

INSIGHTS FROM YOUR
**DREAM
BOARD**



Suhail Mirza

Dean Kelly

Bev White



Tim Cook

Luke Williams (OBE)

David Higgins

Katy Rees

Albert Ellis



Paul Kynaston

Neil Carberry

Rhona Driggs

Gary Goldsmith

Eddie Austin



Julie O'Neill

Zack Feather

Peter Searle

Ann Swain

Darren Ryemill



INSIGHTS FROM YOUR DREAM BOARD

There is no precedent for what's happening right now. But a crisis is a crisis and we could all use some advice from people who know what they're talking about.

We believe that experience is the best teacher. So we opened up our little black book, called in every favour and reached out to some of the recruitment industry's most accomplished Leaders. People who've built multi-million pound international businesses from the ground up and triumphed over adversity.

Your dream Board. A brain's trust of some of the recruitment industry's most accomplished and innovative professionals.

Suhail Mirza, a recruitment leader who's weathered storms, built successful recruitment businesses and now advises Boards, has been carrying out a series of in-depth interviews with each of our Leaders.

You can view the videos [here](#).

We've boiled the interviews down into common themes and nuggets of knowledge from values, leadership, communication and what to do first. These are hard-earned insights from professionals who've triumphed over adversity.

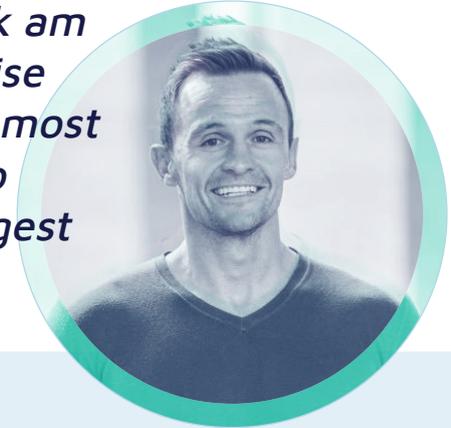


Suhail Mirza

Chairman and NED at various,
Recruitment Leader

TAKE A BREATH

"It can be overwhelming if you look at it as a brick wall. You have to say, which brick am I going to attack first? How do I prioritise these challenges? Which gives me the most breathing space to continue to develop and grow my business and get the biggest returns from my business?"



Dean Kelly

Founder & CEO of RealiseMe and Co-founder of RDLC

Yes, this is unprecedented, but so was the dot com crash, 9/11 and the banking crisis in 2008. Everything is unprecedented until it happens. All of our Leaders led businesses through these times and many spoke about how to handle massive challenges. Often it comes down to breaking a big strategic challenge down into actionable tactics. Where do you start? You start by taking a breath.

"A cool head is essential. When things are getting more intense and issues become larger, human nature is to drive harder, to try and find solutions quickly, do something rather than to sit and pause. And yet now, unless it's life threatening, I think sit and pause and reflect is essential."



Bev White

Chief Executive Officer at Harvey Nash Group



Take a breath

A lot of recruitment leaders are fast-moving entrepreneurs who are brilliant at seizing opportunities and making the most of them. These instincts arguably helped them get where they are in the first place. But they need to be tempered with a more reflective approach that acknowledges we don't know where this is going, how it'll end and we've very little control over that. Of course, the opposite is just as dangerous, sitting around waiting for it all to get better. Surround yourself with people who'll give you a diversity of views that'll help you take a balanced approach.

CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

"Most entrepreneurs are geared for growth. They're always thinking, whatever I'm going to do, it's going to be better tomorrow. You have the self belief and you take that with you and grow a team. But it's being able to step back from that mindset and think, 'this is not of my making'. Doesn't mean I've got a bad business, that these are factors around me that I can't control. So I need to take that objectivity."



David Higgins

Non Executive Director at Levy UK



Control what you can control

"Keep a calm head, a cool head. There's stuff you can do and there's stuff you can't do. You can control some pieces. Spend your time on that which you can control."



