

The Company Agency

Seven types  
of *confidence*

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July 2009

A Report by The Company Agency Leadership Council

**Over the past few months, we have interviewed twelve leaders in business and public life about one single idea:**

## *confidence*

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**Harold Tillman**

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**Rupert Younger**

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**We are grateful to them for their time and attention (and in many cases for the opportunity to work with them over the years).**

**This is the third in a series of short papers on issues of topical concern to leaders. It is published under the guidance of The Leadership Council.**

ISBN 978-0-9561113-1-9

Published by The Company Agency

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## As is our confidence, so is our capacity.

William Hazlitt, 1778-1830

## INTRODUCTION

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A sexual therapist could have a field day with our society's collective performance anxiety. The market for confidence indices (consumer, investor, property, recruitment) has never had it so good. That someone somewhere felt it worth their while to create, for example, [selfstorageconfidenceindex.com](http://selfstorageconfidenceindex.com) (yes, really) is itself an index of the insatiability of our appetite for this kind of thing. And not just in business. Can Obama's brand of confidence save the world? In London, can any political party or institution command our confidence following MoatGate and FlipGate? Green shoots, death throes... it all seems to come back to questions of confidence.

Questions, that is, of whether or not we and those around us have confidence – in the White House, the housing market, or self storage. But this report is unashamedly unconcerned with the current state of confidence in the UK or around the world. What we do try to answer is the more basic and, for us as advisers, coaches and mentors to leaders, the more valuable question: what exactly is confidence?

We're not helped by the broad stretch of meaning in the word: from self confidence, to confidence in others, to more general confidence in a mood or a market. Nor is the term wholly positive. Conmen, con tricks ... these are not merely mischievous word play, but point to a real underlying danger in the whole idea of 'confidence' – *the thin dividing line between confidence, arrogance and complacency* which Sir Christopher Gent points out.

However, we believe it would be hard to find a body of people better placed to throw light on the question of 'what is confidence?' than our distinguished panel of interviewees. They include a legendary fashion entrepreneur; one of Ronald Reagan's key advisors; the man who joined Vodafone the day it started trading and took it to being the global player we know today; and two who lead their countries' Olympic efforts (London 2012 and Sochi 2014) – to name but a handful.

Mary Jo Jacobi Jephson, former Presidential Advisor and with an unmatched track record of reputational guidance for some of the world's biggest corporations, offers a characteristically punchy and eye-opening definition of confidence: *It's like pornography. You know it when you see it.*

That neatly points to both the power and the problem of confidence. The power of confidence is that we instantly sense or recognise it. The problem is that we may not quite know why. This may explain why confidence and superstition are such frequent allies – witness Tony Blair's famous 'lucky' pair of shoes for Prime Minister's Question Time. And, if we don't know why something makes us feel confident, that poses a dilemma for leaders in commercial and public life, who rightly see the creation and maintenance of confidence as one of their most basic tasks.

Dr Stefan Kirsten, until recently CEO of Majid Al Futtaim and previously CFO of ThyssenKrupp, is a former career officer in the German Army. He tackles the question of 'why confidence matters to leaders' with typical relish. *According to Clausewitz, the classic Prussian military strategist, the battle plan is always obsolete the moment the first shot is fired. Military decisions are all life and death, in a condition of extreme ambiguity. You may be working to a particular model of warfare which helps you take decisions in these circumstances, but whatever the model, confidence in the leadership is supreme. Business is not generally a matter of life and death, but speed and ambiguity are constants. Inspiring confidence is the tipping point in ambiguous situations: 'I may not understand totally what's happening, but I am confident in my leader.'* And, while authorities such as Ronald Heifetz, Professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, warn against the dangers of 'charismatic authority' (a trust in leaders which in Heifetz' view can prevent people from engaging with problems and generate a mindless following), confidence remains a key objective for leaders of all hues.

Management theorists have written widely on this subject, and their efforts have typically been directed at creating a 'recipe'. A prominent recent example (also from Harvard) is Rosabeth Moss Kanter's 'Confidence: How Winning Streaks and Losing Streaks Begin and End' (2004), which offers the beguiling soundbite definition of her topic as 'the sweet spot between arrogance and despair', and distinguishes three 'cornerstones' of confidence: accountability, collaboration, and initiative. Follow this recipe, and, surely, confidence is bound to follow.

