

# progress

*/ˈprɒɡres/*

- 1 forward or onward movement towards a destination
- 2 development towards an improved or more advanced condition

## **your organisation**

british business after the election  
is your company's board as global as its aspirations?

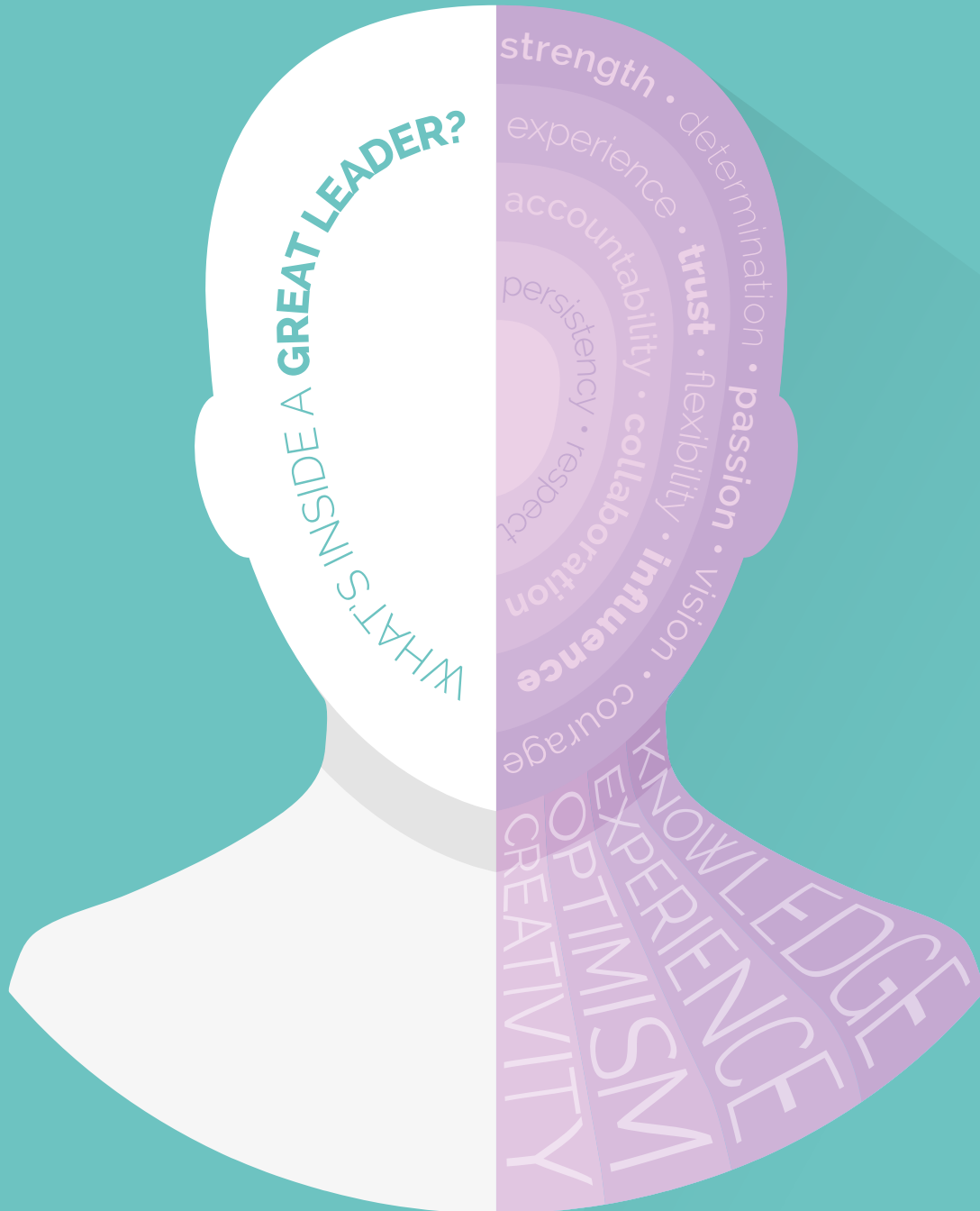
## **your role**

the oversight principle  
developing VUCA-ready leadership practitioners

## **your career**

business partner – making it work  
in another life I'd be an election mastermind

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This issue of *Progress* contains a mix of contributions from our own team, associates and wider business and academic contacts.

