

# Global Talent in UK Leadership

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A Report by **The Leadership Council**

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ISBN 978-0-9561113-6-4

Published by The Leadership Council

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This report is based on 9 in-depth interviews with leaders.

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Chairman, Aveva plc

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Visiting Professor, London School of Economics

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Group CEO, BP plc

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Special thanks to Nicholas Cullinan, Peter Flynn,  
Colin Hatfield, Erin Hepher, Nick Hurrell, Lucy Kennard,  
Paul O'Donnell, Anushia Reddy, and Sam Smith for  
their valuable contributions to this report.



## Introduction

# Global talent in UK Leadership

The UK today has more non-nationals in positions of senior business and even institutional leadership than any other country in the world (over one third of FTSE100 CEOs vs 7% of Fortune100 CEOs according to recent Heidrick & Struggles data) . At a moment when the UK's relationship with the world is changing in ways that are both unprecedented and unpredictable, we have been looking behind the headline statistics and asking questions about why leadership talent in the UK is so unusually global, and what the experiences of individual foreign leaders in UK business can teach us.

The factors behind this strong representation of non-nationals emerge clearly from the interviews in this report. Language, geography and time-zone are central to the UK's attractions for globally mobile talent. The relative absence of 'national champions' in business is reflected in weaker domestic ties with government, adding to the sense that the primary orientation of British business is external. The country's history, while casting a mixed shadow around the world, has for at least 500 years been dominated by global trading and, for much of this time, empire. The cultural mix of London is an immensely powerful pull. These largely familiar points help remind us why the UK appeals to so many leaders and aspiring leaders.

We generally focus less on the flip side of this coin: why the UK needs global talent. The UK's comparatively small domestic market makes global outreach a central strategic imperative, not an option, for almost all businesses of scale: US businesses, by contrast, with a much larger domestic market, can remain considerably more national in their orientation and leadership. There are other factors. Diversity of input is a recognised good in itself, leading to more robust decision making. The UK's reputation for being better at innovation than commercialisation suggests another reason why foreign talent can help transform British businesses. And there's this intriguing suggestion from Margherita della Valle, Vodafone's Deputy

CFO, reflecting on the question of class that always comes up in any discussion of how things work in Britain: *“Perhaps the fact that as foreigners we sit outside the class system is part of why we’re welcomed here. It may be refreshing for the British to be able to engage in relationships unclouded by all the baggage of class assumptions and other self-imposed categories.”* In short, working with non-British leaders and peers builds on our strengths and does much to compensate for our weaknesses.

Four clear lessons can, we believe, be drawn from this report.

1. **Treasure outsiders.** The ability of non-national leaders in the context of British business to challenge, to cut through, is hugely valuable. But it’s largely dependent on the sense that as outsiders they can do these things in ways that are more personally and institutionally acceptable. We urge the global talent working in British organisations to preserve their outsider status.
2. **Fight for simplicity.** The British tendency to indirect and complex communication is deeply unhelpful in the vast majority of global environments. Non-national leaders of British businesses and institutions should follow Bob Dudley’s example in making a fetish of simplifying messages.
3. **Learn how to explain, and share, the benefits of being global.** The sense that globalisation has created winners and losers in national populations is widespread, not limited to Britain. The focus of business is increasingly seen as the concentration rather than the spreading of wealth. Business leaders have a grave responsibility to find new and better ways to tell the story of globalisation and to demonstrate that it works for the many, not merely the few. Even for London listed global businesses who consider themselves semi-detached from the UK market, it may be time to think of regional outreach strategies within the UK as part of retaining your ‘licence to operate’.
4. **Commit resources if you want to keep the door open.** British businesses will almost inevitably have to compete harder to attract global talent in the face of short and medium term uncertainties, and will have to engage with far greater bureaucratic and logistical complexities around employment and living arrangements. At a time when it is likely to be more time consuming and all round more expensive to find and keep global talent, Boards must send out uncompromising signals of commitment to this goal.

Most British people seem able to entertain two quite different ideas of about the UK simultaneously: one dynamically engaged with the world, the other glorying in splendid isolation. A reason for the Leave campaign's success (and arguably President - elect Trump's) could be that it promised both scenarios, while Remain, and Clinton, emphasized only one.

Britain is not alone in this dilemma. The histories of Japan, the USA, Russia, and China - to take just a few of the more prominent examples - all illustrate tensions between 'dynamic engagement' and 'splendid isolation'. These dilemmas may be necessary political games, but for UK plc isolation is not an option. This is where the interests of business and the interests of the emerging nationalist flavoured majorities we see emerging around the world will struggle to find common ground.

Now is the right time to remind ourselves of how much we gain from welcoming global talent into our businesses and institutions, and how much we stand to lose if that welcome is compromised.