Our initial thinking in preparing the interviews for this paper was that we might stumble upon such a 'recipe' ourselves: a proven potion which we could offer our readers and our clients, a guaranteed formula. But from the twelve interviews we conducted, we could find no clear pattern to suggest any single definitive recipe for confidence. What we were struck by was the extraordinary *diversity* of forms which confidence takes. Confidence based on facts (for example an airline's safety record) is clearly different from confidence based on, for example, a CEO or political leader's well-articulated plan, 'vision' or manifesto; and confidence based on an individual's ability to welcome questions and criticism has another flavour again. Each of these could be seen as a distinctive *type* of confidence. Moreover, these 'types' of confidence appear to us to cut right across more simplistic definitions of 'self confidence' versus 'confidence in others' or, for that matter, more generalised confidence of outlook.

Intriguingly, some of the most powerful insights in this area come not from business or politics but from the world of sports. In a 2007 paper<sup>1</sup> written by four distinguished British sports psychologists and based on interviews with a panel of world class male and female athletes, a clear distinction is drawn between *sources* and *types* of confidence. Sources of confidence for these athletes include factors such as preparation and social support, echoing the 'cornerstones'/recipe approach. Types of confidence, by contrast, include tactical awareness,

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<sup>1</sup> Hays, K., Maynard, I., Thomas, O. and Bawden, M. (2007) 'Sources and types of confidence identified by world class sport performers' in *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* Vol.19, Issue 4.

psychological factors, and superiority to the opposition. The point is that while all sources of confidence should be identified and nourished, in reality confident performance takes on several distinctive characters - *and not all of them are necessary for success*. Indeed we can all think of situations where a team or an athlete, often helped by the passion of fans, has won through sheer psychological conviction against a technically superior opposition - or where tactical awareness came through as the determining factor in a final result. Our contention, based on the insights offered by our twelve interviewees, is that the same principle applies to leadership in commercial and public life.

We have identified seven types of confidence: respect, vision, track record, openness, authenticity, consistency, and simplicity. Does every leader need all of these in order to create confidence? Absolutely not.

Each of these types of confidence is strong and valid: each 'works'. Different circumstances (and perhaps even more pertinently different personalities) clearly lend themselves to one or another type of confidence being more effective; equally, it's easy to see how different types of confidence can work in combination.

So our answer to the question 'what is confidence' is this: confidence can be any one of, or any combination of, seven quite distinctive yet frequently overlapping qualities.

Confidence isn't a *potion* – ready mixed and to a set recipe. It's a *palette*.

If Hazlitt was right and our confidence is our capacity, we believe that leaders and their advisers will welcome these observations and even find them liberating. And, if we can increase the capacity of the leaders in our societies, we all stand to benefit. In fact, that almost calls for ... another index.



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# 1 RESPECT

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*The man of genius inspires us with a boundless confidence in our own powers.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist, 1803-1882

**It's a truism that we get back what we give; that what goes around comes around. In our coaching work, we frequently find ourselves falling back on this devastatingly simple observation. If you want people to listen to you, listen to them. If you want people to be excited by your thinking and ideas, show them you're excited by their thinking and ideas. The same applies to confidence: if you want people to have confidence in you and your project, one sure path to achieve this is to go out of your way to demonstrate your own confidence in them.**

**Inspired by Stefan Kirsten's observation below, we describe this type of confidence as 'respect'. Simon Davies describes this in very specific and concrete terms within his business; Matthew Kirk illustrates the theme through a classic episode of British naval history; and Paul Deighton reflects on the anxieties common to us all, and how respect can overcome them.**

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We're discussing confidence, but I think there's a term perhaps even higher than confidence, and that is respect. Particularly at times of uncertainty, we have to go back to core values and radiate respect. That creates confidence internally and externally.

**Dr. Stefan Kirsten**

We need to show our people we have confidence in them. The last line in one of our recent bulletins was 'we need to recognise the success of our achievements and tackle the market with confidence'. Our confidence in our people feeds their confidence when dealing with the challenges of the external world.

