues we need to tackle. Understanding these issues is really important as I believe one



of the most difficult challenges we face is awareness. As leaders, we have to make sure that we're not just approachable, but that we also get out there and find out what's going on, giving people the confidence to raise issues without fear of any kind of repercussions.

What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Firstly I would take a step back and look at the bigger picture, particularly when managing people. I've learnt through experience that you cannot deliver sustainable success unless you've got a great team working with you. Thinking about my first management appointments, I would encourage my younger self to think harder about how I managed the team, as well as how I recognised and rewarded the team, because ultimately, success is dependent on the quality and motivation of that team.

Secondly, I would place more importance on the value of self-learning. Nobody has all the answers to everything and learning doesn't stop when training finishes. No matter how long you have worked there is always something new to learn.

How important have role models been to you?

Very important. I've been lucky enough to have had roles, particularly as Executive Assistant, where I've been able to see how top talent, both in the business and externally, operates. Getting the opportunity to see how they work, how they do things, to spend time and talk to them about what they have achieved, has been amazing.

Have you had any mentors along the way?

I was very fortunate to have had a great mentor in the early stages of my career. He was an amazing support and really helped me think through my decisions. Having someone that you can approach and just ask for advice and support, and who will give you a nudge and a kick when you need it, is very important. The value of a great mentor can not be underestimated.

What are the biggest challenges preventing further progress on diversity and inclusion?

I think the biggest challenges are unconscious bias and ignorance. I think the vast majority of people believe that a diverse and inclusive workforce has huge benefits for everyone, both business and individuals, but believing it is one thing, achieving it is far more difficult. The key to making further progress is, in my opinion, down to driving a much greater awareness of the issues and then providing support and learning for everyone so we can all understand the part we can play. Ignorance of the issues can not be an excuse. Leaders and managers have a responsibility to make sure that unconscious bias is not allowed to inadvertently form teams that are not inclusive. This is tough to achieve but it is vital to make sure that managers don't just recruit teams full of people with what would be seen as 'like-minded' views.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I would have pursued a career in finance, probably accountancy, but I'm very glad I discovered retail and that didn't happen!



Katie Bickerstaffe

Katie is Chief Strategy and Transformation Director, M&S



I grew up in Surrey, with a family with a very strong work ethic. My father instilled in me from a young age that there's nothing I couldn't do just because I was a girl, and that everybody has skills to bring to the table. My parents could have afforded to really spoil me and my sister, but we were taught to get a job and earn our own money. And that's stayed with me all the way through my career.

After university I did an MBA, and I was lucky enough to join Unilever's graduate scheme, but I took a year out to go travelling first. The training at Unilever was amazing, it was such a privilege to be there. I went to work for Pepsi

after that, and then I went to work for James Dyson. He put me on his board when I was just 28. And then I went to work for Somerfield, where I was asked to become MD.

After that, I went to work for Dixons, doing marketing, people and property. My kids were very, very young – eighteen months and two and a half. And then I was asked by the chairman, John Allan, if I would run the whole of the UK and Ireland business for Dixons.

After being there about 10 years, I wanted to do something else. I moved to SSE, then was approached to join the M&S board, which I did for eighteen months as an NED. Eventually, I joined the exec... and here I am!

And, in the meantime, I also joined the England and Wales Cricket Board. Sport is massively important to me – and I wanted to give something back. I love what they are doing with girls' and women's sport, and thought

I could lean in and add value. It's been fantastic.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important?

Society is multicultural and people live their lives very, very differently. If you're in a business that is serving society, then that should be reflected in your organisation. That's the first important point. The second point is about diversity of decision making. We've all got conscious and unconscious biases in the way that we approach things, and to have people who can challenge your preconceptions will make you a better leader.

And I think the third thing is that it makes you a better person. If you can stand in someone else's shoes and empathise with the things that they face and the way that they think – it makes you more able to lead and articulate in a more effective way.

How do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

First of all, I always try and bring my best self to work because I feel I'm representing women and minority groups across the organisation, so that's really important. But I also don't make a big deal out of it because I think you have to be included in a management team because you're capable and you're competent – not because of who or what you represent.

I think you have to deploy different tactics to get your voice heard, and so sometimes being still and quiet and gentle is the best way to get your voice heard. You don't always have to shout the loudest. Part of my job is to offer alternative points of view, and say, "Just before we make that decision can we have a think about that?" It comes

back to being fearless, brave, and challenging and deploying different subtleties in different conversations to maximise impact.

What do you find most rewarding in the food and grocery sector?

The first thing is that what we sell is the sustenance of life, and that's really quite cool. You're providing a desperately needed service that fundamentally underpins society. We're feeding the nation, and there's no greater privilege than that.

Then the really interesting thing is, how do you feed the nation better than anybody else? And that's about product quality, it's about customer service, it's about the channel in which you operate, it's about the people that you have, it's about the way you forecast and the way you order. You have to be very thoughtful about what you

“We're feeding the nation, and there's no greater privilege than that

do in order to satisfy that demand. And then the other piece that I find a real privilege is dealing with our colleagues and our customers. And I know everybody says that, but it's true.

Who are your role models?

My paternal grandmother. She was quite rebellious, she rode motorcycles and travelled all round the world. And also my father who instilled in me the importance of working hard.

Within the business world, I feel particularly privileged to have worked with John Allan. He's been a friend, a mentor, he's thoughtful, articulate and organised – and he always wants to make sure he gets it right. I think that's incredible.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders entering the food and grocery sector?

Be bold. Be brave. Embrace change. Be curious. Stay close to what your customer wants. Don't be afraid to ask difficult questions. Don't be afraid to challenge and be really open minded. That would be my advice.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

Probably getting every woman and girl in Britain to try a sport and stick with it!





Timo Boldt

Timo is Founder, Gousto

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

I genuinely believe that cognitive diversity makes a business so much stronger. As a leader, I have an enormous responsibility to create an environment in which people have equal opportunities and can thrive under different circumstances.

How do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

It's a topic I speak a lot about and encourage in others. There are practical steps, like challenging my leadership team to have diversity front of mind when hiring, but also softer steps like

cheerleading and celebrating success. I also post openly on LinkedIn which is helpful for setting the tone to non-Gousto employees.

What benefits do you think a more diverse workforce brings to the industry?

I've always believed that equality and diversity are fundamentally linked to business performance. It just makes sense: you make better decisions with more diverse thinking, plus all the research supports it. A diverse workforce means we can operate as an industry with the best skillsets and experience.

What are you doing to encourage a more diverse workforce?

First and foremost, we're investing a lot of time and effort into recruitment training to ensure fair selection and screening, with no hidden biases in the recruitment processes.

“I look up to the bold figures who were crazy enough to believe in the impossible

The tech industry that we operate in faces particular challenges so we must take stronger action to encourage a more diverse workforce.

We regularly facilitate not-for-profit tech-focused workshops, which help underrepresented groups in technology land jobs in the industry. We've been privileged to make hires directly from this network too.

It's crucial that we keep the conversation open and remain focused on creating a more diverse workforce. We recently held a very open and honest Q&A taking a deep-dive into our employment process, with members of Gousto's



management and leadership teams speaking openly about our inclusion and diversity programmes, and explaining where we – like many employers – need to do more.

What attracted you to the food and grocery sector?

Due to the huge time demands in my previous career, I realised how difficult it was for those with busy lifestyles to cook nutritious and exciting meals. I was also shocked at the amount of food that was wasted in the system at the time.

I wanted to enter the food and grocery sector to make dinner an amazing experience for people across the UK, including those who were competitively busy. My vision from the very beginning was to eliminate food waste from the system to help the planet and add to this positive mealtime experience for families.

What do you find most rewarding about working in the food and grocery sector?

I love the role that data and food play together. Gousto is a data company that loves food. That means we utilise market-leading data capabilities to push the boundaries of what is possible for

mealtimes, from greater mealtime personalisation to 0% food waste at household level and in the supply chain.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

People and culture are the most important part of a successful business and hiring the most talented and ambitious people to the team is the most rewarding part of the job for me. Identifying the strengths of others and seeing Gousto benefit and thrive from these is immensely rewarding.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders entering into the food and grocery sector?

Overnight success takes 10 years! Think big and create a long-term strategy to win the hearts of customers and turn them into loyal customers that your business will reap the benefits of.

How important have mentors been to you?

Mentors and mentoring have been such an essential part of my career. My advice is to always say yes to mentorship. The collective experience of the mentors I've collected over the years is

invaluable. I'm in the process of becoming a certified coach by taking a one-year diploma course. This will help me be a better mentor for others now too.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Empowering people to play to their strengths and creating a place where everyone's ideas and results matter. If you do this with talented people, you'll be successful.

What do you hope the food and grocery will look like in five years?

There is still so much work to be done to make the industry more sustainable. From a more sustainable supply chain to less food waste and plastic packaging. Led by tech, we can continue to do amazing work as an industry in this space. We're making huge strides here having cut the plastic packaging in our boxes by 50% earlier this year and already operate at 0% food waste, thanks to our use of data and tech.

What will be your biggest personal learnings from the Covid crisis?

The awe-inspiring way that people came together with a shared purpose and responsibility. I'm so humbled by seeing the team work so hard throughout the biggest crisis of our lives, driven by the need to serve the nation at such a difficult time for so many.

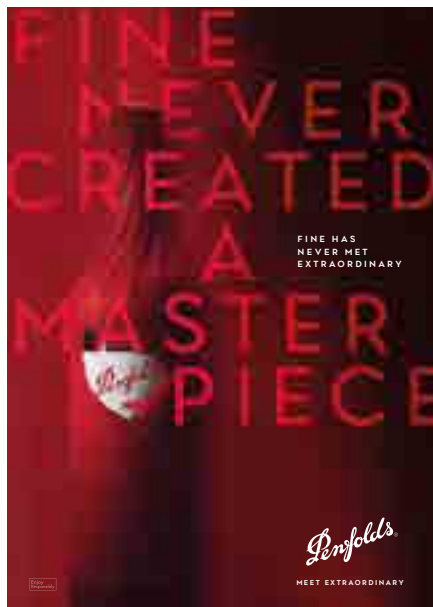
Which companies or leaders do you look up to, outside the sector?

I look up to bold figures who were crazy enough to believe in the impossible. Richard Branson and Elon Musk spring to mind. I also hugely admire Al Gore, and his passion to change the world.



Michelle Brampton

Michelle is Managing Director, EMEA, Treasury Wine Estates



I've been with Treasury Wine Estates for more than 18 years. The company has always provided change, learning and development opportunities, and flexible working options for when I had my family. I've progressed through multiple finance roles, various positions across category and insights, pricing, strategy and planning, to end up as MD. TWE has offered me the breadth of experience and flexibility that's kept me here and enabled me to keep growing and developing.

In my early career I trained as a management accountant, mostly with Sony, but I decided that I wanted to go off and explore the world a bit more through management consultancy. I worked at Arthur Andersen Business Consulting for three years, and I think that's where I learnt the most about myself. Although the work was really interesting, I realised that type of work wasn't for me. I didn't find it was rewarding as I did in

an organisation where you build longer-term relationships.

I decided to find an industry that really interested me. I wanted it to feel real and relatable. That's when I found the job at TWE (the SouthCorp) – it doesn't get more relatable than wine! The culture at Treasury has been always very friendly, very open and rapidly changing – it doesn't stand still for long. It's hugely enjoyable too – it's a really fun industry and category to be in although, of course, it does have its challenges.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

Connecting with people and connecting them to each other for a better outcome. It never ceases to amaze me what can happen when the right group of people come together. What can feel like an insurmountable challenge can be transformed into the most interesting or innovative solution. And then it's so rewarding

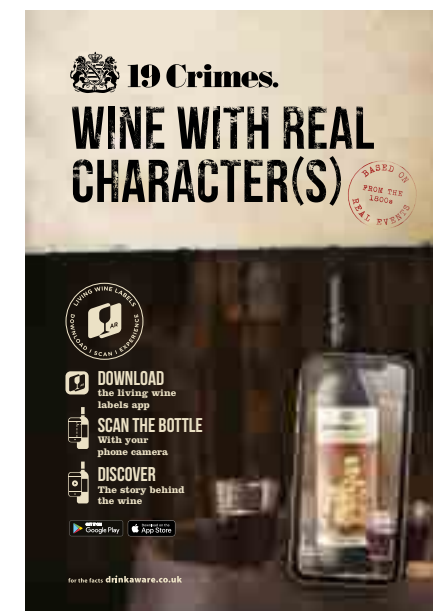
implementing that and seeing it through, watching those ideas come to life and how energised people are by delivering as a great team.

What does great leadership mean to you?

For me, great leadership is setting the direction, connecting a great team and then empowering them to deliver. The direction comes from listening and synthesizing information and opinions, and then building a team around that, being aware of people's talents, strengths and capabilities, and bringing those teams together. In a nutshell, getting the best out of the team.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders?

You need to know who you are, your values and beliefs, and then be yourself to make the difference that only you can. Being yourself allows others to do the same and that creates a great culture where people can thrive. They can bring their talents and strengths and figure out how they can use them in their roles.



I think if people are doing that in an inclusive culture and connecting with other people, then what can be created in terms of energy, ideas, innovation and progress is really powerful.

How have you seen company culture change in terms of the conversation around diversity and inclusivity?

As an industry, the beer, wines and spirits trade has traditionally been male-dominated and predominantly white. So I think it's been interesting, the way the conversation has developed. Now, it's much more about diversity in general, whether that be race, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. We've done some good work, mostly gender related and it's good to see it moving to that next level.

We implemented a programme called 'TWE for She' – based on workshop sessions around building your personal brand, looking after your wellbeing, being heard in the organisation, and addressing some of the classic issues that are attributed to women in organisations around confidence. That programme has now developed and expanded into 'TWE for Me' – it's a much broader and more holistic wellbeing and support platform that's helped to promote inclusion and therefore, hopefully, diversity in the organisation.

“ It never ceases to amaze me what can happen when the right group of people come together

What do you think are the benefits of having a diverse and inclusive workforce?

The advantage of people thinking differently rather than having groupthink is huge. A variety of thought, the ability to challenge viewpoints, and to have empathy is very important. If you bring a group together that has different experiences in life, it creates a different angle to the conversation that hopefully leads to a more rounded outcome.

But you have to have the trust as well, to have people feel comfortable with being able to challenge and voice a different opinion.

Working in a more diverse, inclusive environment where you feel comfortable, and where you don't feel you have to be someone else or act like everyone else, is less stressful and therefore surely you're more creative, more innovative and have more energy.

If you weren't doing what you're doing today, what would you have liked to have done?

I'd have been a flautist in the London Philharmonic Orchestra. I don't think I have the talent to do it by any means but I played the flute and piano as a child and then went off to university and never got back into it. I wish I had!



Zareena Brown

Zareena is Chief Human Resources Officer, Britvic

Growing up in a mixed-race family and culture – my dad was Indian, my mum is English – I’ve always seen the benefits of different cultures and the richness that can bring. But I also saw discrimination, particularly towards my father, as I was growing up. I think that sparked two things for me: a real passion and energy to remove inequality

and create opportunity, and also my goal to have a career in HR.

I’ve had a career of two halves, I guess. The first half was in retail, where I worked for some fantastic companies. And the second half of my career has been in hospitality and FMCG in multinational businesses all around the world, with the likes of

“ Try different things – be as curious and as broad as you can

Hilton and InterContinental Hotels Group. Those experiences gave me a real insight into the world, and allowed me to fine-tune my ideas around what it means to be an inclusive leader, and how best to create an environment where different cultures can be brought together.

In my role here at Britvic, I’m able to lead that agenda – which has been fantastic. It feels very different when it’s you that people look up to. You’re sat round the executive table. It’s a huge responsibility from that perspective, but it’s been fantastic.



Why this sector in the first place?

My dad worked for a large supermarket chain. And every weekend I used to go to work with him, so that kind of retailing was in my blood. The idea of: how do you create real service? I think that’s always been something that’s excited me.

Why have role models been so important to you?

Very early on in my career I worked for a sports company, and my boss acted as a real mentor for me there. They gave me so much confidence and responsibility. At that point in time, I felt nothing could stop me. What they did was build on my strengths, and in doing so gave me confidence and psychological safety. I had five or six years where I grew so much.

The second role model was when I lived in Singapore and I worked with InterContinental Hotels. The CEO was very inclusive. He really understood all the different cultures that existed within the business and had a way of bringing the best out of everybody. People really wanted to spend time with him, he was very authentic. Seeing him operate not only set me up to lead within an international business, but also changed me as a leader. He was willing to really invest the time in me, to help me understand how I could lead in a much more inclusive and culturally sensitive way. I think the biggest thing I learned from him was the ability to really listen.



What advice you would you give to the next generation of leaders?

You’ve got to surround yourself with people who will do two things: build your confidence (because any doubt you have in that space will determine whether you grow or not), and give honest feedback. Find people you can turn to, who you can bounce things off. But the biggest piece of advice is to try different things – to be as curious and as broad as you can. It’s certainly something I did early on, and it’s been invaluable to me. And I continue to do that to seek those new ideas.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

From a values point of view, I want to make a difference to equality and injustice. That’s fundamental for me. There is no doubt that, to be a successful company, you have to have diversity of talent. You have to have a complete mix of people from different backgrounds, different experiences, mix of gender, all of those things. If you don’t, you are missing out on ideas.

We’re aiming to have the best brands that consumers choose. If you don’t reflect those consumers, you’re sitting in a bubble designing brands and experiences that just won’t relate to everybody. Most companies will not be diverse enough, and Britvic isn’t yet, but we are committed to improving and changing.

What do you think are the major hurdles preventing further progress on D&I within the sector?

First of all, removing unconscious bias from the recruitment and selection processes. In the instances where we’ve done that successfully, and we’ve opened ourselves up to looking at talent differently, we’ve made some great appointments and seen real differences in teams.

Another barrier is the safety to have genuine, open conversations. Recently, with Black Lives Matter, we’ve talked about racism and what we’ve experienced, and how we’re feeling about it. And whether we even feel comfortable talking about it or not. Those conversations made a significant difference.

And I think the other barrier is being prepared to do different things. Everyone’s got very different views, and it can be such an emotive conversation – I think you can be paralysed into not trying and experimenting.

If you hadn’t have trodden this path, what would you have done instead?

Well, I wanted to be an artist. I was on the verge of going to art college at one point. And my dad said, “Are you sure you can create a career out of that?” I find it very hard now not to tinker in anything that’s creative or visual.



Caroline Cater

Caroline is Vice President
Field Sales, Coca-Cola
European Partners

I left school at 16 and went straight into the industry working for Cadbury's – and stayed there for 17 years, working in many different commercial roles. I was prised away and moved to Britvic in what I see as the key part of my career journey. I had seven years at Britvic and then moved to Coca-Cola 10 years ago. During my time here I've seen a different way of operating a business. When you're on the outside looking in, you assume it's this big corporate machine but get inside and you find it's a very local organisation.

A decade ago, I was asked to lead the Women's Network. I wasn't impressed at the time and thought, "That's not for me. The world's equal. I don't want to be shouting on a soapbox about gender." I ducked it. Then, I went to the Global Women's Forum conference in Deauville, France, and had an epiphany when I was listening to a speaker. He talked about social issues in different countries, even atrocities that were happening. Really, he was asking, "When is enough for you to get involved?" It made me think how I was doing nicely, with a career moving forward, and thinking there wasn't a diversity or inclusion issue. Suddenly, I was immersed in evidence suggesting there was, and it was systemic. I came back and said, "I'm going to do it." It also led me to become a member of the Diversity in Grocery Partnership.

We started to lead in a way that helped women build confidence, mindset and belief, and we

started to talk about career pathing and networking. Over the last three years the agenda has shifted to engage everyone in the organisation and is about inclusivity and diversity in its widest sense.

Explain a little about your approach to D&I.

At CCEP, we talk about I&D not D&I, because the more people you can include in the conversation, the more power you have to move things forward. When I started our Women's Network, it was with a vengeance about changing the agenda in CCEP, trying to ensure it was inclusive. I then started to work with the Diversity in Grocery Partnership, following a conversation with a colleague at Tesco. She started talking to people across businesses – all saying the same: "Our business believes in diversity, but it feels like slow progress. We've all got the same challenges, why don't we join forces?"

What about mentoring and role models?

We've started running the Mentoring Partnership, which I chair, and is something I'm passionate about. However, I have had some incredible role models. My sales director for six years at Cadbury's was Mike Denyard. I learned so much from him: around his calmness, decision making and ability to listen to everyone.

What's the career challenge you've learned the most from?

There was a point in my career when I nearly gave it all up. I was in a marketing role, and found myself working for someone who didn't value my role or my skill set, as a result, my agenda fell away. I got into a cycle where I felt under pressure, but didn't have the relationship you need with a manager. In hindsight, I could have leaned into it more but, eventually, I got a new line manager and had a reset. I moved into the European role I've just returned from and I went into it feeling very different, it boosted my confidence. I'm so glad that I stuck with the business and my career because I wanted to – because I enjoyed it.

What brought you into the sector in the first place?

I left school (I'd intended to go back and do my A-levels) but as I walked down the drive I thought, "I don't want to sit in a classroom anymore." I couldn't go home because my mum would have killed me, so I needed to find a job fast. Cadbury's were at the end of the road, and were recruiting for the YTS scheme. The reasons I've stayed, though, are because it's fast moving – which I find exciting – and the breadth of careers is immense.



What advice would you give to the next generation coming through?

Be as accessible and true to yourself as you possibly can. I get frustrated when I see someone in a meeting, then see the same person in the coffee lounge after – and it feels like I'm looking at two different people.

What are the challenges preventing further progress on I&D within the sector?

The biggest challenge is getting people to understand that we don't want diversity for the sake of it – we want people of different genders, ages, races and life experiences to bring their differences to the table and increase our success.

“I get frustrated when I see someone in a meeting, then see the same person in the coffee lounge after – and it feels like I'm looking at two different people

What changes would you like to see within food and grocery in five to 10 years?

More flexibility in the way we plan our workforces, and I'd love to see a world where there isn't a separate corporate language to the language that you use with your next-door neighbour.

If you hadn't trodden this very successful path, what other career might you have had?

I was almost a cartographic surveyor. It didn't happen because I've got a terrible sense of direction.



Anuj Christi

Anuj is Regional Manager, Co-op

I came to this country to do a master's in international finance at Westminster University. The goal was to finish the study, go back to India and then do something there.

And then I started working in Somerfield on the checkout. It was paying my rent, and then suddenly I became a full-time team leader.

When I was finishing my studies, the team manager offer came. I had a job offer from an IT business, and the money was probably £15,000. And Somerfield was paying me £15,500. I thought, "Look, I'm enjoying it," so I continued.

Co-op bought Somerfield and I became store manager, then interim area manager. At the same time, I was selected to go on the Shining Star programme, which was an internal programme at Co-op that accelerated my career, and at that point,

I thought, "I think I probably have taken too much on."

So that nine months was a big stretch for me. But I managed to complete both, and I got signed off as an area manager and a Shining Star.

I delivered really good performance for three, four years, and I was in a very comfortable place. And I thought "What do I do now?" and this role came up last year. When I applied, I didn't get it. But this year, when the role came up again, I applied for it and was successful.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

Everyone has their own viewpoint and their different life experience. Diversity is easier than inclusivity, because you can tick the box by recruiting one from here and one from a different continent. You have to ask: how do you make people feel welcome in that team?

By being inclusive, you're allowing people to just be themselves, and you're getting the best out of them and they feel they belong here.

What do you do to encourage a more diverse workforce?

I'm setting an example that when you're recruiting people, you have to recruit based on the diverse list, and then give the job to the best person. So if I'm doing that, my team will start doing it.

I think role modelling is really important, and also educating people. If I can educate my team, my peers and my line managers on what I know and about my experiences, then the decisions they will make will be better reflected in terms of D&I, and that's what I'm here to do. And probably that was one of the reasons I got the job, because I have a different life experience, and I think I have a responsibility to educate some of the individuals who I work with.

“No matter where you come from... don't be afraid to ask questions

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders?

The most important thing they can do is network better. And they shouldn't be afraid to ask questions. No matter where you come from, whether you're born here or born somewhere else or whether you are from the LGBTQ community or whether you are female, don't be afraid to ask questions, because there are people who want those questions to be heard.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I should have started believing in myself and what I have to offer probably a little bit earlier. Self-confidence and self-belief are really, really important. And check in with people. Have open and honest conversations, whether it's with a colleague or a friend. Tell them, "I did this – what do you think of it?" And I'd say treat people nicely, because you don't know what they are going through in their own life and their challenges. Travel more and have fun as life is too short and live it while you can.

What challenge in your career have you learnt the most from?

When I failed at any level, that made me even more determined to go and achieve that thing even more, because it made me a bit more curious. So I think I have a habit of failing often, but learning regularly.

How important have role models been to you?

I look up to so many people in and around my organisation, There was a point for in my career when I met Claire Camara, who's probably the first Black female exec, joined. So I went and asked her, "Claire, would you kindly mentor me?" and she said "Yeah, absolutely." And that helped me hugely in terms of confidence and in terms of my self-belief.

What does great leadership mean to you?

It means that the people who work for you feel at ease and can be themselves all the time without having fear of being judged. They feel that they can say what they think, and they can challenge. If you have 10 people working for you for 10 years, that's not great leadership, because what you have done is hold up so many other people's progress. Great leadership is allowing people to be themselves and grow.



Are there any leaders that you look up to?

I like Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister from New Zealand, the way she comes across and the way she does the politics. And I like Elon Musk, Tesla, where he's come from and how he's gone from working in the mine in South Africa to launching a rocket and SpaceX. It's just phenomenal.

If you weren't in this role, what would you be doing?

I'd be painting. Any painting, whether it's nature or abstract or a person... I am actually a very good painter. But yeah, I'd be painting or playing chess. I used to be state champion, or I'd be riding my motorbike and exploring nature.





Sue Clark

Sue is a NED at Imperial Brands; Britvic plc; Bakkavor Group plc; AkzoNobel N.V and Tulchan Communications LLP

If you'd asked me when I was 18 what was I going to do when I grew up, I would have said a mountaineering instructor. When I was that age I took myself off to Switzerland and worked in the Swiss Alps, but realised pretty soon that it was all just a bit cold and wet.

After my first degree, I joined what was then the Central Electricity Generating Board because its broad-based graduate programme was a great introduction to business. The CEGB had 48,000 employees, and there were no female managers. Women didn't even wear trousers in the office, and sexism was blatant.

I became part of National Power, following the privatisation of the industry, then moved to Scottish Power, studying for an MBA while working. The next big step for me was becoming a mum and having two children. To reduce the amount of international travel I was doing I joined Railtrack, which

I thought would mean I had more time with the kids. But I joined in a crisis following the Ladbroke Grove crash and then the Hatfield crash. The government put the business into administration, and so myself, the finance director and the company secretary set ourselves up and fought the fight for shareholders. It took us a year, but we got the government to settle. We then closed up the top company and Network Rail was born.

I was out of a job. I wanted to do something international and more fun, so I joined SABMiller, the global brewing business, as corporate affairs director. This was a completely new industry for me, but it was a great business with some fantastic brands and fabulous people. I am really proud of some of our corporate social responsibility work, particularly in Africa around HIV/AIDS and empowerment for women.



And then, in 2012, I went to be MD of SABMiller's Europe region. That was a big change for me. We really needed a new strategy with a focus on innovation to access new consumers and occasions. We were making some great strides, but sadly all that came to an end when Anheuser-Busch InBev made a bid for the business.

It's kind of weird. One minute you're running around working 100 hours a week, and then the next day you're not. And, you know, that's kind of sad, you miss the people and the chance to make a difference.

I took a year off, and then decided to go down the plural route. I had been a Non-Exec at Britvic, and I subsequently joined AkzoNobel and Bakkavor. I'm also on the board of Imperial Brands. I know tobacco is quite controversial for some people, but I think there is an important job to be done there to help the business move away from combustibles into something that's better.

You've seen some seriously diverse and interesting things...

When you run a global business, you actually realise that, particularly in food and beverages, tastes are local, brands are local. The way people drink or consume food is local. It makes it even more challenging because one size doesn't fit all. And that's why you need great local teams and really diverse employees.

What does great leadership mean to you?

It's being clear on what you're trying to achieve and then communicating that to the people who are working for you. And being clear about what you want them to do. I think it's really important to be able to empower people, to give them space and to enable them to make their own decisions.

You work across all those different companies with their own challenges. What do you enjoy most?

I've come to realise that although those businesses are in different

sectors, there's more that joins them than doesn't. You know, the businesses have very similar problems and, while you may not have seen it exactly in that industry, you've done something similar. And so the great thing is that you can bring that outside-in perspective to a company.

How important is diversity and inclusion to you?

I think it's massively important from two perspectives. One is it's the right thing to do for all the reasons we know. But then secondly, it's also the right thing to do for the business. I think it's particularly important in food and grocery because our consumers are very, very diverse and have very different tastes and temperaments. And, you know, the more diversity you have in your workforce, the more you're able to empathise with those consumers.

Is there a real appetite for D&I, in your experience?

I think it has increased massively. Companies are finally getting their heads around what can make a difference – and realising that it's not a one-size-fits-all situation. As boards, what we can do is ask the questions and keep prodding and

keep getting the data. You know, I'm a great believer that what gets measured gets done.

Companies are finding what works well for them. So when I was at SABMiller, we had a clear picture of where the female talent was in the business, and then focussed on supporting that talent and moving it around. Because you want to ensure that the best talent has had a broad and varied career.

Do you think there are any particular hurdles preventing further progress around D&I?

In global businesses, there's a lot of international travel and moving families around – which can be a barrier to female progression and diversity in general when families don't want to move their children around. At SABMiller, experience in different geographies was a requirement for a top role – and businesses should start rethinking this.

Had you not have trodden this incredibly interesting path, what else would you have been?

I would have loved to have been a mountaineer or an explorer or something, which definitely would have been fun when I was younger – but would not be quite so much fun at my current age!





Christine Cross

Christine is NED, Coca-Cola European Partners; Hilton Food Group; Clipper Logistics; Zooplus. Chair, Oddbox



“Second guess where consumers are going and then try and get ahead of the curve – and be brave

I've had a Heinz 57 Variety career and it's not at all usual or planned. In fact I still haven't decided what I want to be when I grow up really! I did decide that I wanted to do something with food and after my first degree and lecturing roles at Edinburgh and Bath Universities, took a master's in Food Science and ended up staying in academia for 15 years. Then I moved into Tesco to head technical, spearheading a range of initiatives for Tesco.

I went out to China and I was out there for two years and set up the sourcing offices in China and then did the same in Delhi, and Dhaka, and gradually worked my way back home and was part of the operating board in the early 2000s.

I left and set up my own business doing consulting work and I also took on some non-executive stuff and that kind of continued ever since. I now have four PLCs – Coca Cola European Partners, Clipper Logistics, Zooplus, and

Hilton Food Group. I also Chair ODDBOX and do quite a lot of pro bono stuff at the Royal Agricultural University. I love meeting and mentoring bright people and helping spark ideas

Did you have many role models in your career?

I did – sometimes there were positive role models, and yet they were negative ones in terms of learning. I don't think there were many women role models because there weren't any women about, either in the university sector or in the companies that I worked with. That's become more so now. I do quite a lot of individual mentoring, an equal number of men and women, and that's good fun.