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# Interviews



## JAVED AHMED

CEO, Tate & Lyle plc

*Javed joined Tate & Lyle as Chief Executive in October 2009. He started his career with Procter & Gamble before spending five years with Bain & Co, working in both London and Boston. He joined Benckiser in 1992 as General Manager, Canada, and moved to the UK to run their UK and Irish operations in 1995. In 1999 his responsibilities, now within Reckitt Benckiser plc, were extended to Senior Vice President, Northern Europe. In 2001, he assumed the role of President, North America and was promoted to Executive Vice President, North America, Australia and New Zealand (2003) and then to Executive Vice President, Europe (2008). He has been CEO of Tate & Lyle since 2009.*



*Javed is a Pakistani American with US Citizenship and lives in London.*

*Globality is in Britain's DNA.* Remember there was a time when 'the sun never set on the British Empire'! The relatively small size of the domestic market has been a big factor in making Britain the quintessential outward looking country with a wide world view. A lot of major institutions have their heritage and legacy on the island but outgrew it decades ago, so the skills, experiences, and expertise they need are, by definition, drawn from a pool much broader than the confines of these shores. If you take a company like Tate & Lyle, less than 2% of our sales are now in the UK. Our footprint is primarily outside, which means that your leadership skills have to be as facile 'outside' as they are inside - it's just a demographic fact of life. Today, any big multinational which has a footprint outside its domestic market requires leadership which is at home in that wider world. For a long time, the size and dynamism of the US's domestic market meant that the big US firms could ignore that, and were often led by managers whose entire experience was on home ground, but that is also changing now.

*Looking and sounding different means only that eventually.* Being 'different' can get you that 'extra glance', but it's when you start talking about substantive issues, is when people make up their minds and decide who you really are. I was once told "You're going to look different and sound different. You will get attention initially on that basis but beyond that, all your skill sets kick in, and these will eventually define your leadership, your success, your failure." Ultimately, it's never about where you came from, what you sound like, what you look like. It's about who you are. Organisations are very good at finding the 'real person' out.

*Yes, you are product of your environment and your experiences.* I grew up in a communicative environment, in a family where we talked a lot but also listened attentively to each other. Empathy was inculcated by our parents from a very early age, we were always asked to put ourselves in 'his/her' shoes, especially when we had done something which had had a negative impact on someone, even if inadvertently. Empathy is something I believe you can learn by observing yourself and others, observing how people succeed and fail, by looking at the impact of different types of behaviour. When I think about leadership, 'empathy' is a word I keep coming back to. By this I don't mean becoming less performance oriented or less demanding, but having a deep appreciation of how people feel. Personally I feel this is easier if your career has not been limited to just one geography or just one culture. I was raised in Pakistan, had my primary/secondary education in a British system there, and my undergraduate and graduate education in the US system. My first job was in Switzerland, and I've called four different countries 'home' since. It gives you a great vantage point on the commonality, the underlying behavioural themes and human motivations, across borders and across cultures.

*You have to give it some 'shoe leather'.* As an 'outsider', you have to make an investment in time and effort to really touch the roots of the organisation. Until you go and talk to people face to face, and give them the opportunity to engage and interact at that very personal level, it will be difficult for them to truly understand who you are. That effort however, pays huge dividends. All of us have preconceptions, prejudices, stereotypes - that's just the way people operate. You have to understand that and deal with it. One word of advice I would give to any non-national: do not be defined by your background or nationality or ethnicity or accent. Define yourself. But don't expect that to come easily. It takes work to be able to dispel a stereotype or pre-conceived notions.

*A strong global organisational culture can be more powerful than the local or national cultures.* This makes developing your organisational culture absolutely critical and a top priority for any leader. If you get the culture right, so much flows from it. I've done business in over 40 countries and that is a clear common denominator. My strong personal belief is that the right organisational culture (not easy or quick to develop) can be as much a source of competitive advantage as any technological capability, asset base, market shares, etc.

*Communication skills are more important than nationality.* One of the key challenges of the CEO job, especially if you're not from 'around these parts', is communication. What matters above all is the clarity of the message, a core simplicity, because as soon as your language becomes in any way complicated, in a global environment that makes it almost

impossible for different audiences to navigate through to the heart of what you're trying to say. Experience tells me that the world creates a lot of complexity, but it also cries out for simplicity. Some organisations have a huge bias towards complexity – they can almost promote it, as complexity creates 'hiding places'. The challenge is to cut through that, and sometimes you have to force yourself to be quite brutal. I'm often presented with an incredibly complex picture; over time I've learned that part of my role is to force the issue, to make things simpler. My response is frequently to provoke and say 'I think the issue is x'. I may or may not have completely nailed it, but at least I've thrown down the gauntlet of simplification.

*Calling it like it is stands you in good stead.* In life and business you will encounter the proverbial "good, bad, and ugly", and if you are honest you'll find that you, along with others, are responsible for all those shades. 'Fess' up to it, call it like it is. This plays a large part in how you are defined: "he's a straight talker". As soon as you do this, you're no longer defined in terms of your past CV – no longer 'the consumer goods guy' or 'the brand guy', but the 'straight talker'. Getting stuff out on the table, even when it's personally uncomfortable, ultimately creates a non-defensive culture, and a healthy working environment.