**Simon Davies**

Confidence is not a one way path. The confidence of the team in the leader directly reflects the belief the leader gives the team in themselves. A classic and much misunderstood example of this is Nelson's famous signal at Trafalgar. Misunderstood, since 'England expects...' was not the message Nelson intended to send. His intention was to say 'England *confides* that every man will do his duty', using 'confide' in its old sense to mean believe in and trust. There's a world of difference between the cold sense of duty implied by 'expect' and the warm sense of trust and belief implied by 'confide'. The message was changed because the right flags weren't available. Nevertheless, the deep underlying mutual confidence between Nelson and the officers and men of the navy led to a stunning result.

**Matthew Kirk**

Everyone has some doubt about their capabilities. Those anxieties affect everyone - from a prime minister to someone on work experience. Once you've accepted that those doubts are normal - and actually it's quite dangerous if you don't - the whole thing becomes a lot less scary. Is anyone going to be totally brilliant at every aspect of their job? Of course not. It's all about giving people certainty that they are the right person for this job. You have to build in each individual the feeling that they can do it, that they're the best person to do it and that people believe they're the best person to do it.

**Paul Deighton**

## 2 VISION

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*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*

Proverbs 29:18, King James' Bible, 1611

**If people can see where they're going, if a destination and path is clearly identified, they can relax and get on with the journey. In the absence of that clarity, that vision, it's hard to achieve anything.**

**This goes to the heart of what it is to lead: *Leadership*, according to one academic definition<sup>2</sup>, *involves persuading other people to set aside for a period of time their individual concerns and to pursue a common goal that is important for the responsibilities and welfare of a group.***

**It's not surprising, therefore, that many of our interview panel commented on this particular type of confidence. From David Frost's inclusive team definition, to examples drawn from HSBC, Orange and BP, our panellists evoke both the theory and practice of vision as a commonly experienced manifestation of confidence.**

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Confidence comes from a common vision supported by individual self belief: the thought of achieving more together than we can alone.

**David Frost**

The business leaders I've known who are most successful had a vision. They knew where they wanted to take their businesses, and they had the strategy and the team to deliver it. Above all they were able to articulate and share that vision in a way that people could understand and buy into. When Willy Purves was head of banking and then chairman of HSBC, he felt the bank had to diversify beyond its roots in Asia. Starting with organic growth and then careful acquisition, he extended the bank's foot print in the Middle East and then into South America. It was brilliantly articulated, clearly understood, and immaculately delivered. The vision gave everyone in the bank a clear sense of purpose and focus. It created confidence.

**Mary Jo Jacobi Jephson**

You have to be clear and you have to be brave. Even if you're flying in the face of what people believe is acceptable or correct, clarity and boldness can create the confidence that delivers a great result. A few years ago, France Telecom bought Orange. That created two camps in France Telecom. One was very French, focused on traditional fixed lines, engineers, systems. The other was a completely different culture, the Orange culture: English, customer focused, marketing focused, and mobile. Can you think of a bigger clash? One man, Didier Lombart, took the brave and very controversial decision that the future (to coin a phrase) would be Orange. We worked for two and a half years re-branding all France Telecom activities, and as they acquire new businesses in other countries that's the brand they use. The value, the international appeal of that brand, its engagement with the customer, is phenomenal. The whole business has shifted from being a state service to a consumer brand. And that's down to a simple bold vision.

**Olivier Fleurot**

There was a time when the oil industry had about as much trust from different stakeholders as financial services has today: when corner cutting and the single goal of profit at the expense of all else seemed to be the norm. People have revisionist views now, but if one looks at what BP accomplished by differentiation around a clear vision, taking a decisive stance on certain issues and leading the corporate responsibility debate, and even down to their revised identity, they showed tremendous courage and foresight. I see this happening more in the current climate – how some CEOs and even regulators and governments are talking today and taking far bolder steps than in easier times. Bold steps inspire and create confidence.