How would you describe yourself as a role model?

I don't see myself as a role model. I think it's important that you're true to your own values. People say I've got a pretty strong moral compass. One of my very early role models said, "If you want to know whether something is right or wrong, think about whether you could tell your mother about it."

Don't ever do anything that compromises you. Sometimes you can change things better from the inside than the outside, so go in and be honest with them.

What advice would you give to those beginning their careers in food and grocery?

Second guess where consumers are going and then try and get ahead of that curve – and be brave. I wish I'd been braver. We introduced Own Brand and Value Brand because Aldi and Lidl were getting into their stride. But I was obsessed that we could do Finest. The brand guru in the organisation wouldn't have it. I rolled over on that, and it wasn't until several years down the line that Finest went in.

How important has diversity and inclusion been in your career?

A lot. If you think about the sort of ranges we were developing, inspired by people in other parts of the world, food inspiration is in itself diverse. Since working on my own, I've got big clients in Australia, in Russia, in the Middle East, in Italy, and each of them I deal with totally differently. And working with men and women is very different as well. We are different, and you appeal to emotional intelligence often rather than pure commercial intelligence.

Where do you think we are from a diversity and inclusion perspective, compared with 20 years ago?

I think we've still got a long way to go. But sometimes you've got to mandate things to get them through. People are recognising that you want people with different cognitive perspectives, it's not all about gender or colour. It's making people recognise the value, and that will just take time. But we're further ahead than some other countries.

What do you think are the benefits of a more diverse workforce?

It gives flexibility and challenge. I also think it gives support. I always knew the sort of people I needed around me to support me. I'm more than aware of the weaknesses that I've got, so we worked as a team. I think you can work better in a very diverse team.

What do you think are the main hurdles for the food and grocery sector in achieving greater diversity and inclusion?

There are barriers of tradition and fear of what other people think. PLCs in general have been a bit slower to embrace this than other organisations. And, even in private equity companies, the big ones tend to go with known entities. The changes that have happened through Covid-19 might just force some of those changes – looking at people from different industries and backgrounds. Why don't we have a new approach? Not taking risks is a risk. Not being brave, and attempting to do things differently, is the biggest risk that you can take.



What do you hope the food and grocery sector will look like in the future?

I hope it's very, very different. I hope it embraces the fact that customers in this country don't need to trog round a 100,000 square foot store to get their products. That we don't need to have huge ranges – they're just wasteful. That we're on a trajectory to get to something like self-sufficiency in terms of food in this country. And that the people who are producing it are recognised as doing a really good job.

Which leaders do you look up to?

In the grocery sector, Jo Whitfield and Steve Murrells at the Co-op are two of my favourites, because they are both brave and they've stuck their necks out. They've got some brilliant ideas. And then there's a young couple that run ODDBOX, a company with a true mission to reduce produce waste – I'm hugely impressed by them and the culture that they're engendering.

If you hadn't taken the career path that you have, what would you have been doing?

About 12 years ago, I asked myself that question, and I decided that I would love to be a lawyer – I'd like to be the QC at the Old Bailey!



Mark Cuddigan

Mark is CEO, Ella's Kitchen

Looking back, I suppose you could say I wasn't really very good at school or certainly not the academic side. I had a different sort of brain, I suppose. Although I did go on to university, afterwards I knew I wanted to do something hands-on that allowed me to embrace my passions. Initially, I qualified as a professional tennis coach and set about teaching tennis to children, which I look back on with really fond memories and absolutely loved at the time.

As my professional career moved on, I first found myself in the food industry working for my brother-in-law at his snacking company. That first role taught me a lot – we

launched a really successful range of products together and ended up selling the business to a PLC.

I went on to lead a breakfast cereal company and worked for Annabel Karmel over the years that followed. However, it wasn't until I met Paul Lindley, who is the founder of Ella's Kitchen, that I really felt I had a chance to see how business could be a broader force for good in society. I ended up building a close bond with Paul who became a mentor of sorts – the only mentor I've ever really had. Paul hired me as the co-MD for Ella's Kitchen which felt like a huge leap in my career at the time but one that has ended up being pivotal.

Ella's Kitchen was founded with a mission to improve children's lives through developing healthy relationships with food. Paul was the one who really showed me that business absolutely can have a positive impact on society; that far from being competing ideologies, he showed me that

purpose and profit have to go hand-in-hand. I saw that, in order to make a real difference as a business, we had to change the system in which we operate. We advocated that you cannot simply measure success by profit and the bottom line – it is equally important to balance out the business' impact on the planet and its people.

We've come a long way since then and proudly certified as a B Corp in 2016 – I'm now a proud advocate and leader of the B Corp movement in the UK.

What do you think are the main challenges preventing progress on diversity and inclusion?

I think one of the main challenges to progress is the lack of real education and understanding.

I'm sure like lots of people, the Black Lives Matter movement made me feel embarrassed and ashamed because I realised how much I didn't really know about

the history in this country and racial justice.

At Ella's Kitchen, we made educating ourselves a top priority in the first instance. All of our staff were given a day to go away and educate themselves on racial justice – sparked by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Crucially, we are going to be regrouping as a team to share and discuss our learnings which will in turn help us to shape our anti-racism strategy and go further on our diversity and inclusion commitments.

How have you noticed the culture evolve since you've been at Ella's?

I've been at Ella's nearly a decade and in that time, we went from being a founder-led business, with a visionary founder in Paul Lindley, to being part of an American PLC.

There were certainly concerns at the start of that transition on what impact it might have on our culture or our core values, but it has actually made us a better business. We have always stayed true to our founding mission and now we are part of a global community which has given us

more of a voice within a large organisation.

Certifying as a B Corp in 2016 has also helped us to align the ethos that Paul inspired, being part of a community of businesses who are united in a shared goal of doing better for people and the planet. A big part of the culture at Ella's Kitchen is collaboration and we believe that we can do so much more to bring about tangible change if we work together.

Looking internally, there's a huge amount about our culture that I'm really proud of. Take gender diversity as an example. At the moment, 75% of people who work at Ella's Kitchen are women, with a quarter of them working part time. We've also now got a 50:50 gender split in the leadership team, including two women who work part time.

We're very understanding of balancing work and childcare, as many of us are parents, myself included. Childcare and parenting can be a roadblock for women in their careers which is why we are super flexible in our working hours and allow women in our company to work to a schedule that suits them.

We're also very conscious about mental health and ensuring all members of the team are supported. This was something we focussed on particularly during lockdown earlier this year, and without being together in the office we adapted the systems we had in place. As well as regular team check-ins, we also ensured we had Mental Health First Aiders available for one-to-one support; that our employee assistance programme number was understood, and used, and provided external CBT and counselling in some cases.

Tell us more about what becoming a B Corp means to you.

It has been great to see how fast the B Corp community has grown in the UK – faster than any other country in the world. Becoming a B Corp is not only about the commitment you're making as a business to the world, it's also about engaging and encouraging other organisations to join you on that journey.

That's something I'm hugely passionate about and have been committed to spreading the word since I joined the B Corp community. One of the things I'm most proud of is that we worked with our creative agency, Havas, who successfully certified 18 months ago. This was a major milestone as it was a huge undertaking for Havas to certify.

It's no longer acceptable to not act responsibly and do the right thing as a business. I know that I'm part of the first generation of leaders that aren't going to be able to look back and say, 'we didn't know'. We all know now and it's all of our responsibilities to make the world a better place for our future generations.



“I'm part of the first generation of leaders that aren't going to be able to look back and say 'we didn't know'”



Fiona Dawson

Fiona is Global President, Food, Multisales and Global Customers, Mars



Growing up in Dublin, I was always interested in business and politics when I was younger. Although I toyed with going into classical music, I followed this passion and went to Trinity College in Dublin to study economics and business studies instead.

I joined the Mars graduate training scheme 32 years ago and, outside of a brief stint with PepsiCo, I've spent my working life with Mars working in many different roles within the business. During the course of my career

I've specialised in certain functions – I was sales director in the UK and marketing VP in Europe – but I always gravitated back to leading teams and running businesses.

I was working as sales and marketing head and seven months pregnant with my son, Conor, when I was offered my first General Manager role, leading the Irish business.

I'm currently the Global President of Mars Food, Multisales and Global Customers, and sit on the Mars Leadership Team. On a personal and professional level I am a strong advocate for building diverse teams. Internally I sponsor our I&D work and I am also incredibly proud to chair the Women's Business Council.

I'm also a member of the Lego board, which is another purpose-led company that I love and sit on the board of my old business school, Trinity Business School in Dublin. I was previously President

of the IGD, so the organisation is very close to my heart.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

I've been incredibly lucky in that I genuinely love what I do and work for a company that has values that match my own. I love seeing people develop, it's brilliant to see Mars Associates I have worked with getting promoted and doing things they thought they wouldn't be able to do.

For me, ambition is not about the destination of a career, it's about that development stretch. I get worried when people say, "my dream is to be a CEO". Why do you want it? I certainly didn't have a dream of being a CEO, I just wanted to find something I was passionate about and feel like I was doing a job that added value.

Have there been any difficult learnings along the way?

Oh, heaps of difficult learnings. You've got to invite people in when you're experiencing your most challenging period. My biggest piece of advice to my younger self, or anyone who's starting their leadership journey, is to not feel that you have to sort it all yourself and to ask for help when you need it.

Have you had any role models in your career?

I don't think you ever realise that they're role models at the time, do you? But there are so many people who inspire me. The first one was my mum who was amazing. She never worried about what any of her children did as long as they were doing a job they were happy in.

My first real role model was Mary McAleese – the first female Irish president. She was the underdog, she wasn't meant to get the job. And she spoke with courage about issues on a humanitarian level that hadn't been discussed in Ireland before.

It's clear inclusion and diversity is important to you...

It probably wasn't always, to be honest with you. If you met me 35 years ago, I would have been very adamant that the reason I got my job was because I was good enough, I didn't see any sexism. But in reality, I did see sexism and encountered it myself – particularly in sales. I wasn't until I was in my 40s that I had a really honest conversation with myself about stepping up to build a better future. I said to myself "Fiona, if you don't do something about this for future generations, who on earth is going to speak out"?

The most important lesson in my experience is that there is not, and should not be, a one size fits all approach when it comes to inclusion and diversity. There was a sales conference pretty early on after I came back from maternity leave, and an Associate asked if I really felt I could be a role model for women when I came back to work so early. And I realised that as a woman I needed to decodify how I was working. So I explained, I can't do the 'no evening' emails, but I'm doing that because I'm going to leave early and get home for bath time. Or you might see me sending an email on a Saturday, but that's because I want to make sports day. Or whatever it was that I was juggling at that point in time, it worked for me.

I never wanted to be the token woman. But we know there are unconscious biases in the world, we know that people do tend to recruit in their own likeness, and, thankfully, I can tell a gender stereotype in a heartbeat. It's important we continue to challenge and educate ourselves on diversity and inclusion, especially on racial and ethnic stereotypes as we go forward.

What are the hurdles preventing further progress on inclusion and diversity within the sector?

One we've talked about a lot is mobility. We find that women, for very understandable reasons, will tend to shy away from moving their family to go for a job that is slightly bigger. I think that mobility is a challenge because it will often happen at a life stage where maybe they have younger children and they find it quite challenging. So, providing an infrastructure for women to be able to succeed is very important. We'll often talk about how we help the person, but you need to help the unit

that goes with them if they're to succeed. We also need to provide flexible, dynamic and agile working environments for men and women of all backgrounds. We need to recognise everyone as individuals and look at how we can support their personal growth and development needs so that we can build diverse representation across the sector.

“For me, ambition is not about the destination of a career, it's about that development stretch

If you could have had a different career, what would you have done?

I would probably have gone into politics. I wanted to be the first female Taoiseach. But I'm not a very good politician so I'm not sure I would have got there.





Leendert Den Hollander

Leendert is VP & GM for Northern Europe, Coca-Cola European Partners

I grew up in the Netherlands. My father was a co-owner of a marketing research company. He was working primarily for fast-moving consumer goods companies. This offered an opportunity for me to do some work during summer holidays. Initially that was a bit of a chore, but I really started to enjoy the whole notion of how brands can influence consumer purchase decisions. And that got me into the food industry. Still today, I'm really fascinated by how consumers define and decide what they buy, how they buy, when they buy, where they buy it and how you can influence that across the spectrum.

Why is inclusion and diversity so important to you?

I think it's very much a philosophy. I honestly believe that more diverse and more inclusive teams deliver better results. I've seen that in a number of cases. I think the tipping point for us has been defining everything around I&D as a philosophy as opposed to a strategy, and that means if you call things a philosophy, you can't opt out. We put the I before the D because we said diversity can only thrive in an inclusive culture. We have articulated the philosophy around 'Be yourself, Be valued and Belong' – we call it the three Bs.

We focussed much more on inclusive leadership and tried to identify what inclusive leadership means. One of the things was 'skip a layer'. So don't just talk to your direct reports, talk to the direct reports of your direct reports. What I found very powerful was reverse mentoring. I'm working with the team leader,

“I believe that leadership is about 'future-proofing' a business and its people

Frank, in our factory, and we regularly meet together and talk about what's on his mind. But he also tells me what he believes we can do differently and better as a company.

If we want to become more diverse and be a true reflection of society, it starts with diverse hiring. We started to hire much more for attitude, for what we call 'cultural add' as opposed to 'cultural fit'. We now want to say well, what can someone with his or her uniqueness bring to the culture of the business? And I think that was pretty insightful.



Is there any particular challenge that you've learnt from in your career?

I think you learn a lot from things that are outside of your control, things that happen to you and then how you respond to that. I listen to a number of podcasts, and there's a fascinating quote that says: 'a crisis doesn't build a character, it reveals character'. Assemble the right team and make sure that you create those diverse teams. Taking a risk, sometimes, on talent that you would like to accelerate, has to realise potential. In every company, that's the distinction between past performance and future potential. Getting the balance right in your conversation is very important. And I think when it comes to people management, you learn every day.

What does great leadership mean to you?

The main thing is that, if you think about the definition of leadership, it's all about showing the way and defining the path. In simple terms, I believe leadership is about 'future-proofing' a business and its people. When it comes to leadership characteristics, I tend to focus on four, which I call the 4Cs. It starts with Curiosity. How are things working, why

is it happening like this, why hasn't this been tried, why is our competition doing it like this?

The other thing is Challenging the status quo and stereotypes. That's really important, because it also impacts how you think about culture.

A good leader is all about Controlling your own destiny, for yourself, for your company, for your team.

And finally, I think a good leadership quality is to be Confident yet humble.

What advice would you share with the next generation?

The most important thing I would say is try to be yourself. And be happy with that. That's also the most difficult to do, because there are so many people who influence how you might think about yourself. But it is so important to stay close to yourself, and also find an environment where that's OK.

Also define what the world's all about, what you like and what you're passionate about. And if you can find that sweet spot of doing something that you're passionate about and being able to be yourself, then I think that's quite good.

What's stopping inclusion and diversity getting better within the sector?

One of the main things is making sure that people feel that they can talk about things in their own way, whether good or bad. And I think if you create that level of transparency, then most likely you create a sense of trust which I believe is a prerequisite to get on to an inclusive culture. Because an inclusive culture is, as we all know, way more than a sign above the door.

We have this concept of the 'little voices'. The whole idea is about the difference between what you hear and your interpretation of it. Let's talk about those little voices. And if you can create a space where people can share their little voice and say what's on your mind, I think you create an environment where people feel that they can contribute to the conversation and feel included.

If you hadn't have trodden this path, what would you have done?

I've never really thought about this, I was just on this path. I very much enjoy it and never looked back. Most likely, it would have been a very different field. It might be in the area of sports. I always said one day I would love to be the chairman or CEO of a football club. I'm from Rotterdam, and so it would have to be Feyenoord. But I don't think that's on the cards.



Johanna Dickinson

Johanna is HR Director,
KP Snacks

I've got quite an unusual background because I left school at 16. I had decided I wanted to be a figure skater, so I picked up a full-time job at my local Pizza Hut to fund the skating. But, actually, what I discovered was that the work was really good fun.

I skated for a couple of years. When I got to the age of 18, the current Olympic champion was 14 and it occurred to me that the best female skaters were getting their technical ability before they grew.

Around that time, Pizza Hut offered me a place on a management development programme. Within seven years, I was a restaurant general manager with a team of 30.

I moved to Gap after that as a store manager, then as HR store manager for the Oxford Street flagship store which we opened in 1999. Gap were great, they saw potential and gave me the opportunity in a field I didn't have

experience. I studied in my own time to achieve a degree-level qualification in HR (CIPD) and I haven't looked back.

However, the opportunity to progress in HR was limited in London, so I went to Air France looking for a real shift in industry and culture, and got both. Then, when an opportunity came up to work at Coca Cola, I just grabbed it. I thought it was a dream job. I had found what I really love in terms of the fast-paced element,

but also the brand and the culture side as well. I was head-hunted out of Coke. I was a bit reluctant to leave because it's such a brilliant organisation, but I'd missed out on a couple of director roles so took a brave leap. And to come to KP Snacks as HR Director five years ago was a huge step, you know... I think through my career, people have just taken a bit of a punt on me and I have worked really hard to show them they made the right decision.



Have you had influential role models, and how important were they to the development of your career?

Hugely, especially women. I had an opportunity to interview the four female board of directors from Coca-Cola worldwide. Oh, my goodness, they were the most inspiring women I've ever come across. Their determination to succeed in their own way and be true to who they were, was truly encouraging.

Sarah Schol, who was HR VP at Coke and my former boss, was also great. She was the one who really showed me what coaching is about. And at first it used to frustrate the hell out of me. Because I'd often go to her with a problem and I'd just want her to tell me the answer. And she'd be like, "Come on, right, what are your options?" It's something I now do with my team.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I like the fact we have a product and a brand that I am passionate about. I don't know if I'd feel quite the same if we were producing something that doesn't mean anything to me. I love the dynamism of it – the fact that we're present from brand creation all the way through to the customer. Snacking is a really enjoyable business to work in. We know that being the biggest snack manufacturer in the UK may not be achievable; our goal is to be the favourite — we want people to smile when they think of KP because of our products and our people. Recent customer feedback through the Advantage Group Survey and our employee survey results show we are achieving this.

“Companies which are diverse are more successful and there's enough research to back this up

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

I'm the only female in the UK executive team. I'm very aware and conscious of that position, and I feel like I have a responsibility to the rest of the KP business to make change. I also believe companies which are diverse are more successful and there's enough research to back this up.

In order to enable a diverse organisation for the future, we have to start right back at the beginning, recognising what inclusivity is, how it feels and what it's about. It needs so much investment.

I've got a plan. Or what I should say is we've got a plan. Rather than it be HR-led, it will be organic through our people. I want to leave KP in a better place than when I joined it. And we want to focus on inclusion, in particular, because we think if we focus on the inclusion, then diversity will more likely happen. We want KP to be an organisation that people choose to work at because of its culture and this includes being inclusive and diverse.

What do you think are the main challenges preventing further progress?

Many of us in senior roles have come from a life of privilege whether we are aware of this or not. So actually starting with some training to help us recognise this and what life can be like for other people was an important place for us to begin. There are other barriers too like the time investment, and of course money for example to run multiple workshops across the business. Also keeping this a priority, particularly since the results are not necessarily that quick.

What changes would you like to see in the sector?

Outside of diversity? It's sustainability — I would love to see how innovative packaging can get in terms of fully closed loop recycling opportunities. My mother is always asking me when we're going to be able to make a fully recyclable crisp packet. I say, "We're working on it, mum. It's not so easy to do."

If you'd had a different career, what would you have done?

Well, if I'd had a bit more talent and started earlier, I would have perhaps been a world-class figure skater. I have left that dream by the way, but I still skate for fun and enjoy teaching my goddaughter and my children whenever we can.



Gharry Eccles

Gharry is VP, UK & Australia, Cereal Partners Worldwide

My birth parents are from South America, although I was born in the UK. The marriage didn't work out and I was reluctantly fostered and then adopted aged three. I grew up in a normal working class family in what politicians would call a socially deprived area. Despite that environment I did find two role models that really helped me: firstly a businessman at church who built his business from nothing – he showed me what's possible; then secondly my headmaster was a significant influence, he coached and mentored me following a rather serious car accident when I was 17.

And then later on in life, at Kimberly Clark, my sales director was a significant mentor. I'd risen through the ranks pretty quickly and he sat me down and said, "Look – you're 24, you have to go back and finish your education and get a degree." He sponsored my move from sales into marketing, which was probably the biggest transformation for me.

Following 15 years at Kimberly Clark, when the opportunity came to work for Wrigley I took it. It was a great move, after two years I was promoted to MD where I learnt a lot about the importance of culture from Bill Wrigley Jr. After Mars/Wrigley, I was appointed CEO of Muller Dairy and then enjoyed three years working with PZ Cussons globalising their categories across Asia, Africa and Europe.

But then I met the CPW people, I didn't realise that Nestle & General Mills had formed this partnership in 1990. I really valued that it combines the power of the big with the spirit of the small – it was the entrepreneurial culture that really attracted me.

What do you find most rewarding about your job?

I love the fact that the food and drink industry has been a force for good in many ways. For the last 20 years, I've been involved with Business in the Community.

Initially focussing on helping school children to improve literacy and helping homeless people back into work and mentoring vulnerable adults. Today that's evolved into partnering with FareShare & Marcus Rashford's #endchildfoodpoverty practically helping food insecure families. So yes, I find that being a force for good is incredibly rewarding.

“Nowadays, I think great leaders need to go further and show vulnerability

What does great leadership mean to you?

Great leaders operate on a number of levels, firstly they create a desirable future, a compelling vision and invite you to be a part of it.

Secondly, they have a distinctive and motivating strategy that people can mobilise behind in a way that doesn't rely on hierarchies.

Nowadays, I think great leaders need to go further and show vulnerability. The best leaders I've seen are the ones who show courage in the face of vulnerability.

Leaders also need to be culturally intelligent and empathetic – they need to really connect with people. Great leaders create places where people truly belong, and when people belong, they bring out their best work.

What advice would you impart to the next raft of leaders?

Firstly, develop a curious mind. I would encourage them to continue to learn and to problem solve. The second thing I would say is be competitive but choose the right target. And lastly I would advise getting a coach, stay sharp, be externally focused. Surround yourself with people who will tell you it as it is.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

Because everyone deserves a chance. I didn't receive a good education. My family lived in a council flat, I didn't go to a Russell Group university, but I had ambition and ability. I know what it's like to feel excluded, to experience racism and physical violence because of the way that I look. But I was fortunate to be able to break out of that limiting environment. I was given a chance to prove myself by an organisation that sponsored me to complete my education and that's why I believe companies should look beyond mere qualifications to potential. Talent is more than skin deep.

Have you seen progress around D&I?

Definitely, I've seen significant progress on gender balance. We've been spending a lot of time educating around unconscious bias, mandating gender-balanced shortlists and creating flexible working arrangements that are enablers of the future.

I'm particularly proud of what we've done on mental health. I was staggered that the single biggest cause of absence in Nestlé is mental health. So we've been weaving mental health wellbeing into a lot of our programmes. Where we need to do more is around race equity. As one of the senior sponsors for Nestle UK&I, we worked together with over 100 volunteers from across our business to create four areas of focus, which are i) Create an environment where everyone can thrive, ii) Build education and awareness across the whole company iii) Attract, enable & retain a multi-racial talent pipeline and iv) Be a force for good in our communities. I would love to partner with others to share experiences and learn.

What changes to the sector would you like to see in five to 10 years?

I think our consumers are looking for companies to go beyond sustainability to restoring the health of people, places and the planet, to a regenerative business model.

We will be playing our part, next year Nestle Cereals with Purina will be launching a wheat plan. We will be working with farmers and authorities for better soil health – the ambition is to get 50% of our wheat from a regenerative agriculture model.

If you went back to the beginning, what career would you have had?

I would be a journalist. I think words are incredibly powerful. I love the way that words stir emotions, they transform lives through learning, they bring joy through entertainment but most of all I love words because they connect us to each other.





Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones MBE

Wilfred is a farmer and Founder, The Black Farmer

I was born in Jamaica, and I'm part of the Windrush generation that came to the UK in the 1950s. My parents settled in Small Heath, Birmingham, which is one of those classic deprived inner-city areas that felt really devoid of hope and opportunity. I'm the eldest boy in a family of nine and we were very poor. My father had an allotment, and this became my oasis away from the misery that surrounded me everywhere else. By the age of 11, I had made myself a promise that one day I would own my own farm.

I'm dyslexic – I left school at 16, hardly able to read and write. I joined the army, got kicked out, and then went to the local catering college, and enjoyed working as a chef. I had this idea that I'd love to work in television, but I didn't have the right qualifications or background.

I got a break, though, at the BBC Pebble Mill TV studios, where I'd been doing casual jobs like cleaning. I met Jock Gallagher,

who recognised my enthusiasm. He took a punt, giving me an initial three-month contract as a general runner. That punt kicked off a 15-year BBC career in television: I went on to be a researcher, and then a producer/director.

In the day, I was pretty well known because I made food programmes, and my boss was Peter Bazalgette, the man who really started the whole celebrity-chef culture. People like Gordon Ramsay and James Martin, I gave them their first breaks in

“A great measure of knowing whether you're living or whether you're just surviving is the number of mistakes you make

television. I travelled the world making films about food and drink. But I always wanted to have my own farm.

I realised I had to leave and start my own business. So I set up a food and drink marketing agency, which launched brands like Loyd Grossman Sauces, Kettle Chips, Plymouth Gin and Cobra Beer. Challenger brands, which really fit into my personality – taking on the big boys.

I ran that business for about 15 years, and that gave me the money to buy my farm. It's on the Devon/Cornwall border, near Launceston. I did some research and came up with the idea of gluten-free sausages and 'The Black Farmer' brand. I thought the name would make a strong brand, even though research suggested it was a bad idea. That's where you need to have vision and purpose – I went with it, and it's been going successfully now for 15 years.

Are there any particular challenges you've had to overcome or learnt from?

There are always challenges. What's quite interesting with the Black Lives Matter movement is that, as an outsider – whether you're Black, whether you're a woman, whether you're disabled – it's always a challenge. When I talk to people who are thinking about starting their own business, I tell them it's an absolute street fight, and those that survive are the ones who can handle that. But if you're Black, it's even tougher. Everything I've done, I've been an anomaly. I don't fit into people's expectations of a Black person, or people's expectations of a businessman – and that's been a challenge.

But in my mind, a great measure of knowing whether you're living or whether you're just surviving

is the number of mistakes you make. If you say, "I haven't made a mistake in the last six months," then that means you're coasting. I've made tons of mistakes, but I don't think they define me – I see them as great ways of learning.

What do you think the food industry will look like in five to 10 years from now?

I think that supermarkets as we know them will not exist, because they don't make sense anymore – the physical journey, carrying a basket around, selecting from shelves and paying at the till. I think we will probably see supermarkets become hubs where people will collect their online shopping.

And that has big implications for the food chain. The model we now have is a centralised one – it's about high volume, low

margin and centralisation. This model is all about efficiency, and that in turn reduces choice for the consumer.

Things are changing now. Technology has caught up with human nature. We're working from home more, and small players can now deliver their produce to our doors at a relatively cheap cost. This diversity of choice was not available before and I think it's going to be really disruptive.

Do you feel a responsibility to use your success to promote diversity?

As a successful Black person I do get a lot of Black people looking to me for inspiration. I know that if I see any Black person who has succeeded, then they've had a really tough ride. So I believe it's the responsibility of those of colour who have succeeded to help people who are trying to come up. I'm quite well-known in the food and grocery industry. But I'm probably the only high-profile Black person that I know in it, so I feel it's my responsibility to do as much as I can to help foster more diversity.

As an industry, we're really, really far behind. If you look at the supermarkets, for example, people of colour are also buying stuff in those outlets. How many of those have proper representation at senior level? You'll find very, very few. So, there needs to be a lot addressed in our industry, and I think that the people at senior levels need to be doing a lot more to demonstrate that they are now part of this new change.





Jana Gaffaney

Jana is Legal Director
Northern Europe, General Mills



I grew up in Minnesota, in the American Midwest, as the youngest of five girls. After law school I clerked for a justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court and then worked at a large US law firm. I'm currently leading the legal practice for General Mills in Northern Europe and based out of London, but it's been quite a journey to get here.

I'm an American with both Mexican and European ancestry and my mother was a single

parent. Growing up we received help such as benefiting from a free lunch programme but also primarily, I had the support of my family who really championed my education. My siblings and I all ended up being able to go to private universities.

Interviewing at General Mills was certainly a watershed moment in my life. I started the role when I was very visibly pregnant yet the hiring team at General Mills could not have been more welcoming and supportive of me – and so I took the leap to join a very

“I started the role when I was very visibly pregnant yet the hiring team at General Mills could not have been more welcoming

different type of legal practice. It's been an amazing experience. While I was pregnant with my third child, I was approached about taking on my current role in London and decided to seize the opportunity to experience life in Europe. In all, I've had a terrific career thus far and I feel privileged that so many things have fallen into place at the right time – I've benefited from good fortune as well as my own hard work.

Has there been a particular challenge in your career that you feel like you've learnt from the most?

The foremost challenge for me has been figuring out how to balance having three children and a family life with a demanding career that I am committed to and want to make an impact in. I've become quite the expert at prioritising, and now, ten years after having my first child, I can see how that has impacted the way that I work.

I work in an efficient way: I focus on the things that matter, because, to me, making sure that I am spending the time with my kids and raising them the way I want is hugely important.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

First of all, it's the right thing to do – and that's a core value to General Mills. We all have a moral obligation to make the world better, and that includes business. But personally, I'm really motivated and driven by it because of my history and my experience. I was the beneficiary of a college scholarship that let me go to a private university, in part because I was smart and I was able to qualify for it, but it was only offered to people of ethnic minorities. That's part of the reason why I got where I am. It's my obligation now to bring that forward and make opportunities for other people in the way that others made opportunities for me.

How are you personally driving the agenda at General Mills?

When I moved to the UK, I realised that diversity is approached very differently, rooted as it is in the culture and history of a place. Whilst our US business is very engaged in these matters and has been for some time – for example through a very well developed network of affinity groups – the UK was not so advanced and I wanted to help translate some of that work and import the learning for our business here.

Our first goal is to establish a baseline: to identify the gaps, blind spots and the good things we can build upon. In parallel we've been working on upskilling our leadership team through a

series of workshops and lots of online learning we've stolen with pride from our US business. I'm really interested in how we drive a change that endures as opposed to ticking the box. And that will take time.

Coming from the US, is there a tangible difference in the way people are talking about diversity and inclusion?

Our histories are intertwined but also different, as is the immediate background to the current situation, and this informs the debate. Culturally I think British people are less comfortable talking about the issues. Whilst in general the US has some very significant systemic racism, at the same time, people are very accustomed to talking about racial issues. I believe that a lot of what people experience here is under the surface and talking about it creates discomfort, especially

as privacy is of greater cultural importance.

If you'd gone back to the beginning and done something wildly different, what would you have done?

I'm a qualified yoga teacher as well as a lawyer so if I went back, I would probably have started a yoga studio – which is very different from the legal profession! But I love what I do and I like to try to blend things together as much as I can so I've already taken it upon myself to teach yoga to some of my colleagues over here.