*If I had one piece of advice to give, it would be this:* don't **ever** pretend to be something or someone you're not. Be comfortable in your own shoes, that's eventually what will make you succeed. I've always told my daughters "everything you need to survive in the world you carry on your person – your intellect, your values, and your faith, so be true to them." When they were younger they would look at me as though I was talking nonsense. They are growing up now, and the other day the older one recalled that phrase and said "Papa, I now understand".



## PHILIP AIKEN

**Chairman, Balfour Beatty plc**  
**Chairman, Aveva plc**

*Philip studied Chemical Engineering and began his career at BOC Gases, where he worked for over 25 years before becoming executive director and Chief Executive in 1995 of BTR Nylex (which later became Invensys plc). From 1997 until his retirement in 2006, he served in BHP Billiton; firstly as President of BHP Petroleum, and latterly as Group President of BHP Billiton's Energy business. From 2006 till 2009, he was a senior advisor at Macquarie Bank Ltd. He currently is Chairman of Balfour Beatty plc and Aveva plc and a Non Executive Director of Newcrest Mining Ltd.*



*Philip is an Australian citizen and lives mainly in London.*

*A lot of British companies are aware that their home-grown management may be a bit myopic/introverted. That creates opportunities for someone like me. We now have a bit of a free kick! Britain has always been good at listening to external views and inviting foreign input and that helps reassure boards and investors. "Let's learn everything from the foreign devils" was the attitude that brought Japan into the modern world. There's an element of that here, and that is no bad thing.*

*I came to live here as a young engineer in the 1970's, working for British Oxygen. At that time people found it exotic to have a young Aussie to have a beer with. It's very different now - the world is so much more global. In the 1970's people had only just started travelling. Now everyone's been everywhere.*

*Japanese friends have said to me that they look on London and the UK as part of Europe, but the least racist part of Europe in its thinking. The Japanese feel more comfortable here than in most places. People speak English, they're used to foreigners, and the golf courses are great. Those advantages are not shared by many continental European cities. New York may be America's multicultural society, but London is the world's.*

*The US always has an isolationist trend. It's not easy to get a green card or a work permit, and it's still very hard to get to the top of a US company if you're not a local. That's partly inherent in the education system, which makes it harder to get entry into professional services unless you have the US qualifications, for example. They don't have that acceptance of a globalised world that you find in London. There's a strand of isolationism*

which you can see rearing its head in the UK now with some of the Brexit camp. Isolationism doesn't make great sense even when you have a huge domestic market like the US, but when you have a relatively tiny domestic market like the UK it becomes simply untenable.

*My kids spent three years at school here.* There's a big difference in teaching when compared to Australia. Here, you do an assignment, write up your argument, and then you're expected to discuss and defend it. In Australia you write your piece, get a mark, and nothing is ever discussed about it again. The UK has a system which really makes you think, and think on your feet. But there's a flip side. A lot of people hide behind intellectual thought without action, and I do see that as a British tendency. The other extreme, where you have the 'boss says do it, we do it' mentality, can be equally unhelpful.

*Foreigners are sometimes deliberately chosen in order to drive through change* – I've frequently found in UK corporate life. Openness to foreigners isn't quite the same as openness to change, and I've seen UK boards manipulate that – they'll appoint a foreigner, which meets with little resistance, knowing full well that this is the best way to bring about changes which in other circumstances would be met with huge resistance.

*The snobbery of plcs was loud and clear until the 1990's.* I'm happy to say that a lot of that has gone: even the most conservative businesses, like the big legal firms, have moved on substantially.

*Britain has to be very careful about how it keeps its talent pool open.* London still has a huge number of attractions. But even before the Brexit vote it was becoming much harder to bring in the next generation of people. This is a very serious issue for the UK's attractiveness and competitiveness. Shutting the door is the very worst thing this Government could do.

*I believe once the world settles down post Brexit* things will be much the same as they are today with UK businesses attracting talent from all over the world.



## SIR VINCE CABLE

**Visiting Professor,  
London School of Economics**



*The Rt Hon Sir Vince Cable was Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills and President of the Board of Trade (2010-2015). He was Member of Parliament for Twickenham 1997-2015; deputy leader of the Lib Dems 2007-2010 and shadow chancellor 2003-2010. Vince read Natural Sciences and Economics at Cambridge University, where he was President of the Union, followed by a PhD at Glasgow University. From 1966 to 1968 he was Treasury Finance Officer for the Kenya Government. After lecturing at Glasgow University in economics he worked for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as a first secretary in the Diplomatic Service (1974-76). He was then appointed Deputy Director of the Overseas Development Institute, which included a period working for the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, John Smith, as a special advisor. From 1983 to 1990, Vince worked as special advisor on Economic Affairs for the Commonwealth Secretary General, Sir Sonny Ramphal.*