These articles reflect the breadth of our interests with the practical, academic, and research-based activities of CRF and PARC continuing to attract ever-increasing interest and membership from organisations of all types and sectors. Similarly, the search work of Strategic Dimensions keeps us firmly abreast of the challenges facing HR leaders and their teams.

It seems to us that from an operational perspective, HR is doing work of exceptional quality, embracing technology and smarter ways of working, often with significantly fewer resources. We are also seeing a determination to progress in the areas of talent, performance and change which are high on the agenda in our discussions with Chief Executives, HR Directors and their colleagues. But these are difficult concepts to deal with, requiring subject understanding, strategic vision and commitment to implementation in an often sceptical environment – issues we always aim to address in our CRF and PARC activities.

For many organisations there is the added dimension of implementation on an international basis when the local culture and business environment can introduce subtle differences of understanding and acceptance in addressing the organisational and individual performance drivers so important to commercial success.

We have been mindful of this international component for some time, reflected in our International Conferences which have become an integral part of our annual programme of events. We are in Vienna in October of this year, whilst in 2016 we will be in Prague. However, we recognise that we have to do more internationally and have CRF events planned for Brussels, Lausanne, Amsterdam and Munich through 2016.

We also continue to seek the best people from around the world and invite them to contribute to our programmes, providing the diverse mix of contemporary thought leadership and business experience which our members value.

I hope that you find *Progress* an interesting and thought provoking read. We welcome your feedback and views on the topics addressed.

Enjoy the summer.

Warmest regards,

**Mike Haffenden**

Founder and Director

## british business after the election

The Conservative victory in the general election seems to have been broadly welcomed by British business. Under the leadership of Ed Miliband, the Labour Party had strayed away from the business-friendly formula pushed by Tony Blair. Mr Miliband's condemnation of "predatory" capitalism, his pledge to impose price-controls on energy and his promise of higher taxes, had all combined to create wariness of Labour amongst many business-people.

But corporate opinion is not monolithic and the prospect of a second Cameron government has created both hopes and fears in the business community.

The biggest reservation that many business people have about the new government is its commitment to a referendum on British membership of the European Union. The Confederation of British Industry – the largest employers organisation – is pretty clearly in favour of continued British membership of the European Union. Many big foreign investors – such as Japanese car companies and European banks – have invested in the UK on the assumption of continued unfettered access to the EU's single market and they are also clearly worried by the prospect of "Brexit" (a British

***The prospect of a second Cameron government has created both hopes and fears in the business community.***

exit from the EU). Some warn that even the threat of a Brexit might have a chilling effect on investment, until the uncertainty is resolved.

By contrast, support for a fundamental renegotiation of Britain's relationship – or even for Brexit itself – is stronger in the small-business sector, where the EU is closely associated with onerous regulation.

Both the "Yes" and "No" campaigns will have impressive-sounding rosters of business supporters. But the whole renegotiation and referendum process may be uncomfortable for the majority of businesses that prefer to keep a low political profile. They are likely to be pestered by the "Yes" and "No" campaigns – and by the media – to express a clear preference on the European issue.

On the domestic front, the Conservative Party's promise to restore order to the national finances and to do so largely by

cutting spending is the kind of thing that tends to go down well with business-people – who usually believe in balancing the books. That said, Mr Osborne's plan to achieve a fiscal surplus by the end of the parliament looks ambitious. If sharp cuts in public spending cause a slowdown in growth, some business people may advocate taking a slower road to fiscal balance.