**Euart Glendinning**

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<sup>2</sup>Hogan, R., Curphy, G., and Hogan, J., (1994) 'What we know about leadership: effectiveness and personality', in *American Psychologist*

### 3 TRACK RECORD

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*It isn't the incompetent who destroy an organization. It is those who have achieved something and want to rest upon their achievements who are forever clogging things up.*

Charles Sorenson, Ford Motor Company Executive, 1881-1968

**Past performance, as we well know, is no guarantee of future results. 'But', as a recent blog<sup>3</sup> has it, 'it's a heck of a lot better than anything else we've got to go on'. Hence the importance of track record as one very significant dimension of confidence.**

**Our interviewee panel explore this issue from several angles – from Harold Tillman's emphasis on the individual, to Simon Davies' suggestion of the kind of team confidence derived from a major win which can lead to the sense of being on a winning streak. Rupert Younger's voice of caution warns us of the punishment that lies in wait for those with impressive track records which they fail to live up to, and finally Harold Tillman again reminds us of the need, at any age, to take on new challenges and not to rely on your past triumphs.**

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Did we think London was going to win the 2012 Olympics? We had a man leading – Sebastian Coe - who we all believed in. We believed in him because we know he's a winner. It's the same in business – if the track record of the leader is good, that breathes confidence into the whole team.

**Harold Tillman**

In the last quarter of 2008, we won the key instruction on the administration of Lehman Europe. That made people feel confident - if we can win and then execute such complex work under so much pressure, we can do anything. Clients see that too and it gives them confidence.

**Simon Davies**

Track record is one of the more important elements in establishing confidence. Track record comes in many forms – from the ability to google for instant third party endorsements on any individual or institution, to one's own personal experience. It all affects your confidence in your dealings with others. Then if expectations are met or exceeded, confidence strengthens dramatically – and conversely, the punishment for failing to meet expectations can be brutal. This makes the way in which businesses manage and present their track record in an interconnected world, and the way in which senior management properly frames expectations, a critical reputational task.

**Rupert Younger**

I was quite shy and unconfident as an only child. I started to overcome that by finding one thing I was really good at, running. That brought medals and trophies, and there's no greater feeling than not just winning but having other kids come up to and you congratulate you. That was my first boost of confidence. But you have to work on it all the time. Aged 19, in my first job, I was asked to go out and sell. I fell apart – I hated the product I was selling, I felt intimidated, and they showed me the door. But I remembered winning at school and went back. Again they showed me the door – but this time I went straight back in. I didn't get an order but I got a hearing – which lead to a third visit with an appointment and a sale. That really got me started – gave me the confidence to go back to my employers and tell them I wanted some control, I wanted to sell my own designs.

Within a year mine were outselling the original range. Within five years I'd bought out the owners and built it up to the point where I was the youngest ever person to take a company onto the London Stock Exchange. But you can get to take confidence for granted. I took a knock in 1990, and I dramatically lost all the confidence I had. So again, you have to go back to the roots of it, which for me means thinking back to running at school, and slowly you can build up again. I think it's important to keep on taking on new challenges, to take on things which make you feel unconfident. I've only just started to take on public speaking, that's a big deal for me. You have to keep challenging yourself, keep building your confidence. Confidence isn't something that you can just sit on – you have to feed it and work at it.

**Harold Tillman**

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<sup>3</sup> <http://ideoplex.com/id/175/past-performance-is-no-guarantee>

## 4 OPENNESS

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*His priority did not seem to be to teach them what he knew, but rather to impress upon them that nothing, not even... knowledge, was foolproof.*

'Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix', J.K. Rowling, 1965-

**Part of the paradox of confidence is that to many of us it seems to contain the seeds of its own downfall. Confidence pushes people (in war, literally) 'over the top' to achieve the extraordinary; yet over-the-top confidence is asking for trouble.**

**As with all problems, this can create an opportunity. We believe the opportunity is 'openness' – to other perspectives, to other voices, to challenge, to diversity. This is part of the sense of 'responsibility' which Dmitry Chernyshenko identifies; it is clear from the way that David Frost and Simon Davies describe politicians who have insulated their perspectives, and from Matthew Kirk's comment on the Obama security team debacle; and in Sir Christopher Gent's clarity of focus on the importance of recognising and being open to change. The value which Olivier Fleurot put on open question sessions with his staff of journalists when he ran the FT will resonate with many leaders. Finally, Simon Davies reminds us that an important part of openness is just being around, showing up, not hiding away.**

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Levels of confidence should be constantly revised according to circumstances. Confidence is a responsibility and it must not become arrogance.