*In 1990 he joined Shell International taking up the post of Chief Economist in 1995. He has also been head of the economics programme at Chatham House and is a former fellow of Nuffield College Oxford and the LSE. He is currently a visiting professor at the London School of Economics.*

*Even in the Premier League, half the players are not British nationals. When Arsenal fields 10 foreign players, no-one thinks that's a problem. Most of our companies are foreign or part foreign-owned. I remember in the early 1980s there was a very serious debate about whether Japanese investors and businesses operating in the UK were welcome or not. We have come a very long way on this agenda, although it still raises its head from time to time, as we've seen in relation to Chinese investment in nuclear.*

*I don't feel any cause for complacency about how diverse our leadership has become. The UK is far from alone in this story of bringing in global talent. You only have to think of Carlos Ghosn, the French Brazilian head of Nissan, leading a business based in Japan – historically one of the world's most culturally self-contained nations. The evidence that companies with diverse senior leadership generally outperform is well established, and it reflects a series of solid practical reasons about reflecting your consumer base, reflecting your workforce, reflecting the markets in which you're active. In some of*

our institutions there's been real progress. DeAnne Julius was a founder member of the Monetary Policy Committee. The Bank of England went on to appoint a Canadian-Irish Governor, Mark Carney, and an Egyptian-US-British Deputy Governor, Minoush Shafik. The EBRD's President, Suma Chakrabarti, was born in Bengal. Sharon White, the daughter of Jamaican immigrants, was a star as a Permanent Secretary at the Treasury and now runs Ofcom. In the private sector, the Ivorian-French Tidjane Thiam stands out as a highly successful CEO of Prudential and continues to impress at the head of Credit Suisse. But these examples remain very much the exception. If you think in terms of the ethnic profile of UK leaders it's still a bit like football - many black players but extremely few black managers.

*Outsiders are not always welcomed with open arms.* Kumar Bhattacharyya is a brilliant engineer who has been at Warwick University since 1980, and more recently set up the Warwick Manufacturing Group which has raised the bar for engineering excellence in the automotive industry. Initially this British Indian was regarded with some suspicion by both the academic and manufacturing worlds. Yet now his outfit at Warwick is the main hub around which British car industry revolves. He's become the doyenne of automotive engineering.

*The caricature of big companies being run by white people no longer quite fits.* A growing number of the new players here are from Asia - Huawei, Tata and the rest. It changes slowly at the top of the big established corporations, where boards are filled by people who started out 30 years ago and who to a large extent represent the standard profile and prejudices of that moment in time. But outside those corporations the picture is different. Business minded members of the Asian community in Britain, for example, are less likely to join a big firm and slowly climb that ladder. They set up their own business. That's subtly different from the situation in the US, where you'll find a great number of people at the top of big established firms with Indian names.

*Post-referendum the mood is to be more inward looking.* Theresa May is quite clear that immigration control is her top priority and that may well be at the expense of tapping into global talent pools.



## BOB DUDLEY

**Group CEO, BP plc**

*Bob became Group CEO of BP in 2010. He joined the oil and gas industry in 1979 and has held a variety of engineering, commercial and strategy posts in the US, the UK, Russia and China. Bob's external roles include membership of various Business Councils, the UK/UAE CEO's Forum, the Advisory Board of the Tsinghua School of Economics in Beijing, and the Russian Geographical Society. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.*



*Bob is an American who holds British Citizenship. He lives in London.*

*London is the world's great global city, and that's why London draws in so much global talent and international commerce. New York is global but it's very much a US city. Paris is an amazing capital of culture, but it's still some way from being a truly global city. There's no better city than London if you want to know what's going on around the world. Almost every world leader comes through London formally or informally on a regular basis. At our company, we have probably the longest investment wavelength of any industry – so political awareness is at a premium.*

*All I ever wanted to do was see the world and do some interesting work along the way. The great thing about London is that from here, I can do both. I'm a UK citizen now with a great affinity to the country. I'm often asked by Americans and others who come here as CEOs to say what are some tips or pointers. I always say – just do a lot of listening. The system of communication is more complicated than people perceive. Listen really carefully, because the real message may not be what you first think you're hearing. And be aware that this remains a very closely knit community – politically and in the business world. For example – do your homework on the connections between people around the board room. But you also need to know that close knit does not always equal loyalty. You have to constantly work at your connections to keep them fresh. But equally, if you're a non-national coming in, don't expect to immediately be part of the establishment. So if you have a high need for that kind of status and recognition, then you may have to manage expectations. Finally I tell them – don't play the brash American – don't be too loud and assuming, and never, ever criticise cultural things, even when others around you are doing just that.*

*One of the key parts of my job is communicating, and I've been really pushing for plain speaking communications.* If you do a town hall, or if you write things for 80,000 people around the world to read and you can say it in five words why take ten? We're all hung up on all the formal conventions about what's supposed to seem 'professional', particularly in written communication so people tend to put in layers of complexity and long words. Taking that layering out, and stripping back to plain language, is a major project but one that provides them with real clarity, and that is what people generally need and want.