***Some warn that even the threat of a Brexit (a British exit from the EU) might have a chilling effect on investment, until the uncertainty is resolved.***

The appointment of Sajid Javid as business secretary has pleased the many groups and corporations that have been calling for a reduction in red-tape. Mr Javid has a reputation as a Thatcherite and has promised to slash regulations that add £10 billion of costs to business. But while there is no doubting Mr Javid's reformist zeal, a certain scepticism is in order. Almost all governments promise to slash regulation. Michael Heseltine promised a "bonfire of red tape" in the early 1990s. In reality, cutting regulation turns out to be harder work than many imagine. Mr Javid has already played down hopes that he will make it easier for businesses to lay off unwanted employees.

Amidst all the general talk about Europe, regulations and budgets, many business people will focus on more specific issues – in particular airport capacity and immigration.

**Gideon Rachman, Chief  
Foreign Affairs Commentator,  
Financial Times | @gideonrachman**

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The long-delayed decision on expanding airport capacity in the South-East of England will be seen as an acid test of the Cameron government's willingness to take difficult political decisions. A decision is promised early in the life of government. If it is anything other than a swift expansion of Heathrow, there is likely to be much grumbling from business.

Finally, the Cameron government's promise to redouble its efforts to control immigration will make many businesses nervous. Since it is impossible, under European law, to put limits on the number of EU citizens who move to Britain, it will be immigration from outside Europe that takes the pressure. In particular, that is likely to mean that it gets even harder to obtain work-visas for non-Europeans – even for skilled and highly-paid employees.

That issue is likely to be a continued source of irritation for British business, including some of Mr Cameron's biggest backers, in the City.



**Hear Alastair Campbell's thoughts on business post-election at our 2015 Summer Lecture & Reception.**



## is your company's board as global as its aspirations?

Although many multinationals wish to appear to the world as truly “global” companies, the boards of directors of most of these companies continue to be dominated by natives of the company's home country.

New research I have conducted with Professor Niccolò Pisani shows that only 18% of board members at the 391 companies from the Fortune Global 500 for which we were able to collect data were foreign nationals and, in fact, 36% of these companies had no foreign board members whatsoever. Even companies pursuing global revenues, customers, employees and shareholders still tend to stock their boards with locals.

Foreign board members bring a diversity of experience that natives simply cannot offer. They also have the potential to bring new clients, offer advice on strategic acquisitions, and improve the connectedness of the company within that country. Appointing a board member from a particular country is also a signal that doing business there is a priority.

Globalising the board does come with risks, however. Ronald W. Masulis, Cong Wang and Fei Xie show that in addition

to the benefits, there are substantial costs. Boards with foreign members tend to have poor meeting attendance, their companies are also more likely to pay their executives excessively and they are more prone to restating financials. All of this is consistent with weaker oversight, probably due at least in part to the fact that geographic distance and cross-country differences still matter.

With that in mind, companies must maximise the benefits of diversifying their boards while avoiding the pitfalls. When a decision is made to boost foreign board representation – which typically makes the most sense when a company has significant foreign operations or is targeting expansion overseas – it is essential to be clear about what the firm hopes to gain. This allows candidates to be selected and adjustments to be made such that these goals can be met while managing potential adverse consequences.

For many firms, the priority will be to improve the diversity of opinions presented at the boardroom table. For them, the goal is to find board members with different experiences: people who have different

***Appointing a board member from a particular country is also a signal that doing business there is a priority.***

Out of the  
391 Fortune  
Global  
500 companies  
studied...



cultural backgrounds, went to different schools and worked in different places. These individuals need not live abroad! It may be that well-qualified candidates

are living within commuting distance of the corporate headquarters. Expatriate board members are in a unique position to bridge cultures, as they have experience both in their home countries and where they live.

Other firms, however, may be looking to increase connectedness in a new region or have someone present who understands the local business environment in a strategic country. In this case, only someone living there will do. Technology can bridge some of the gap, although by now we know that a video conference cannot replace an in-person meeting. For boards that are truly global, rotating between sites so that the burden of travel is shared can be helpful. This also has the added benefit of signaling a commitment to the places where meetings are held. In 2006, IBM held a board meeting in Bangalore, showing its commitment to the country as well as its Indian workforce. The meeting became the centerpiece of a series of events involving employees, investors, analysts and journalists.