**Dmitry Chernyshenko**

One thing that kills confidence is people not tackling the problems as others see them. This is where politicians often go wrong. They fail to define the problem they say they are tackling in terms that you or I really relate to.

**David Frost**

Being frank, open, honest, not overselling yourself or the things you're trying to do: these qualities always speak of confidence. A certain amount of modesty is needed, but not to the extent of people thinking you're not up to the job.

This stands a leader in particularly good stead when confidence is shaky. Being open about what's gone wrong and why is a huge strength. With the series of repositionings around Barack Obama's security team, people were starting to think 'is he the white knight we were expecting after all?'. Obama put an end to that very simply - he said 'I've screwed up - let's move on'.

**Matthew Kirk**

Whenever I've made a mistake, it's been because I've thought I'm at the top of my game and I know best – it's when I have stopped listening.

**Harold Tillman**

You have to create diversity, to be open to different views. If you look at the make up of Bush's inner sanctum, they were all leaning in one direction. They couldn't conceive the possibility that there was another valid way of looking at things. That's one of the risks of putting wholly like minded people together.

Arrogance is never a sustainable form of confidence. That's true in UK culture but even more so in other parts of the world. I worked on a deal with a senior British banker in Thailand in the 90s. He very confidently told the Thai Finance Director we were dealing with exactly how life was going to be. It was extremely uncomfortable, a total misreading of the culture. I asked for a short break, took the banker out and said that he simply had to make more room in the dialogue, that he was being far too bold. And indeed an hour later we were kicked off the deal.

**Simon Davies**

There is sometimes quite a thin dividing line between confidence, arrogance and complacency. In any organisation one has to be open minded and be prepared to listen to contrary points of view. Over recent months we've all seen events occurring that require totally new responses. If you carry on thinking things won't change, or that you've dealt with this in the past so you can deal with it in the future, you're in the wrong game.

No leader has a monopoly of wisdom. It's very important to be open to external input and advice, and anyone who thinks otherwise is likely to be embarrassed very quickly. Yet it's remarkable how blinkered business can become. For example, to most of us outside the automotive sector it's been blindingly obvious for perhaps a decade that building gas guzzlers was not the way to go. Consumer preferences, environmental awareness, cost implications – all of the factors which you would imagine would inform policy were somehow ignored.

This is a vital part of the chief executive's role, to bring a rounded awareness of external factors that can affect your business, to understand what are the disruptors to business as normal, what needs to be developed and what changed. This undermines any strand of complacency you might have – and replaces it with an informed confidence.

The most important thing in business, even if you have a very successful model, is to be brave enough to change if the environment is changing. We completely reinvented the business model twice while I was at Vodafone. If we hadn't done, we would have seriously damaged shareholder value. I remember one CEO telling me 'I wish this market would stay still for a while', and I thought – time for you to move on.

**Sir Christopher Gent**

When I was CEO at the Financial Times during some tough times, I knew that the only way to build confidence was to be totally open. Every quarter I would do open presentations with completely open questions for the whole business. FT journalists aren't noted for holding back with difficult questions, so it was tough – but it made people feel that everything was in the open so there was nothing to fear.

**Olivier Fleurot**

Visibility is very important. A lack of visibility causes ambiguity. It doesn't matter if you've got the answer of not, you must be visible.

**Simon Davies**

## 5 AUTHENTICITY

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*This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

'Hamlet', William Shakespeare, 1564-1616

**From Day One of The Company Agency, authenticity has been at the heart of our analysis of what works for leaders. Recently, we have been encouraged by research from Canada<sup>4</sup> which suggests that self-help books (which tend to take as a starting assumption the idea that *you can change*) can be worse than useless. Researchers have found that if you take individuals with, for example, low self-esteem and subject them to typical self-help exercises based on repeating affirmative statements about their own worth, lovability and so forth, their awareness of the discrepancy between these two positions can actually create even lower self-esteem than they had to start with. Conversely, for those with higher initial confidence, the exercise has some positive value (although arguably they don't need it). This strongly reinforces our belief that trying to turn people into something they aren't is, frankly, a mug's game.**