*There are some things I can do and say differently because I'm not British.* I have pushed a speak-up culture, where people know they can say directly what they think. That's slightly at odds with the traditional British way of making your point indirectly, and it creates a lot less wriggle room. I've always been fascinated by the careful use of language you find here. I remember in the early days of our major M&A activity, people from the other countries would come out of meetings saying - So what's actually been decided? The use of language is very subtle. Another subtlety you can't help being aware of is a class system. It's less strong than it was but I am aware that people in the UK still make judgments about each other based simply on their accent. I'm amused that even when this isn't taken in a negative way, it still is notable. For example, our CFO is from Liverpool, and people tell me you can hear that when he speaks. I'm told that having a Liverpudlian CFO is seen as a sign that we've turned a page on class consciousness. Frankly I believe we only really turn that page when we stop speaking about how positive and exceptional this is.

*Investor Relations is a very different game in the UK.* Shareholders here are often closely connected with each other, they're all deeply knowledgeable about your business, and frequently they have been holding your stock for years - many are reluctant sellers, and the FTSE tracker funds system means that some funds have no option but to hold shares. There is generally more interest and emphasis on dividends and income. In the US, the questions from shareholders tend to be about what you're doing to get the share price up now.

*The UK's legacy of history is deeply in the culture.* When I first went to Aberdeen in 1985, I was so struck by the engineers around me who knew the geography of the world, people who had a sense of real connectedness to the world. That made a deep and positive impression on me. What shocked me was the difference I saw when I made the comparison with US engineers - deeply professional but with much less sense of curiosity and knowledge about the big wide world. Of course it's not only history and education that determines

this. The size of the US domestic market has a lot to do with that difference. If you want to scale up your business in the UK you simply have to be global minded – hence that mercantile trading spirit. I do think Britain should consider how it maintains the right environment and sends the right signals to the business community that it wants to continue being considered a global center in the future. CEOs from other multinational companies may be looking for these positive signals.

*I worry about the long term picture for employment.* I find many people in business and politics very articulate on the concept of efficiencies, but this is an agenda with some very problematic consequences for which I don't believe we have yet focused. It's estimated that globally, 1 billion jobs will be lost through automation over the next two decades. This is also when 2 billion more people are joining the world population. This kind of change goes way beyond our vague current concerns with inequality, which you hear from politicians of every shade. I believe the long term problem for the world will be jobs.



## RICARDO OBERLANDER

**Director, Americas,  
British-American Tobacco plc**

*Ricardo is a Management Board Director, Americas Region for British-American Tobacco, a position he has held for 4 years. He is also Board Director of Reynolds American International since the end of 2014. Ricardo was recently appointed to the Latin America Advisory Board of the CMO (Chief Marketing Officer) Council. Prior to joining the Board he was Global Consumer Director for BAT and held positions in Marketing and General Management in Brazil, in the UK, Malaysia, the Americas and France. Ricardo started his career with Xerox and he was also Business Director for Corporate Segments at Oi (Telemar), one of the largest telecom companies in Brazil.*



*Ricardo is a Brazilian citizen and lives in London.*

*BAT is a story of a multinational in reverse. BAT was created 114 years ago with the sole focus on overseas markets – ironically, for a business with ‘British’ and ‘American’ in its name, we had no business in either the UK or the US. Then we grew from that to become more fully global again – in some ways, not unlike HSBC. Being initially entirely dependent on overseas markets created a very special habitat, where the need to involve local businesses was very strong. The results are plain to see. 30 years ago BAT in Brazil started driving localisation of management. 30 years later, the group has a Italo-Brazilian CEO.*

*British business isn't just global: it has a positive bias which encourages people to take a genuine interest in understanding different markets, cultures and behaviours around the world. It's well understood that to develop talent, multiple opportunities to broaden skills through international assignments are part of that stretch. That creates a rich environment in which individuals can join and prosper via a local subsidiary, and when a London opportunity arises for you it feels natural, part of the plan. When you're inside that plan you quickly learn that one of the most important things you're learning is flexibility. When you move you leave a lot behind, you're leaving your cultural reference points, family, friends, habits. It's fascinating but totally different, and unless you are flexible you won't survive.*

*The UK has a meritocratic system, it's more welcoming than other places. The British managers whom I have worked with know there's a need to let diversity in, without*

sacrificing their own competitive drive, and I'd characterise that as a tremendous unselfishness. I think that's special and unusual. Brazil, my home country, is a warm and welcoming place, but for example there are official legislated barriers to employing foreigners - you have to legally demonstrate the non availability of equivalent local talent. I worked in France for 2 years and my experience was of a system that's far more closed than the UK, with the presence of high level managers with non-EU passports quite rare. The whole system seems to be filtered around a network based on ENA and Grandes Ecoles alumni. It's not entirely clear how this welcoming character will evolve after Brexit, but it's worth fighting for. Personally, from my modest and respectful perspective, I believe that the UK's global vocation and orientation for stretching out to the world for over 500 years is so ingrained, so well focused, the pillars so strong, even Brexit won't change it.