Acting globally requires a commitment to flexibility. Geography, language and culture remain barriers, and while the benefits of a more global board are clear, a board member whose voice cannot be heard because of these factors takes up a seat without contributing.

Having a clear set of goals and making the right accommodations to ensure participation are keys to success for integrating foreign nationals into your board.

**Pankaj Ghemawat, Professor,  
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## the oversight principle: how executives really become authentic leaders

Authenticity has become the gold standard of leadership development. But, the fact is that moving into a bigger leadership role requires people to act against their natural inclinations.

That's why, paradoxically, exhorting managers in transition to be more introspective can backfire, encouraging them to stick with comfortable behaviours and habits instead of growing new capacities.

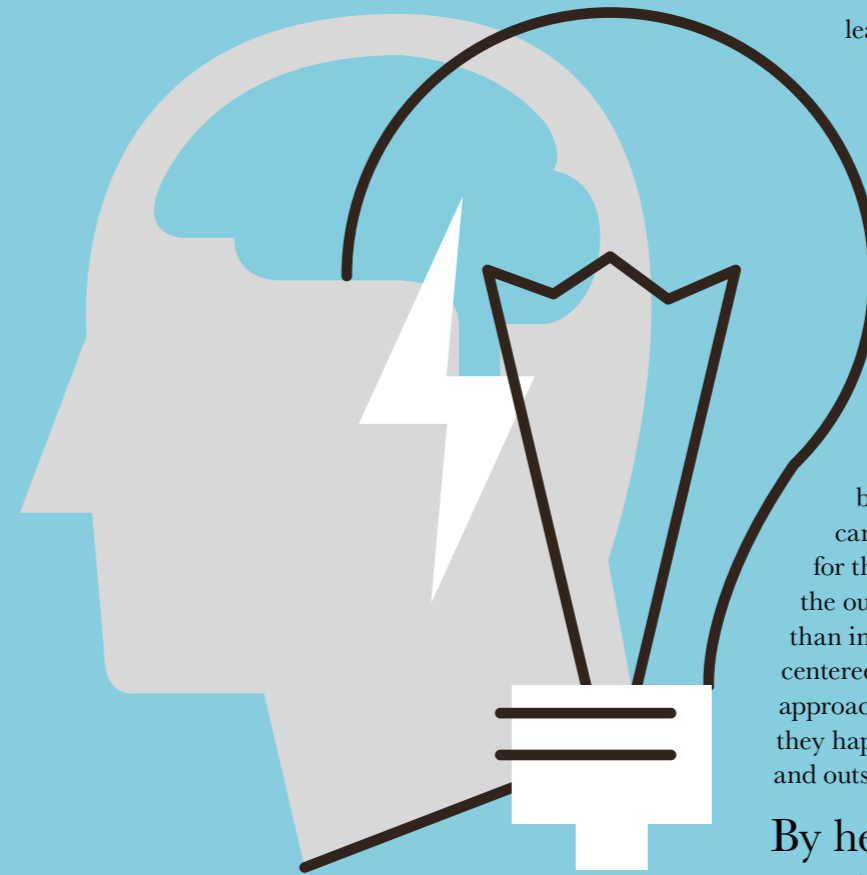
A more effective alternative, I have found, is to help managers to act their way into a new way of thinking by developing what I call "outsight." Outsight is the fresh, external perspective that comes from doing new and different things – plunging ourselves into new projects and activities, interacting with people outside our daily routines, and experimenting with new ways of getting things done. It's the opposite of learning by self-reflection, in which we seek insight on our past behaviors.

Development to increase oversight recognises that the way we act drives the way we think. Working on a cross-functional project, for example, exposes a functional manager to a different vantage point on her work and forges relationships with peers who can inform his partial view of organisational issues. The work itself – and not an abstract notion of, say, a collaborative leadership style – motivates personal change. By working alongside others who think differently,

people gradually start to change the reference by which they judge what is possible and desirable.