**We will let our interview panel speak for themselves: Matthew Kirk on the distinction between accentuation and change, Sir Christopher Gent warning of the dangers of *trying to become something you're not*, Mary Jo Jacobi Jephson on the authenticity of Thatcher and Reagan, Olivier Fleurot and Paul Deighton on body language and being true to your emotions, and Rupert Younger discussing *zeitgeist* and character.**

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I think you're born with the personality you have. For most of us, what you can learn is how to project your personality. Lots of people assume they have to take on the attributes of other people they've admired, or generic traits of leadership - but that can come across as false and therefore destructive to leadership. Establishing confidence should never mean changing your personality, rather it is accentuating the aspects of your personality most likely to make people connect with you.

**Matthew Kirk**

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<sup>4</sup>Wood, J., Perunovic, W. and Lee, J., (2009), 'Positive Self-Statements: Power for Some, Peril for Others' in *Psychological Science* Vol 20, Issue 5

We all learn characteristics from those we admire and feel comfortable with. It's whether in the process of learning, we try and become something which is beyond our comfort zone – something which is not true to ourselves. Nurturing and refining your good qualities, and learning to manage the negatives, is very important: but trying to become something you're not is a big mistake.

**Sir Christopher Gent**

If you talk to people who know Margaret Thatcher well, they all say she was what she was, what you saw behind closed doors was not very different from what she was in front of camera. It was the same with Reagan - the way he acted in public was the same as in a meeting in the Oval Office with two people. Quiet confidence and a sense of optimism. A hugely engaging person. It's written that he was just an actor – but when you look at even very successful actors, they're a mess in private because they look for public adulation. He didn't want or need that. More than anyone I've known, Ronald Reagan was completely comfortable with the person he was. He knew who he was, accepted that, liked that person, he knew the limitations but he also knew the opportunities. He certainly was someone who could distinguish between being disagreed with and disliked, something that most of us can't do. He understood that disagreement was to do with things that he was trying to do, so he would take that seriously, but he didn't have a need to make people like him. He was at peace with himself.

**Mary Jo Jacobi Jephson**

You have an expression, 'body language', that we don't have in France. It's very easy to see if someone French is happy or unhappy whereas in England you had to read the body language very carefully. I lost count of the number of times people told me 'don't get emotional'. But I'm human, I have emotion and I have reason, it's right to use both.

**Olivier Fleurot**

People read a lot into leaders' body language and manner. If wherever I am, and whoever I'm with, I go out of my way to send out signals that I'm relaxed, happy and positive, it conveys a great deal more, and more effectively, than any powerpoint slides. Clearly, it helps when this reflects how you actually feel! The power of getting this right is quite extreme.

**Paul Deighton**

Confidence has a lot to do with zeitgeist. In a buoyant, expanding market, a very outward facing, ebullient, entrepreneurial leader may be well regarded. In leaner times, we may want leaders to be more sober. Those attributes run quite deep and it's not only difficult but probably undesirable for someone to try to change their style dramatically to suit an external mood.

**Rupert Younger**

## 6 CONSISTENCY

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*The only completely consistent people are the dead.*

Aldous Huxley, novelist, 1894-1963

**Most of us aspire to be consistent, to live up to the ideal of always following through on our promises, always holding firm to our values. WYSIWYG, (What You See Is What You Get), that ugly but useful acronym, hovers perpetually around corporate and political life. Huxley's mischievous words may embody a strict truth, but they won't stop us trying.**

**Partly this is because of the extraordinary effect that consistency can have. Psychologists have been aware since the 1960s that simply presenting a consistent position – regardless of the facts – puts enormous pressure on those around you to listen to and even come to agree with you. Experiments such as the famous 'blue/green' research exercise<sup>5</sup>, where a group was given a series of slides showing different shades of blue and asked to judge the colour, reveal that when infiltrated by one person briefed to consistently identify the colour as green, the group was massively swayed. Clearly, consistency can take you a very long way in terms of creating confidence that the view you consistently articulate is correct.**

**Here, Olivier Fleurot suggests that, although being wholly consistent may be tough, the price for inconsistency is tougher. Sir Christopher Gent recalls an episode at Vodafone which made him rethink what values could mean in a business. Finally, Rupert Younger makes the important point that while true consistency may be in many cases unattainable, creating a *continuum of thought* between an original position and whatever changes of circumstance and objective have happened since is vital.**