*I've always found neighbours here friendly, but I wouldn't expect establishing close friendships.* You're received into each others' houses, people are extremely welcoming, tolerant, but the lines are drawn clearly, the social rules and behaviours are set and if you don't respect them you're an outcast. But if you stay within those boundaries you feel more than a visitor. Paris offers so much, but it's a city for Parisians. Parisians live there; everyone else just walks around it. The ease you feel as a foreigner in London is totally different. Partly that is because people here are genuinely interested and informed about different parts of the world, so when people find out I'm from Brazil they immediately want to talk about that and they display a truly impressive level of knowledge. I found that even when I first came here in a very junior role decades ago, and it's even stronger now.

*I see little reluctance to receive foreign influence.* As London has become more and more cosmopolitan, the level of acceptance of foreigners in business and more generally in the culture has grown from a level where it was already very high. In a business like BAT, intolerance would not only be excruciatingly awkward, it would also be seen as plain foolishness. The risk of having a single minded British approach would be immediately apparent: you'd start losing the opportunity to embrace a very complex marketplace, where trends pop up overnight and migrate at high speed. You would lose touch with the consumer trends, the behavioural trends, the management trends, the regulatory trends, the cultural trends that define your operating environment. Having, to use a strong word, an 'incestuous' inward looking perspective would create an organisation able to achieve some success but which would struggle to evolve globally.

*There's much to admire in French business, but it remains an enigma.* There are more French than British companies in the Fortune 500. The quality of management is high. Very close relationships with the Government have made many of the big French enterprises into massive social institutions. BP for example is a business you could imagine operating from almost anywhere in the world. But could Total? Could L'Oreal? That certainly creates a particular kind of strength, but I think their model is too hermetic. My own view, based purely on personal observation, is that British companies have an edge in terms of agility and innovation – not because we employ more foreigners (although that is true), but because the emphasis on being open to ideas from outside creates new inputs.

*In the US diversity is happening from within.* The growth of 'minorities' has created a completely different social fabric that oxygenates innovation and development, and changes business. Diversity in UK business seems to me to be happening from engagement with outside, bringing international representation in. That's a reflection of how the UK does business, focused on global markets because the domestic market can be relatively small. In the UK you want a Turkish person who can talk about Turkey but who understands the British context, someone who will help you perform in the Turkish market.

*Coming here as a foreign executive does bring some sense of anxiety.* But that is natural, a slight uncertainty about how you will perform, how you will be accepted in this very competitive and highly professional environment. It's natural but nevertheless daunting. The positive side of this is it makes you tune in very carefully to your environment, you listen with great attention, you prepare to a higher level than you may have been used to. That raises the bar and it has to be a good thing for oneself and all those around.

*It seems too early to predict the impact and implications of Brexit for the UK job market.* However, I would like to believe that two principles will prevail. Firstly, British intellectual capital makes this country one of the best talent pools in the world. Therefore, there's an implicit potential benefit for companies here or in other countries to attract, develop and retain qualified British executives. Secondly, the UK is home to a very large number of multinational companies, many of them having their headquarters based here. Their operations stretch to all corners of the world and cover several countries, in the best tradition and global vocation of the UK. In a world where trends emerge and evolve in the fastest pace known to civilisation, being in tune is a must for those who aim to remain competitive and relevant. Hence, having access to the global talent pool and being able to "export" local talent can be a source of truly competitive advantage to understand and reach consumers and markets all over the world.

## RITVA SOTAMAA

**Chief Legal Officer, Unilever plc**

*Ritva Sotamaa was appointed Chief Legal Officer of Unilever in February 2013 and has over 25 years of experience as a global legal executive. Ritva is responsible for the company's Legal, Intellectual Property and Compliance functions and is a member of Unilever's Leadership Executive.*



*Ritva was born in Kankaanpää, Finland and earned a Master of Laws from the University of Turku, Finland. She has trained on the bench (judge qualification). Prior to joining Unilever, Ritva spent most of her career within the healthcare industry. She has worked extended periods of time in global corporations in Finland, USA, Germany and United Kingdom covering a broad range of legal matters, managing multinational teams and operating as part of business executive teams.*

*Ritva is a Finnish citizen and lives in London.*

*Unilever starts from a position of cultural diversity: as an Anglo-Dutch business since 1930 we have no other choice!*

*Historically, the UK has always looked outwards and been a global player. One factor is the universality of the English language, which makes it easier to integrate non-UK individuals. In principle that should of the same with the US, and it's true that you do find a hugely diverse workforce in many US companies. When I was working with GE in the States, I was surrounded by every nationality – for example my manager there was a Bangladeshi national. US companies have historically tended to develop strong domestic businesses before globalising, where in the UK globalisation has come much sooner. As a result senior leadership in the US has until very recently been largely made up of US nationals rather than leaders from other markets.*