Catherine Gillespie

Catherine is HR Director and I&D Lead, Coca-Cola European Partners (CCEP) in GB



As People & Culture Director and I&D Lead at Coca-Cola European Partners (CCEP) in GB, my passion lies in people and the difference they can make as well as bringing together company culture and business strategy. I've been at CCEP for a long time. I began in an HR position in supply chain and told myself I'd stay as long as it was interesting – and that was two decades ago! I have worked across most parts of HR, including L&D, Management Development, Organisational Development, Talent Acquisition and various Business Partnering roles and

even had experience of other markets. Each of my roles here has genuinely felt like a different career providing an opportunity to work with different business functions – it's been a privilege to be able to have that all under one roof in an organisation that is constantly evolving.

How have you seen company culture change?

We have made more progress in the last four years than we have in the previous ten with Inclusion & Diversity. Previously we have been more singularly focused on gender diversity, we weren't able to create meaningful change because we were only talking to small parts of the organisation. We have been on a journey over the last three years where we are living our philosophy of 'Everyone's Welcome to Be Yourself, Be Valued, Belong' which creates an inclusive culture and has made it a conversation for every single employee to be involved in.

At the same time, we have really evolved the culture more broadly in the business, we are very frontline and customer focused, we have moved away from a formal hierarchical approach to being much more open and people are encouraged to share their views on the things that will move the needle. We talk a lot about having a 'progress over perfection' growth mindset, and an informal culture that allows people to say, "let's have a go, let's try", which really makes a difference.

What's the biggest challenge you've learnt from?

It would certainly be around Inclusion and Diversity. We had a very successful women's network that was enormously popular across many of our female employees. But we decided to change it because we realised we were not changing the culture. It was a difficult choice to stop doing something that was so highly valued but switching our approach to focusing on creating

an Inclusion culture & broadening our focus across a range of diverse communities has really paid off.

I still think one of the hardest parts of I&D is that a lot of people find it intangible and think it is about trying to prove the value and the business case when it goes so much further than that and the immeasurably positive impact it can have on creating a healthy culture and employee experience as well as improved engagement. Another huge learning has been to listen carefully for who is quiet in the organisation, who potentially doesn't feel included and how you can build trust to understand any remove systemic barriers that may be in place. You can't do this if you aren't going out of your way to really listen.

How important have role models been in your career?

Really important. I have always looked at high performance role models to learn from how they operate. Someone taught me years ago to go shopping for role models and mentors, so you can have a diverse group of people to look up to and learn from. I look for different people from whom I can take different things. I don't think it's necessarily a hierarchical thing. I have a few reverse mentor relationships and we both feel like we are mentoring each other, one guy in particular I learn so much from him, because he's completely unfiltered and I can see the organisation through his lens. Role models give me energy and I intentionally engage with those role models to help with my energy when I need to, and I encourage other people to do the same.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders in the food and grocery sector?

The 'what' and the 'how' are equally as important. There are some brilliant people who are excellent at delivering targets, but they don't necessarily focus on how to achieve those results, they don't necessarily focus on having a healthy culture or what behaviours are important, don't lead with empathy etc. When you find a leader that can do both, it's such a strength and a rarity.

Curiosity is another one. If you only stay in your lane and focus only on your topic, you're going to miss out on the world of learning. Have your eyes open beyond the role you're doing. The world is more different than it is the same, and the next generation of leaders will be able to lead and manage that difference.

What's been your biggest learning from the Covid-19 crisis?

If 2020 has proved anything, it's the importance of connection and belonging. Leading with empathy, openness, listening and flexibility is more important

than ever especially when we are navigating through ambiguous and difficult times. We've spent the last however many years pretending we don't have a personal life and keeping work and life separate and we can now move forward in a world where work and life are integrated, and we work more flexibly than ever. We're also being forced to face up to societal issues that have been under the surface or not impacting everyone and with the whole Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 the conversation has changed and we are able to focus on ensuring all groups have a voice and are able to be treated equitably. It's a journey but well, you know, 2020 was the year that made people stop, listen and work for change.

If you hadn't had your career, what would you have done?

My family always said they thought that I would've been a human rights lawyer because I am known to "passionately" campaign for causes I care about and make a lot of noise when I don't think people are being treated fairly. I think it's too late for that career, but those values are just as important today as they were growing up.





Rita Greenwood

Rita is President, Europe, Middle East and Africa, William Grant & Sons



At the start of my career I had a fantastic time at Nestlé, where I got what I'd call core-skills education: marketing, category management, sales and negotiation. Then I started to focus on sales, commercial, and P&L management, and really loved that.

After three MD roles at William Grant & Sons I was asked to join the Executive Board in the role of President. This is an ideal role as I have a lot of experience in

those markets over the years. When I look back it is incredible to believe that I have been in the drinks industry for 18 years as well as fitting in having two children. During that time, I've been a trustee on The Benevolent (Drinks Trust) charity, and have been Non-Executive Director on a number of our boards in different markets. I was also on the Scotch Whisky Association council, representing William Grant & Sons.

When I was promoted to the Executive Board, I was at a conference and somebody asked me, "Now you're on the Board, what's the thing that you want to change?" I said, "I want to make sure that I'm creating opportunities for everyone to be able to do this." I wanted to encourage the idea that you don't have to be a certain type of person to get to Executive Board level by championing inclusion. We need diversity of thought in all organisations. The more you can mix up teams, the more you can

stop groupthink, and therefore benefit from a wider range of creative solutions.

This sentiment also directly relates to my passion for developing people. I completed an accreditation in coaching which has helped me to effectively support and lead people. This is the part of my role I enjoy most; working with senior leaders within the team and helping them to achieve their ambitions.

How important have role models been to you in your career?

I remember one of the first role models to impact me was when I had a Tesco account management role. I was the only woman in a team of what seemed like a lot of older men. Actually, they were probably mid-30s, but I was in my 20s. This leader was fantastic. In the first meeting, he said to me: "Rita, come and sit at the head of the board table." He was a little old-fashioned

“The more you can mix up teams, the more you can stop groupthink, and benefit from a wider range of creative solutions

in how he led meetings and said things you probably can't say now, but the way that he included me made a difference and enabled me to make an impact. In every discussion, he would ask, "Right, kid, what do you think about that?" If he didn't think I was involved, he would ask what I thought. He gave me the confidence to speak and I've always remembered that.

Would you say inclusion breeds diversity?

I was giving interviews to the German trade press about our new company in that market recently, and one of the questions they asked was: "As a woman in the spirits industry, what do you think about gender balance?" I answered by saying that actually I do not think it is about the gender agenda. I think that narrows the conversation about diversity and inclusion. What you have got to be talking about is inclusion

and as soon as you talk about inclusion, then you are thinking about diversity of thought, and it is diversity of thought that really benefits teams.

For you, what does great leadership involve?

For me, there are three elements:

- First, it's about being able to make a judgement call. That doesn't mean you need to make quick decisions but rather that you need to make timely ones.
- Second, while it's vital to have confidence and belief, you can't know everything, so you have to be able to say that you don't know. You have to be able to admit vulnerability, because if you don't, you will not benefit from the knowledge and insight around you.
- Last, the ability to be able to trust and empower your teams is vital.

What advice do you have for future leaders coming into the business?

Start by looking at how the industry is changing. Try to understand the way people shop and consume. Then, think about what is motivating you as a consumer or as a shopper. Try to understand the digitalisation agenda, the growth

in online. Finally, get a sense of a company's culture by preparing properly, by understanding the company strategy, and by researching online.

Why is inclusivity or inclusive thinking important for you as a leader?

I was often the only woman in the room and if I had not had those doors opened, if people had not invited me into the conversation, I would not be sitting here now. If people feel excluded, it is not only wrong, but can lead to individuals feeling disconnected, and ultimately disengaged.

If you hadn't had this successful path, what different career might you have tried?

This is easy: I would have loved to have been an actress. If you are going to do it, you want to be the best – so I'd have loved to be an Oscar-winning, Bafta-winning actress.

Any final advice?

For anybody trying to establish a diversity and inclusion agenda, please make sure that you speak to people within your organisation. Yes, get expert help, but it is vital to engage the team, who will be aware of the internal challenges and opportunities that lay ahead of you.





Rachel Griffiths

Rachel is Joint Managing Director,
Dalehead Foods

In all honesty my childhood aspirations leant toward the artistic world, so perhaps the food industry wasn't the most obvious career choice! Coming from a farming background, food and its marketing quickly became a vocation. My career at Waitrose provided me with a fantastic platform, instilling values of respect and humility. Moving to the food service industry in the late 1990s gave me an opportunity to build on the processes and principles learnt in retail. I enjoyed the commercial focus and annual tender process. I have been lucky to work for some great organisations, ABP, Moy Park and more recently Dalehead Foods and most importantly with some fantastic people. The food industry and more particularly the meat industry has weathered many storms and its been tough at times but I feel very privileged to work in this industry; particularly in the

last few months when people have reconnected with food and given more thought to how it's prepared. Bringing friends and families together sharing a meal, has, I believe, been a positive outcome.

What took you into the industry in the first place – what was the attraction?

After graduating from Harper Adams University with a BSc in Agriculture and Food Marketing I started to become very passionate about food and its journey to our tables.

You came back to the meat industry and noticed a significant change from a D&I perspective...

I am pleased that I am no longer the only women in the room but there is still a long way to go, this applies to all elements of diversity – we need to work

together to make our industry more inclusive. We need to create an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and included. Initiatives such as Meat Business Women have been fantastic and we are working hard within the Worshipful Company of Butchers to encourage more diversity.

What do you think are the most obvious benefits from having a diverse workforce?

The biggest benefit is diverse thinking. We want the variety in ideas and perspectives; increasing creativity and driving overall business performance.

Is there anything you do as a leader to encourage a more inclusive or diverse team?

Make our business an aspirational place to work, attract and recognise talent. Ensure people feel safe, included and are developed and motivated. Organisations also need to recognise the importance of a diverse set of role models to inspire their workforce.

What advice would you give to that next generation coming into their careers now?

Treat everyone as you wish to be treated. Ensure you enjoy what you do. In the food industry and

particularly the meat industry no two days are the same, so you need to be flexible and resilient. We are seeing a huge amount of burnout and issues around mental health. For me it's all about balance, never easy to achieve but critically important to putting things into perspective and ensuring that you look after yourself.

Have you had role models that you've been able to look up to?

I have had a number of people who have supported and mentored me at different stages in my career. It is really important to have someone who inspires

you but also someone to use as a sounding board.

If you hadn't had this career, what would you have done?

Pursued my career in art as a fine art valuer at Sotheby's or something in sport.

“It is really important to have someone who inspires you but also someone to use as a sounding board





Amelia Harvey

Amelia is Co-Founder,
The Collective

I was born in England, but moved to just outside Glasgow aged six. With an English accent – and I’m a quarter Pakistani, so I’m a lot darker than your average Scot – I had quite a tough time at school for appearing to be different.

I didn’t feel like I excelled. I was at a private school that celebrated those who performed well, and really ignored everybody else. I threw a lot of my time into horse riding, and then went on to be an eventer and represented the West Coast of Scotland. That was where I put my energy.

I grew up around business and entrepreneurialism because my dad had his own business.

“We wanted to be able to create a business that is not just about profit – but one that does good

I went to university in Glasgow, did marketing and loved it. I then worked for Kellogg’s as a graduate in field sales role. After a year and a half, I joined the L’Oréal commercial team. You work hard, play hard and there are opportunities to progress really quickly.

Four years in, I saw an advert for Gü to run the sales team, and got the job. As a young leadership team, we had the most amazing four years of building that business. Gü was later sold to Noble Foods, so we all went off and did different things.

And I met Mike Hodgson at that point. We just got on so well, we decided to work together. And that’s when we met Ofer and Angus, the founders of The Collective in New Zealand. And that’s where The Collective UK story begins. Those early days were probably some of the most fun and exciting creating something from nothing. It’s been quite a journey. Now, it is bigger

and bolder than we dreamed it could ever be.

How important and influential have role models been?

There’s been some stand-out people along the journey – the sales director at L’Oréal, David Wells. He is an industry legend, and somebody I’ve learned from and admired hugely. James Averdieck, the Gü founder, an amazing out-of-the-box thinker is still a really good friend of mine.

And then Mike Hodgson, who I launched The Collective UK with and who sadly died in 2015. It felt like I always had a bit of a safety blanket with him by my side, I realised that when he was no longer with us. He taught me so much.

All the general managers that I worked for at L’Oréal were women — very strong, very determined women.



Some were collaborative, others were directive, but all were juggling having a family and a big position at L’Oréal. Working with them made me think, “You know, it is totally possible to do this.”

What have you seen as some of the main enablers for inclusivity, flexibility and supporting people?

We couldn’t afford a full-time marketing director. We took somebody on three days a week, and that allowed them to balance their time with their family, so that worked really well for us. From taking on people either as consultants and buying in expertise to the business, to employing people like office managers that are working around school drop off times – to just flex the opportunity for the team. We’ve always done an early finish on Friday to allow people to make choices, have a longer weekend and travel earlier.

I think being flexible is probably a part of being an entrepreneurial business anyway. And that’s fast-tracked for us over the last year, because we’ve just become a B-Corp. It gave us lots of opportunities to do more – think about volunteering, think about enhanced paternity leave, maternity leave. We wanted to be able to create a business that is not just about profit – but one that does good and that has the team and our community at its heart.

What advice would you give to the next generation?

When I interview graduates coming into the business, the thing that shines through is their curiosity. I would say curiosity is probably one of the biggest strengths that you can have. This is the sort of growth mindset that I try and promote with my eight-year-old son.

What has been your focus on diversity & inclusion?

When the Black Lives Matter movement rose, it really started a conversation in our business. Everyone who had a story they wanted to be heard used their voice, and we wanted to provide a platform for them. We listened a lot, and thought, “What are we doing across the board? Where can we learn and improve?”

Our HR director set up a diversity and inclusion team for anyone that wanted to join, anyone who was passionate about getting their voice heard. We have started to run team-wide workshops on inclusiveness and perception, and that’s just the start. We’re looking at ways to learn and improve across the business.

What are the main challenges to making further progress on D&I?

FMCG doesn’t feel as diverse as other sectors. We work in Huckletree, which is a shared office environment, and you can see way more diversity in different sectors. It might have something to do with the industry we’re in – we seem to be a bit stuck in a rut, and the way we go about looking for talent hasn’t changed dramatically over the last decade.

What would you have done if you hadn’t had this career?

Well, one of the things that I have really love doing over the years is house renovation. I’ve done two or three houses as I’ve moved around. I’m just renovating a cottage in the Cotswolds at the moment. It’s complete creative escapism. I’ve found painting to be a very calming and mindful experience, when I’m not getting it all over me!



Shelagh Hancock

Shelagh is CEO, First Milk

I come from a big family of seven children, and I grew up in a home where it didn't matter who came to the door, they had to be fed. I grew up in Northern Ireland, but have lived in England for more than 30 years. I came to university, did agricultural biochemistry and nutrition, then I did a master's in animal nutrition. So I entered the food industry very much from the agricultural side of the supply chain. I worked in that sector for about 10 years, largely with farmer cooperatives.

I wanted to go further along up the supply chain, so I did a postgrad diploma in marketing, which I think was a good bridge for me to come out of the agricultural supply chain into food. I worked for Glanbia, which was an Irish cooperative, went to Milk Link and worked across many different business functions. I always looked for opportunity. I went to commercial roles – trading, procurement – and then into business unit management,

which took me into general management. I became an MD, and then later chief executive, which is the role I'm in now.

We work long hours, as many people do, but I always say to people in the business: you have to enjoy what you do. And if you don't, you're not in the right job. I've never stayed in a job where I didn't feel that the atmosphere or the culture was the right one for me... Life's too short!

When you first started out, were there many female mentors for you to look up to?

In 1990, we went to a trade dinner. The speaker after dinner stood up and said, "Good evening lady and gentlemen." I looked around and I thought, my God, I'm the only woman in this room. It's moved on tremendously since then, but it really was a world of men.

“Inclusion is needed to deliver alignment, and you have to have an aligned workforce to drive the business forward

Working in such a male-dominated industry, what do you think the main benefits would be from the dairies becoming more diverse?

I don't believe in positive discrimination as such – I'm a real believer in hiring the right person for the job. I think women generally have a different management style (but that's not to say that all men have a particular style, either). To me, it's about different mindsets and different outlooks.

So diversity in that sense is really important, but it doesn't necessarily mean gender diversity, or religious diversity. The more diverse your views, the more you look at things from different angles – inside, outside, different perspectives, all of those things.

What does diversity mean? For the first few years, I really needed dairy expertise. So, could I bring diversity from other places? Not really, I needed people who knew what this business was about.

Our industry – and even our business – is very traditional. Our sites are not in very multicultural environments, therefore their workforces tend to reflect the local community, which isn't very diverse in terms of culture or background. Being site and factory orientated, it's largely a male environment – we have about 80% men – but, at our head office, it's probably more like 60%, so the balance shifts. But I don't go out specifically looking for different types of people.

Talk to us about inclusivity.

Inclusion is a subject I really believe in, I think it's needed to deliver alignment. You have to have an aligned workforce to be able to drive the business forward.

I was thinking to myself, why do I feel so strongly about inclusivity? If you think of my upbringing in Northern Ireland in the 70s, we had separate schools, separate places of work, and separate social areas, pubs and housing areas. Everything, largely, was segregated. And I left Northern Ireland because I didn't like that environment. I didn't like the fact that it was not inclusive. I love Northern Ireland, all my family still live there, but I never was comfortable with the exclusion that existed there. For me, that element really runs deep: I didn't like exclusion then, and I don't like it now.

I believe in treating people in a way that's equitable. Everybody comes together for the greater good. Our vision is "Together we'll deliver prosperity", and that word, 'together' is probably the biggest thing that I refer to whenever I talk to people.



The biggest driver for inclusion is people understanding why. Why are they here? Why are we doing things? What's your role within that, and how do you make a difference?

Mental health is another area where you can easily find exclusion. And it's a big problem for society, never mind the industry. I find that it's like talking to farmers about succession planning: having the conversation is the most difficult part. Once you've had the conversation, you're on the road to do something about it.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders?

They need to be really good at change management, and really good at speed, pace and adaptability. Have eyes in the back of your head, and think strategically and carefully about what's ahead. Never believe something is not possible.

If you weren't doing this today, what else would you have done?

I'll tell you what I would be doing: I would be doing something that I absolutely believe in and that I'm passionate about. I've no idea what it would be... but put it this way – I'd have my feet firmly on the ground – I have no dreams of going to the moon!





Andrew Higginson

Andrew's portfolio of NED roles includes Chairman of Wm Morrison Supermarkets Plc



What was your pathway into food and grocery?

My parents were older parents and my dad had fought in the war. Equality of opportunity was always the thing I was brought up on. Not equality of outcome (not everyone can be the CEO), but give everyone the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Coming from a pretty ordinary working-class background in Lancashire, I got the benefit of going to grammar school, and that was my route out of Bury.

I'd done a vocational degree in Town and Country Planning, at Birmingham Poly. So I was all set to be a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed town and country planner. But I managed to stretch it out by doing a year on the Student Union. And that gave me a real taste of responsibility.

I got a bit disillusioned with town planning, so my dad said, "Well, why don't you go into business?" and I didn't really know what that meant. I didn't know anybody in business. I just started applying, and he says, "Oh, all the accountants seem to do quite well at our place, so why don't you try doing accountancy?" So I did. It was kind of a last-minute thing really. Serendipitous.

It felt quite alien at first, and quite intimidating. I was the odd one out! My peers were all from top-end universities. Someone who became a great pal of mine had done nuclear physics at Manchester. I wasn't too bothered in the end, I made my own way.

But I found that I was probably a bit more comfortable in my own skin than I expected.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

I've always tried in my own business life to look for people with talent rather than look at people superficially. And one of the things I've liked most about retail is that you gain respect by what you do, not what you say and how you say it, or which school you went to. Grocery is quite good at promoting people who get things done as opposed to people who make interesting observations!

The benefit of diversity is better decision making. You know, at the end of the day, businesses win or fail if their teams out think the competition. I believe that a more diverse management team will produce better outcomes, and having a diverse executive is vital – much more important than a diverse non-executive team.

The reason I try to encourage diversity is that link all the way back to my childhood and value system. A team with the best talent, built on different experiences, with diverse perspectives on the issues facing the business, should provoke a better outcome.

Have there been mentors that have enabled you to take the next step?

No question – I think having good bosses is a big part of getting on in your career.

I was very lucky. My first mentor was a guy in Hong Kong, John Kedzierski, who was my first boss in a real operating job. I was responsible for accounting, all the finance side, the IT side, distribution, what Unilever called "Commercial".

“I think having good bosses is a big part of getting on in your career

I was 27 and had only worked in Head Office. He was tremendously patient, thoughtful and helpful. He was marketing and sales by background, so was able to teach me a lot. He was able to give me the confidence to do the job. Having him was fantastic.

I think having good bosses is a really important part of anyone's education. And to have someone who's prepared to give you a leg up as opposed to a push down is a very important distinction.

What do you think makes a good leader?

You don't have to be this larger-than-life caricature to be a leader. Charisma comes from competence, and you get listened to if you've got something to say. A good leader can listen to their team's view, but also understand the benefits and drawbacks to each different approach – and then choose the right one. The general rule is, if you make the right decision 70-80% of the time, then the business will do well.

A good leader takes their team with them by listening to them and taking on board their ideas. A good leader has got the confidence to know that having someone incredibly strong working for them will make them look better, not weaker. A leader's job is to try and strike that balance between maintaining standards and disciplines, but also getting people to enjoy their working life.

If you could choose any job, what would you be doing?

Leading a travel company or an airline or something, so I could go all round the world. But I'm not sure that's a good pick now!





Joanna Jensen

Joanna is Founder and Chair, Childs Farm

Prior to setting up Childs Farm, my career background was largely Investment Banking, both in Hong Kong and then in London.

It was when I had my first daughter, Mimi, in 2006, followed by Bella in 2008, when the idea for Childs Farm came about. Bella had terrible eczema, and was allergic to absolutely everything, yet I couldn't find anything on the market that could help with Bella's skin problems that didn't involve steroids or other harsh medicinal treatments. Having been brought up with homeopathic remedies and natural medicines, I thought it couldn't be that hard – so I decided to do it myself.

“Leadership is about inspiring people to give more than they think they have in them

So in 2011, I hooked up with Tom Allsworth, owner of Contract Manufacturer Medichem International, and founder of the highly successful Revolution make up brand.

He and I were immediately aligned on what I was trying to achieve and the space I had discovered in the kids toiletries market, and in a Little Chef on the A303 our relationship began!

I had a very steep learning curve – I hadn't worked in Retail or FMCG before, and I thought you just turned up at Waitrose head office with some samples and were automatically given a listing! I had also totally underestimated the costs of producing toiletries products, and was trying to produce and market products on an absolute shoestring and learning on the job, but I had amazing products, buckets of passion, common sense and a total belief in the fact I would succeed.

In 2014, we got our first National Listings in Waitrose and Boots, which was wonderful but took place whilst I was in the middle of a divorce, we were selling our family home, I had two young girls to look after, and then I was rushed to hospital with a tumour – life was slightly fraught to say the least, but bizarrely working flat out on Childs Farm kept me focused.

Fast forward to 2019, and we became the number one brand in baby & child toiletries in the UK. And then in July this year, we launched our adult range for dry and sensitive skin, Farmologie by Childs Farm, in Boots.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Leadership is about inspiration; inspiring people to give more than they think they have in them, and to do that you have to lead by example, with passion and with excitement.



It's not for everyone, but in any challenger brand disrupting an industry filled with big, international competitors, you've got to have people who are high achievers, riddled with ambition, have a positive attitude and have the same common goal as you do.

Looking back on your career so far, what have you learnt from most?

The biggest lessons came when we had two PR spikes in 2017 and 2018.

I remember the first, sitting in a holiday house Cornwall with family watching the orders coming in to our D2C, and all of us had a drink every time we did a thousand pounds of sales! At £26,000, the penny suddenly dropped, and I thought, A) we don't have enough stock, and B) it's going to take us weeks to get these orders fulfilled!

This situation taught us many things but mainly that we had to join the dots of events pretty quickly, act quickly, make decisions quickly, and communicate effectively. It also showed us which people and suppliers were aligned to our ambition: those people who congratulated us on our success

and told us they would work around the clock to support us we still work with. Those who didn't: we don't.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

It has to be all the letters, postcards and poems that we get from people who say that we've changed their lives because we've helped them with chronic skin conditions. I've always said, "I want to sit in my rocking chair in my old age knowing I've made a difference," and I think I have.

How important is diversity and inclusion to you as a leader?

The basis of our business is that everybody's skin is different. We don't want anyone with skin issues to feel left out, and that ethos really permeates everything we do. We offer solutions to every skin type, and we are an inclusive brand. Our business must operate in the same way. The business case for diversity is very clear – when you have a real diversity of backgrounds and diversity of thought, it gives you the intelligence and skill to make you a better, more inclusive business.

If all of us were straight off the production line, we would only make one product; but the world is a garden in which many different flowers grow, and we want to bring the beauty out of as many of those flowers as we can.

Are there any companies or individuals that you personally admire?

In my industry, the standout has to be Anita Roddick: she changed conscious thought about cosmetic products, championed sustainability 40 years before anyone else, and made sustainably sourced ingredients the heart of her brand. If I can even begin to pick up where she left off, I will be extremely proud.

If you hadn't have trodden this very successful path, what else would you have done?

Whatever it was, I would have been very busy!

I have been working with Riding for the Disabled (RDA), one of our charity partners, for years now so I would have liked to do more with them. Again, RDA is all about inclusivity – anyone can achieve anything – and for that reason, working with Paralympics GB would be inspirational. What both organisations do is utterly, unbelievably incredible. All I know is that I would never have worked for someone else; I just love having the freedom to make live my dream, and empower others to live theirs alongside me.



Paula Jordan

Paula is Managing Director,
UK & Ireland, Mission Foods

I come from a very traditional family. I'm the third of four children, my father was the breadwinner and my mum stayed at home. But there was a spirit in the family around doing your best, and being rewarded for doing your best. There were never really any obstacles in our way.

The notion of gender inequality struck me quite hard, and I was quite dissatisfied by it from a very young age. When I chose to go into the corporate world, I felt like I was following a path that had been walked mainly by men.

I learnt my trade at Coca-Cola, and then moved into more senior roles to prove that you can be a strong female leader. When I became a mother to two girls, it was a real defining moment for me, where I realised I wanted to not only be a role model, but also leave a legacy. And I guess I believed that you could make a powerful difference if you changed things from within.

“When I chose to go into the corporate world, I felt like I was following a path that had been walked mainly by men

Deep down, I wanted to challenge some of the values that I was brought up with, that the men went out to earn the money and the women stayed at home. And when I got into corporate world, I saw lots of my peers getting to that middle career point, making a choice to spend more time with their families, and then finding it very difficult to get back in the career world.

My aspiration is that that decision is as valued as staying in the workplace, for both men and women. It's not just about women. If we can get to a culture in which

people can make their choices without judgement, I think that will be a better workplace. And I'd like to think that ultimately, I make some contribution to that.

What advice would you give to the next generation?

I do think that they should embrace the journey a little bit more. Sometimes they can see the pinnacle, but I don't know whether they can see the climb. You learn from every experience, and even if you don't like it, you build resilience, or you learn what you might want to do next.

Understanding where you want to get to is really important. But thinking about that learning agenda is also critical. You need some life experience, so go and get that, and then come back to it. Don't think everything has to happen today.

Have there been any specific learnings in your career that have moulded you as a leader?

I think, on a positive note, I really try to be authentic in the workplace. It always came naturally. And I don't mean that purely in a positive way, I think some of my peers probably positioned things to their bosses and their stakeholders in a more of a polished way, while I've always been very transparent and very open. And that's just part of my DNA. And I suddenly realised that this notion of authentic leadership was going to be something that I could leverage as a positive.

And I think on a more negative note... I have been on the receiving end of some unacceptable sexism. And that was quite challenging. I'm sure it still goes on now, of course, but I hope that people feel that it's less acceptable.

What do you think are the main barriers preventing further progress on D&I within the sector?

I think fear of change, because if you were to look at most decision makers in organisations, they've usually got quite a few years' experience, they're a certain profile, certain background. So, their world is being challenged by people who have got a different perspective, and a different way of making decisions.

But, I guess, fundamentally, people don't always want to change, do they? You've got to know why you should change, and you've got to want to change yourself.

You only have to look at the noise around the gender pay gap. I can directly remember looking at my team and their salaries, and making a recommendation based on gender pay gap, and being steered by my HR colleague maybe not to go as far.

And I said, absolutely no way, I'm making that change. I'm not financially naïve, of course, you need to be able to find a way. But if you see a gap in salaries for one gender versus the other, for no apparent reason, as a leader, it's your job to fix that.

I remember having a similar conversation about maternity leave. I just felt like the right thought processes weren't going into it.

It's not a PR campaign about D&I, it's about adding value to people's lives, to people's businesses, making it better for society.

When you think about the food and grocery sector, what changes would you like to see in the next five to 10 years?

I think more inclusion and diversity at all levels. It's one of those great areas that should come from the bottom up, but also has to have frameworks in place that can facilitate and enable it.

I'm hoping we're going to have a more sustainable food and grocery world, and I'm massively passionate about plant-based and a flexitarian lifestyle. I don't think it's just about what you eat, it's about the choices you're making.

If you hadn't had taken this career path, what would you have done?

I think I would have been working with an organisation single-mindedly focused on helping women, whether that's because of their background, their race, their gender. It is something I'm passionate about.





Aisling Kemp

Aisling is ex-Group Commercial Development Director, The Billington Group & currently a Director of Team PAK Consulting Ltd

I've been in the food industry for more than 26 years. Whilst studying for my master's at University College Cork, and I got an opportunity to come to the UK and work with Whitbread for six months. It was a great culture, very inclusive and despite my young age at the time, I always felt part of the team. They offered me a full-time position after about five months, and I stayed in the UK.

I worked with Whitbread in menu development, and then went on to work at JD Wetherspoon pub company heading up Catering Development in its highest growth period and I loved it! After that, I got an opportunity to cross to the supplier side, and went to work for Geest, which is now Bakkavor in a business development & innovation role across all their sites. In 2002 I joined a manufacturer called Bar Foods in Cardiff, became MD, and with the team we absolutely rocketed that business & doubled the profit in 3 years.

On behalf of the owners I led the sale of Bar Foods to the Billington Group in 2012. The Billington Group wanted me to stay on in the role of MD, and I subsequently became heavily involved in acquisitions for the group alongside the CEO and headed up the Commercial & Innovation strategy for Group wide food customers.

After leading the consolidation of another two acquisitions into the Group I was promoted to the Billington Group Board in 2016. I was the first female on the board in its 157-year history. After almost four years I decided I wanted to spread my wings, further my career plan and look for an investment in the sector. I left the Billington

“ I always ask myself: how do I take my team with me? ”

Group in my Executive position at the end of last year and stayed on in a non-exec position until May this year. It was a great business, and I met some lifelong friends whilst there but am now enjoying helping other businesses with their strategy & investment plans as well as working on my next leadership role so watch this space...!