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I think it's very simple. Be consistent, be true to your word, that inspires confidence and trust, there is no other way. And that means leading by example. If in your words you're saying it's time to tighten belts, make very sure that your own behaviour is consistent with that. It's a small example, but I was probably the first FT CEO in history not to have a chauffeur: times were tough, and it was simply the wrong thing to do. Coherence and consistency over time builds trust. If you're not consistent forget it. Of course this is the expression of your values overall - and again if they are not consistent and deeply rooted, you

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<sup>5</sup> Monovinci, S., Lage, E. and Naffrechoux, M., (1969), 'Influence of a consistent minority on the responses of a majority in a colour perception task', in *Sociometry* Vol 32.

can fake it for a while but not for very long. Some people are extremely good at talking and speaking. When you first meet them they look very confident and you think wow - but then after a while you know if it's true or not.

**Olivier Fleurot**

Every business gets into choppy times. If you have strong values, they will carry you through. You can openly admit that you are in uncharted territory, but that your values will guide you through. Values don't have to be easy, they just have to be real and effective, and they have to be values you can fully espouse - otherwise they lack all credibility.

On one occasion we were discussing values at an executive team meeting in Vodafone. We'd identified a set of values that really mattered to us. I can remember saying we all had to be *committed* for this to work. Then Vittorio Colao [now CEO of Vodafone] spoke up. He said that commitment wasn't enough, that we would have to be *passionate* if we wanted the values to mean anything, to punch through. There were various voices around the table cautioning that 'passion' was a bit much, but Vittorio was completely right. You have to mean it and then live by it.

**Sir Christopher Gent**

Confidence comes from doing what you said you were going to do - and if you change your mind or your objectives, which is perfectly reasonable, it's about explaining why. The vital thing is to create a continuum of thought, protecting your previous position and creating a revised expectation which means you can maintain your track record.

**Rupert Younger**

## 7 SIMPLICITY

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*It seems that perfection is reached not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.*

Antoine de Saint Exupéry, writer and pilot, 1900-1940

**Our seventh and final type of confidence is simplicity. Interestingly, while it's clear that this quality underpins the personal style and performance of many leaders, few explicitly remarked on it during our interviews. For this reason we thought it worth highlighting and even giving it some prominence by making it our concluding 'type'.**

**In the world of confidence, less really is more. Fewer, simpler words. Fewer, simpler, bolder objectives. Ultimately, perhaps, the discipline to focus on fewer and simpler ideas. The courage to cut through.**

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If your message is over complicated, people lose interest and lose confidence. If you are not disciplined enough to distil your message into something simple, that undermines people's belief in your own discipline and all round capability. As Lloyd George was reported to have said of Woodrow Wilson's 14 point plan, "even the Almighty only needed 10!".

**Rupert Younger**

## THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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**This is the third in a series of papers on topical concerns for leaders. It is published under the guidance of The Leadership Council.**

**The Leadership Council was established by the Partners of The Company Agency in 2008 bringing together senior figures from commercial and public life. Chaired by Lord Janvrin, the Council provides a powerful perspective on the leadership agenda. Individual Council members also act as senior mentors for The Company Agency's clients.**

### **Jonathan Chenevix-Trench**

Jonathan Chenevix-Trench is co-founder of African Century, specialising in investment into small and medium sized companies in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition he is Chairman of Ashdown Funding Limited, and Elgeti Ashdown Advisors. Until 2007, he was Chairman and Chief Executive of Morgan Stanley International in London.

### **Val Gooding**

Val Gooding is a non-executive director of Standard Chartered Bank plc, J Sainsburys plc, the BBC, and the Lawn Tennis Association. She is also a Trustee of the British Museum and the Rose Theatre, Kingston, and a member of several advisory boards.

Val was CEO of Bupa for 10 years following over 20 years at British Airways.