Tim Cook

Group CEO nGAGE Specialist Recruitment



"I think the whole problem, the whole issue was so big, I found it hard to get my head around. I spent a lot of time putting things (issues) into boxes - what you can control and what you can't control"



Katy Rees

Managing Director at Smile Education and Education
Sector Chair at APSCo



When you focus on elements that are outside your control, you lose focus and waste time. We can all predict when things will get back to normal, but we don't know. Make a list of the things you have control over and the things you can influence but not control. For example, You have control over your wage bill, but you may only have influence over your premises rent. You have control over how you treat suppliers, but you may only be able to influence how clients treat you. Simply breaking this list down can form the basis for building a strategy for survival.

BE PRACTICAL

"If you're new to this and it hasn't happened to you before, you tend to be optimistic. A very good instinct that ensures the survival of the species. It's something that actually keeps you going in tough times. However, you've got to look at the short-term crisis with realism."



Albert Ellis

Non Executive Director at Staffline Plc

Our Leaders talked about the need to be clear-eyed in the short-term and redefine what good looks like.

"The sad reality is that this represents the end of the line for businesses too slow or resistant to embrace change, and brands that have failed to look after employees during the time of crisis"¹

Shoring up cash flow and cutting costs are a simple fact of this new world and that's easier if you're in good shape already. It's about having honest conversations with your people, suppliers and clients. Our Leaders talked about making difficult, personally painful, decisions to secure the survival of their businesses. Employees prefer honesty and transparency, no matter how difficult.

"I don't believe in shying away from hard facts. As long as the decisions I make are fair and to the best of my ability, consistent. Then people will accept tough messages. And they will understand, and they will work with me, because we're all on this journey together."



Paul Kynaston

Managing Director (UK Construction) at Search Consultancy



1. The impact of Covid-19 on the employment and the recruitment sector.
<https://www.caminopartners.co.uk/blog/2020/04/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-employment-and-the-recruitment-sector>

COMMUNICATE. COMMUNICATE. COMMUNICATE.

People respect leaders who are consistent, honest and communicate. For every single one of our leaders, this was absolutely key.

"You can never over communicate during these moments. To continuously check in with individuals, teams, the whole business, to be out front and visible no matter what the issue is."



Bev White

Chief Executive Officer at Harvey Nash Group



Our Leaders spoke about the need to bring your people with you. It's easy to forget that they don't have the same view of the business as you have. You have to take them on the journey. Because in the long run, these are your brand champions. These are the people that'll make it happen when you're not in the room.

"With people in your business, take time to explain things to them – you probably have to over-communicate. I'm emailing the REC staff once a day, every day. People will remember not what you did... what they will remember is how you did it and whether it felt fair".



Neil Carberry

CEO at Recruitment & Employment Confederation



LEADERS LEAD

Communication fuels culture. One of the hard truths that leaders must face is that culture is a mirror of their values and leadership style. For example, if people aren't open and honest about their mistakes, maybe it's because you've created a culture of fear. Leaders must own their culture and positively influence it. You are what you repeatedly do.

"You have to understand the basics of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - people go back to basics and start becoming very concerned about their livelihoods, income, families etc...It's your job as a leader to maintain morale, to keep culture in place and to use that ability to keep culture to drive new business areas. I think one of the things that is important is leading by example."



Peter Searle

Executive Chairman at Airswift

Leading with authenticity is the foundation.

"One of the key things I always say to the people about their own leadership is to be authentic in your style. It's a critical component because that is when people will follow you".



Luke Williams (OBE)

Executive Chairman at Resourcing Capital Ventures
and CEO at Ignata



Leaders lead



"If you can't come into work as a boss - that beautiful position where other people are genuinely investing their careers to be part of your journey - and you can't be really happy by being that person, you don't deserve that job, mate."

Gary Goldsmith

Champion to Recruitment | Growth Coach | Mentor



Building on that foundation, you need to articulate your values and why you're worth following. When your people can communicate who your agency is, what it stands for and where it's going, you've a much better chance of getting there. This is going to become increasingly important as research shows that people are becoming more attracted to authentic businesses that stand for something.

"We have a vision of how we will come through this. We have clarity around that vision. We communicate the vision and therefore create the culture."



Eddie Austin

Founder and CEO of Operam Education Group

PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE KEY



"I've worked with Richard Branson. I think his greatest skill is his ability to surround himself with brilliant people – he's like a magnet for super-talented people."