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

You know, it's all about people. Businesses are all about people and having an inclusive & diverse workforce gives you that breadth of thought. You get a lot more ideas from different age groups, genders, cultures and you get people with different skill sets which ultimately drives positive change in a business.

How do you personally role model that inclusive leadership style?

I always ask myself: how do I take the team with me? It's not about

me – it's about the team and it's about the business, the values, the purpose & culture within. I like to listen & talk to people, I like to spend time around the business – culture is so important to me and as a leader I care about the people who work in the business. And the other thing is communication. My view is, let's share with people how we're doing, let's share with people where we're going. Because the reality is the more you invest in your people, the more your people will invest back in you & your business.

What kind of D&I measures, or initiatives have you benefitted from personally?

I've benefitted from having some really good mentors that I could talk to about how I was feeling. We all know that women can sometimes experience 'Imposter Syndrome' throughout their career and think "Ooh, I don't know if I'm good enough to do this". I'm a firm believer in mentoring for women and I have had brilliant mentors both male and female in my career. It's something I now champion myself and am mentoring some amazing women in the industry in the Plan B UK Mentoring program www.planbmentoring.com.

What do you find most rewarding about working in the food and grocery sector?

I absolutely love this industry, because it's fast-paced, it's ever-changing and no two days are the same. If you want a consistent job where you go in, do your bit, then go home, this is not the industry for you. But if you love the evolution of changing consumer behaviours and want to help shape the future of our eating habits then it's a brilliant sector to be in!

What has been the biggest challenge during your career?

Staying true to myself and my value set in a very male dominated working environment. All too often women leaders are expected to 'behave' in a certain way; I've had an experience in the past where one particular leader wanted me to be 'harder and more aggressive with the team'. Essentially, I was told to be more like some of the male leaders in the business at the time & I found that very difficult as it's not the way I operate. It felt very alien to my value set. I tried it and it failed, miserably, with the team and the results that followed because it just wasn't me. It taught me a valuable lesson, stay true and be your authentic self!

In terms of your time at Billington, how did you see the company culture change?

I think I certainly brought a new dynamic to the business. There were no other female MDs around the group and only one other female director, so I certainly set out to champion D&I and the CEO supported that. I used to get calls from team members across the subsidiary sites asking for advice how they could further their career and how I balanced a stressful job, family life and still take time

out to talk to them. I guess I was approachable and always made time – my answer was always the same, I'm not superwoman but I do believe in myself and keep telling myself I can do it and somehow I do!

The culture in Billington's became very much around progression, nurturing talent within the businesses and we put a mentoring programme in place. I do believe that mentoring done well can pay dividends in the long run. A culture of inclusion where its led from the top will automatically bring diversity into the business in any case. Like a lot of businesses Billington's recognise there is still more to do and are working on further initiatives now to make D&I part of the DNA of the business.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

Well, I probably would be back at home in Ireland, maybe doing something in arts & teaching. Perhaps something to do with music, which is my other passion. I used to sing a lot when I was younger, but I'm pretty bad now! Funnily enough I was asked to sing at the Papa John's OPCON in Florida a few years back as part of the Supplier themed session – let's just say it took quite a few G&T's and the help of a very loud band!!





Paula Lindenberg

Paula is President, UK, Ireland, Spain and the Canary Islands, AB InBev



I was born in Brazil, I'm married and have two girls. Though I've worked in marketing for other CPGs, I was excited to work in beer for AB InBev. Beer has always been a passion of mine. I love that it's fun, it is about bringing people together. It is a product that has always felt interesting in terms of size, and in terms of its ability to impact society and culture.

After working abroad, I came back to Brazil to lead the marketing department. I have to be honest, when I joined the company in 2001, it was my dream job. I was in that role for three years, and it gives you the chance – when you have the full portfolio of brands in your hands – to bring your point of view, and to have real impact.

That was a moment where I felt diversity and inclusion were very much part of the conversation internally. At that point, we all felt that women shouldn't have been portrayed in the beer adverts the way they had been. One of the things we did to

counter this was to invite artists to redesign our old brand posters. The artists portrayed women as enjoying beer and being part of the conversation, not serving beer in bikinis. In a way, we were using our brands as a platform to make a change, not only for ourselves but for the category as a whole. I was the first woman at AB InBev Brazil to ever have a vice-president role and I hope that inspired other colleagues to believe in themselves.

In AB InBev we have the mindset that people perform at their best when they are out of their comfort zone. Putting them in positions where they know they are stretched is how we tend to move people around. In my case, these were the positions that made me learn the most.

What does great leadership mean to you?

It's about the results of the team together. Today, we spend so much time at work that I think it's about creating an atmosphere – a working environment – that allows people to be their best and to be authentic. It means fostering the team to provoke you and to bring ideas, to be agile, to implement, to fail... but then to learn. And to move at pace.

“Find a place to work that is aligned to you and to your values – and one that you can feel passionate about

What career challenge have you learned the most from?

Those where I have been out of my comfort zone. I think you learn the most when you have to step back and listen. That exercise of listening, while it may not be the fastest or easiest way to make decisions, is the most effective way to get things done. For this reason, the more diverse group you are in, the better.

What advice do you have for the next generation of sector leaders?

Find a place to work that is aligned to you and to your values – and one that you can feel passionate about. I've found working with beer keeps you young at heart! Also, be open to new things and try something you didn't plan for. That's when you flex your muscles, and that's when, in my mind, you learn the most.

What are the main benefits of having a diverse workforce and team?

Diversity means you're better prepared to have a broader conversation, one that takes in different points of view, and is much richer because of it. This mindset is crucial for any business, especially in our world which is changing all the time.

How different is the UK's thinking on D&I compared with some of the other countries you've led in?

The UK is more advanced because it has so many different cultures and nationalities, and that fosters openness and acceptance. Brazil is different, Ecuador is different. The UK is more developed, which I love. That's not to say that we don't still have a lot to do. In the company, at senior levels, today we are 50/50 in terms of gender balance. There are 36 languages spoken in my office! We have a Business Resource Group called Landing Pad, which aims to help people from different backgrounds to adjust to living and working in the UK. We also have groups to support Women in Beer, our LGBTQ+ colleagues, and a group focussing on race and equality.

What do you think are the challenges preventing further D&I progress within the sector?

The lack of role models is one. It's a problem. I had doubts if I was going to get there, partially because I'd never seen a female leader get there before. Diversity and inclusion is a long-term process. It's about working on all aspects of the organisation, including recruitment and training, and about having a level playing field for people to be successful. It needs to be a mindset – one where the benefits are only going to come when you're not in the position anymore, maybe not even in the company anymore. It's just the right thing to do.

What career would you have liked if you hadn't had this one in FMCG?

The thing I would love to have done – and who know, maybe one day I will – is be a researcher. In terms of trying to understand people and how they make their choices; how their brains work, their behaviours. Understanding people is a passion of mine. I would also love to be an artist. In my spare time I draw.





Stuart Machin

Stuart is Managing Director, Food, M&S

“All of us can have a tough time at some point in our career – none of us are perfect

I joined Marks and Spencer on April 30th, 2018 as Managing Director of M&S Food. I am also Executive Lead for Talent across the M&S group and Non-Executive Director of Ocado Retail Ltd.

I have spent nearly 30 years in the food, fashion and home retail sector holding senior operational and commercial roles in UK retailers Sainsbury's, Tesco and ASDA and more recently spent 10 years in Australia working at Wesfarmers as COO and CEO of Coles and Target respectively.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

It means bringing more diverse thinking to the table. At M&S, we are working hard to create a diverse and inclusive workforce, and it starts at the top, with people like Steve Rowe and me. Steve has strong values and a real sense of fairness and appreciates diversity in all its guises. It is about people being truly themselves and feeling like we all belong.

When writing our strategy, we started with, 'One Food Team' but Laura in our PR team said, "Stuart, you always welcome everybody, it doesn't matter where they're from, everybody belongs". And so we immediately updated the food strategy to 'One Food Team Where Everyone Belongs'.

Diversity makes for a stronger organisation because everyone can be themselves – and at M&S I have always felt I can be myself. As leaders, we have the privilege of being able to recruit the best



people and make sure we have the best people around the table whilst creating an environment where everyone has an equal chance success.

Everybody wants to feel like they have won in life, and if you get the chance to help someone win, for me that is a success. I can recall as a teenager my mother having a very successful career but was often taunted for being the only woman in what was then, a "man's world" (I even remember reading that in the local paper). Thankfully, society has moved on considerably.

What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Be yourself, and don't think you have to be perfect – take your time a bit more and enjoy the moment. I think I would tell myself to make a more time for friends and family, because I think it balances you out and it does help you to develop and appreciate things more. Always be your own person — don't try to be anybody else.

Crucially, learn from as many people as you can. In my family, my mother and my grandfather were my role models and constant guides. In my career I was so fortunate that in my 20s I had a superb leader in Sainsbury's called Jon Hartland who gave me so much confidence, which at the time I was lacking. Later in my career, undoubtedly Archie Norman and Michael Mire (ex-McKinsey) have had a huge impact on me and my development.

Who were your role models?

Both Archie and Michael, because although very different people, both intellectually and emotionally smart, have huge integrity. Although extremely business focused, they do genuinely care about people and have both provided me with huge support in helping me be the best I can be.

So are Archie and Michael role models or mentors?

I have many role models, from family members through to public figures, and people in business I have previously or currently work with.

Having a mentor is more of a formal relationship, and I am fortunate that I have various people including Jan du Plessis,

BT Chairman and Andy Halford, who also sits on the M&S board. In my current job, I still see Archie, Steve and Michael as mentors and people I would seek advice from.

I mentor not only my direct leadership team, but people throughout the wider M&S group; acting as someone who listens, coaches, challenges and helps individuals reach their potential.

What challenge have you learned the most from in your career?

All of us can have a tough time at some point in our career – none of us are perfect. I was explaining to my team, previously when I recruited people, that if someone had a blemish on their record, I used to look unfavourably on them. But the interesting thing is, I had a 'blip' in my career five years ago when things did not go quite to plan, and I was devastated as I had never tripped up before. When I look back, that was an incredible learning experience and has made me a much better CEO today. I know that I love product, stores and developing people but that experience has taught me I also need to give more time to other parts of the business like governance and financial

controls. Having a competent and diverse team around you and building an environment where bad news travels faster than good is essential for success.

Which companies or leaders do you look up to, outside the sector?

Firstly, retail is in my blood and always will be, as I know I have a natural retail instinct.

Outside of retail, music, entertainment, and theatre all really interest me.

I have great admiration for when entertainment supports education and gives people enjoyment and escapism.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

Prime Minister! But I wouldn't do it, because I wouldn't be a good fit for government, I wouldn't like the bureaucracy. I think the current political environment is a real shame, not just for this country, as it doesn't encourage great leaders to step up and take up a career in politics; the media are out to get you before you have a chance to even get started.

The job I really wanted as I was growing up was to be a teacher of English and Religious Studies.





Ronak Mashru

Ronak is General Manager, UK&I, Glanbia Performance Nutrition

My story starts with my family. My grandad and parents are East African and came to the UK from Uganda in the early 1970s. There, they were successful business owners who had a good life. But then came Idi Amin's military coup of 1971, and all Indians were forced to leave Uganda. My family felt fortunate to be welcomed by the UK, a gratitude that runs deep. I came out of this lovely clash of cultures and enjoy both, with that classic Indian upbringing



of people coming in and out of the house all the time.

I graduated from UCL and Cambridge but actually got a job as a stand-up comedian! I did that for a couple of years, so I was able to experience something different before joining P&G and starting a career in consumer goods. I was at P&G for six years, with Diageo for seven. At Diageo it was great to be at the forefront of a lot of diversity conversations, particularly in the last couple of years there. It was becoming a much bigger topic. Then I joined Red Bull in the role of Commercial Director. I found that at Red Bull you were very much allowed to be yourself. But all of that opportunity and setup, I think, goes back to the graft and hard work I learned from my grandad.

About five years ago, I was asked what my dream job would be and I said I'd love to be the MD of a health nutrition business with growth ahead of it. It's exciting

“The right thing to do is to foster a workforce that is representative of your consumer base

to be in that position now. The additional challenge of the pandemic means we are in an even better position to make an impact on the nation's health. To have the chance to make some difference feels good.

Have you had any career role models?

Yes, there was my grandad for a start, and also leaders I'm currently working with. A senior leader suggested two books he wanted us to read – *Rebel Ideas*, and *The Growth Mindset*. It's great to be working as part of an organisation where this is going to be the mindset.



As a leader, is there something you do to actively, and personally, to create an inclusive environment?

Yes, and one is hiring decisions. I'm always curious about who we hire and what they're going to add to the team, particularly at the leadership level. And then I also look on a cultural level. I'm a believer in building cultures from the bottom up with support and coaching from leadership teams. If company culture is shaped by the team, then everyone can buy into it straight away because they've been central to forming it.

What do you think are the main benefits of having a diverse workforce?

The right thing to do is to foster a workforce that is representative of your consumer base, and a workplace where people feel they can be themselves. I think the more diverse a workforce you've got, the more likely you are to have a culture that's resilient enough to handle the ambiguity and volatility we will go through – and are going through at this time.

Is there any particular challenge that you've learned from the most?

I definitely have a desire to be successful in everything I commit to but in reality, most of your learning comes from harder times – so I'm trying to enjoy and embrace the setbacks as opposed to worrying about them.

What do you hope your sector will look like in five to 10 years' time?

I think there are already some great things happening, especially in terms of recognising our industry's responsibility to the nation's health. This is definitely one of the reasons I joined Glanbia – and you can see us all working together on that. Food and grocery is also a well-networked, social industry, where people look out for each other. I hope that continues.

What are the biggest challenges preventing further progress on D&I in the sector?

I think everyone realises we're not perfect, but the more individual experiences you hear about, the more you learn. I think there are two challenges. The first is ensuring we focus on individual experiences, not generalisations. The second is making sure that D&I is recognised as the driver of performance it is, instead of getting focused on short-term metrics.

If you'd not had your career in business what would you have done?

I would have been a comedian. I definitely wouldn't have taken over dad's corner shop – that was hard work. I enjoyed my time as a comic, because even then it gave me a platform to talk about a clash of cultures.

Has there been a book that's inspired you along the way?

The Founder's Mentality from Bain & Co speaks a lot about never ignoring that frontline employee, as they are closest to consumers and what the business needs.

Any final D&I observations?

At a corporate level, we are doubling down our efforts in this area, with sponsorship from our CFO, Mark Garvey. We're working with a company called Mix Diversity to shape our thinking and we've kicked off focus groups to see what's working and what's not. I'd like to think, just in the 12 months I've been here, the change that I've seen in gender diversity alone has been visible.





Carmel McConnell MBE

Carmel is Founder, Magic Breakfast

I grew up in a mixture of Northern Ireland and East London, my early career was a mixture of finance roles, and in my spare time was involved with campaigns against racism and nuclear weapons. As a young, wannabe journalist I went to cover a story at a peace camp in Greenham Common, and ended up staying there for two years, it was quite the introduction to activism! This was at a US Air Force base where new missiles were due to arrive without a UK decision – I didn't think that was right. So I ended up campaigning, getting arrested for peaceful protest, raising public awareness. We won, the American base closed and it's now a beautiful area of common ground, for everyone.

After Greenham I joined corporate life, used the ideas about purpose and passion from activism in a technology career. I built up my own business, advising big firms on purpose-led change. I wrote a book about companies building trust as USP. It was called

Change Activist and as part of that I talked to a range of people I wouldn't usually meet day to day at work. One day, talking to a group of five Headteachers in Hackney, I asked "do we in the City help create a fairer, as well as richer, economy". They replied that children regularly arrived at school having had nothing to eat since the day before. When I asked why their parents weren't feeding them, they said: "these parents are hungry themselves, they have no money. The food budget is the one that gets reduced because that's the only negotiable."

It really shocked me, so I went to the local Tesco, bought cereals and bread, dropped it off at the schools on Saturday morning. And the teachers said, "We've had kids that we don't see until 11 o'clock here at class on time – they were just out looking for food before. We've had kids that are usually naughty, settled and ready to learn – they were just acting up because they were hungry."

“My strapline was
“no child too
hungry to learn”

One Headteacher said I could give out warm bagels in his school playground before school started. There was one little boy – Liam – who stood there in front of me, asked if he could have another one, then filled his pockets full of bagels. "This is for my mum, because there's nothing at home, and this is for my auntie next door," he was saying. I couldn't believe it. The schools with high numbers of free school meal children kept asking for help, I kept adding new schools, paying for food myself.



Any child who wanted a breakfast could have one, without price barrier or stigma. I wanted each hungry child to feel valued and would say "you are here today to prepare for your future success". *Change Activist* came out, became a best seller so I put the money from that into the charity. My strapline was "no child too hungry to learn" Sadly, even with the heroic efforts of Marcus Rashford MBE, we still haven't solved this problem for good. There are 1.8 million school age children who are most at risk of hunger. And a hungry child cannot concentrate. The charity is so lucky to have great food allies, Heinz UK for example donated 12 million breakfasts – their super healthy no added sugar beans and are doing lots more to help. So much care!

About three years ago I decided to focus on lobbying the Government to invest in school breakfasts, it worked and we successfully set up the National School Breakfast Programme. Before lockdown this was reaching over 300,000 children every morning. Magic Breakfast still has a waiting list and needs support

to reach more hungry children – reaching about 48,000 every day in 500 schools. So please help! About 6 months ago I stepped back from the charity, handing over to a great team. It's a good idea for the Founder to leave at the right time in any organisation! I am now advising leaders on scaling up, as well as working on a national winter hunger push and updating *Change Activist*.

Did you have people mentoring you along the way?

One great mentor was Wendy Briner, a family therapist, organisational behaviour guru — who, God help her, had to support me through my MBA. She told me to make more space for thinking time! And my late father Gerald, a gentle soul, was the biggest influence on me, encouraging and ambitious in his own way.

Is D&I an important subject to you?

Why is it that only a few of us get the best chances in life? I think this has to change and we are the ones to do it. We are all uniquely able and precious! I genuinely believe global answers are less

likely to come from the 16-18% of humanity from the white West. Those of us who have the power have to be part of facilitating this paradigm shift. Let's see senior teams of every company made up of the humanity we are. And at personal level, we all have to keep self educating, and checking our natural prejudices. I try to be a champion of every voice, everyone, which means not excluding anyone. I don't like going to "one type of person only" things, I want men there when we talk about solving gender inequality, I like straight people leading campaigns on LGBTI+ issues. Why exclude anyone? Surely we are all trying to learn from each other, to be kind. We need to open up the boxes, not box ourselves in.

What advice would you give to people wanting to make change?

Follow your gut. Believe in yourself, trust yourself take action, learn from it, don't wait for the perfect plan. If you don't know what action to take - imagine you are on stage, being applauded and recognised for an issue that you have championed. What would that issue be? What do you feel strongly about? If nothing, that's data, you've maybe lost a bit of your feeling self for some reason. Maybe? Just take a small action – do that and you expand your comfort zone. More on how to make big things happen fast in the updated version of *Change Activist* out May 2021!



Marnie Millard

Marnie is CEO, Nichols



I've been in the food and drink industry for most of my career, and have spent the last 25 years in the beverage industry. I started as an account executive, then moved to Sales and Marketing. I've been a Managing Director, a Commercial Director, and have run my own business, too.

I had my career mapped out: a grand plan to be an MD of a factory in a European soft drinks business. And, I did it – but it was tough! So, there's a lesson to be careful what you wish for! Still, it was the point in my career when I learned the most. Sometimes it's as important to learn what you don't want to do, as much as what you want to do.

I was at Gerber in another turnaround role when I got a call in 2012 to say Nichols was looking for a UK MD. My overriding thought was that this is a real opportunity to get a better work-life balance. I joined Nichols in October and did a major restructure in January. Here

I learnt an important lesson: if the structure is wrong, if people aren't the right fit, then give yourself 100 days and then get on and execute. When I come to step down, one of the things I'm most proud of is that my successor, Andrew Milne, has come from the talent pool I drew three years ago.

Who were your career role models?

As a woman and a CEO of a PLC, the thing with role models is that, sadly, there's still too few of us. So, it's important to share positive stories. I spoke at a lunch for the North West Business Leaders Forum, which had a rising star award. It was hard to judge and I came away thinking, "I don't know if I've hit the mark," but then, out of the blue, I had this LinkedIn connection from one of the women attendees. She said, "I want to thank you. You made me think with your comment about being brave at certain points in your career. There's this opportunity in my company and

I thought 'I'm not ready for it,' but after hearing you I thought, 'What would Marnie do?' and I realised it would be to go for it."

What does great leadership mean?

It's having a leadership team around me that, value-wise, is aligned with me, but is potentially different to me in approach and different in experience. It's about creating an atmosphere where contributions are welcomed, listened to and passionate opinions and beliefs are shared.

Why is diversity and inclusion so important to you?

I feel passionate about it, even though I know we still have loads to learn. For a start, we understand that there is a demonstrable result in output from having a diverse and inclusive board, leadership team, and workforce. Also a lot of the good things we've done are down to one of my HR team, Gabrielle, who has been really thinking about how we make the advertising and recruitment of roles more inclusive.

“Leadership means having a leadership team around me that, value-wise, is aligned with me, but is different to me in approach and different to me in experience

Is there a particular diversity and inclusion example that stays with you?

This one put fire in my belly. I was invited to speak at a dinner at Harvey Nichols in Manchester about my experiences of being a female CEO. It was attended by around 80 influential people in the city, primarily all of the advisory community, as well as some big businesses. I'm standing there and out of those 80 I'd say, in terms of diverse faces, I can't recall any. In terms of age: 55 and up. In terms of gender... four

women. Here were all these firms who say they have diversity and inclusion on their agenda, have programmes doing this, have mentors doing that, and yet just four women in the room. This was only a couple of years ago. I did my talk, but at the end I couldn't help myself, so I said, "I network with a lot of your colleagues and work with your graduate teams, actually mentoring your rising stars, but you need to go back and reflect, because we've got quotas on boards and you've made commitments... yet I'm in a room and there's just four women. Something's not working, guys."

If you hadn't done this, what other career might you have had?

I wanted to be a teacher! And that's why I'm Chair of the Board at UA92, because I can go in and guest lecture. Academia and business, there's a big void with higher education, and I'm realising my dream, just in a different way.





Tom Moody

Tom is Senior Vice President & Managing Director, P&G Northern Europe



I was born in Barnsley in South Yorkshire. My Dad ran a steel business, and my Mum was a nutritionist and Mum to four kids. I studied International Business and French at Aston University, including a year at a French Business School in Bordeaux. After four brilliant years I joined P&G straight from university.

At the time, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. I figured I'd probably do a couple of years at P&G, pick up some experience, and then go and do something else. And I probably thought I'd follow in my Dad's footsteps and run my own business – but 25 years later I'm still at P&G.

I've moved around a lot within the organisation. I ran a sales area in South Wales to start with, before moving to work on Sunny Delight in Newcastle. Then I moved out to Geneva, Switzerland, where I was for five years. It was there that I got married and had the first of my three children.

After that, I came back to the UK and had three main roles at P&G: I ran our beauty business for four years; then took up the Sales Director role; and then was appointed Senior Vice President & Managing Director, P&G Northern Europe in 2015, which has been an tremendous privilege.

The fun thing with a 'branded house' like P&G is the range of challenge the different brands present. Each has its own unique personality and problems, and each reacts in a different way to economic circumstances or trends. You can move around a lot within the different brands and geographies. I don't feel like I've been in the same company for 25 years — I feel like I've had 25 different jobs.

What does great leadership mean to you?

In the past, I would have said that great leadership is about working with people to achieve their goals and the goals of the organisation. Increasingly I find that definition to be too functional and too far removed from what many leaders really find themselves doing every day. Increasingly I think that great leadership is about bringing out the potential in other people in the organisation.

Once a leader accepts that most of what happens in their business they can't touch directly, it becomes clear that the most important thing to focus on is supporting other people and allowing them to realise their potential. As leaders, we are the finders and builders of potential, rather than the people who call the shots. It's all about encouraging a team member to do a task they don't think they're capable of, or supporting a colleague in a role they don't think they're qualified for.

What challenges in your career have you learned from the most?

I've done three or four 'ugly' jobs – the sorts of jobs that nobody else wants but you take on when you're climbing the ladder, like leading the turnaround for a brand that has been going backwards for a while. In these jobs you're up against very adverse circumstances, you have to motivate an organisation that feels downbeat, and make key decisions to get the business going in a different direction. These sorts of jobs are really, really hard work – but are the ones you learn the most from. I've loved all my ugly jobs – they're my favourites.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you personally?

We can now prove with data that an organisation that reflects society will get better results than one that doesn't. It's simple stuff. If, for example, I've got a team without any racial or

“ Once a leader accepts that most of what happens in their business they can't touch directly, it becomes clear that the most important thing to focus on is supporting other people

ethnic diversity, how are they going to understand the needs of consumers with different hair types & needs to them? That's the science of it. The art is the feeling you can create in a diverse organisation where everyone is contributing their uniqueness to drive a better outcome.

With gender split, we've been at 50/50 for ages, and will continue to be in the future. But the job's never done... we've got more to do on inclusion – because there are still barriers which prevent our people giving everything they've got.

What else would you have liked to have done if you hadn't taken this career path?

I've always fancied running a ski station. I love the Alps and think running a corner of them could be fun. I'm a big fan of chair lifts with sun on them, and would make it my life's work to eliminate moguls.





Clodagh Moriarty

Clodagh is Retail & Digital Director, Sainsbury's

I'm Clodagh Moriarty and I have the amazing privilege of being the Retail and Digital Director at Sainsbury's. I'm our Board sponsor for Wellbeing and sit as a Non-Executive Director on our Sainsbury's Bank board. I'm an electronic engineer with an MBA from INSEAD and worked with Bain & Co before joining Sainsbury's where I have been for the last 10 years, working in a range of roles across strategy, trading and channels.

“One of the key messages I shared with all our colleagues was the fact that I work flexibly, and I encourage others to do the same

If you had to give some career advice to your younger self, what would it be?

The most important piece of advice would be to back yourself. So many of us underestimate our potential and sometimes that holds us back. The other is that it's okay to have a plan but it's equally okay for that plan to change, because we learn as we go. We're human so things are unpredictable but having a longer-term plan really helps to provide a sense of purpose.

I'd also tell my younger self not to be afraid to ask. When I came back from maternity leave for the first time, I wanted to move to flexible working. I practised asking that question for three months. Which is crazy, because when I asked the question, my boss said: "No problem." I was still talking through my well-rehearsed speech before I had realised he'd agreed.

Finally, you only have one life, so don't judge your success on someone else's tick sheet.

What have your flexible patterns been since you've come back from mat leave?

I have two amazing children, who are now aged six and four. They're intense and demanding and wonderful in equal proportion. When I came back from maternity leave, I returned to work on four days a week. I subsequently became pregnant again and whilst I was off, Sainsbury's promoted me. So, I came back as a director but still on a four-day week. Since then I've taken on a bigger role and I've flipped to flexible working patterns and hours as opposed to four-day weeks. This allows me to accommodate our business which is 24/7 and the daily routines at home, now that the kids are in school. I still work four days a week out of term time. One of the key messages I shared with all our colleagues was the fact that I work flexibly, and I encourage others to do the same. At the bottom of my email signature is a note that says: "At Sainsbury's, we work flexibly."

So, while it suits me to email you now, I don't expect a response out of your working hours". That is something I live and breathe, because, quite frankly, I will take the time with my family. It makes me more effective and happier in all aspects of my life.

Who have your personal role models and mentors been along your journey?

My most influential role model is my Mum, without a shadow of a doubt. She's my biggest fan and greatest critic, which is the perfect balance for me. Her guidance and her ability to balance what she did, inside and outside the home, made it feel possible for me.

Our previous CEO, Mike Coupe, was a role model too. Mainly because he showed me what it meant to take a punt on people and how to support them through their careers. He did that massively for me. I was working in the strategy team and he supported me through a move into a trading role. At that point, I didn't know the trading dynamic from one end of a can of beans to the other, but he backed the individual. This is something I saw him do that across the organisation. If I can do what he did, which is make sure that you

always see the individual, what they can contribute, and bring the best out of them, then wow, we'd be unstoppable.

What do you see in grocery as a barrier to progression on diversity?

Role modelling is important, and I don't think there's enough of it. Can individuals in the sector see people like them? Because if you can't, it's hard to have confidence that progression is possible for you. One crucial part of solving that is by doing what we're doing, which is trying to bring in, or grow, as much diverse talent as possible. I do think flexibility plays into it. Work is something that is part of life, it isn't something that happens outside of life.

What's your aspiration for grocery in five years' time?

I think the world of grocery is changing. We've seen this channel shift over the last six months, and customers now think, "I want to shop how I want to shop," which is beautiful. Placing control back with the consumer. I would hope that the way customers shop becomes so much more fluid and then our stores will continue to adapt to best serve our customers' needs.

Do you think there'll be a different talent mix within the business?

On the retail part of the business, there will always be a clear demand for people who are customer led. These types of people anticipate problems, address the pain points, understand individuals and are great at customer service. People who are great at engaging with the customer and solving problems with no hand-offs.

We will also continue to see a surge in the need for digital and tech talent.

What does great leadership mean to you?

I think you absolutely need to have a vision and purpose which you can energise people with, and a clear set of outcomes which you can use to empower a team to achieve together. I do believe I'm at the service of our organisation and my job is to unlock the potential my colleagues have. My job is to let their brilliance shine. If I can get that right, hopefully that's great leadership.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I love my job. It helps me fulfil my purpose. I'm exceptionally loyal to a value-based company whose people I greatly respect and admire. So straight off the bat, if I wasn't doing this right now, I'd probably be a full-time mum until I found something equally special to that. That said, when I was growing up, I was going to be a Montessori school teacher for the longest time, then a lawyer, followed by an engineer...and this is from the woman who said it was good to have a plan! But I think all that tells you is either I'm quite indecisive or...that I can find excitement and adventure in most walks of life!





Henrietta Morrison

Henrietta is Founder, Lily's Kitchen
Proper Food for Pets

I've always been an entrepreneur. I worked briefly for The Daily Mail Group in telesales when I graduated, which was very tough, but really gave me a lot of great experience. Every time I set up a business, I think: Where can I make a difference? What's the gap? Where's the need? It generally comes from an issue or need that I'm experiencing, that I feel like other people might be experiencing, too.

So my businesses have been deliberately very varied. Part of my internal criteria is that I can have no former experience in this area, because I just love coming to something baggage-free.

I set up a teddy bear business with some friends at university, which was eventually sold to Hamleys, and then I had a diversity magazine and conference fair business. After that, I set up a portal for the gay community... at a time when it was incredibly uncool to be gay.

“D&I has to be integrated into the family culture, otherwise it doesn't go beyond the HR desk

And then I got to Lily's Kitchen, and that was very much driven by a need that I felt wasn't being met, which was for healthy food for my dog. There was always such a stench when I opened tins of dog food, and I just thought, "No, I'm sure somebody could do better than that." And that's how it started.

I think being an entrepreneur also came out of a need. I graduated in a recession in 1991, and the milkround had dried up and there was nothing around so we had to fend for ourselves.