### **Tony Hall CBE**

Tony Hall has been Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House since 2001. Before that he was Chief Executive of BBC News. He is on the board of Channel 4, the British Council, the DCMS's Creative Economy Board and the London Cultural Strategy Group. He is currently Chair of the Theatre Royal Stratford East and of the Sector Skills Council for the Creative and Cultural Industries. He is also a member of the management committee of the Clore Leadership Programme. He became a Commander of the British Empire in 2005.

### **Mary Jo Jacobi Jephson**

Mary Jo Jacobi Jephson is Chairman of the IDM Group and chairs the Forensic Science Service's Independent Advisory Group and the Advisory Board of Family Office Advisors LLP. She is also one of Her Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners and a US-UK Fulbright Commissioner, and she is a trustee of several not-for-profit organisations in the UK and US. Previously, Mary Jo led reputation management and communications at Royal Dutch Shell, Lehman Brothers and HSBC and was a senior advisor to two US Presidents.

### **Lord Janvrin, Chairman**

Robin Janvrin is Deputy Chairman of HSBC Private Bank (UK) Ltd. After eleven years in the Royal Navy, including reading PPE at Oxford, and thirteen years in the Diplomatic Service, including postings in Brussels and New Delhi, he moved in 1987 to the Royal Household, initially as Press Secretary and then subsequently in The Queen's Private Office, becoming The Queen's Private Secretary from 1999-2007. He is a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery, on the Advisory Board of the UK-India Business Council, and is a Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Corporate Reputation.

### **Lady Barbara Judge**

Lady Barbara Judge is Chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority since 2004, having joined as a Director and Chairman of the Audit Committee in 2002. She is also currently Chairman of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Deputy Chairman of Forte Energy NL and a Director of Massey Energy Company and Bekaert SA, among others.

Previously, she was a Commissioner of the US Securities and Exchange Commission and an executive director of Samuel Montagu and News International, among others.

### **Martin Newman, Director**

Martin Newman is a Partner and Coach at The Company Agency, working internationally with political, public and business leaders. He has worked for twenty years in many of London's leading communications agencies, and in 1989 helped set up the Fairtrade Foundation as its founding director.

### **David Richards CBE**

David Richards is Chairman of both Aston Martin and the Prodrive Group of companies. A former World Rally Champion, he founded Prodrive in 1984 and is regarded as one of the most prominent figures in global motorsport. In 2005 he was made a Commander of the British Empire, CBE, for his services to the motorsport industry.

### **Sir Tom Shebbeare**

Since 2004 Tom Shebbeare has been Director of The Prince's Charities, a group of 29 Charities and not-for-profit businesses established by The Prince of Wales. Between 1980 and 1987 he was on the permanent staff of The Council of Europe (Strasbourg) before becoming the first Director of The Prince's Trust in 1988. He is a Director of Virgin Money Giving, CIM Asset Management and In Kind Direct. He was knighted in 2003.

# *confidence*

When you are confident, you control all your negative emotions and concentrate fully on the current situation. Confidence is a state of mind which allows you to demonstrate your best qualities and strive for excellence.

**Dmitry Chernyshenko**

The ability to make others believe.

**Simon Davies**

Internally, confidence comes from the feeling that you have a robust knowledge of your subject, and have done all that you can to be fully prepared. Externally, it's the ability of a leader to demonstrate with credibility that we know where we are going and that we can get there.

**Paul Deighton**

A feeling that you can trust these people, and that they have the skills and abilities to do something that you expect them to do.

**Olivier Fleurot**

It comes from a common vision supported by individual self belief: the thought of achieving more together than we can alone.

**David Frost**

Confidence comes from trust. It's enjoying the trust of all the people who matter to you.

**Sir Christopher Gent**

The ability to inspire. Even in the face of extreme adversity.

**Euart Glendinning**

Confidence is the belief that leaders can do what they're setting out to do. But it is not a one way path. The confidence of the team in the leader directly reflects the belief the leader gives the team in themselves.

**Matthew Kirk**

It's between people. Being confident alone is no good. But ultimately, confidence is resting in yourself.

**Prof. Dr. A. Stefan Kirsten**

It's not a con game. If it is, it doesn't last for long.

**Mary Jo Jacobi Jephson**

Confidence develops through need. Every confident person has worked to achieve it.

**Harold Tillman**

A perception among your audience that you will deliver on what you promise.

**Rupert Younger**

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