Luke Williams (OBE)

Executive Chairman at Resourcing Capital Ventures
and CEO at Ignata



'People are our most important asset' is one of the over-used clichés. But it's a fact. No matter how talented or capable you are, you will not be able to do this alone. It's a collective effort, especially when you're in the business of people.

"Letting people know the good and the bad and what the potential opportunity will be at the end of all this. If they can see what they're aiming for, then they will get on board for that journey."



Paul Kynaston

Managing Director (UK Construction) at Search Consultancy



I think as we come through this, we will have been through a really bonding experience. Experiences can be bad or good, but they still create bonds. And its not just our own teams and our own people – its our customers.

Tim Cook

Group CEO nGAGE Specialist Recruitment



People have always been the key

"As a group, we talk every day. We always start with one positive each to just lift everybody. We ask about everybody's families. We did a bit of a gallery of rainbows. These are just small things, but it's important that people embrace it. And I'm seeing it with the clients, too. Everybody is trying to follow a path that works for them, that keeps everyone engaged..."



Julie O'Neill

Joint MD of McCall



Losing talent is so often overlooked at times like this. We're so focussed on controlling costs and efficiency that we don't think about people leaving. But if they're not completely engaged and with you, they'll walk. And at times like this, you need them firing on all cylinders. Our Leaders talked about nurturing talent, continuing to promote from within, incentivising and empowering them to help lead the effort.

"Talent is always very interesting. I love people. I love working with people. I don't look for people for particular roles. I look for what they're good at and try to create a role that'll make them great at it. For example, I want salespeople to be amazing at selling, I don't need them to be great at admin. As long as they're developing as entrepreneurs, we'll build support around them that takes care of the things they're not so good at..."



Zack Feather

Board member at various, including:
SpringPod, TechSpert.io, United Medicine, Draper & Dash,
Unity Healthcare & Educate Staffing



GET CLOSER THAN EVER

"I've sent out messages on a daily basis about how important client engagement is right now. Staying close to them and understanding what they're going through. Being there with them. Not to try to get business or to sell, but to be there with them to really understand what they're going through and how we can help them through it."

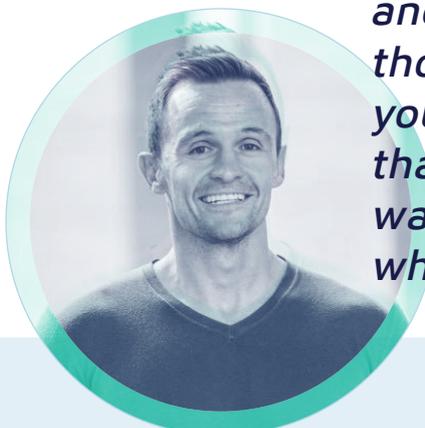


Rhona Driggs

CEO at Empresaria Group plc

Recruitment has always been a relationship business. And even though there isn't much business out there for many recruiters right now, everything passes and you'll be remembered by those you supported. This was a core message from our Leaders. Your people need to foster and maintain those relationships so that when they are ready to recruit, you'll be the first name that pops into their head. Because you'll have built a relationship that's less transactional and more partnership-led.

"We're seeing a lot more recruiters just having conversations. More of a duty of care. Saying, 'How are you? What does this mean to you as a business?' And there's more time now to understand your client and your client to understand you. When those business supply chains pick up, you're much better placed to work with that client than you were before, when it was, '...quick, give us a vacancy and see what we can do'..."



Dean Kelly

Founder & CEO of RealiseMe and Co-founder of RDLC



Get closer then ever

"Add value to a customer, I remember in the '90's we literally didn't have a single vacancy in the business. But what we did was sold HR services. We sold outsourcing business. We sold workforce management. We basically looked at what skill sets we had and we sold those skill sets instead."



Peter Searle

Executive Chairman at Airswift

In a way it's back to basics. Back to understanding, empathy and relationships, not just emailing and googling and fastest finger first.

OPPORTUNITY IS FOR THE BRAVE



"Good people will always find a way. A lot of the good people that work for me, they're rubbing their hands with relish almost at what could represent a massive opportunity."