I sold Lily's Kitchen to Nestlé in March. They're so happy with

it, and they will be very good custodians. They will provide the logistics and international support the business now needs to keep it growing.

What did you enjoy most about building Lily's?

It's been such a privilege to build such a wonderful business. In the early days, Sam Roddick, Anita's daughter, placed a huge order of something like 800 tins. She called up and said, "It's the only food that hasn't made my dog ill". And we did the delivery in about eight different goes, because I had one of those tiny electric cars.

And it was at that moment that I thought "Hurray, other people can see that this is a great product!". It's very hard to replicate that joy you get when you're excited and your customers are excited... it's very affirming. Becoming a founding member of B Corp was also a huge joy, and of course being awarded the Royal Warrant was an amazing moment.

Why is D&I important to you?

If you want a success story with your business then you need a true reflection of the population you are serving – people from all walks of all life with a myriad of different experiences. You can't do that if you've got a company that has a cookie-cutter recruitment policy.

As you were building the culture at Lily's, did you have initiatives to ensure a diverse workforce?

Yes. The leader has to give the HR team the confidence to really go for it, it's not the other way round. At Lily's Kitchen, we had a lot of initiatives around disability, visible and invisible. We had an epilepsy group within the business. We did diversity training with Stonewall. But I think it's really got to be integrated into the family culture, otherwise it doesn't go beyond the HR desk.

It's not just about the black/white conversation or the gay/straight conversation, but also about being an employer who offers flexibility. If you say to someone, "Look, the hours are your hours, if you want to do three days that's fine, but make it work for you", you get so much loyalty back for that.

What do you think are the challenges preventing further progress on diversity and inclusion?

It's the fact that all the leaders are men. You see very few women in senior positions. It's not funny anymore – you can't just shrug your shoulders and walk away from the problem, you've got to get in there and make things happen. Positive action is exactly what we need.

What I've witnessed is how men are just so forthright with their



opinions. They can be quick to take credit for things that a woman has made happen, but she's done it quietly and behind the scenes. Women are naturally self-deprecating and men are generally desperate for the glory. Men like to debate, and I think the way women interact in a group context can put them at a disadvantage sometimes. Many times I've been left behind because I haven't been 'gung ho'.

So maybe it's a question of training up women who have leadership potential. At Lily's Kitchen we trained the group of women at middle management to give them the confidence to be on the senior management team. It wasn't anything to do with capability, it was skills like how to phrase a question, how to interject, how to give your opinion in a way that's going to be

heard – quite simple things, but it did make a huge difference and it gave them a lot of confidence in that debating context.

If you went back to the beginning, what would you have done instead?

I love being an entrepreneur, and it feels like a wild ride every single time. I can't imagine having done anything else.





Seb Munden

Seb is Executive Vice President & General Manager, Unilever UK & Ireland

I joined Unilever in 1990 as a marketing trainee at Lever Brothers in the UK after completing my degree in English Language and Literature at Oxford University.

I went on to hold various senior roles across the UK, US and Germany before being appointed Vice President of the Laundry Category for Europe in 2008, and head of the Global Marketing Operations Team in 2012.

I now lead the UK & Ireland business, a position I've held since



2017. Over this time I've driven more sustainable packaging, and pioneered new ways of working across Unilever to accelerate the agility of the business in a more digitally connected world. I champion the inclusion of more diverse young talent in the workforce, and into Unilever. I'm married to Elisabeth and have two adult children.

What does great leadership mean to you?

I think leadership is a combination of being instinctive and being self-aware or conscious. The instinctive part is about not overriding what you know is right, and the self-aware part is personal mastery. You have to turn up to every new engagement without bringing any of the baggage of what happened five minutes ago, and just be present with people. Just listen and be there – that takes concentration.

There's another part of leadership, which is setting strategy. In hiring

or casting, that's building diversity of thought, and encouraging difference of ideas. I'm a white male who went to Oxford, so my D&I journey is as an ally. But what I learned at university has held strongly for me ever since – to enjoy the plurality of opinions, advice and perspectives on the world and not to feel that you have to come down on one side or the other. Being decisive is not the same as taking sides.

What are the wider benefits to having a more diverse workforce?

We're a brands company. Our job is to build brands that capture the essence of important values and to capture the zeitgeist. If your team comes only from a part of the population, and only experiences a narrow spectrum of what's going on, you will only be able to reflect one part of the zeitgeist – instead of tapping into multiple different lived experiences.

“ I can say without fear of contradiction that I have experienced white privilege, and that has made me determined to make sure I open doors for others who might not have had the life chances I had

At Unilever, we've been focused on our gender balance and getting to 50-50, which we have achieved not only in the UK but world-wide, and we've learnt lots about how to accelerate diversity. But now we realise that we have to think in a more intersectional way. It will be a new challenge, but we're taking the leap.

How do you think, from an ally perspective, people make that breakthrough?

I can say without fear of contradiction that I have experienced white privilege, and this has made me determined to make sure I open doors and opportunities for people who may not have had the life chances I had. As well as acknowledging privilege, sponsoring others and being a good ally, it is important to acknowledge that super-effective teams are not always the smartest people individually, but real diversity of thought and experience helps teams outperform.



What do you find most rewarding about working within the food and grocery sector?

I'm just very motivated by being able to serve households with brands that can improve quality of life. When I came into the industry, making people's lives better was a bit one dimensional. Today at Unilever, we think about making people's lives better and, simultaneously, making their consumption that bit better for the planet. That bit better for society. That bit better for health. That's what we're trying to do... we call it making sustainable living more commonplace, and I find that super motivating.

I also love the everydayness of what we do. I love factories. I love seeing things being made. You have an idea and then – before you know it – millions of them are being pushed out somewhere, making lives better.

What changes would you like to see in the next five to 10 years?

The most important one now is that we have to make consumption take less of a toll on the planet. I think the climate emergency is a serious crisis – and not enough people are doing something about it. I think our commitment to carbon-free consumption is absolutely essential. We've set ourselves a very stiff target at Unilever for it. But, honestly speaking, we've all got to do that. It's the biggest gift that we can give to the next generation. And it will take truly diverse thinking to get that temperature down.

If you'd not trodden this path, what would you have done?

When I was at university, I was a theatre producer. I toyed with the idea of going into broadcasting. Ironically, one of the parts of my job in Covid that I find most satisfying is my weekly broadcast for the UK business, interacting with our teams.



Steve Murrells

Steve is CEO, Co-op

I have three children, two sons and a daughter. My two boys have quite severe learning difficulties, so Josh is 27 this year and Connor is 25, but their mental age is five. They both have a condition called Fragile X, which means they have an X chromosome missing. But one of the wonderful things is that they're the same now as they were when they were three or four. They wake up happy, they go to bed happy, but it requires quite a big support system – they have 24-hour care. They're a huge part of my life and we see them every other weekend.

I've then got a wonderful little girl called Sienna, who's eight. Sadly, we lost her mum to cancer three years ago. So, from a personal point of view, lots of challenges but an incredible little girl that bring me lots of happiness.

After 15 years at Tesco, I got to the point where I needed to decide whether I was going to stay as a lifer or whether I should try and break out. I'd always had a

love for the supply chain, so I went to a Danish cooperative, running their UK business at Tulip, and absolutely loved it.

I then joined the Co-op in 2012 but 2 years later we had to contend with the media issue surrounding Paul Flowers, our then chairman of the Cooperative Bank, and the long list of stories that flowed from the media. The old adage of make the most of a crisis played out and we were able to change all the things that needed to change at a Group level whilst successfully turning around our food business which is now in its sixth year of growth. We were only two hours away from losing everything. You know, a 175-year-old brand, on our watch and we were going to lose it. I think going through that experience holds you in good stead for the future.

I did the food role until 2017 and for the last three years I've been Group CEO. As you can imagine all of the businesses are

very busy. We used to laugh, we would never have started off with a food, funeral, legal service and insurance business if we were reinventing it today, but in a Covid world, we're in businesses that people really do need.

How do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

I think the first thing is to have an honest conversation that says I am a white man; I can't have any real understanding of what an ethnic individual is going through. But what I've said right from the beginning is that this has to start from the top, that I have to pin my ears back and listen whole-heartedly to understand those experiencing the issues. Then we have to make sure that this just isn't an HR policy in the Co-op, but that it actually is something that I, the leadership and the management team deliver against.

“ I have to pin my ears back and listen whole-heartedly to understand those experiencing the issues

That's the way I've started but we've got a lot to do. If you look at the other areas of inclusion – gender, LGBT, ethnicity, disability, young people – those are all areas that we've had lots of influence in over many years. Now the really big one is endeavouring to make sure that everybody who works for the Co-op can fulfil their potential. You know, it is no more complicated than that.

How do you get a balanced shortlist on race?

Leaders all have an objective to deliver against our manifesto commitments and bring in the talent and the experience for the job required. . We've said that we want to double our leaders from a BAME background from 3% to 6% by 2022, and we want to get to 10% by 2025.

Publishing our ethnicity pay gap is another key activity for us, and crucial for understanding how to close the remuneration gap between white and non-white individuals.



What challenge have you learnt the most from in your career?

I've learnt to trust in others' judgement and to stop worrying about if I'm doing 'well'. The advice I'd give is to just focus on doing the best job that you can do in the knowledge that your bosses and leaders will spot what you're doing and they'll pull you through. I think that's probably the biggest learning that I've had during my career. And to keep on asking questions. And growing.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Crediting others with success, blaming yourself for failure. Allowing people to go beyond what they thought they could achieve. Taking risks on individuals but making sure that you support them.

What do you hope the food and grocery sector will look like in five years from now?

I hope it's still a job-creating industry. We've got to create opportunities for those people to come into the sector. A sector that hooks in the brightest talent. As an industry, there isn't anything more diverse. If you want to be an architect, join a retailer. If you want to be a buyer, join a retailer. If you want to be a solicitor, join a retailer. If you want to run shops and connect with customers, join a retailer. There is no other industry that has that panacea of opportunity.



Dayalan Nayager

Dayalan is Managing Director Great Britain, J&B Wines & Santiago de Cuba, Diageo

My role is as the Managing Director for Diageo, Great Britain. I grew up in South Africa, studied marketing and business management at university and started my career as a graduate at Mars, where I progressed to Head of Sales, before moving to Heinz as General Manager for Sales, Marketing and R&D for South and Southern Africa. Mars was an exemplary training ground giving me the opportunity to work across Marketing, Sales and Supply chain within their Petfood, Food and Snackfood divisions. Heinz gave me the opportunity to manage multiple countries across Africa as General Manager for Sales, Marketing and R&D. I joined Brandhouse in 2013, a joint venture company between Diageo, Heineken and Namibia Breweries in South Africa into its commercial organisation and it was with Diageo that I moved to London in 2015, firstly leading the European part of Diageo's Global Travel business and then as the Managing Director for the global business.

What's the biggest challenge you've overcome in your career?

Like every leader, I have had numerous challenges in my career over the years, but the one that probably stands out was my initial move from South Africa to the United Kingdom to undertake a more global role based in London. Despite having worked for three multinational companies, I hadn't contemplated how difficult it would be to change location to London, not because the role I took on was overly challenging, rather because I was suddenly in a new environment, with a different and unfamiliar culture, where I initially lost some of my self-confidence and belief, a response I have since heard articulated by diverse groups who have made similar moves – I had temporarily started to question my own capabilities and the value I brought to the company. I learnt a lot from the experience of overcoming this dip in confidence.

Did you have role models and mentors to help you through your career?

Yes, both in my personal and professional life. For example, both my mum and dad have been massive role models for me – despite huge adversity caused by apartheid South Africa and the disadvantage, discrimination and poverty they experienced, they somehow managed to maintain a positive outlook. They focused on providing whatever they could for my siblings and myself; they sought to constantly better themselves and invested everything they could in their children's education, which resulted in them achieving more than what could have seemed possible for people in their situation. Sheer determination, drive and tenacity is what enabled them to succeed.

Professionally, when I joined the Mars graduate programme, I was allocated a mentor in the business, who was someone who provided

me with a listening ear and offered me coaching on career progression when I needed it.

Finally, Diageo has invested in providing me with an excellent external coach, who is stretching my thinking with the aim of becoming the biggest possible leader I can be.

What do you think the main hurdles are for a diverse workforce?

What we have learnt at Diageo, is that you truly need to match your ambition on D&I with actions and plans that make progress at pace. It can be disillusioning for diverse groups to hear companies talk about the agenda but not see the follow through in terms of actions that match the ambition. At Diageo, we have not shied away from setting targets; we have pushed ourselves to create market leading policies and practices and we have identified interventions across multiple opportunity areas, like advertising, the work we do in communities, how we prioritise suppliers who will partner with us and our approach to hiring and development among others, to ensure our actions make a difference.

In terms of specific hurdles for diverse groups, there is also an element of unconscious bias and unrealistic expectations around

what level of experience might be required before someone could do a good job. If I look at hiring requirements that companies have, for example in FMCG, take an account director, you'd probably see on job adverts that someone needs to have had 15 years' key account experience. Roll back 15 years and ask yourself how many people from a diverse background would have been an account manager in the UK in order to have built that level of experience? Not everyone will have had the same advantage when it comes to education and resources, so there is a need for companies to get better at hiring for potential, drive and capability rather than purely length of experience – this is an outdated and limited way of thinking of how to access talent.

Why were you attracted to the industry?

I love brands, so I think that's why I am drawn to the industry. My dad worked for a retail chain in South Africa, subsequently owning his own retail stores, which meant that I had the chance to work part-time in retail stores as a teenager. This gave me an exposure to brands and developed in me a keen sense of how consumers shop and behave. Having the opportunity to go to university, I studied Marketing and Business Management, and

from the graduate schemes I was offered, I chose to join Mars, because of that love for brands and the demonstrated values of the company.

Are there any companies or individuals that you look up to?

I value leaders who are authentic, follow through on their commitments and contribute to broader society and communities. The way our CEO, Ivan Menezes, has changed the Diageo business has been significant, from performance and productivity gains to the work we do in communities, progress on ESG areas and shifts in the culture of the organisation. He is committed to diversity and to driving an inclusive culture, which can be seen in terms of how progressive the company is on gender equality.

What do you hope food and grocery looks like in 10 years' time from a people perspective?

In all sectors, I would like to see and experience people at all levels who can bring innovation to the sector because of the diverse perspectives they bring to the table. Food and grocery should leverage the opportunity it has to shape consumer trends, embrace digital and technology and be a good corporate citizen, to an even great extent than today. And I would love to see a sector in which you can find a broad base of diverse leaders in influential positions who can then change the shape the industry.

If you weren't doing what you're doing today, what would you have been?

I'd probably be running my own business. I like to act like an entrepreneur in how I lead businesses, and at Diageo I have the opportunity to do this in a corporate environment.





Sarah Nelson

Sarah is Head of Finance – Supply Chain & Logistics, Sainsbury's

Before joining Sainsbury's, I was at the Virgin Group, working for Richard Branson at his head office company, Virgin Management. So, looking after lots of exciting companies such as Virgin Galactic and the Atlantic. I knew a few people that worked at Sainsbury's and they'd spoken to me about how exciting it was. I saw a role in group finance in 2010 and I haven't looked back.

In 2015, I had a fantastic opportunity to understand how Retail works on the ground, and I took the opportunity to become an Area Manager running the North London convenience business for 18 months. It was a fantastic experience in a really tough operating environment. I then went back to into finance as group financial controller, and I am now leading the supply chain and logistics finance function.

At the same time, I am a mum of two – my daughter's 20 and my son's 15. And they've seen me go through all of the hard work

to get to where I am today, which is really important for them. It has meant putting in lots of hard work and balancing as much as I can, but I don't know anything different because that's been my life for the last 20 years. It's been a rewarding experience, and I'm looking forward to seeing what the future holds.

Have you had role models that you've been able to follow?

My main role model in life has been my mum. She came to this country from Nigeria in the early 70s and ended up as a single parent with three girls. She showed me what can be done with determination, hard work and the right support around you. She really wanted to be a university lecturer and she managed to work a few jobs whilst studying to get to be where she is today.

And so, although I've been in an environment where I haven't seen role models that look like me all the time, that's never been

“Great leadership is about giving people the support and space to learn and grow

something that's held me back. Most of my role models and the support I've had from my line managers has been fantastic, and they've quite often been white men.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Great leadership is about giving people the support and space to learn and grow. For me it's about creating more leaders and giving people the opportunity to show exactly what they can do. Leadership isn't about your job title. I always like to give the more junior colleagues in my team an opportunity to lead.

By giving people the opportunity, you really get to see their true potential.

Has there been a particular challenge in your career you've learnt the most from?

When I took on my retail role which was a complete change in function. The challenge is that people always expect you to know the answer to every single thing. I've learnt to ask the right questions, to connect with your colleagues and customers.

What advice would you give to the younger generation?

I would say follow your passion. What is it that you enjoy? Why are you here? Really tap into that. At the same time, be bold and be happy to try new things, and don't necessarily feel as though you have to stick to a script. For me, progression is really important, but I find that's easier when you throw yourself out of your comfort zone and do what you love.

What are the main benefits of having a more diverse and inclusive workforce?

I think it goes back to the point I raised around giving everyone a voice, making sure that you can really tap into the potential of everybody within your organisation. There is a difference between diversity and inclusion. There's a famous quote: "Diversity is being invited to the party and inclusion is being asked to dance." The two have got to come together.

Do you play an active role in diversity and inclusion within Sainsbury's?

I play an active role in diversity and inclusion at Sainsbury's and I am the founder and chair of the first ethnic minority colleague network. We now have over 4,000 members across the whole of the business. I realised it's really important that everyone in the business feels as though they're included, and so the network was founded on that basis. It's called, "I am me" because it's about everybody – regardless of your background – feeling as though they can just be themselves. It's something that I'm really proud. I also mentor a number of colleagues from different parts of the business and I am really passionate about helping others to be the best they can be.

Have you seen the company's culture in relation to D&I evolve?

It has evolved a lot since I've been at Sainsbury's. When I joined, I think D&I wasn't really talked about in the way it is today. We had a big challenge around women in finance and we started thinking about why – especially at the most senior levels – we didn't have female representation.

Now, it looks like a completely different division.

I think the race and ethnicity agenda has been something that has always been much harder to face into. We've made some good progress including increasing our investment in the development of ethnically diverse colleagues and really focusing on education and having a more open conversation around ethnicity. Our senior leadership teams recently completed a Let's Talk About Race session and due to popular demand this is now being rolled out more broadly. As a network we've also had some great support and worked really closely with our LGBTQ and gender networks.

Who do you admire?

Having started at Virgin, Sir Richard Branson is someone that I've always looked up to. I really admire his boldness.

If you hadn't have trodden this path, what would you have liked to have done?

It would probably be serving others, whether it was setting up my own charity, coaching others or setting up mentoring – I like helping people to see their super powers.





Georgiana de Noronha

Georgiana (Jojo) is President, Northern Europe, Kraft Heinz



I was born in Rio, Brazil. I'm one of four children, and I also had two step-siblings, which I think says a lot. I'm also a middle child, so I'm one of these personalities that tried to get my voice heard. I was the only child in my family who moved abroad. I spent my time at the University of Virginia, which is an incredibly American university, so I was a bit of an outlier there, too.

People ask me why I went into investment banking. Well, my dad was an economist, my stepdad was an investment banker, and I didn't really know any different.

I made the move to private equity, which felt less disingenuous than

my experience in investment banking. But, back in 2014, I was sitting at the board of an organisation we had bought in Spain. I remember looking around and the average age was double my age, and the people knew a lot about the industry. And I thought – who am I to sit here and tell these people what they need to change?

I decided that I wanted to make a move to corporate. And that's when I came to Kraft Heinz. My last interview was with the global CEO and he said, "Which area would you like to start in, Jojo?" And I said, "I don't really know anything about the company, so I might as well start in an area where you think I'm going to learn the most and the quickest." So, he said, "Sales."

I had a mentor at the time. After I had started, she said, "Jojo, I really think you have an eye for recognising talent and coaching people. And that's quite rare with your finance background."

So would you like to have a stint in HR?" I decided to take a leap of faith in the people who took a leap of faith in me, in hiring somebody who had zero experience, who only really brought passion and will.

Last October, my predecessor decided to retire. We were quite close. He believed I could do a role as the president of a business unit. Of course, being a woman, typically, I thought I couldn't do it. I was very scared, but I took the opportunity and, 11 months on, here I am. I've got two children

“ Culture is not what's written on the website, culture is how I communicate with you, how I send you an email, how I act in meetings

and I'm married to a man who is probably the reason I can do all I do, because he supports me every day. It's been great – tough, but great.

What challenges have you learnt the most from?

I lost my parents very early on in life, so I'm very independent and have the ability to compartmentalise my life. I've also had a lot of setbacks in my career. It means I don't take any opportunities for granted. I've always kept going and tried to prove myself wrong.

What advice would you give to the next generation?

Put the consumer at the front of everything you do. We need to stop asking consumers and start watching them: in supermarkets and on social media. And culture first. Culture is not what's written on the website, culture is how I communicate with you, how I send you an email, how I act in meetings. Meet as many people as you can, because that's how you're going to feel the culture.

What does great leadership mean to you?

There are two things that make great leaders. Firstly, trust. Having trust in your people and letting them fail first is incredibly important. The second thing is genuine care, no matter what decision you take. People know when you care – they also know when you don't.

What changes would you like to see in the food and grocery sector in the next five to 10 years?

The UK has a real issue on diversity, so definitely a more diverse workforce. The second



thing I would love to see is more of a focus on sustainability and ending hunger. One in five children go to school without a breakfast every single day, which deprives them of learning – and that deprives them of a future. If we come together as an industry, we could end this tomorrow.

What do you like most about what you do?

Having so many different topics in one single day is incredible. Secondly, feeling like you really can have an impact on people's lives is so rewarding. Thirdly, we make food for millions of people. The scale of the industry I work in and the level of impact I can have is just incredible. I know that any change I make will impact millions of lives.

What have been your biggest learnings from the Covid-19 crisis?

The importance of bravery. We did lots of things differently during the crisis. We launched the 'Heinz to Home' direct-to-consumer website. We launched our 12 million meals campaign with Magic Breakfast. We created more visibility than ever, and it took a

lot of bravery. Let's not forget the fire we had when the crisis was happening, because that's what moved our business forward.

The second is being close to our people and really understanding their worries. Because it was a level playing field, everyone had the same struggles.

The third is the importance of doing good while you do well. If we had sat here and just done super well but done no good, I don't think we would be doing our job.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I would have been a doctor as I'm very, very passionate about the medical world – I'm an avid reader and watch every documentary around everything medical. I did contemplate becoming a doctor later on in life, but I don't have time. It probably comes from my passion to help people!



Dr Raj Patel

Raj is Head of Stores, Sainsbury's

My journey starts with very humble beginnings back in a village in India. I came to the UK 16 years ago to learn English, starting in McDonald's as a part-time customer assistant. I met the store manager and he said, "You've got something special about you, your drive, your passion, your dedication. One day you'll be my boss." That comment gave me the confidence I needed. I worked through the ranks in McDonald's and became a manager, then went to O2.

I got the attention of Tesco, who were recruiting phone shop managers and was lucky to get the job. I ended up doing six other roles in Tesco: Area Phone Shop Manager; Senior HR; Senior Non-Food; Senior Fresh Food; Store Manager of a small Supermarket and then store manager of one of the biggest Supermarkets.

Lidl approached me with a Head of Sales job, which would be my

first senior management role, then I moved to Sainsbury's, working for a great leader called Jon Bye, who was MD at the time. I loved working with him and I'm still very proud of what we achieved in that time. I did well, so I was put on the Business Leader Program, and as part of my development I took a role in London as Head of Labour.

I have now come back to the North, where my family is. I am a Head of Stores in the North. Academically, I did six years teaching at Liverpool Hope University. They sponsored me to do MPhil and PhD at the University of Liverpool.

Why is having a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

First of all, 14% of the UK population is from an ethnic minority, so it's right that the business represents the customers, the colleagues and the community itself.

Secondly, it's just the most fair and human thing to do, isn't it? That's really important.

And the third thing, from my perspective, is that the more diverse the team is, the better the decisions you make, because people bring different insights and challenges.

How do you make sure that you role model an inclusive leadership style?

Listening and asking open-ended questions are very powerful tools. Also, I openly rely on those around me, leaning on their strengths and skills. It's very important that colleagues see that happening, and recognise joint decision making – it really helps to get the best out of people. If colleagues are brought into the process, switched on and engaged, then you can achieve greatness as a team.

And how do you make sure that you create that inclusive workforce?

I think it's my natural strength. While I am not blessed with pure intelligence and emotional intelligence, I have good people-development skills.

“The more role models we see at senior executive level, the more colleagues are going to think that that is achievable for them

I was a customer assistant 16 years ago, couldn't speak much English, and since then I've done pretty much every single role within my sector. This is my fourth senior executive role, so I've seen the world from different perspectives and understand peoples varying circumstances.

In terms of D&I measures, have there been any that have benefited you?

The more role models we see at the senior executive level, the more colleagues are going to think that this is achievable for them. My aspiration is to develop myself into a bigger role, and I work for an amazing, inclusive leader — Bridget Lea. I'm inspired by her empathy, leadership and journey. Bridget is a Black ethnic minority, and that encourages me and reminds me there is no glass ceiling.

What attracted you to this space in the first place?

I was working in the sector while I was studying for my PhD, and retail offered some flexibility. Being an ambitious person, I thought that the sector offered development. The pace was important as well, as I've got a lot of energy and a lot of drive. Our industry is certainly one that requires pace and drive. After my PhD, I could have done a teaching job, I had a really good offer from the university, but I chose to continue in our industry.

What challenge in your career have you learnt the most from?

The Head of Labour job. I went for the role for the wrong reasons. I wanted to improve that area of my skill set, I wanted to stretch myself, instead of going for something that was my strength and passion. On a positive note, the Labour role taught me a lot about strategy, collaboration, influencing and provided a broader knowledge of the business. The biggest lesson I learnt is go for something you are passionate about, you love and you are great at.

Have you seen a culture change at Sainsbury's?

I've seen some of the most inspirational, inclusive leaders in Sainsbury's. And the business is investing a lot in educating all leaders and colleagues on D&I. Some of the differences we're going to make will be long lasting.

Outside of the grocery sector, who do you look up to?

I followed the career of Sachin Tendulkar. He was a great Indian batsman, arguably the greatest of all time. Growing up as a kid in India, he was always an inspiration. He carried the hopes and aspirations of a billion people, with a lot of humility, empathy and grace, without any scandal or any controversy at all. That inspired a generation. How can somebody be so successful, but so humble at the same time?

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I would be teaching. I would be a lecturer somewhere. I really enjoy training, coaching, mentoring and developing people and that's something that comes naturally. So yeah, I think I would be a teacher.





Katie Pearce

Katie is Chief People & Diversity Officer, EMEA & APAC, Molson Coors

I've been with Molson Coors for 21 years now, which at the time I joined wasn't the plan. I originally joined Bass Brewers (as it was back then). I didn't go to university, it wasn't something that I was pursuing, I completed my A levels and at the time Bass did a very good young employment scheme. I was originally recruited into their Telebusiness Unit in the Sales department, which you would describe as their call centre in those days.

And then because Bass were very clear on development and on supporting people to be the best that they can be, they really supported me, and I was really up for different challenges. I did a variety of different roles in sales before I moved over to Head Office and into HR. I thought: what the hell have I done, this is so different from what I was doing before... but I loved it!

The other element of my development that was fantastic for me was Molson Coors sponsored

me to do my CIPD HR degree, which was great. There were lots of different opportunities and I tried to grab as many as possible – I did a fair few different roles in HR in COE teams and then business partner roles before I became HR Director for the UK & Ireland Business, and then I moved from that role to the Chief People & Diversity Officer for Europe.

We give lots of different opportunities to individuals who have performed in a role in a certain function, they have developed and demonstrated great leadership, followership, and that enables them to then move from one technical function to another that they probably were not originally thinking about in their career plan. And we've got loads of examples of that at senior level.

“Great leadership is about being very authentic – people always get found out if they're not genuinely authentic

Do you have role models that you've looked up to during your career?

I think role models and mentors are really important – they give you hope. You can see someone who's very similar to you and who may have similar attributes or background etc, and you think to yourself: wow, they're doing an amazing role that I never thought I'd consider doing. And it gives you that sort of aspirational nudge of, well, why can't you? A part of my background was the lack of degree. In those days it was very much about graduates, the education part.

A role model is anyone from an aspirational perspective of your career. Who can you look up to from a role model perspective, that you just connect with. And that's why I think mentoring is so important, because I definitely had a couple of leaders who I could just be very honest with and supported me and nudged me in different directions and ultimately gave me the confidence to try different things.

What does great leadership mean?

I think it's being very authentic – people always get found out if they're not genuinely authentic. I also think it's about having empathy. You need to be able to understand on a very empathetic level what another individual's going through, or why they're thinking the way they're thinking.

What brought you into this space?

It always seemed like a fun, fast-paced, challenging environment. I'm clearly a sociable type of person, so I love our brands, which obviously helps! In those days they did some quite quirky adverts, they were on the radio, and they'd done some sort of comedy sketch about the company and the culture. And I just thought, oh, they don't take themselves that seriously, that sounds fun.

And I think that's true about our culture today. You know, we're very down to earth, we don't take ourselves very seriously, we make and sell amazing brands, it's a sociable product, and I think that comes through in our culture.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

I think it's a few things, isn't it? To have a successful organisation that can roll with the punches, that can be fast paced, innovative and be agile, I think you need teams of individuals that think and feel differently. I think it brings the difference that you need to be competitive. For me, it's much more than that though, because it's about culture. And I'm a really firm believer that it's about feeling like you belong somewhere, you can bring your true self to work, and I think we do that well.

How do you make sure that you're providing an inclusive environment?

It goes back to what I would call empathetic leadership, so, are you really trying to understand the other individual and have that connection from an empathy perspective, and walk in their shoes? I think that creates a connection, and it works both ways. Feedback. Constantly asking your team in one-to-ones, and trying to create that atmosphere and openness so they're willing to give you the really warts-and-all feedback, because you need it.



What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders?

I think I would tell them to seize the opportunities. If there are projects, or if there's challenges that you can see, or something that you want to get involved in, get in there and learn, and have different experiences. I did, I was just in the thick of everything. But I absolutely loved the opportunity to be stretched and pushed and challenged with different opportunities.

Have there been any books that have inspired you?

Yes, I read lots of books. One that I read recently was Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead*. She really resonated with me about having that confidence in yourself, being humble and vulnerable but if you make mistakes, own those mistakes and learn from them.

If you weren't doing what you're doing today, what would you have done?

Well, I did want to be a dancer, if I'm being really honest. I had lots of lofty ambitions to be a high-performing dancer, which clearly didn't quite work out. I really liked ballet and I wanted to be a ballerina. But it wasn't destined, I can assure you!



Dawood Pervez

Dawood is Managing Director
Retail, Bestway

I have lived and breathed food and grocery since I was two years old. You could say it's in the blood. I remain as passionate today about the sector as ever. It is vibrant, dynamic, and no days are ever the same. The sector is an enormously important part of the UK economy and one that impacts people's everyday lives. I find it a compelling industry to work within that engenders innovation, inspiration and commitment.