*After the US I worked in Germany. Even though I speak German, I found integrating much harder there. There wasn't similar global flow of talent coming in and out at leadership levels. It was very much a German environment, and that created some cultural barriers, which took some more time to overcome. In contrast, at Unilever I have over 10 nationalities just in my own leadership team.*

*You have to know how to say things in a way that people around the world will grasp, and not being a native English speaker helps with that. You had better understand the fundamental*

importance of simplification, of cutting through to the clearest possible messages. It is always amusing to observe the difference in communication styles though, for example between the very direct Dutch and the indirect, super-polite British. Soon after coming to London I began to notice how people would end statements with a question, to make it a bit less assertive. You get this even in simple social chat, you're always hearing Brits say things like "nice day, isn't it?". I love it!

*I made the decision to move to London in 2013 and would happily make the same choice again today.* The workforce in major UK companies is deeply global and this brings with it a diverse range of insights and expertise. Talent will continue to be a key driver of the success of the UK and I am optimistic it will remain committed to fostering an environment in which people who are willing to work hard and contribute to the country are able to succeed.



## MARGHERITA DELLA VALLE

**Deputy Group CFO of Vodafone Group plc  
Chair of the Audit Committee, Centrica plc**

*Margherita has been the Deputy Group CFO of Vodafone Group Plc since July 2015 and prior to that, Group Financial Controller from October 2010. She served as the Chief Financial Officer for the Vodafone Group Plc's European Region from April 2007 to October 2010 and Chief Financial Officer of Vodafone Italy from 2004 to 2007.*



*Margherita joined Omnitel Pronto Italia in Italy in 1994 and held various Consumer Marketing positions in Business Analytics and Customer Base Management prior to moving to Finance. Omnitel was acquired by Vodafone Group in 2000. Margherita has been a Non-Executive Director of Centrica Plc since January 1, 2011 and is Chair of the Audit Committee. Margherita is also an advisor to HM Government on the Financial Management Review Board.*

*Margherita is an Italian citizen and lives in London.*

UK companies tend to be very open to the world and very diverse with a wide range of markets. Very often the “home market” is only a small fraction of the total.

*In this context, most multinational firms have a global outlook.* In many multinational firms, there’s a direct correlation between high performing markets and the origins of those who rise to the top. This creates a constant set of new experiences and new backgrounds, with proven successes, coming into the senior ranks of leadership. It’s both challenging and positive.

*There can be struggles with communication.* I witness how a lot of our brilliant foreign managers just don’t get through to their teams, and that’s a language and sometimes an accent problem. Even if you think you can speak English well, you can very easily be blind to subtleties and as a result come across as abrupt. When I’ve had British colleagues and bosses, I know I have struggled sometimes to find the right tone for communication. And it’s easy to underestimate the urgency of something that’s been communicated with politeness and indirectness. A classic example that I still find myself getting wrong is when someone says “I think it might be interesting to do an analysis”. I still take that at face value when in fact it almost always means “Do it!”.

*Large global companies like Vodafone create a way of communicating and a vocabulary that is not exactly English.* Partly that's to do with our own specialised technical vocabulary, and partly it's something you sense has been shaped through years of global conversations on similar topics, so a way of speaking has evolved organically to allow people to understand each other across cultural and language gaps.

*Class is a fascinating and very British topic.* I don't know any foreigners who really understand class differences, I could never detect if someone is Oxbridge for example. Perhaps the fact that as foreigners we sit outside the class system is part of why we're welcomed here. It may be refreshing for the British to be able to engage in relationships unclouded by all the baggage of class assumptions and other self-imposed categories.

*We have all embraced the UK,* because the UK is accepting of diversity and sees the richness that can come out of it. It's an environment where almost anyone can flourish as long as they have something to contribute. There is much less prejudice than in most places on the planet, which makes it a very safe place to develop yourself and be yourself. The biggest attraction for me was to live in a multinational environment. Diversity enriches my day.

*My own family commitment to the UK has deepened over time,* with our children independently putting down roots here. I don't see any cultural threat: I don't think fundamental attitudes to other Europeans will shift in a way which makes life uncomfortable for my family. What matters is the economy. The important things are availability of jobs and flexibility to work. These are what make for the thriving, dynamic and creative environment that has made the UK one of the best places where to live in the last 20 years.

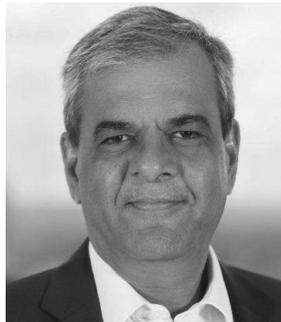
*I do not think that people from other countries living in the UK* see Brexit as the result of a sudden change of attitude from the British towards foreigners and diversity, a rejection of the values of tolerance and openness. The current reactions are a response to the challenges of globalisation and the rise of inequality. There is a worldwide search for a new equilibrium and the UK is part of it.