Making significant changes, not just in what we do but how we do it, requires a playful frame of mind. Take, for example, the shift from having good ideas to being able to sell them to a broad and diverse set of stakeholders. Many inexperienced leaders find the process of getting buy-in distasteful and "inauthentic" because it feels artificial and political; they believe their work should stand on its own merits. They don't do only because they lack

***The trick is to work toward a future version of your authentic self by stretching way outside the boundaries of who we are today.***



the skill set but also because they are not sure they want to be the kind of person that behaves that way.

That's why I recommend that people approach the natural authenticity challenges that are part and parcel of stepping up to a bigger leadership role with a playful mindset. When we adopt a playful attitude, we're not committing to become a specific kind of leader, but to a process of experimenting. We're more open to a diverse, even divergent, set of possibilities. It's OK to be inconsistent from one day to the next. We're not being a fake. That's just how we figure out what's right for the new challenges we face. The trick is to work toward a future version of your authentic self by stretching way outside the boundaries of who we are today. Knowing the kind of

leader we'd like to become is not the starting point of our development journey, but rather the result of increasing our oversight.

It's no secret that many formal leadership development efforts fall short of expectations. At best, managers gain valuable personal insights but fail to learn how they can apply them to create value for their organisation. Applying the oversight principle is harder than implementing self-awareness-centered learning and development approaches because, by definition, they happen outside the classroom and outside HR's direct control.

By helping people develop new experiences and relationships first – before we ask them to redefine themselves – we help them gain the necessary oversight on what it means to be a leader.

**Herminia Ibarra, Professor of organizational behavior and the Cora Chaired Professor of Leadership and Learning at INSEAD. Author of *Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader* @HerminiaIbarra [www.herminiaibarra.com](http://www.herminiaibarra.com)**



**Our recent leadership development webinar assessed the current leadership market. Listen on demand here.**

## developing VUCA-ready leadership development practitioners

Recently, a lot of attention has been focused on what leaders need to be effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century VUCA environment and how this capacity and capability can be developed.

What are the implications of these insights for the professionals who have been tasked with designing and delivering the development activity which will shape these leaders?

If leadership development professionals are to add real value, they need to have credibility with their clients (the leaders they are responsible for developing). So what attributes might be seen as adding value in the current context? CRF's recent research '*Leadership Development – is it fit for purpose?*' provides some significant clues.

### Externally referenced.

We now understand that effective leadership is context specific and leaders need to make sense of what context they are operating in and how this context is changing (see Herminia Ibarra's comment on oversight, in the previous article). L&D professionals are often in a unique position to support this by acting as the eyes and ears of the organisation, scanning the horizon to provide an external perspective across the whole organisation.

### Business relevant.

A related issue is the extent to which leadership development is tightly linked to the prevailing business strategy of an organisation. CRF's previous research report – *Developing Commercial Acumen for the HR Function* – has highlighted the need for HR practice to be grounded in commercial acumen and developing leadership is no exception.

### Robust foundations.

Business leaders are used to presenting strong business cases to support investment proposals. Leadership Development professionals also need to demonstrate that their request for investment is grounded in good theory and evidence (and not just the latest L&D fad). They also need to demonstrate that they are capable of measuring the impact of this investment. If they have contracted a clear purpose and objectives for their work with their business colleagues, leaders can then see

a clear link between developing themselves and adding value to the organisation.

### Adult development.

Effective practitioners need to invest in their own continuous development so they can act as role models and are seen as mentors by their business colleagues. This involves a willingness to experiment and to be seen as an incubator for new practice. Sometimes this will be an uncomfortable place and will require speaking truth to power, but it will mean practicing what you preach, which is at the heart of being a role model.

### Finally, it is critical that someone is taking a whole system perspective.

Too often HR is getting in its own way – Resourcing, Talent, L&D and OD risk being HR silos. For example, a recent CRF Talent breakfast identified that too few HR functions were effectively linking their talent identification (supply) to the actual work that will add future value in their organisations (demand) raising the prospect of shallow or empty leadership talent pools in the not too distant future. Business leaders want effective solutions to their business challenges and with the pace of change in the VUCA world, this requires collaboration and integration across traditional HR silos.