What do you like about working in food and grocery?

Undoubtedly the people. It is an industry that is highly entrepreneurial, right through the supply chain and retail. Everyone has a role to play, whether a driver, a warehouse operator, a retailer or a supplier, through to manufacturing communities such as farming. The sheer diversity and breadth of what it covers never ceases to amaze me.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

Making a real difference, whether to our customers, our team here at Bestway, or our partner suppliers, and seeing first-hand the value that our retailers are bringing to their local communities, especially at a time of national uncertainty. It is an extraordinary year, and I am incredibly proud of the Bestway team and what, together, we have achieved. The old saying, "Together many raindrops make an ocean" has never been more apt.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders entering the grocery sector?

Business and working practices are changing fast – and so are consumer shopping behaviours, which have accelerated this year as never before with DTC and home delivery models in extreme demand, alongside the explosion of ecommerce and online shopping.

Undoubtedly, there will be a new breed of game-changers coming into the frame who will be 'digital natives' and taking a very different approach, using data and digital platforms to sell and reward loyalty. But my advice would be to never forget the roots of the industry and the power of people buying from people.

What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Make sure you pick a career or sector that you are fascinated by or have a passion for – then, working long hours is spending time indulging yourself!

What challenges have you learned the most from?

Never take things at face value, whether assessing information or people. Always assess everything fully, and on merit – not on packaging or appearance.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I most likely would have followed my career path within law and then into private equity.

“ I find making a real difference, and seeing first-hand the value that our retailers bring to their local communities, extremely rewarding





Andy Phelps

Andy is Supplier and Programme Director, Co-op

During university, I went to Florida and spent a year working at a five-star resort in a retail division. Being an openly gay man, I think that's when I really figured out who I was. After that period, I came home and came out. I still hate the fact you have to come out. It just feels wrong. You don't come out straight.

I then joined Sainsbury's graduate scheme and accelerated relatively

quickly. I did have some challenges around my sexuality in the early stages of my career in the industry; challenges that I think people would be shocked to learn today. The feeling it gave me at that point in my career, so junior and so young – I just felt physically sick.

Then I moved into Sainsbury's support centre as a project manager, when I first got into buying. I got promoted to

category manager of frozen food, which I loved, and had the opportunity to work in Retail and ran the West of Scotland. I came back into the centre for Sainsbury's and ran beers, wines and spirits for four years. And then I moved north with Co-op and spent a couple of years as director of trading.

After that, I took up probably my most challenging leadership role, and got involved in our Respect network. The last few years, I picked up our supplier engagement strategy and built a team, and was asked if I would lead our retail business transformation programme. New systems, new tools, new processes. It's the biggest thing Co-op has ever done. Every day is a totally a different day. There are days when I wonder why I agreed. And there are days when I'm buzzing on cloud nine.



Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce so important to you?

I suppose it's previous experience where I haven't felt included. Having been through it a couple of times, it really isn't nice. The feeling of coming to work and just not being able to be yourself and be your best, that sits with me. So, I wouldn't want anyone to be in that situation.

The fact that I've been able to grow and be quite a senior leader – and I can make a difference, I can create a culture, I can create a shadow that others should follow – is so key. Here at Co-op I am really proud about our inclusion strategy and the commitments we make to improve our culture.

How do you go about that?

I think it's about leadership, isn't it? It's about asking how you would want to be treated, and understanding how things would feel if they were flipped the other way.

It's still my biggest worry that some people come to work and they can't be themselves. I think it's more important than some of the KPIs, actually. My job's to set the right environment, make sure they've got the right strategies, and allow people to get on with their jobs.

“My team and I are dedicating more time to educating ourselves and having open and honest conversations about what we don't know

We have to be allies and we have to stand next to people and understand the challenges that they're going through. For the last few years I've been working out how I can be a better trans ally. A new member of the team joined. She interviewed as a male and then she joined us having transitioned, and she has helped me learn a lot.

I realise that there's still a lot more work we need to do. My team and I are dedicating more and more time to educating ourselves and having open and honest conversations about what we don't know, and sharing experiences.

What specific D&I measures have benefited you personally?

There was one piece of training that sits with me today, and that was unconscious bias training. There's nothing I find better than a proper conversation about the issues that matter. The other thing that's really helped me is being a coach and mentoring people. Being mentored is so key, because there's stuff you just don't see and you don't think about. I think every leader's got a responsibility to educate themselves.

What do you find most rewarding about working in the sector?

The change and the people. I have met some of my closest and best friends through my career, which is brilliant, and they're still in my life. I've always loved travelling, and my career has allowed me to travel the world, and see new cultures and communities which is amazing.

I went out to South Africa and saw the difference that Fairtrade was making. The difference it makes in those communities is phenomenal, educating kids and giving them fresh water.

One of our partnership here at Co-op with the One Water Foundation allows us to make a difference around the world.



What does great leadership mean to you?

I think it's about your team feeling that they can be themselves, and that they can talk about how they're feeling. Something that sticks with me, a leader who was at Co-op, one of his biggest regrets was not being around enough for his kids. Not being a parent, I don't know what that's like, but the conversation I have with my team is, "Please do one drop off and pick up a week. It is vital to be that parent at the school gate and to be there when they get home from school."

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing do you think?

Possibly something in transformation or change. Helping small businesses, supporting others to grow. Something this has definitely taught me is, how do you help create right culture and ask the right questions? You don't necessarily need to know the answers.



Pam Powell

Pam is NED, AG Barr plc, Cranswick Country Foods plc, Premier Foods plc



“I’d love to see a change in the way we recruit into food and grocery... there’s a fantastic opportunity in the sector for graduates to contribute to all the things they care about

I’m American. I went to university in the School of Engineering at Duke and was going to be a mechanical engineer, before deciding that was definitely not where I wanted to be. I did an MBA, and during my summer internship, was invited to a course on brand positioning at Quaker Oats in Chicago. I loved it; after that it was all brand management.

I went to work for Lever Brothers in New York, where I stayed for seven years. My last job there was running the Dove brand, and then I moved to the Unilever head office in London to be the global director for Dove. Launching new markets and new categories, we took it to be Unilever’s first billion-dollar brand.

I was really due for a move, and ended up with a job in Paris, at Coty Beauty. But my heart was in the UK, so I soon came back and went to work at SABMiller to create marketing capability and drive growth as we acquired brewing businesses around

the world. It was an incredible success story.

After nine years, and with my daughter starting school, I decided to retire my frequent flyer cards and start my plural career. For me, it’s been an easy transition into the boardroom side of things. I have three food and beverage boards that I work on: Premier Foods, AG Barr, and Cranswick. I round that off with roles in the charity sector with a focus on education and on the local community. I’m on the council at the University of Surrey and have just agreed to chair a local award-winning art gallery and museum.

Have you had role models you’ve been able to look up to?

When I think about influences, my mother was a key one. She had four children and went back to work when I was about nine. You know, that was back in the 70s. She then opened her own business, and I went to work for her from the time I was 12



until I finished school. It was fascinating. For a kid to be able to get involved in all aspects of a small business, and do it with your mum, was very inspiring.

What does great leadership mean to you?

I think it’s about helping people have a shared vision about where you’re going, it’s about bringing people along with you, but in a way that’s flexible, adaptable, and lets people be who they are. It allows people to make a contribution, bringing their own style and their own voice to things.

Looking specifically at diversity and inclusion, why is it an important area for you?

I care about it because it affects me personally for starters, being a woman, and on one of my boards until recently, being the only woman on an all-male board with an all-male executive team. Research is clear that when there are different genders, or people

from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, around a table, the conversations are richer and decisions are better. And it’s definitely easier to be yourself.

Thinking about the broader issues around inclusion and belonging, I have a sensitivity, I suppose, to all the small things that can impact someone’s happiness and their ability to succeed. My sister is gay, and so I have close second-hand experience of the kind of prejudices and problems she’s encountered through work and life.

What do you think are the main hurdles preventing further progress on D&I within the sector?

I think it’s multi-faceted. I mean, it starts with recruitment. If you don’t have any diversity, it’s harder to recruit diverse candidates, you know, because they look around and say, “Oh, I don’t see anyone who sounds like me, looks like me, understands me.” And then when they come in, having

things like diversity committees where employees can come and talk to other people in a safe environment about what they’re experiencing. I think having mixed mentoring can be really powerful, too. But at board level, we can hold management to account, by tracking the numbers, asking to see the progress.

What changes would you like to see in five or 10 years’ time?

Brexit will be significant for the food industry. Jobs in food such as raw food processing are difficult to recruit for, and we rely on European labour. It’s not easy to fill those jobs, and it will be very tough on our food supply if those who are willing to do the roles can’t enter Britain.

I’d also like to see a change in the way we recruit into food and grocery. There are cycles when it’s more interesting for young people to go into banking, or into consulting, or into branded goods – and food manufacturing and retail doesn’t always seem so sexy. But I think there’s a fantastic opportunity in our sector for graduates to contribute to all the things they care about... the environment, healthier eating, local authenticity and so on. We need to sell those. And a diverse community is more able to bring new ideas that will make a difference.

If you went all the way back to the beginning, what would you have done instead?

I think I might have been an art teacher. Although I’m not myself artistic, I’ve always appreciated art and creativity. And I’ve always been attracted to education and seeing people develop and grow.



Ashwin Prasad

Ashwin is Group Chief Product Officer, Tesco

I'm a Kiwi by nationality. My parents were both originally from Fiji, however they initially left for Holland as my father was part of a sponsored study program whilst working for the Fijian government as a land surveyor. Whilst in Holland, the first of a series of military coups occurred in Fiji starting in 1987. As a result, our family was offered political asylum in two places: Holland and New Zealand. My parents chose New Zealand because we'd been there before. Losing their home and assets, my parents had to start all over again in another country as refugees. As a young boy, that experience has shaped my character.



I did my bachelor's degrees in Auckland, and then started on a graduate programme in the gas and chemicals industry, which took me to Sydney. I'm now in the UK because my wife — whom I met in Sydney — is British, and she was starting to miss Branston pickle and Soreen malt loaf. So we both transferred our life and careers to the UK.

I joined Mars in the UK, starting out in commercial before moving into marketing. After my time at Mars I went into the retail sector with Tesco. We went through a series of challenging times at Tesco, but emerged as a fitter business. I had admired Tesco before I had joined and wanted to experience working for the company that had become the UK's biggest retailer. Over the past few years I think my early background that developed my resilience, prepared me well for the turnaround we have been through.

I believe in the purpose of the business and its ability to do good, to be a platform for change. I think we have a responsibility to make a difference in the world. If you look back specifically at the past six years at Tesco, a lot has been achieved. There wasn't one transformational moment, but a series of improvements over time. Being involved in that journey is part of my story.

“I believe in the purpose of the business and its ability to do good, to be a platform for change

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

I believe that Tesco is a place where everyone is welcome. That has genuinely been my experience. When I joined Tesco, it had an Afro-Caribbean network, an Asian network, it had an Out at Tesco programme, that has now become LGBTQ+. But very authentically, it has always felt part of the communities we are serving. When I looked around the business, you could see that it was also a diverse place to work. Now, when you start getting into the ratios and the statistics, we find that there's always more to do, whether it's women in leadership or a balanced representation of people from different backgrounds in the teams that work in head office roles. But what I love about Tesco is that diversity here isn't about trying to drive big steps forwards to respond to a corporate agenda, but rather about ensuring that everyone is welcome and about treating people as they would like to be treated. How do we help everyone get on?

How do you personally role model in an inclusive leadership style?

If you think about inclusivity properly, it is about diversity of thought, not just gender or ethnicity. And diversity of thought means being a really good listener. Here at Tesco we call it "Every voice matters". It is something that I've benefitted from, and I've become a better leader by being open to a variety of voices. Not just the ones that reinforce and support your world view, but also the ones that challenge you.



What have you done to encourage a more diverse workplace? Is it something that you consciously do?

I think it's probably becoming increasingly less conscious because I've been doing it for a while — but it certainly didn't come naturally to me at first. We all have our biases as we come up through the organisation, and I think the key is being able to be open enough to understand what yours are. And then wanting to do something about it. If you try to find the finished product in people and talent, you miss a trick, because you're looking for people to fit a mould and reinforce a type. What you want to do is give people the opportunity to stretch themselves and develop into who they're ultimately meant to be. Give them room to grow by understanding them better and helping to set up their success.

What advice would you give your younger self?

Relax a lot more. I was way too severe and intense as I was coming through as a young graduate. That resilience and perseverance probably made me results driven and comfortable with driving change. I think people around me recognised that. But in hindsight, I'd still tell myself to relax a bit

more — and to laugh, smile and slow down without losing the desire to make a meaningful difference and act with purpose with whatever I was doing.

Which organisations do you look up to outside the sector?

Maybe it's just because I'm a parochial New Zealander when it comes to sport, but I really admire the culture and leaders (players and coaches) of New Zealand rugby. The All Blacks have famously strong team values and instil them in every member of the broader team. Their principles are about no one in the team being more important as an individual than anyone else, the metaphor of being a good ancestor and having a responsibility for setting up the next generation if you're a senior member of the team. That, for me, is quite inspiring.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

I'm a very keen conservationist and animal lover. So, if I could have done anything else, it would have to be running a luxury game reserve in the Okavango Delta or perhaps in South Africa. The combination of running a premium hospitality business combined with animal conservation would be my ideal role.



Emma Revie

Emma is CEO, The Trussell Trust

From a young age, I was very passionate about social justice. My mum and dad were the kinds of people who always stepped forward, and I think that really instilled in me a responsibility to step up when things aren't right.

After leaving university, I moved into the third sector, and I started focusing on overseas. I worked for an aid agency, Tearfund, in their UK offices. For me, poverty was something that happened overseas. While I was at Tearfund, I had moved to Tooting, London. I set up a couple of youth clubs and the kids who came were struggling with essentials, like clothing and food. I was horrified – and I realised how important it is to tackle the inequalities and injustices that exist on your doorstep.

I then became CEO of a youth charity in the East End of London, before moving into a national role within the youth sector.

Then I saw the job at The Trussell Trust – and took the opportunity to work for an organisation where compassion and justice come together. I've been at Trussell for about three years now, and our vision is a UK without the need for food banks. It's an incredible privilege to work with our food banks across the country, but also a job I deeply wish didn't need to exist. In that way, it's the best and worst job in the world.

Tell us more about The Trussell Trust.

During the pandemic we've seen the number of people needing food banks almost double. We support a network of 1,250 food bank centres across the UK, and every one of them has seen unprecedented levels of demand. And that happened overnight.

And at the same time, as the industry knows better than anyone else, food was disappearing off our shelves, and particularly those food items that food banks



are reliant on. During that time, our food and grocery partners stepped forward, called me directly and said, "What can we do in this situation?" Where our food banks would normally have a relationship locally with their supermarket, there was nothing locally that could be done. So, the major supermarkets stepped in to help ensure that food supplies were still available for our food banks, and that financial resources were there to allow us to buy food where needed.

“My aspiration is that we look back in 10 years' time and think, “How on Earth were we living in a country where we had food aid as a standard part of our response to a crisis?”

Across the whole country, we managed to keep providing services, and that was in large part due to the partnerships we had with our major retail partners.

What do you find most rewarding about what you do?

I think it's the opportunity to see the very best in people. When I approach a food bank for a visit and they don't know me from Adam, I walk through the door and I am greeted with this overwhelming welcome from a volunteer. It's a really radical welcome. To step over the threshold of a food bank is a deeply distressing thing for somebody to do – it's deeply undignified to have to come and ask for donated food. And so seeing our volunteers understand that, and seeing them radiate a warmth that makes that step easier... after three years, it still gives me goosebumps.

But also, I have the privilege of being part of the conversation about how the system can change. I think many people feel it is inevitable, that part of our



society is having food banks. But I know from the data I've seen and the conversations I've had that there are policy changes that can be put in place that could ensure people have enough money. My aspiration is that we look back in 10 years' time and think, “How on Earth were we living in a country where we had food aid as a standard part of our response to a crisis?”

Is diversity and inclusion important to you?

Hugely important. I think when you are tackling intractable problems in society, you want the very best group of people who are able to work in their very best way to formulate solutions. So it is critical for our organisation to ensure that we're attracting the very best, most diverse workforce and that we are creating an environment that is inclusive for them.

For me as an employer, it's incredibly important that we are modelling the kind of behaviours we'd want to see in wider society, to prevent injustice and inequality.

What changes would you like to see in the food and grocery space in the next five to 10 years?

Two protective factors would prevent people coming to food banks. One, a social security system that provides enough money for people when they are unable to work to hold them out of deep poverty. Second, it's about establishing a work environment that pays fairly and is secure – providing opportunities for people to earn a living wage. And it's about that development as well: how do we ensure that there's a path for people starting at the lowest salaries in our organisations across food and grocery?

If you went back to the beginning and did it all again, what would you have done?

When I was young, I wanted to be a spy. The attraction, I think, was tackling really knotty problems and trying to resolve them. And I think that is probably part of my DNA.



Chika Russell

Chika is Founder and CEO, CHIKA'S



I'm the youngest of seven children. I was born in London and then moved to Nigeria, where I stayed until I was around six. Those days were carefree days – just fun, freedom, happiness. Found in climbing trees, picking fresh fruit from trees. Dancing in the rain.

Aged six, my parents decided that I had to go and start formal education in London, and join my older siblings who were already at boarding school. While I should have been really excited about

this, I was sad to leave my friends. It did not really seem fair that I got to go, and they didn't.

I moved to London, and that feeling of unfairness stayed with me. In fact, it never really left. I was going backwards and forwards from London to Nigeria because my dad wanted us to spend all of our free time in Nigeria and to have a real affinity with where we came from. I continued to see my friends from Nigeria, but naturally, as time passed, this common ground we had together started to diminish.

During my time at university, I felt compelled to get involved in educational sponsorship. I also started my career in banking, and I really loved it.

Then after having my first child, and having lots of time compared to before, I hosted a number of art events at home, showcasing African Art. And at these events, I would provide wine and snacks for people. These snacks were

foods that I grew up with, and everyone seemed to like them. Also noticing that none of the snacks I grew up with were in any of my local shops. I felt that I could create a business which produced great snacks, believing that there must be people out there who wanted them. But the business had to do good. It had to make my sponsorship of children sustainable.

So I got in touch with a couple of people and explained what I wanted to do. That is business built on a good ethos but crating supremely tasty snacks. A business that would impact lives.

CHIKA'S was born. Actually, because I was not ready with the brand name, I put my name on the design, as a place holder for the unveiling. And when these consultants saw it, they said, "Chika, fantastic name. This is amazing." I was like, "Oh, my God, it's not called Chika's." But it had started... and we ended up with CHIKA'S.

We have just raised funding for CHIKA'S Africa. The same great snacks, ethos and making it more accessible to the nation. The factory is already up, HQ is looking great. Recruiting's already started, and we have a target of 70% females. We will be able to offer girls more education opportunities directly with the schools, and then we can put those girls through our business with work experience. For me, to be able to do that where I grew up, and impact the lives of people there, is very exciting.

Have you had role models in your career?

I've had so many role models, male and female. A woman called Sahar Hashemi really helped me. When CHIKA'S launched, we did not have a brand, and the snacks were in lovely white bags because I thought they looked premium. Until I met Sahar. She was clear, "How have you ended up with this bag? I wouldn't buy these, I think they look shocking, soulless and certainly does not give me the feeling the snacks do when I actually eat them." I really appreciated that very direct feedback.

“It is so important to build up the confidence of the people around you, whether it is that of your friends, your family, your partner or your children

As someone who's got the power to grow and nurture a business, why is diversity and inclusion important?

For one reason – because of confidence. It is so important to build up the confidence of the people around you, whether it is that of your friends, your family, your partner or your children. Diversity brings challenge, which if overcome, in itself builds confidence.

In our business in Nigeria, there are people of different ages and different backgrounds. And while I champion women, and I champion girls and education, I would be foolish to have a 100% female workforce – diversity is needed across the board.

You say you support the education of women through the business...

We work with World Vision and we sponsor the Empowering Girls programme. It's about helping girls attend and stay in school. There are lots of areas we focus on, like getting them to school safely, ensuring there are appropriate facilities, and educating communities at large about why it is important for girls to attend and finish school. Those who do are five times more likely to educate their daughters in turn. It's a confidence issue as well. When girls finish school, their confidence and knowledge is passed down to their children. It changes generations, it improves the community. The country. Ultimately the world.

What changes would you like to see in the next five to 10 years?

When we started, one of the big things for CHIKA'S was that we would never accept a listing or distribution into the world-food



aisle. Because we saw that aisle as marginalised away from the rest of the supermarket, with fewer visitors down it.

Just because I'm an ethnic minority business, I did not want less opportunity to showcase my range to a wide range of people. One of the things that is needed is to bring the mass market brands from world-food aisle to the mainstream, as that is where the footfall is.

Entrepreneurialism is a beautiful thing. But it is tough. More should and could be done to encourage and support it, at government level and amongst the retailers. It would be nice to see smaller brand with less budget helped and given a shot. There are so many great brands I've come across that could be really successful.

If you hadn't set up CHIKA'S, what else would you have done?

I've always wanted to go into food. So if it wasn't CHIKA'S, I would have created a chain of restaurants, a place of happiness. A place where you can relax. It has all the things that make you happy – the warmth, the colours, the music, the food, the people, the company. I would have called it 'YOUR PLACE'... so, yeah. I might still do that.



Laura Ryan

Laura is Founder and Global Chair of Meat Business Women and leads her own consultancy business, Lavenpark

I've got no agricultural background and as a kid I didn't even like going into the butcher's shop... but when I finished my master's degree I saw a graduate job as marketing manager for a meat wholesaler. I naively thought, "Marketing meat, that'll be easy, I'll give that a go." I started there almost 20 years ago and I've fallen in love with this industry. I love the pace, the challenge, the people and the way the industry operates.

In that first job I was identified as a Business Leader of Tomorrow in a process led by the government, and I was lucky enough to travel and meet international graduates from a range of industries, which really put into perspective how the meat industry is viewed as a career choice.

I moved into marketing and strategy roles at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), becoming Sector Strategy Director in 2016. It was really at this time that I started noticing that in senior-level

meetings I was often the only woman in the room. I would chat to my friends over a drink in the pub, and they would say, "Why on earth do you want to work in the meat industry?"

These were talented friends who worked in medicine or finance or law, and they would have never considered a career in the meat industry; it just didn't sound appealing to them.

I could see two things really clearly: firstly, the image of our sector was not attracting female talent. Secondly, when I was looking around head offices I couldn't help but think: 'The pipeline of female talent that we do have is not progressing to the top'.

Keen to convince women that the meat sector could offer them a rewarding career, I decided to set up Meat Business Women, a global professional group for females working in the industry. I established the group with three clear goals: to improve the

“Role models show that the potentially unachievable is achievable

image of the industry for women; to nurture new entrants through education and mentoring; to improve networking.

We're now in five countries, we're recognised by the United Nations and by royalty (HRH Princess Anne spoke at a recent UK event). I often think: 'Bloody hell, how have we managed that?!'

Two years ago I went portfolio, running my own consultancy – Lavenpark – which delivers marketing and business strategy solutions for food businesses. Alongside that I've got a new Non-Executive Director role for Livestock Information Limited and I'm still passionately involved with Meat Business Women.

Has being a woman ever felt like a barrier to progression in a male-dominated industry?

Not necessarily, but it's made me work harder. I think if you work hard you're going to get ahead, and the meat industry is one where the opportunities are huge for those who want to get in amongst it and make change for the better.

Did you have any female role models in the industry?

No. When we talk about this within the Meat Business Women committee – all senior women – without fail the six of us have male role models. I think that's fine – though it would have helped me if there were female role models. Our research highlights that there's not enough female role models, particularly from a diverse background, and at a younger age. We want to address that.

What does it mean to have a role model?

It helps you think differently – and shows that the potentially unachievable is achievable, when you see that somebody else has done it. With role models, I look at the good things they're doing and think, "I can take something from that, and influence my own style and approach, and put that into my own performance."



What are the things you focus on when inspiring others?

For me it's about giving people time, listening and truly understanding their aspirational goals and challenges first, and then helping any way I can.

What benefits do you think the meat industry would get from having a more diverse workforce?

It makes the industry more sustainable and will allow us to be more agile to challenges, thinking and acting innovatively. It will bring it closer to the consumer and ultimately, will make it more profitable.

Which books have inspired your thinking in the way you lead?

There's a book, *How Women Rise*, by Marshall Goldsmith and Sally Helgesen, which impactfully outlines what holds women back in their careers. There are 12 points, and one is, 'Don't let your job get in the way of your career.' That's been one of my things: I am a perfectionist, so I always want everything to be right. In the past that meant it therefore had to be me that did it. I'm much more self-aware now, and inspired every day by the skills and brilliance of the amazing people I work with.

What is the most rewarding thing about working in the meat industry?

The variety. I have not, in a 20-year career, ever had two days the same.

If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?

Working for Diageo because of my love of gin! Though a newer passion of mine is academia. I've spent time lecturing in marketing and management, it's rewarding to spend time with students at the beginning of their career plus better understand what Gen Z perceptions are of the meat industry.

Can you explain more about your consultancy Lavenpark?

Lavenpark is a small but powerful consultancy. We put into play 20 years of marketing and management experience across the food sector to build solutions for a client base that includes commercial players, government and levy boards at a domestic and global level. Having a strong international network helps Lavenpark to give clients unique insights, trends and best practice from around the globe.

Where would you like Meat Business Women to be in 10 years' time?

Operating in at least 15 countries connecting 100,000 women across the world to attract and retain them in a more diverse and sustainable meat industry – oh and another invitation to the United Nations!



Ana Sanchez

Ana is Vice President Consumer Division EMEA, McCormick

I was born in Seoul, South Korea and I am the daughter of a Puerto Rican father and a Korean mother. I spent my very early school years in Germany, then lived in at least six different states in America. By the time I was 17 years old, I had moved about 12 times and it wasn't until I arrived at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire that I knew I would spend four years in one place.

Professionally, I started my career at 14 years old at McDonald's, working weekends during the school year and full-time in the summers as a drive-thru cashier and host for kids' birthday parties. I spent two formative years there, learning about responsibility, customer service, team-work, and up-selling (i.e. "would you like fries with your order?"). During university, I interned over the summers in investment banking. After graduation I accepted a role in finance at Intel Corporation, then joined Deloitte Consulting before jumping into the Silicon

Valley dotcom mania. Luckily as the internet bubble burst, I was accepted to Tuck Business School at Dartmouth College for an MBA in General Management.

After graduation I joined Colgate-Palmolive where I spent 15 years in leadership roles of increasing responsibilities in the U.S., Latin American Division, and European Division. I am now at McCormick & Company where I started as the Vice President of Marketing for EMEA where I led a transformation across all aspects of marketing including data and analytics, technology, innovation, digital and communication. I was recently promoted to the Vice President of the Consumer Division for EMEA with P&L responsibilities and charged with accelerating profitable growth, building brand love with consumers, and removing complexity.

Who have been your career role models?

In my earlier days, my role models were in academia, due to the fact that I was the first in my family to go to university and I experienced how an education can change your life's direction. I was, and still remain, inspired by Dr. Scott Cowen (father of my college roommate and best friend). At that time, Dr. Cowen was the Dean of Case Western Reserve University and then went on to become President of Tulane University as well as a critical community leader in New Orleans during and after Hurricane Katrina. He achieved success on multiple fronts despite his humble beginnings and his learning disability as a child. Dr. Ella Bell Smith, a Tuck Business School professor, accomplished author and speaker, and advocate on women's workplace issues. She taught me about leadership awareness, driving change in oneself and in an organisation, and rising above drama.

During my long tenure at Colgate, I had many career role models, and specifically two senior executive leaders were instrumental in my development over many years. I am also fortunate to have career role models at McCormick who drive a high standard while offering advice and support to help me become a more effective leader.

What does great leadership look like to you?

A great leader is courageous, honest, resilient, self-aware, kind, grateful, always learning, inclusive, and drives high standards, but celebrates the people and their achievements easily.

What career challenges have you learnt the most from?

In 2012, I was offered the role of Marketing Director of Latin America and it was known to be a high-pressure role with significant travel (at that time my son was 18 months old), however it was also a high-profile and high-impact role as well as a significant growth opportunity. It was steep learning curve, in a new region across many markets, significant competitive threat and challenging business and economic environments. My first instinct was to decline the offer, but with the support of my husband as well as critical mentors, thankfully I accepted. It was immensely rewarding and shaped me as a business leader and built long-lasting relationships that I still hold dear today.

Another career challenge is the role that I am in now at McCormick. It is extremely rewarding, fast-paced and dynamic with a breadth of responsibilities across multiple functions, brands, categories, and markets with an ambition to drive unprecedented

growth. Although I have reshaped the business and strategies, redesigned the organisation, acquired and developed talent, and embedded new capabilities, there is still much more to do to deliver our ambition.

What are the main benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce?

With true diversity and inclusion comes innovative thinking, divergent perspectives, and a heightened sense of belonging, which will not only retain and attract the very best talent but also extract the absolute best in people and teams. It also creates trust, connectedness, and pride which allows each person to bring their individuality and creativity. These elements together will drive teams to reach for higher ambitions and unlock stronger growth.

What diversity and inclusion initiatives are you driving at McCormick?

We have a Global Diversity and Inclusion Council of which I am a member. We also have a global IGNITE programme, which seeks to create a workplace where all employees can maximise their potential by removing the invisible forces standing in their

way. Specifically in EMEA we have made important strides promoting gender diversity and delivering unconscious bias training. Women's International Network, an employee ambassador group dedicated to advancing women, has been established in the UK, France, Poland and South Africa. We've also established a multi-disciplinary anti-racism advisory group called EmBRACE to ensure we pro-actively identify tangible actions across our region.

I, along with the Global and EMEA leadership teams, am committed to building a positive, modern, diverse and inclusive workplace where colleagues of all backgrounds, life experiences, preferences and beliefs are recognised, respected and valued – and everyone gets the opportunity to thrive. Companies like ours must reflect the communities and consumers we serve. If not, how can we expect to meet their needs and inspire the chef in all of them?

What are the biggest challenges facing further D&I progress?

Making clear choices on where to have the largest impact, accessing and measuring accurate data over time and unconscious bias.





Vismay Sharma

Vismay is MD, UK & Ireland, L'Oréal

I come from a middle class, Indian family with parents with very strong values around education, doing the right thing and helping those around us. I studied as my parents asked me to and I think education is one of the most important things we can have, and these values have helped me all along my career.

I was raised in Delhi, did my degree in computing, and then



I did my MBA. In my final year of my MBA, I came across a case study on L'Oréal, and I found it really inspiring. As a matter of chance, L'Oréal decided to set up a subsidiary in India around the time that I was passing out of my institute. I applied and I managed to get in.

I joined the Consumer Products Division first, then the Professional Products Division, which is the division focused on hairdressing salons. I came to the UK as a product manager working on hair colour, then went back to India to relaunch the Professional Products Division, which was struggling a little bit. We were faced with the question of our business model because there were no salons in the country at the time. If there are no salons, how do you run a salon business? So we started creating salons and within two or three years, it completely changed the shape of the hairdressing industry in the market. Even today, for us, one of our most successful

professional products divisions in the world is in India.