Paul Kynaston

Managing Director (UK Construction) at Search Consultancy



Opportunity is for the brave

Get ready, because survival is just phase one. Recruiters are optimists. They are resilient and they don't give up. All of our Leaders could see opportunities in the future. While survival now has to be the priority, you must surround yourself with optimistic, can-do, open-minded and creative people who aren't afraid of the future.

"Use this time to make the plans and get the right people with the right attitude and the right resources to ensure a bounce that goes in the right direction."



Ann Swain

Global CEO at APSCo



Leaders must start planning now for the recovery. Not just thinking about it but consciously articulating their objectives, strategy and the day-to-day tactics that'll get them there.

BUILD TOMORROW



"Recruitment is dead. Right. I'll say it. Recruitment is dead. As a word. It's about products and services and solutions, resource and delivering outcomes."

Gary Goldsmith

Champion to Recruitment | Growth Coach | Mentor



Build tomorrow

Our leaders had a lot to say about the future and where it's all going. Here are a few nuggets:

"When we start to come out, we're still going to have extreme pricing pressures from our clients. So, we're going to have to figure out how to run much more cost effectively and efficiently, as an industry. And that's going to rely on technology. That's going to rely on outsourcing. That's going to rely on a lot of different things that we're used to doing in-house."



Rhona Driggs

CEO at Empresaria Group plc

The world will definitely be leaner coming out of this, no doubt about that. Now's the time to bake efficiency and productivity into every part of your process. Use technology to automate processes that are currently being done by people. Free up their time so they can build client relationships and add real value to your business.

"You're going to see more ideas, creativity and innovation come out of this, because out of any crisis you get innovation. We're going to see more interesting platforms and real engagement with clients."



Albert Ellis

Non Executive Director at Staffline Plc



Build tomorrow

Many hugely successful businesses were born out of a recession. Alfred Marks Bureau was founded during the Spanish Flu of 1919. Adia was founded during the Asian Flu of 1957. You might know them as Adecco today!

"We've seen two years' worth of digital transformation in two months."
Satya Nadella, Microsoft CEO.

It makes sense when you think about it. The world's been turned upside down and organisations are more willing now, more than ever, to try new things to gain a competitive advantage. Expect good, brave and innovative recruiters to step in and challenge the old guard.

BE PROUD TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

The recruitment sector is integral to the recovery of the UK economy. Recruitment creates growth, momentum and positivity. Take pride and have purpose in your actions knowing how important the recruitment industry is in helping society to emerge successfully from lockdown.

"I believe in the recruitment sector. I think it's a phenomenal sector. I think as an industry it has a really positive purpose, we find people jobs. We help businesses source what they describe as their most valuable asset."



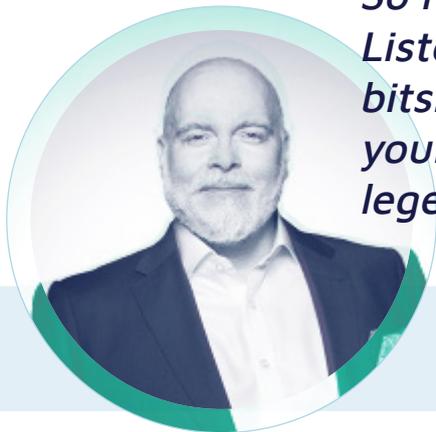
Darren Ryemill

Founder of Opus Talent Solutions



THE LAST WORD

We'll give the last word to the legend that is Gary Goldsmith.



"You don't get into recruitment or sales if you're not born resilient. But you have to draw on an absolute inner belief in yourself. So hang around people that inspire you. Listen to their war stories. Take out the best bits. Build that into your own capacity and your own story and start building your own legend. And good things will happen to you."

Gary Goldsmith

Champion to Recruitment | Growth Coach | Mentor



Some day we'll tell war stories of this time to the next generation of young whipper snappers coming into recruitment. We'll talk about the great pandemic of 2020. The people we lost, the 'R' number and how the government employed everyone for months.

We'll talk about how tough it was, but how we dug in. We made hard decisions that saved our business. We bravely innovated. We stepped up, we adapted, we overcame.

WE STEPPED UP
WE ADAPTED
WE OVERCAME





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