Leadership Development professionals have the potential to add significant value to their organisations – how fit for purpose are yours?

**Karen Ward, CRF Associate and  
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## business partner – making it work

I do not subscribe to the HR neurosis over role – and feel confident and proud about the work we do in business.

Business Partner is a not a job title I have ever held or used in my teams, but I think I know what it means. So what makes a good one? Is there a key to success?

Here's my manifesto:

### 1. Stick to the strategic

HR performs a strategic function in business, if people don't get that they shouldn't employ a HR function. So do the strategic job. Focus on the longer term health issues of the business. This will mean that at times you will need to let a few here and now issues go and take some grief for this – suck it up!

Hird and Hesketh (CPHR 2008) talk about the golden triangle i.e. the unholy alliance (my words) between HR, Finance and CEO. I prefer a strategic partnership with the Strategy Director – we're both in the same game. Building long-term organisational capability in response to business strategy.

The view that says, doing the HR admin well is your ticket to operate at the strategic table is a contradiction and probably a rumour spread by those in our profession who are not comfortable with the strategic role.

### 2. Know your business

Some say that HR is a transportable skill and to an extent I agree, but there is also something to be said for developing an in-depth knowledge of the sector in which you operate. The characteristics are different and context is everything in HR. The here and now of retail, the fast-changing world of technology, the highly regulated world of Pharma (or now banking), the long-term planning of the defence sector. HR will do different things in these different contexts. Is it all about talent attraction strategies, geared reward, leadership of change? The context does matter. All too often we see vanilla solutions proposed, what are the specific requirements of your sector and how do you build your knowledge and insight into this over time.

### 3. Bringing forward the voice of the people

Ulrich and Brockbank (Michigan) talk of amplifying weak signals. It is a sad reality that businesses are not awash with emotional intelligence, in HR we typically have some. Can we thoughtfully capture the employee voice and bring it to the table, to improve productivity, retention, climate, wellbeing, customer satisfaction etc. This is catnip to senior leaders, as it's so hard to really understand what's going on out there in the wider company. There are plenty of rich sources of info these days from pulse surveys, to Glass Door to LinkedIn.

### 4. Challenge and intervene

Lots of HR people build their reputation on helpfulness and support, it's better than being unhelpful, but it's not the point. You have to speak up and challenge, based on insight. Bridge/CIPD talk of being a provocateur. This takes a degree of bravery and sensitivity, I've seen people get it wrong and simply disrupt. It's subtle, you have to pick your issues and your moments carefully. Build coalitions of the enlightened and develop the issues that will move the business from where it is to where it needs to be.

### 5. Manage and execute well

All the good ideas and clever interventions will come to nought unless they are turned into plans and projects and implemented well. I know we're all ENTP's but it's no excuse – train yourself, get some help but somehow have the capability to deliver on time, within budget and to spec – it's what businesses do!



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**John Whelan, Human Resources  
Director, BAE Systems**

# in another life I'd be an election mastermind, with some help from Dr Seuss

When I started to draft this article there was an imminent election. Now, the election has passed and the result is one which nobody seemingly expected nor predicted.

Prior to the exit poll, I don't think I read or heard a single suggestion that the Conservatives would win an overall majority, and those holding themselves out as electoral experts or leading pollsters, were left wondering what rationale for voter choice had they failed to give enough weight to. Policy position on the deficit? Fear of an SNP and Labour coalition? International credibility of party leader? Membership of the EU?

The result is the result, whatever the post-election analysis, and will have some determination on our economy, social policies and international politics for the next five years. Certainly, anyone engaged enough to vote based their decision on something that mattered to them. Dependent on our political leaning and level of engagement,

each of us was surprised, delighted, disappointed, or oblivious to the outcomes, and may be bothered, or not.