I then went back into the Consumer Products Division in Paris, then to India, and to Indonesia as Country Managing Director. Indonesia was great, a very different culture to live and work in. And then I had the opportunity to come to the UK in 2016. To work for L'Oréal in the UK is a privilege. A lot of people tell me, "Oh, you've only worked for one corporation." And I say, "Yes, it's one corporation, but it's a million experiences."

On the personal side, my wife and I have a son who is 18 and who has just started university and a daughter who is 15. It's good to have a 15-year-old who keeps on reminding you what are the most important things for the younger generation. And it's really enriching because her generation amaze me. When I think about what I was interested in when I was 15, I wanted to just steal my dad's car and run out with it.



What does great leadership mean to you?

I think great leadership starts with a vision, the ability to foresee what's coming your way in the next five or ten years, and to prepare the organisation and the people. And then it's about having enough charisma and empathy that your team follows you and your vision. My leadership style is a lot about surrounding myself with people who are brilliant at their jobs, people who can do their jobs much better than I can. And then you need to create an environment of total trust and transparency, one in which people can take risks if they need to.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

The corporation we work for has to be a reflection of the societies we operate in and the consumers we are talking to. At one point, we talked about diversity. Then it became diversity and inclusion. And, for me, it goes a step beyond. It goes into a sense of belonging. If you have experiences that come from different places, when you put all

of them together you have a much richer organisation.

But the primary reason is that you have to do the right thing to begin with. A successful organisation is one where everybody feels that they can come in and give their best. And if you create an organisation that clearly exudes that kind of warmth for everybody, you'll attract the best talents. Those talents need not be one particular gender or one particular race. That's the great thing about humanity. You have bright people everywhere.

“We have to accept that a lot of people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds are starting off way behind the starting line

What are the main barriers preventing progress on diversity and inclusion within the sector?

We have to accept that a lot of people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds are starting off way behind the starting line. They are facing challenges that come from the kind of education they have access to, the kind of security they have at home, the kind of security they have when they step out of their homes. As a society, the sooner we can intervene, the sooner we can help people, and the bigger impact we will have.

I'm lucky to work for a company that is a meritocracy to start with. The very fact that there is an Indian national running the UK and Ireland, one of the largest subsidiaries of a French business, means that this organisation gives opportunities to people. But we need to do more.

How would you like to see the sector evolve in the next five to 10 years?

The sector has to represent the society we operate in. And if you look at senior management in most corporations, that's not happening. We don't have a lot of leaders with disabilities. We don't have a lot of leaders from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. We don't have a lot of leaders who are from LGBTQ+ communities. It is the responsibility of today's leaders to make the changes that will see the sector evolve.

If you could do it all again, what would you have done?

What I would love to do is to go back to India and set up a few schools for children from economically disadvantaged households. I would love to give them the same level of education that I could provide to my own children.



Chris Silcock

Chris is Vice-President and Chief of Kellogg's UK

Authenticity. Seems everyone's talking about it. Whether it's brands needing to be more genuine or leaders needing to ditch their well-honed corporate façade and let the real 'them' shine through.

I don't know anyone who doesn't want to be themselves at work. Why wouldn't you? But in my experience as a leader, it's much easier to talk the talk than walk the walk.

Authenticity is — I don't mind admitting — something I've grappled with throughout my career.

“I can't think of a time when authenticity has been more important

When you start out (and my career in grocery kicked off at 16 when I worked part-time at ASDA), I don't believe any of us has even the slightest inkling of the need to be authentic. We're too busy trying to learn the ropes of a new job and not get fired.

As you climb the career ladder, you again tend to focus on delivering. You don't give yourself the head space to be self-reflective. And, if you can't do that, being authentic is so much harder.

That's been my experience. Apart from a break for university and travelling, most of my career was with ASDA in a range of commercial and buying roles. I learnt so much, for which I'll always be grateful, but around eight years ago I really felt I needed a change.

It's at that point I joined Coca-Cola and it's at that point I also really discovered the need for authenticity.

The role was different, the company was different and the skills I needed to deploy were different. For one, I'd never managed that many people and it was a pure leadership role, so conveying my personal sense of authenticity and communicating was crucial.

I realised every word you say is interpreted, potentially, in a slightly different way. It's fair to say, I learnt from that experience.

If I reflect on where I am today as head of Kellogg's in the UK and Ireland, I can't think of a time when authenticity has been more important. Without it, the contemporary leader is unable to inspire and engage and reach people where they are at.

Authenticity is not always easy to get right (my own personal experiences are a testament to that) but I passionately believe it is something you must work on.

It takes time to get out of your own head and be comfortable in your own skin in a work setting. And once you've kind of cracked it, I think you have a responsibility to create the right environment where others are empowered and encouraged to search for their own authenticity.

After all, who doesn't want to work somewhere where we all feel we belong and where we can bring our true selves to the office every day?

What attracted you to retail and FMCG?

I got into retail dead early – at 16. Admittedly my first job was part-time around my studies but what attracted me to the sector then is what has kept me in grocery and food and drink all these years – the pace. I love the speed and seasonality of it all.

Who have been your career role models?

I like people who take ownership and accountability when things are good and bad. I think people like Andy Clarke, Barry Williams (both from my time at Asda), Leendert Den Hollander (at Coca-Cola) and Oliver Morton (Kellogg's) are like that. I've worked for some great bosses who have energy, strength and a relentlessness to keep pushing.

What leadership traits do you admire?

Authenticity, especially when combined with being a good listener. And it's about having the confidence to say that you don't have to have all the answers. My team will tell you I'm good at listening, sometimes, and sometimes I'm not. I think that's a continual learning journey that involves letting people know you need their help.

What career challenges do you feel you've learned most from?

Listening is a skill I'm working on. When you start understanding what it means to listen, you realise it's not about what you want to say, but letting people know you're taking everything on board. If you listen properly, the results you get can be tenfold.

What advice do you have for the next generation of leaders in this sector?

The quicker you can get to a deep level of trust with those that you work with the better. You can go home and sweat stuff on your own, but the sensible thing is to talk to somebody who understands the issue on a work level – with no fear that they're going to use it against you.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you as a leader?

You're not going to do as well as you could if you're not representing the people buying your product. For me, one of the most interesting and personal things to explore in inclusion and diversity is the idea of exclusion. Everybody's felt it at some point, but because you want to move on, you don't revisit those feelings. When you do, you learn that it's the situation for a lot of people every day – realising that allows you to reframe your perspective.

What are the biggest hurdles to further progress on inclusion and diversity within the sector?

Getting people to understand that D&I isn't a threat. I think getting more people onside – rather than having people pushed to the sidelines and then throwing stones – is key.





Mel Smith

Mel is CEO, Ocado Retail



I'm from New Zealand and I am Māori, from the Ngāpuhi tribe - my dad is white (Pākehā) and my mum is Māori. Both came from working class families and neither finished high school. I moved out of home at 16, finished high school and went off to university.

I loved university, I studied law and finance at the University of Auckland. I was supposed to be a lawyer but I ended up applying to consulting without knowing what the job really entailed. I joined McKinsey as it had the most fun cultivation dinner, and I moved to

Australia for the role. Joining the world's leading consulting firm was quite a learning experience. I remember the first dinner I went to, someone said 'pass the arugula salad', and I had to tell them I didn't know what arugula looked like. I was also told I had poor napkin etiquette (fold goes inwards on the lap apparently), and I really didn't know what wine to order.

I spent two fun years at McKinsey, who then supported my studying for an MBA at Kellogg School of Management in Chicago. En route, I met a lovely French guy on a bus in Peru, and after business school we decided to move in together in London and I rejoined McKinsey. We are still here 20 years later.

I rose through the ranks and became a Partner, but chose to leave in 2009 because I hadn't slept for about three years. I decided to take on a new challenge so went to TalkTalk to be the COO. I did some fun

freelance consulting assignments (Bupa, SABMiller, Pearson) until I retired to hike with my tent and finish my teenage goal of visiting every country in the world. After a year of retirement, a friend of mine told me I needed to hike less and get a proper job. I figured she was probably right, so I joined M&S for two years, got an excellent NED role at SSE plc, and am now the CEO of the world's largest (and coolest) pureplay online grocer. I also managed to finish my travel goal in May last year, with Yemen the last of 197 countries visited.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

Commercially, diversity of thought drives better business performance. Having diverse backgrounds, ethnicities and genders is a really robust way of ensuring diversity of thought. Studies show a strong correlation between the diversity of the leadership team and financial performance.

As a Māori, we are all about our ancestors (our whakapapa), so I really like to know people's origins. Personal histories are hugely fascinating, and I am always asking nosy questions about people's lives. It's a no brainer, for business and fun, to make sure you have diversity in your business and your team.

In the UK today, do you think there is still a class issue?

Social mobility is a huge issue in the UK. I once gave a talk to 15 senior women at a prestigious UK investment bank. I told them about my experiences, my working class background, and how often I felt out of place. To me, they looked like the poshest women I had ever seen. Five of them emailed me afterwards to tell me about their backgrounds and one confessed they grew up in a council estate. I am pretty sure they had never shared their backgrounds with each other. I think foreigners feel it less as we are treated as belonging to no particular class.



How do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

Up until a few years ago, I focussed solely on diversity. I then realised that having a diverse group of excellent people was not enough: I have to create an environment where everybody feels like they belong. I am still learning how to do this well. All of our colleagues do unconscious bias training, we have networks for LGBTQ, ethnic minorities, working families, women, mental health, and we track our population in terms of our ethnicity and gender. We are very intentional about building an inclusive culture - one of our core Ocado Retail values is encouraging colleagues to bring their unique and diverse best selves to work.

What do you find most rewarding in your job?

I love everything about my job, you never know what the day is going to bring. Online retail is pure adrenaline: it moves so fast, and we can change so much so quickly and see how customers respond.

I realised that having a diverse group of excellent people was not enough: I had to create an environment where everyone feels like they belong

I have an amazing team of 400 in our head office. They worked 24/7 during lockdown and they were rock stars who supported me and each other. I have never been more proud or inspired than I am right now leading this small and mighty business.

Additionally, we also have a strong network of frontline colleagues working across the UK. I visited every facility in the Ocado network during the first lockdown, four of which were a three-hour drive away, and there were no hotels. So I showed up in my panel van and welcomed drivers back from a night shift, and then slept in the van until 5am to greet the first drivers coming in for the day. Our frontline has always set us apart from our competitors, but this year they are heroes!

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders entering food and grocery?

Young people should actively seek out parts of the industry that are disruptive, challenging and growing. Join businesses or teams that are growing and thriving. There is no better industry to work in than food retail — we all love food, and retail is absolutely fascinating — there is nothing like customers to keep you on your toes.



Louise Stigant

Louise is MD, UK,
Mondelez International



I spent my childhood in Portsmouth with my parents who both worked exceptionally hard to provide us with opportunities but, more importantly, instilled a belief that anything is possible. At 18 I left for Sheffield Polytechnic to study for a degree in Food Marketing and I was fortunate to be able to complete a placement year with Waitrose, which helped me secure a job on their graduate buying scheme when I finished my degree.

After four enjoyable years as a Partner, I then moved to Kraft completing many roles in sales across a range of customers and categories. Over that period, I had two children and like many

couples navigating dual careers, family life was hugely rewarding but presented regular challenges. It was sometimes difficult to find a balance between doing a job that I really loved and being the parent, I wanted to be.

One of the outcomes of the Kraft / Cadbury integration was the proposal to close the Kraft HQ in Cheltenham. I learnt a huge amount from leading the consultation on this significant change programme; which led to constant personal conflict between making the right business decision whilst acting with humility, recognising the personal impact this had on colleagues. I learnt to appreciate how critical it is to be trusted as a leader and the importance of acting with integrity as it is often not what you do but how you do it that is remembered.

Another key juncture came when I was asked to become MD of our Ireland business, which provided me the opportunity to work with

an incredible business and team. Before being offered the position, I was aware the role had become vacant but convinced myself that I would not be considered at that point; at the same time "the business" was unsure whether I would take on the role as I wasn't prepared to move my family to Ireland at a critical time in my children's education. It was only after an impromptu conversation that the pieces fell into place and I did not miss out on a fantastic opportunity. I learnt that it is critical to be clear with yourself and others about your career goals and parameters.

In those early career moves, with a young family, I was driven by wanting to do well personally to support my family. As I've got older and my children are increasingly independent, I am now inspired by those I work with; helping them see the possibilities open to them when you understand your own motivations and aspirations.



Talk to us about inclusion, diversity and leadership.

I'm most proud of the shift that we've made at Mondelez, focusing more broadly on leadership and inclusion. We've spent a lot of time encouraging people to be their whole selves and that honesty and openness has created a greater connection to one another and the business.

We started this journey about five or six years ago with a women's network and, over time, that has evolved enormously. We have a passionate gang of people in different affinity groups under the umbrella of Inclusion@Mondelez. It goes from strength to strength. Recently we showcased an initiative in our field team – a set of podcasts where individuals shared their own stories about their religion or beliefs. It had an immediate emotional impact on me and others who watched it. Simply hearing people talk about their own lives really brings the topic of diversity and inclusion onto a human level. It takes courage to do this and that's why I'm a big believer that if we create leaders in everyone, regardless of their role or status, then we will unleash people.

What do you get most enrichment from?

The thing that really makes my heart jump is when I see someone step into a leadership space by identify something that needs to change and then having the courage to do something about it. It just gives me a huge amount of energy and it is partly because you can see their faces light up when they realise they can have an impact and add value to themselves, their colleagues and the business.

Tell us about your engagement with the wider D&I community.

Mondelez had been involved in Diversity and Inclusion in Grocery from the start and it is an example of what can be created from a small "acorn".

Initially, the idea was simply to share D & I best practice across 5 founding partners – Tesco, Coca-Cola, P&G, Accenture, and Mondelez. It rapidly evolved, driven by the courage of the individuals involved, for Mondelez that was Claire Parkes, and quickly there was a bold ambition to host a conference at Wembley!!

So, in 2019, the first-ever Diversity and Inclusion in Grocery conference in partnership with GroceryAid had around 800 delegates from many businesses within the grocery industry. I had the great privileged of hosting with Alessandro Bellini. At a time when it is so easy to focus on what divides rather than unites us, I felt hugely proud of the industry coming together against a common challenge.

The delegates listened, learnt and participated in the various sessions – you could feel the energy in the room swell throughout the day.

You know, if I'm honest, it was a unique moment, that real engagement, a sense of common purpose and importantly 800 colleagues with an action to take when we all returned to our organisations the next day.

“Hearing people talk about their own lives really brings the topic of D&I onto a human level

Since then more businesses have joined as sponsors, a host of lunch and learns have been run and the mentoring programme has grown. Sadly, we had to deliver the 2020 conference virtually, but plans are developing for the next conference in October '21. This group have really stimulated a rich conversation in our industry and I am confident it will continue to have an important impact on our colleagues.

There is so much more we can do to drive diversity, inclusion and belonging. Corporately we must be clear on our commitments against D & I but we also often underestimate the power we have individually to make a difference. Supporting everyone to feel confident, speak their mind and be themselves will unleash our grocery community to lead the way.

If you'd done something completely different, what would it have been?

I have a fascination with BBC1's *Silent Witness*, so it would definitely be a forensic pathologist.



Annabel Tagoe-Bannerman

Annabel is Group General Counsel & Company Secretary, Bakkavor



I was born in Accra, Ghana and lived there until I completed my first degree and moved to the UK in the mid-1990s. I then undertook my post graduate law qualifications, trained at the City corporate law firm, SJ Berwin and worked in private practice for several years.

I moved to a senior in-house legal role at Ladbrokes Plc and was promoted to the role of Group General Counsel. I sat on the Ladbrokes Executive Committee until 2017 during which time I gained brilliant commercial experience.

I took a sabbatical to study and attended London Business School for their Senior Executive Programme. I also obtained further professional qualifications to become a chartered governance professional (ICSA) and undertook the FT Non-Executive Director post graduate diploma.

My first brush with the FMCG sector was as a senior legal consultant at Britvic Plc for six months. I enjoyed the experience which made me feel well disposed to the sector. When the opportunity to join Bakkavor arose a year and a half ago, I embraced it.

I have always worked hard and, obviously, as a Black female professional, I am aware of others' expectations and I work diligently to succeed at what I do. The underlying current is that one knows that one is always being assessed as a minority – rightly or wrongly. Part of my philosophy is not to give anyone

the opportunity to reinforce their negative views about women or about my race or to confirm any of their biases. I am mindful that I am setting an example to those who come after me and I must do my part to make it easier for them to take their opportunities confidently. They belong.

Have you had role models?

My dear mum is my role model. Sadly, she is no longer with us. She was a strong and a smart lady with fire in her belly. She was so clued up about life, relationships and was a woman of faith. Just the whole package, really. I was blessed to have had her in my life as an example to emulate.

From a work perspective, I have not had a singular role model as such, but I have had the benefit of mentors and sponsors. When I started in the law two decades ago, there were few Black women in leadership positions at law firms. It was the same at the junior level – I was the only black trainee

in my cohort, for example. In most of my corporate life and as I have taken leadership positions, there has often been no one in the room who looks like me. Things are changing now albeit at a slow pace.

I have been fortunate to have had mentors and great sponsors with whom I have cultivated lasting relationships. Interestingly, my sponsors to date have all been white males (this probably betrays my age as those who were then in leadership positions when I was starting out!). I have had senior people who have seen a spark in me and thought "this is worth developing." I, in turn, have seized the opportunities given, built on them and paved the way for others coming after me.

What does great leadership mean to you?

One word: influence. I think you can have influence at all levels. You influence people in how you handle yourself. To have real influence, you need to build relationships. You need to be able to make difficult decisions. The only way you are going to capture people's hearts and minds is if they feel you have got 'something' or you handle yourself in manner worth following – not simply because of your title.

Bringing in the concept of diversity and inclusion – is it important for you?

It is not only important but essential – I live it. In recent months it has become topical due to the murder of George Floyd and the BLM protests. It is becoming hard to ignore the inequalities and injustices of life. I believe that it is important to have diversity at every level – in terms of gender, race, sexuality, ability, and cognitive.



Further, I think we owe it to ourselves to reflect the communities we serve. People do not like change. So, if you want people to change, you need to really get behind the initiatives and help bring it about. It is the reason for my continuous involvement in diversity and inclusion dialogues.

Have you noticed any differences between the sectors you've worked in and their thinking around diversity and inclusion?

The sectors I have worked in so far have been largely male dominated (particularly in the senior leadership roles). The junior ranks are beginning to show more gender diversity though there is more work to be done regarding ethnic diversity and promoting diversity beyond middle management.

What do you think are the barriers of us achieving greater progress around diversity and inclusion?

We need a shift in mindset. We recognise there is a need for change. Certain privileges must be forgone for real change to happen. People know this

and some may fear giving up those privileges therefore communication is key. The pace of change needs to quicken, and efforts must be made to make our workplaces and communities more diverse and inclusive.

“Certain privileges must be foregone for real change to happen

If you hadn't followed this path, what would you have done instead?

I love what I do, so it would be something not too dissimilar – I would run my own law firm practice with a focus on providing advice on legal and governance matters.



Carly Tait

Carly is a Digital Campaign Manager at Co-op

I got involved in athletics after the London Paralympics in 2012, when I was 27. I went to the closing ceremony, and the experience totally inspired me. I'd never been that interested in participating in sports before. I have Cerebral Palsy and at that time I was very dismissive of my disability. I would totally disengage – I hated it and didn't really identify as a disabled person. As a result, I would go above and beyond to outperform non-disabled people.

So, in 2012, even just awareness of the fact that disabled people played and excelled in sport was a big moment for me. And to see thousands of people screaming for the British team and being so proud of everything they were doing – it really had an impact on me. I decided that I was going to be an athlete and completely change my life.

And that's what I did. I found a wheelchair racing coach and rented some equipment. And I basically dedicated the next

four years of my life, six days a week, to training to get on the start line of the T34 100m at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Three years into my athletics journey, I joined Co-op. I don't know if it was fate, but the head of my team at the time was Head of Brand for the 2012 Olympics, and with her support, they agreed to keep my job open while I left to fight for my place on the team. Overnight I became a professional athlete and every waking moment was dedicated to success.

Being in the Paralympic village where non-disabled people are the minority was a life-changing experience. When I came back to work, I started to be more vocal about my needs. And then I had a baby, and consequently went through another new experience of how people react to disability. When I returned from maternity leave, I thought, "Something's got to change for me because I don't want to be an athlete anymore."

“ I didn't want to have to do something amazing to get people to view disability in a different way

I didn't want to have to do something amazing or something big and tough to get people to view disability in a different way.

So I thought, "I'm going to set up a network", with the aim of providing peer-to-peer support and development opportunities for our disabled talent.

At this point, I was more aware of inequality and why it existed, where it comes from and how to solve it. When you live it you have a vested interest in changing it for the community.

Even though the network (recently branded 'Represent') is in its early stages, it feels like we've made so much progress, even by just having conversations that weren't necessarily happening before. And it's made a massive difference already.

What benefits do you think a more diverse workforce would bring to the industry?

Obviously, the more diverse you are internally, the more equipped you are to cater for your customers. And – particularly in retail – your customers are your colleagues, and vice versa. So it's very much from a rudimentary standpoint – if you get it right for your colleagues, you get it right for your customers.

You do need to represent your customers, and particularly at Co-op, we're very mindful of our people and the communities we trade in, so we'll go down to hyper-local level. We do talk to the people on the street.

What do you find the most rewarding about your job?

One of the most rewarding moments was when I went away to achieve my athletic ambition, and Co-op got behind me and sponsored the last part of my journey.

That gave me the best opportunity at the time to make changes for myself – it gave me that media platform too which luckily gave me the chance to make a positive impact in my local area. I was involved in a lot

of youth projects that were going on at the time and I took part in a number of awareness initiatives as well. So I'm pretty proud of that.

I'm very aware of the problems that the disabled community face, and I'm very privileged to have the platform I do, thanks to the Paralympics and Co-op.

Have you seen the company culture change?

I have definitely seen some changes happening, and pretty quickly. For example, I've noticed more conversations and more inclusion in certain meetings, particularly around the D&I strategy at Co-op. Those conversations have obviously led to more insight, more data, and they present a great foundation for making that cultural shift.

I think change has got to come from the top down in this instance. Because being disabled is still taboo to some extent. So it's got to be embraced in the workplace and it's got to be driven by our leaders to help mobilise the right people to cause that shift – and it's great to have seen that happen.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Somebody that can listen, relate and empathise. To be honest, you've got to feel valued, haven't you? And it's about having that skill set to value the people that you work for. They don't work for you – you work for them. That's really what I've learnt through it all, because you're in a privileged position to affect change.





Hayley Tatum

Hayley is SVP, People, ASDA



I grew up in the West Country. I took my A-levels, and then went to work in my local supermarket, Tesco, straight from school. I joined on the tills for 10 weeks and I stayed for 20 years!

I volunteered for overtime and began learning all the different skills and functions within a single-site store. Within quite a short space of time, I fell into personnel.

I decided to take a lateral move and I went to work in Tesco Head Office, in charge of their NVQ programmes. By being in the centre, I got involved in resource planning, project management and recruitment. I then became head of learning and development, and my career just rocketed up. Alongside this, I completed a master's degree, part time.

I left for a period of time to work for the British Airport Authority as head of learning, then was headhunted back to lead all the people changes for the Tesco

hypermarket business. It was a steep journey, with a fabulous team. I then had the chance to lead a region of stores, and my last job was HR director for Tesco UK and the Republic of Ireland.

I moved to Asda, into the Chief People Officer role in 2011. Without moving countries, I suddenly found myself in the international division, rather than being in the mothership.

And then, three years ago, I added my first non-exec directorship at DWP. It was one of those moments where you think, "Goodness, a supermarket person? What on earth am I going to be able to give to a Cabinet Office department?" But actually, lots of the things I've learnt along my journey in retail are applicable, leading change, customer service, reputation management – it really does translate.



Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

Two reasons really. We operate in every corner of the UK, and so our business needs to be representative of the communities we serve and we want to be a good neighbour to those communities.

And, secondly, we need to make sure that we're representative right the way through the ranks of Asda. As we make business-critical decisions, we need to ensure we are drawing on a wealth of experience from a mix of individual experiences.

How are you encouraging a more diverse workforce?

First of all, through our hiring and recruitment, starting from the way we represent the brand and the way that we advertise. And making sure we're really clear who we have coming up through the organisation, how

we're sponsoring and supporting those individuals to achieve their potential.

And then really by telling stories. We're a brilliant storytelling business. If you can explore and explain one person's story, there's lots more who will connect with that story and feel, "That could be me." And so it's using our brilliant colleague stories to inspire and engage others. It is possible to do so much by promoting and tapping people on the shoulder, but so many more can be reached by showcasing and explaining what's possible.

How do you personally role model an inclusive leadership team?

'Ask, more than tell' is generally a theme of my leadership. After all, much of the time the people around me know more than I do about a specific subject, informed by current and relevant data.

I believe, in board-level positions, it's easy to only be served a sanitised view of the world – but it's so important to stay close to reality and different points of view. I think if you can do that then you can get close to and be trusted by your people. And then you hear the truth. Leadership is about hearing and acting on the truth.

“In our industry, we honour, respect and recognise experience, from wherever you've got it

What is the most rewarding thing in your job?

Social mobility. There are no biases in our industry. In our sector, there aren't prejudices that say, "You must have this particular degree to be at board level." Nothing like that. We honour, respect and recognise experience, from wherever you've got it. We take risks on people early in their careers and encourage them to learn and grow.

What do you think the biggest challenge has been in your career?

Balance, definitely. It's 24/7. The business never stops. I work for an American-owned business, so my day starts in Leeds but ends in Bentonville. And that can be a long day! On a Sunday, our business trades and therefore you're always on. And so it's a challenge finding ways to be present and up-to-date, but making sure your whole life isn't consumed by work.

A few years ago, I had breast cancer. I do think a big life moment like that does shake you a little, and makes you stop and say, "Am I looking after myself well enough to be as good as I can be? As a mum, as a wife, as a Chief People Officer?" What's that saying? Work gets my best, my family get the rest. Work demands can challenge our best intentions.

If you weren't doing this job what would you be doing?

It would be something to do with learning and knowledge – something in education. I love the experience and the satisfaction of being able to spark curiosity in others and watch them flourish and grow.



Sam Thomas-Berry

Sam is Vice President, European HR, Kellogg Company

I grew up on a council estate – although money was tight, I was blessed with brilliant parents who always showed me so much love and support. To fund college, I was working three jobs aged 16. I'd do a 4am-6am cleaning shift, then go to college, and I'd do a 6pm-8pm shift in the evening. I also worked weekends. It wasn't just about college fees, it was about supporting my family financially.

I was the first in our family to go to university. I studied a Business Studies degree at Liverpool John Moores University, and then joined Marconi. I had a year placement in the HR team, loved every second of it, and was delighted that they offered me a permanent job.

Upon leaving Marconi after seven years, I chose a completely different sector. I went to BAE Systems, British Aerospace. I thought it was going to be like *Top Gun*, but that wasn't quite how it unravelled! I was Head of

HR for Eurofighter Typhoon, a very different industry.

I really wanted to be part of an organisation that was fast moving, where I could make a difference, and I found Kellogg's. I pretty much fell in love on interview one, watching Special K whizz around the production line! I quickly realised that this is where I wanted to be – it felt like family from day one.

I'm married to Steve, and we have two children, Rhys, 13, and Caitlin who is eight. So, I'm a busy, very proud mum as well.

“Nothing makes me prouder than seeing something develop from an idea into a reality, and the pace at which it happens

How important have role models been to you?

Probably the most important one is my mum, who is just incredible. I mean, she is a character, but she's incredibly down to earth and has always been a straight talker. Honesty, integrity... for me, that was always part of my DNA, and, as a leader myself, that was always how I wanted to show up. And then I do have kind of a girl crush on Michelle Obama, I must admit. I just think she's incredible.

What does great leadership mean to you?

It's critically important – and, over the years, I've really reflected on the importance of followship. Because getting to a point where you have a highly engaged group who will support, follow and challenge are the key elements of a high-performing team.

I talk a lot about the shadow of a leader, and what I mean by that is you have to be very conscious of the shadow that you cast as

a leader. It's the consistency in your behaviour, how you show up, your body language and it's how you navigate tough situations and filter that to your team in an appropriate way. I know every single one of my team personally. I know how they tick. And I think that level of investment is really important.

What do you find most rewarding about your job?

I work with incredible people – I genuinely have so much passion, respect and admiration for them. And being in a position where I have an equal voice at the table as a business leader means an awful lot to me.

On top of that, nothing makes me prouder than seeing something develop from an idea into a reality, and the pace at which it happens. It's so exciting being able to see that process every week and every month.

Looking back on your career, what's been the biggest challenge?

It's often the toughest experiences that give you the most learning.

I remember being given the opportunity to lead a UK downsizing programme in Marconi. And they said, "Sam, we want you to head this up and you've got a team of 30 who are going to handle all the administration elements." And I made every mistake from a people management perspective. I didn't have a clue, and the pain and the scars and the awkwardness of those interactions really were the bootcamp I needed. Just because you're telling them what to do doesn't mean they're going to do it. That was a important lesson.

And then from a more recent example, the whole 'future ready' organisation transformation we went through in Kellogg's in 2019. It was another huge learning curve for me that I'm delighted I had the opportunity to lead.

Why do you think diversity and inclusion is important?

It's about ensuring that an organisation and everybody within that organisation has the opportunity to be their absolute best.

I did a Team Talk session to our European organisation on Inclusion and Diversity and outlined our commitment. I said, "We have to create a movement and we all have responsibility. So if you're interested, we will connect with you. We're going to make something magical." And, honestly, it was just like an explosion. And just the energy and the passion of, "I want to be involved. I want to be part of this." The baton was passed from my team to effectively the whole region.

What advice would you give the next generation?

Get as much as experience as you can. Put your hand up for every project. And, I guess, if I were to talk to myself earlier in my years, I would say: back yourself. Make sure you invest in your development. Remember what's most important in terms of attitude and mindset. That counts. I smell arrogance very, very quickly. I'm kind of allergic to it. And, whether we like it or we don't like it, hard work counts.

I laugh a lot, and I think that's important because you've got to sometimes take the intensity out of the situation and remember that we all want to have a bit of fun along the way.

If you hadn't had this career, what would you have done?

I think I would have been in the medical profession. I quite like the idea of a nurse or a midwife. And I often think as well – wouldn't it be nice to have a place on the beach, maybe doing afternoon teas? That would be nice as well.





Rajesh Tugnait

Rajesh is CEO,
Sysco Speciality Group
(Europe)

I was born in Mumbai, did my degree in business studies, and ended up on an MBA programme in the UK. Once I realised how expensive things are here, I started working whilst studying for a family business that imported food from the Far East for ethnic caterers.

I earned my Chartered Institute of Marketing, and then met my wife, who's a chartered accountant. She was with Ernst & Young. We got married and she said, "OK, you need to get a proper job now."

And so I came out into the market. I went to a recruitment consultant, who said, "Look, academically you're off the charts for this industry, but you're Indian and worked for an ethnic firm, so you need to work for something at the other end of the scale to balance your CV out." So I decided to go into mainstream foodservices.

I got a call from the recruitment consultant and was offered a marketing manager job, but I decided to turn it down because it wouldn't have provided any work-life balance. Ashford to Pinner is not a great commute, and we were balancing two careers. But they came back to me and said, "Look, we really like what you can do. Why don't you do national accounts?" We were expecting our first child, Mira was working, and working from home wasn't a thing. But the MD said, "We'll manage, we'll try and make it work between us."

So, I joined the group 22 years ago, and I've moved role every two years since. Four years ago I was part of the team that was sold to Sysco, stayed with the group as CEO for the fresh businesses and I've just been appointed CEO for Sysco Speciality Europe. It's been an incredible journey, and I absolutely love it.

What does great leadership mean to you?

A lot of people think it's a badge, a crown, or a business club. And while I think leadership is a privilege, I also know it comes with a lot of responsibility. You're in charge, and you have to take that responsibility very seriously. It's growing and protecting the business four-dimensionally, whether it's upwards, downwards or sideways. Additionally, great leadership is about being aware of how you come across – a leader is always 'on'.

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders coming into the sector?

Throw yourself into challenging situations, take the job that nobody else wants, and experience everything you can as early as possible in your career. Have that natural inquisitiveness.

Your career is your responsibility and you should play the long game. I've had 11 jobs in the same company. You can argue that I've moved more than anybody else, but I've always gone for what's getting me towards my long-term objective. I could've gone for more money, I could've gone for an easier life, I could've gone for a better title, I could've followed bosses, but I've tried to think about the long game. It doesn't have to be a very well-written plan, because things change, but you should have an idea of your general direction of travel.

What do you find most rewarding in your role?

Right now, I love spotting talent and then nurturing those individuals and watching them grow.

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

We're all different, and we all bring different perspectives to a situation. Diversity and inclusivity improves performance, and that validates something that feels morally right. By surrounding yourself with people of different ages, genders and ethnicities, you achieve better outcomes, in both your professional and personal life. Alongside the business case for D&I, having a diverse team in your organisation sends a message to your customer and supplier base that diversity is something to be celebrated.



And how do you personally role model an inclusive leadership style?

I think my style, if you ask my team, is very much a servant-leader model: how do I work for you, rather than the other way around. How do I break down barriers for you? My goal is to be approachable and I listen a lot, but I'm clear on what I want us to achieve together as a team.

What do you think are the main barriers preventing further progress on diversity and inclusion?

I think we've made progress on ethnicity – I see much more ethnic diversity in the sector now which is great. There are still barriers for women, though. I don't think it's an overt discrimination, but we need to take steps to create environments which provide more women opportunity to progress to leadership roles. We really need to make a concerted effort to make this a reality, because I know we'll be a better industry if we have more women.

“Your career is your responsibility and you should play the long game

D&I cannot be an afterthought; at Sysco we have it as a strategic business objective so that it is always on the agenda.

If you did it all again, what else would you have done?

Nobody's got a better job than I have. It's a vibrant industry, it's a people industry, it's a service industry – very real. It's talented chefs, it's growers, fresh fish, meats, plant-based foods, new tastes and cuisines. I don't think I would want to do anything else.



Giles Turrell

Giles is Group CEO, Flamingo Horticulture and Afriflora

I started my career at GlaxoSmithKline (SmithKline Beecham as it was at the time), as a graduate on their brand management programme. I was one of the first marketing graduates to do a secondment into sales to explore the benefits of diversity of thought. That experience really broadened my mind and definitely helped me be a better leader down the line because I had a different perspective.

After my time at GlaxoSmithKline I joined Kimberly-Clark and held a number of roles which took me all around the world. I think the Kimberly-Clark experience was all about broad, diverse leadership, whether it be geographic, from different cultures, or focusing on the importance of gender diversity. This was key as we needed our leaders to be more reflective of the consumers we serve.

Then I received an offer to join Weetabix as CEO in 2011. That was a great opportunity to be a CEO, to work in private equity, to run my own business and to learn a lot. I spent seven years at Weetabix, overseeing two sales processes, developments in innovation and big changes to our people. One of the things I'm proudest of is the quality of the people we brought into Weetabix.

I left Weetabix in 2018, took some time off, and then was approached by Sun Capital in 2019, and ended up joining as Group CEO of Flamingo and Afriflora. We're a £600m revenue business, providing premium flowers and produce to UK and European grocery.

How have you viewed the development of diversity and inclusion in the industry?

My leadership philosophy is that you can have the best strategy and can have the best plan, but it's people, right? Without

“I think as a leader you have a responsibility to make the organisation more reflective of the consumers you serve

people you can't do it. I enjoy an environment where there is diversity of background and gender diversity. I think as a leader you have a responsibility to make the organisation more reflective of the consumers you serve. That is one of the things we talked about at Kimberly-Clark.

Have you had many role models in your career?

One of the best was Tom Davis, who ran Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa at Kimberly-Clark. He taught me about supply chain and manufacturing. I learnt



to have a relentless intellectual curiosity from John Clark, and about trying to understand as opposed to just accepting. In PE, I'd say Robert Darwent – who is one of the Lion Capital founders. He has been an inspiration: how he thought about business, how he thought about value, how he empowered me as a CEO.

What advice do you have for the next generation of leaders coming into the food and grocery sector?

Focus on results but make sure the team has fun. What has served me well is setting out a clear strategy, focusing on the execution of the plan and having the right people around you.

What do you find most rewarding in what you do?

When you see people succeed. It's great to see people rising through the ranks. Someone took a chance on me, and so it's immensely rewarding being able to take chances on other people. It's fantastic when you see them knock it out the park.

What's the one challenge you've learned most from in your career?

Covid-19 is a great example. The key thing was that we had a clear four-pronged plan.

Number one was to ensure the safety of our people, second was how to manage our finances, the third was to protect the farms, and fourth was all about getting as much cost out as quickly as possible, because we didn't know how long it was going to last.

Is it correct that when the crisis hit you ensured your African workers were paid first?

We wanted to protect them and wanted to feed them as well, so we were giving out extra food. It was important to do that. And fair play to the UK grocers, they recognised the importance of continuing to protect the supply chain for the good of the community.

Can you describe the relationship you have with the farms, workers, schools and hospitals in Africa and explain some of the initiatives being worked on?

In Kenya, we have about 8,000 workers across two farms and run a local school near one. We also have a food programme with another school. In Ethiopia, it's the same, we have 12,000 employees and run a local hospital. We're part of Fair Trade, too, and that contributes money back against various initiatives.

Social responsibility is critical to our business.

Is there a book about leadership you've found particularly inspiring?

I read books around the leadership side of sport and there are lots of analogies: bringing a team together; how you focus; what to do collectively. Recently I read *Extreme Ownership*, by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin. It's about Navy SEALs and how as a leader you have to take ownership if something goes wrong and think, "How am I going to do this differently?"

If you hadn't had this career, what else would you have liked to do?

I'd like to have been a professional golfer but I think I'd have been very poor and you wouldn't be talking to me! Seriously, though, I think sport is an interesting analogy with business. For example, there's someone such as Kate Richardson-Walsh, the England hockey captain, who took a team that was rock bottom and led that team to an Olympic medal.



Emma Vass

Emma is UK CEO, Wessanen

I am the UK CEO at Wessanen. I started my career at Mars, where the focus on culture and values gave me an excellent foundation on which to build as I gained more experience. The bulk of my career was at Danone, where I started as National Account manager and after a number of roles became Dairies UK Commercial Director. I'm incredibly proud of my career at Danone – I was the first female from commercial to get onto the UK board, and it was also the first time family commitments were supported and an internal promotion to board level was given without a prior international assignment. Now at Wessanen, it's the strength of the brands and the inclusive culture that I really enjoy. As a woman, I can really feel the difference between a business which is focused on KPIs and diversity metrics, and one which thrives on inclusion and celebrating differences.

Have you had role models in your career, and how important have they been?

Yes – interestingly, they are all white middle-class males of a certain age, which I think says something about the industry. I was inspired working with leaders with true 'inner' confidence. They inspired confidence by appearing personally as if they had nothing to prove. They believed in their ability and value contribution which enabled them to be themselves and not necessarily conform to the norm of the time. They had great work-life balance yet always showed determination and confidence in delivering exceptional results.

Has that meant that you've actively sought out to be a role model?

It's meant I'm very aware of the impact my transparency can have on individuals and the team. I am open about the challenges I have balancing work and family,

I'm honest when I don't know the answer and I acknowledge when I do not have the functional expertise to lead.

What does great leadership mean to you?

Great leaders inspire people to want to deliver the exceptional results whilst enjoying the process of success together. Having real clarity of thought, but delivering it with passion and enthusiasm gives everyone confidence. Making sure everyone is clear on what you're thinking and why you're thinking it. But along with the direction you're setting, you also have to be really clear on the value each individual will contribute so everyone feels we are in it together.

What brought you into the food and grocery sector?

It was one of the milk rounds at university, and Mars inspired me. They did a great job at framing the industry as so pivotal to everything in society – the one

thing that brings people together is food and drink. They set a very good impression of the industry from the beginning.

Is there any particular challenge that you've learnt from?

Being confident in myself and in my own leadership style, trusting who you are and the influence that you have. We rely so much on data and analysis to help frame ideas, particularly in an industry like food and drink. At the end of the day, we're the consumers and we're the shoppers, and our instincts are actually pretty good. Trusting those instincts is key.

What advice would you offer to younger generations?

Keep being aware of you as the consumer, and then think three steps ahead as to what would make you value the industry more. And just remember that, as the junior, you have the best insights for the success of the future, so share it widely. Challenge the views that senior people with more experience have – they get stuck in the moment, but you're creating tomorrow's moment.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

I love Wessanen as the culture is so strong. The brands are all anchored under sustainability, which is something that I'm very passionate about. It brings like-minded people together. I enjoy thinking about what the future



could hold, and how we can adapt, make the 'right' choices.

What do you hope that the food and grocery sector looks like in five or 10 years' time?

Wessanen became the first multinational to achieve Group B Corp accreditation this year. The B Corp movement challenges the historical capital model of focusing only on shareholders. I think our industry is still very much driven by that traditional model. So, I would love our industry to really champion that future thinking, be a force for good and ensure business success is about delivering financial returns but also having a positive impact on people, communities and the environment.

What do you think are the main benefits of having a diverse workforce?

It's the entrepreneurial spirit and the creativity. Diversity and inclusion always helps you – it's your breadth of thinking and how you continue momentum/success into the future. It's not trying to mould how or what you do into a need that fits one thought process, or one specific style. It means that you can deliver to different needs and it really widens your horizons.

What do are the main challenges or hurdles preventing further progress in the sector?

It's a big question. I think the retailers are much better in the industry than the suppliers, certainly on the metrics of diversity, they seem to be much stronger. I think that change in the industry – on the supplier side – needs to step up. As an industry that touches so many people and communities we should be leading the way in diversity.

I would love to see our industry really champion future thinking

What have been your biggest learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic?

It's the perfect demonstration of the need to react and be flexible. We responded very quickly and proactively, and everyone's felt very supported. The commitment from everybody has been absolutely outstanding. But it does show this need to be flexible, and to treat people as individuals. Covid-19 touched everybody in very different ways, whether it was their attitude to the severity of the pandemic and anxiety, or their personal circumstances around childcare or having to home school.

Have there been any books that inspired you?

I found the Sheryl Sandberg book *Lean In* very empowering because it was so spot on in terms of women and that aspect of diversity. It was very relatable. The bit that I took out of it is how sometimes we can hold ourselves back by either not acknowledging or celebrating what our differences are. It goes back to that need to be confident in who you are and what you have to give.

If you'd had a different career, what would you have done?

I always wanted to be a social worker, but I'm not sure I would be patient enough with the bureaucracy and challenges that go with that. I know that if I'd have taken that course it would have been disastrous, so I'm quite pleased I didn't!



Helen Weir

Helen is NED at Greencore, Superdry, Bata Group and the RFU, a member of the Supervisory Board at Ahold Delhaize and a Trustee at Marie Curie UK

I studied maths at university, then got a place on the Unilever management development scheme. When I graduated, I went to the States for a while, and studied for a PhD and then an MBA at Stanford. When I finished, I realised that I wanted to broaden my business knowledge, and so ended up working with McKinsey back in the UK.

After about five years at McKinsey, I decided I wanted to be part of a team building a business so I joined B&Q. I started as CFO on the – then brand new – Warehouse format, and after a couple of years became CFO and Strategy Director of the whole business. After five years at B&Q, I was asked to be CFO at Kingfisher, the parent company, which was my first PLC role.

I had four very busy years at Kingfisher, during which we restructured the whole business – including demerging Woolworths, selling Superdrug, demerging the electricals business, KESA, and

refocussing on just DIY. When this was complete, I decided it was time to move on and, through a headhunter, was introduced to the CEO at Lloyds TSB. We had a number of meetings, and eventually he asked me to join his executive team and become the CFO of the bank.

I was at Lloyds for seven years in total, four as CFO and three as Chief Executive of the retail bank. It was a very hectic time as it was through the financial crisis. I left Lloyds in early 2011 and, although banking was interesting, I knew I wanted to return to retail. I subsequently spent three years as CFO, firstly of John Lewis Partnership, and then M&S.

In 2018, I decided to go plural. I'd had a number of non-exec roles along the way – including Royal Mail and SABMiller. I currently sit on the board of four businesses: Ahold Delhaize, Greencore, Bata Shoes and Superdry. It's a good blend of international and domestic businesses – all with

consumers at the core. I'm also a trustee at Marie Curie, and I sit on the board of the RFU, England rugby.

I have three children, who are 26, 22 and 18, who were all with us over lockdown. That is every mother's dream, just to have her three children at home for four months. So, that was great – we were very lucky. And we got a lockdown puppy – Milo!

Have you had role models along the way?

Whenever I move into a new business, I always try to find someone who has been in the business for a long time and got an instinct for how it works, and to learn from them. One of my team when I was at the bank was someone who had joined working in the branch network, and made it all the way to senior management. He'd been in the business since he was 16. And he was really helpful to me – because he offered a different perspective which I could learn from.

“Great leaders focus on communication and visible leadership

What does great leadership mean to you?

First of all, great leaders have a clear vision – and then make sure that their leadership team is aligned behind that. When I brought the team together at Lloyds, I spent a lot of time with my team deciding on the vision for the business and ensuring that everyone was aligned behind it. It took a while, but when you get there it's very powerful. Then you have debates about the 'how' rather than the 'what'.

Great leaders also find and nurture the great people: I learned early on that you are only as good as your team. The best leaders are not afraid to build a strong, diverse team – where people have opinions – because that's how you build a better business.

Last but not least, great leaders focus on communication and visible leadership. This is particularly important in a retail business – you need to 'walk the talk'.

What do you find most rewarding about what you do?

I love being part of a team building a business – that's what motivates me. I often say no-one has monopoly on the truth. The reality is that a group of people will always come up with a better solution than an individual. Being part of a team building a business is what gets me out of bed in the morning.

How important is diversity and inclusion to you, and how has it evolved?

I think it really is important. What I'm interested in is having the best possible team and the best possible business, and 'best possible' doesn't come in a particular shape or size. But I also want a diverse group of people who have had different experiences, because differing perspectives will contribute to a better business.

When I started, diversity, when it was discussed at all, was all about women's networks – which was great, but only went so far. Later in my career, at Lloyds, John Lewis and also at M&S, I was the executive sponsor for the LGBT+ organisations. I did this because I felt that needing

to hide part of who you are at work would be dreadful. When I started sponsoring the LGBT+ group at Lloyds, there was a lot of prejudice in banking, and I heard some dreadful stories.

Probably one of my most exciting days was when we launched the LGBT+ network at Lloyds and held our first conference for colleagues from across the business. Ben Summerskill, who was then chief executive of Stonewall, came and spoke, and we also had Gareth Thomas, the Welsh rugby player, who gave his first speech since coming out. I still get goose bumps when I think about that event now and what it meant to everyone involved.

When the 30% Club was set up, I was a bit concerned that by setting targets, women on boards would be seen as 'token' – only there to hit the target. Actually, I think it's been a gamechanger for women in senior positions, particularly in non-exec roles. There's still quite a lot of progress needed on the executive side though!

Since I started my working life, I think the discussion about diversity has moved on significantly, and the appreciation of the value that difference can bring to business has increased hugely. However, it doesn't mean that we are there yet – there is still much more we can do... particularly on ethnic diversity.

If you could do it all again, what would you do?

I have a huge amount of admiration for entrepreneurs, and I would have loved to have had my own business. When I was young, I wanted to be a pilot so I could travel the world.





Alex Whitehouse

Alex is CEO, Premier Foods



I grew up in Yorkshire. I did a physics degree at York and had every intention of being a scientist at some point. However, I was also president of York University wine society, and so I applied to all the wine companies as part of the milk round, and accidentally found myself in marketing.

My career went through many commercial roles, and I eventually finished up in what was Reckitt & Colman, now Reckitt Benckiser. I regularly travelled and we lived overseas in a number of different countries, which I found really opens your mind. Spending a lot of time in India, South America and East Asia completely broadened my horizons. I think those experiences are an important part of who I am now.

What does great leadership mean to you?

For me, great leadership requires vision and inspiration. Of course there are many aspects that sit behind that, including being strategically strong, but you have to be able to inspire the broader team and lead people in the right direction. I think a lot of it comes down to exciting people about a more positive vision of the future.

It's then about how you encourage and support. And I've found over the years, and particularly on this journey with Premier Foods, that people are almost always capable of delivering more than they think, and part of the role as a leader is to unlock that potential.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

I'm a brand marketer at heart, I came up through marketing and sales, and I've always loved brands. I love the creativity of product innovation and that it's ultimately founded in a deep understanding our consumers, how they cook and how they eat. I don't think I will ever tire of growing or reinvigorating a brand.

“Frankly, you can try and recruit in a more diverse way, but if people don't feel comfortable then clearly it's not going to work

What advice would you give to the next generation of leaders in the sector?

One of the bits of advice I always give to our graduates is to be themselves and maintain the curiosity to challenge everything. Never assume that the way things are done at the moment is the optimum way to do it, because I can almost guarantee you that it isn't. Businesses need smart people to come along and re-analyse things. Never accept the status quo; always challenge and move the agenda on.

How important is diversity and inclusion to you?

It's very important. I'm not going to pretend for a minute that we're as far down the track as some of the bigger organisations with more resources but we're making

good progress. For me, it is about a broader imperative of acting responsibly and with integrity, and it relates to the people you work with every day.

We have deliberately flipped the 'I' and the 'D' the other way around, because one of the first things we've been trying to focus on is making sure that we've got a culture that embraces individuals. We want people to be able to turn up and be exactly who they are, feel entirely comfortable, and be open. Frankly, you can try and recruit in a more diverse way, but if people don't feel comfortable, then clearly, it's not going to work.

I am particularly proud of the unconscious bias training that we recently delivered to 480 managers within our business through a not-for-profit charity called the Human Library. It's a remarkable, immersive learning experience.

What are the main obstacles to making greater progress on D and I?

We're very passionate believers of promoting from within, whenever and wherever possible. But that means, for the senior roles, you can only pick from the bench that you've got in the mid-layers, and if that's not particularly diverse, you've got a compounded problem. If you look into the market at that level, how diverse is the talent pool? The answer, quite often, is not very.

So we've started to realise that we've got a responsibility at entry level to try and create an environment that allows us to bring people in from a more diverse background in the first place. We're looking at creating a commercial apprenticeship programme, which would run

in parallel to the graduate scheme. By doing that, we think we will be able to give a first-step opportunity to people who haven't come from such advantaged backgrounds and haven't gone to a top-flight university. I think we, and all companies, have a role to play in giving people a leg-up.

If you had done something different, what path would you have trodden?

Well, obviously, my first career choice as opening batsman for Yorkshire was never really going to happen – lots of enthusiasm, but not a lot of talent, unfortunately.





Jo Whitfield

Jo is Chief Executive, Co-op Food

I'm a north-west girl, born in the Liverpool area and come from an Irish Catholic working-class background. Both of my grandmothers worked in quite industrial conditions, so there are lots of strong women in my story.

I was the first member of my family to go to university. There was nobody around who could give career advice, but my mum's sense was that finance directors always seemed to know what was going on. So I did a Business Studies degree and then I went to work for EY, which gave me the chance to become a chartered accountant. As soon as I qualified, I went into industry.

I started off in the food manufacturing industry and I was given some really great stretching projects that scared me witless, but I also learnt huge amounts. Then I moved across into General Electric and after two valuable years, I found my real passion, which was retail. I moved to Matalan leading the Finance

team and I had both my boys, Jack and Harry, while I was there. I absolutely loved it, but was ready for change and to step up.

I went to work for George and absolutely adored it, starting as FD and broadening to run Retail and Online before I moved to lead the Asda General Merchandising business and Asda Money.

The next thing I knew, I was moving to Co-op as finance director, and then very quickly stepped up to be CEO of Food. I've had a great three and a half years doing this role now, and I've loved it. I've got two lovely teenagers to show for it, and a fab husband who's been in the background all along making it possible, sharing the challenges and helping us all have happy healthy lives.

Why is a diverse and inclusive workforce important to you?

For me, it's about fairness. And then there are all of the things

“In a diverse team, you work with interesting, dynamic people who are bringing new ideas and new experiences

that flow from that. In a diverse team, you work with interesting, dynamic people who are bringing new ideas and new experiences to make the conversation richer. It definitely drives better performance for the business. From a colleague engagement point of view, the business feels different. People feel the energy of having more variety of thoughts and opinions, and they appreciate the kind of richness that comes from having a really good team. So it starts with fairness for me, and then it builds out from that.

And how do you role model an inclusive leadership style?

I'm a very open and honest person, and I'm always someone who wants everyone to have a voice. So I'll actively search for talent, and throw the doors open for people to get involved.

What are you doing to encourage a more diverse workforce?

There are loads of things going on internally to ensure we're building balanced teams. I mentor and sponsor a lot of people around our business, but also externally in the grocery industry. Up until recently, I was leading our Aspire network, which is our gender network, but I've just taken on Respect, which is our LGBT network. And then I run Grocery Girls, which is fabulous. We've got nearly 1,400 members now across the industry.

I'm on the Women's Business Council, and we're doing work around gender pay gap and promoting gender equality, and doing some work with the BRC around how we bring talent through. So it's a really active space for me.

Swapping from a finance director role to a CEO, what do you find most rewarding?

It's so different. But the things that I love the most are the interactions with people, and also the product. I'm very keen to ensure we innovate. I'm a very creative thinker, so seeing product move on and making sure that we are moving it with, and ahead of, the customer is really important.



What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Believe in yourself a little bit more, I'd say. When I started out, I don't know if it's because of my background, but it felt like everyone else knew more than I did. Everyone else had got it all figured out. And actually, I checked myself a bit too much at the start.

Do you think that the class structure in this country has changed?

It's still there. But I think it's more subtle. In all the conversations I have with young women through Grocery Girls, when I open up and say, "Gosh, I certainly didn't think I knew anything," their immediate response is, "Oh my God, it's such a relief to hear you say that because that's how I feel."

A lot of these women in their twenties feel that others around them are more confident and are further ahead – perhaps because of the school they went to.

It's some of those life skill pieces, I think, that come through differently.

Do you separate out mentors and role models?

Quite often, my mentor has become a role model, actually. There are people that I've worked with from a distance, but often I've ended up having a very close relationship with them, which I think is why they've then become a role model.

If you weren't doing this job, what would you be doing?

Do you know what I really want to do? I want to run Liberty. That is my dream job. And if I wasn't doing a retail job, I would either want to run my own art gallery or run my own florist.



Darcy Willson-Rymer

Darcy is CEO, Costcutter



I started my career as a waiter at Pizza Hut in York, which was the beginning of a 19-year stint at Yum! Brands. I then moved sectors, doing three years at Unilever Ventures as MD of Persil Service. In 2007, I returned to hospitality and took up the post of MD of Starbucks UK & Ireland. After four years there I was offered the CEO role at Clinton Cards, and then joined Costcutter in 2013.

Alongside my professional life, I undertake a lot of charity work. I took over as chair of anti-people trafficking charity Stop the Traffic at the beginning of this year after

seven years as a trustee. I have a fundamental issue with working in a world where human beings are bought and sold, so I have a strong drive to do something about it. Stop the Traffic works entirely in the area of prevention and has a mission to put an end to the trade entirely.

Why is a diverse workforce important to you personally?

My journey starts with events that I couldn't have predicted – the shift towards populism in the UK, Europe and the USA, and the divisive impact of this

on our society. I concluded that the key shifts reflected a sense that the middle-class liberal elite wasn't listening... and that if I hadn't anticipated these events, that must include me. If I was part of the issue, I needed to understand it better to become part of the solution.

At the same time, as a company we were starting to think about how to develop a broader culture strategy with a focus on inclusivity, but I didn't know how to move the needle to drive real change. I needed to follow my own advice that I'd give to any other company; that the answer lies in our people, our customers and our suppliers. The breakthrough came when we realised we needed to convene all our colleagues and ask, "Are we truly inclusive and diverse? And if not, why not?"

Tell me more about your D&I journey...

I remember one moment in particular. I was at an event and a colleague from Zimbabwe came to speak to me about race. He told me he'd never had the courage to do this before. He told me, "I'm different: English isn't my first language and so I have to translate everything. Sometimes I use the wrong words, but I know my job and can add value in what I do." I realised that we needed to put the mechanisms in place to allow people to share their experiences and be able to make the most of their talent, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or background. This led to us putting an agenda together to embark on developing our inclusivity strategy and I sent it to that colleague for input. He was frank and told me what was wrong with it; we listened and we changed it in line with his feedback. This listening to the experience of others has formed a critical part of shaping our diversity and inclusion approach.

What are the greatest challenges with regard to workforce diversity?

We're a company based in York and demographics present a challenge that there simply isn't as diverse a talent pool as we would wish for in our immediate vicinity. For us, it's not good enough just to ask why we don't have more diversity in applicants. We actually have to address the question.

What career advice would you give your younger self?

I'd definitely have a conversation with my younger self about bravery and the permission to lead! I believe there's a difference between people doing

something because they're the CEO and those doing it because they believe in the agenda. I've often waited too long to lead or make progress.

What do you enjoy most about what you do as a CEO?

I love the ability to change someone's day – it's a massive responsibility but a huge privilege. My measure of success with a customer is: when they leave a store, is their day better as a result? My measure of success with a colleague is: is their life better as a result of what they've done at Costcutter? I feel I'm in a position to make a difference and to change aspects of the world around us by leading a change of our own policies towards diversity and inclusion.

Who have been your career role models or mentors?

I try and learn from everybody – including the bad ones! However, one person in particular who's had a positive impact on me is Mike Peckham (MD of PSA Training and Development). He's helped over the years on team development. He knows me well – and loves to tell the truth.

“The best job I ever had was when I was waiter. It's where I learned about the privilege of service

If you weren't CEO of Costcutter, what would be the dream job?

The best job I ever had was when I was a waiter. It's where I learned about the privilege of service. When a customer walked through the door, I was in control of their experience and how they felt when they left.

What hopes and fears do you have for food and grocery in five years' time?

A society in which consumers can only get groceries from four or five different companies isn't right. I want to see independent grocery continue to thrive. We need to help independent retailers – local shops serving local communities – to be successful.





Ian Wright

Ian is Chief Executive,
Food and Drink Federation



I was the only child of much older parents. I'm part of the last generation of people who have a real connection with the Second World War – my childhood was dominated by stories about the war, and so that defined how I was brought up, I think.

Instead of leaving school at 16 and going to work in a bank, I ended up going to Cambridge and doing a history degree. From there, I went to work for Roy Jenkins and David Owen at the SDP for five years. And then I went to work for an extraordinary man called Norman Hart, who was a big figure in all senses. He kept the flame of the European Union alive through the 1950s.

And then I worked for a series of PR agencies, ending up restarting a business in Birmingham called Golley Slater. I built it into the largest PR company in the Midlands from, literally, nothing.

And I suppose, from there on, my job has always been turning around organisations. I did it at Boots Healthcare International, then at Boots the Chemist, then at Diageo, and now I'm doing it here. This has been the most fun I've ever had, doing this job, because it's so challenging, and so important.

What does great leadership mean to you?

I think it is about giving space, and about letting your people know that they have your confidence, and your confidence extends beyond telling them what to do.

Having a sense of what's right and wrong is utterly crucial, and you have to be prepared to stand by those decisions. And then giving people the space to achieve whatever it is you've set out to achieve.

“As a leader, having a sense of what's right and wrong is utterly crucial, and you have to be prepared to stand by those decisions

In terms of diversity and inclusion, how have you seen the conversation change?

If you talked about diversity five years ago, it would have been seen exclusively in terms of gender diversity, and people would have referred to disability and sexual orientation about as much as they referred to race or ethnicity. We're quite diverse in respect of the number of nationalities represented across the organisation, which has been the case throughout the five years I've been with the organisation, but we know there is more to do, as do our members.

When you come to a sector like this, it's quite surprising not to find more people from ethnic minority backgrounds. I think it's changing a bit in the industry, but not quickly enough. We're relatively limited in what we can do at the top level. So, on my President's Committee, which is the policymaking body of the organisation, with the top 30 companies by size and a couple of representatives of smaller businesses on it, I think we've got two out of 30 people from either Asian or Caribbean backgrounds. That's more than we had at the start of the year.



We've created an emerging leaders programme and we run things for them. We had a big reception for those emerging leaders. And that was very diverse, both gender-wise and in terms of ethnicity, and, actually, in every way you could imagine. So, the pipeline is there. The key thing, for me, is ensuring that people don't miss the last two steps on the ladder. That's the bit that has tripped up the food and drink industry over the last 10/15 years – where the talent is there but they haven't managed to get right to the top.

These things change, don't they? 20 years ago you would have been unlikely to find an openly gay man or gay woman leading a business.

Thankfully, that's no longer the case. These things can change in quite short periods. And I think you've just got to believe it can be done.

What changes would you like to see into the food and grocery sector in five to 10 years' time?

I think it is going to be very important that we get rid of the glass ceiling for women – I think that's mostly gone.

It would be great to see two or three of our big manufacturers led by people from minority ethnic backgrounds. We really need somebody who was born in Slough, or Bradford, or Moss Side to take over those roles. And I think there are people like that. I do think we need a bit of a push.

If you hadn't had this career and you'd have done something completely different, what would you have liked to have done?

I think I would probably have ended up as an infant schoolteacher. Or a journalist, although I don't have the foot-in-the-door mentality. So, I think, probably, an infant schoolteacher.

About Us

About The MBS Group

For more than 30 years, The MBS Group has been a leading sector-specialist executive search firm advising all consumer-facing industries, with a particular focus in the consumer goods and grocery industry. Clients consider us to be the partner of choice when searching for critical leadership roles that make a difference. We work at board level and on executive positions across all functions of strategic importance. For more information, visit www.thembsgroup.co.uk

About IGD

IGD is a research and training charity which sits at the heart of the food and grocery industry. As a charity we exist to upskill people working in or looking to join the food and grocery industry. We also manage initiatives driven by research and best practice relating to science, technology or economics in the food industry. IGD has a trading subsidiary that provides commercial services. The profits from these commercial services fund the charity. For more information, visit www.igd.com

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