Humour me when I suggest life as a search consultant is not so dissimilar from that of a campaign manager, except we get to facilitate several elections in tangent and don't ever expect a hiring decision to be reached by a defined date. In fact, we are like campaign managers only with the added thrill of more uncertainty – we don't always get the result we expect, or the one our clients hope for, and nobody is making a five year commitment.

Our goal is to represent each of the candidates in a balanced, non-partisan way, and to have a clear idea of what both voter groups, our clients and candidates, want. We never know what candidate the client will pick, and whether the candidate will accept a subsequent offer. Decisions can lead to surprise for anyone involved in the process, and disappointment for the unsuccessful candidates or rejected clients. If the successful candidate is unmoved by the outcome they've secured, then I'd usually advise our client has a rethink.

From an organisational and candidate perspective, picking the



right candidate or the right role is critical. Both candidates and clients must feel they have enough knowledge of each other to vote and be voted, to choose and be chosen, and have evidence and confidence that each is making the right choice for their own futures and the fortunes of their organisation.

And this is when I turn to Dr Seuss because, pre-election, I thought this would be a diversion from political and economic commentary and give people something else to critique. So, here are his wise words, interpreted to give candidates and clients an increased likelihood of being selected in a competitive context.

*Today you are you,  
that is truer than true.  
There is no one alive  
who is youer than you.*

Hiring is certainly served well by an openness, honesty and transparency as to who you are as a person or organisation and what you represent, require and have capability to contribute to a future employer/employee relationship.

*A person's a person,  
no matter how small.*

Mutual respect serves any search process well. Candidates and clients who are respectful of each other's time, values and existing commitments, tend to have more fruitful and informing conversations.

*You have brains in your head.  
You have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself in  
any direction you choose.*

The courage, curiosity and energy to make a change to your current role, or make

a creative hire, is in your control. There are some people who think the world owes them the next great role, or feel everything wrong in their career has been done to them. Organisations also need to take active control of their brand and put effort into attracting people to join them. If an organisation thinks the brand name should be enough they can find their competitor for talent put more effort into the engagement process and secured the talent in the process.

*Sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple.* And sometimes the questions are simple and the questions are complicated. Certainly clarity of communication and asking for clarity in the moment supports a better engagement process.

*Children want the same things we want. To laugh, to be challenged, to be entertained, and delighted.*

As do candidates and clients. The interview process shouldn't be a joke fuelled popularity contest but certainly some fun and openness allows both the voter and voted to get more of a grasp on whether the opportunity is one that will work in the favour of both parties.

*Step with care and great tact,  
and remember that Life's a  
Great Balancing Act.*

It is always wise to remember you are taking part in an interview process for an opportunity that will provide a positive impact on your future career (candidate) or success of your organisation (client).

Don't let too much tact or care stifle the chance to secure your vote, or cast your vote in a most informed way.

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Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October – Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015

The 7<sup>th</sup> CRF International Conference takes place from 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015 in Vienna. This will be a must-attend event for anyone interested in how people and organisations interact, and generate business success.

With a growing reputation as an international event of choice, we take an innovative approach to the way we present, discuss and debate the issues which can make a difference to organisational performance.

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Allan E Cook CBE, Chairman, WS Atkins

*"I look forward to the annual CRF Conference as it's one of the few HR events that combines a strong agenda with a great group of attendees - this makes it easy to put in the diary."*

Mark Wells, Group HR Director, Experian UK

*"In my opinion, the CRF International Conference is the best HR strategy summit I've ever attended. From the carefully chosen location and venue to the calibre of the presenters and strategic, high-quality pitch of the theme and sessions delivery, it's a truly world-class event."*

Ben Bengougam, Vice President Human Resources, Europe Operations, Hilton Worldwide

To reserve your place please contact Lynn Little at [lynn@crforum.co.uk](mailto:lynn@crforum.co.uk) or 020 7470 7104 or for further information please visit [www.crforum.co.uk](http://www.crforum.co.uk).

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For more information please contact Richard Hargreaves, Commercial Director, on 020 7470 7104 or at [richard@parcentre.co.uk](mailto:richard@parcentre.co.uk). [www.parcentre.com](http://www.parcentre.com)

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