## ASHOK VASWANI

### CEO Barclays UK

*Ashok has demonstrated a passion for building and managing businesses across the globe. He started his career in Mumbai, India and since then, has worked and lived in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the US. Ashok spent twenty years with Citigroup. He is the CEO for Barclays UK, covering Personal Banking, Wealth, Entrepreneurs and Business Banking and Barclaycard UK.*



*He also sits on the advisory boards of a number of institutions such as Citizens Advice, FICO, Rutberg & Co and is Founder Director of Lend-a-Hand, a non-profit organisation focused on rural education in India.*

*An Indian National, Ashok lives in London and is married to Veena, with a grown up daughter who is working in San Francisco.*

*Feeling at home in London doesn't depend on having a UK passport. Many people from around the world feel at home here, for a whole series of reasons – education and family ties are at least as important as business and career. You can live here many years with no guarantee of getting citizenship, but in that time you are likely to have taken on many British characteristics. My passport is Singaporean, but a lot of my thinking has been shaped by my UK experiences. That's helped by a sense of openness. I sometimes play a little game when I'm invited out to dinner at someone's house: I ask them what TV shows they're watching. When I ask that question in New York, almost always the answer is a US TV show. The same question in London never gives you a predictable answer. I get the same feeling walking in the parks in London, which I try to do every weekend. You overhear all these conversations and almost every group you encounter is likely to be speaking their own languages, different languages. That sense of real diversity is something I just don't feel in a place like New York. In NYC you have to become a New Yorker. In London, you can be whoever you are.*

*Businesses around the world talk about transcending borders, but in many places, particularly I find in the US, the reality beneath that talk is surprisingly insular. It's different in the UK. The UK remains a major world economy with some remarkable and very large businesses, but its domestic market is small. Indeed it's a commonplace in some UK based global businesses that their domestic-focused division is seen as secondary or even tertiary. To achieve and maintain scale, the UK has no option but to go global. People who*

understand and can engage and deal with markets around the world are at a premium. It's not surprising that so many leaders in the UK are from overseas.

*We need to think differently to help the UK become the home of the scale up.* Left to their own devices, Brits do not do this well. They sell their great ideas and models to Americans and others, and they take them to scale. Sherry Coutu blew this open with her Scale Up Report. It's an incredible indictment of the UK's inability to scale, and the opportunity this presents for learning how to do it. The mentality here is - 'we're done'; in other countries the thought would be 'where's the next billion dollar company?'. The UK is renowned for its invention, at the forefront of all the building blocks of the digital age. But without the ability to take that and scale it, nothing actually happens. This is where bringing in international talent can be more than a timely nod to global diversity - it can be the transformational ingredient that changes the entire game for UK plc. If the UK cuts itself off from this, it's in danger of falling back to a kind of pre-modern England.

*There are definitely advantages to being the outsider.* By definition you're more likely to have developed an ability to understand multiple perspectives. I've spend my career interacting with people from all over the world - Americans, Singaporeans, Indians, Africans, Turks, Brits. As the outsider, in order to make your way you have to get a feel for what different people are thinking, and how to connect with them. You come to understand what is their frame of reference, how they make decisions, what conversations they're comfortable or uncomfortable having. That's invaluable in business as it is in life.

*Some things come less easily.* We recently had a project to set up a ring fenced division of our business, and the question arose of who should go on the board? It's difficult for me to identify 8 or so names in London who would be appropriate. That's the kind of question you probably need to be an insider to address with confidence. The old boys' network is not what it was but there's still a bit of a club of people who were all educated together, people who share the same background, and it's not always easy to break through that.

*The Brexit decision remains a very new event, and we're kidding ourselves if we don't think it has significant implications.* The UK is in the spotlight but there are movements with echoes of this in the US, France, Spain, Germany, Africa and the Middle East. The economic system we have put into the world has failed so many people. That amazing American Dream has benefitted the few and failed the many, and no-one has redefined it. But if London continues to be a hub for international business ambitions, London will always have to draw in people who have the global diversity to support that ambition, so in that

sense I feel there are grounds for optimism. The difficulties would come if there arose situations where you can't use the UK as a base - passporting in financial services is a pressing example. But I'm very clear on one thing: we have over 3000 people from other European countries working in our network here in the UK. There's inevitably some nervousness and uncertainty, although I'm impressed by what the Mayor has been saying about European workers. I understand from my own family experience what it feels like to feel uncertain about your status and security in a country. I will do everything in my power to keep those 3000 people here, make them feel secure and welcome, and continue to draw talent from around the European Union and the world.

*I don't see the UK creating a future which is less globally focused, it's a centuries old mentality which can't be broken overnight. The UK will continue to benefit from that sense of openness to the world, from the idea that it is happy to create opportunities for talent wherever it comes from.*

*In a post Brexit era, I don't believe the UK necessarily has to become less global if we can make the right investments in our future. We benefit from a centuries old trading mentality which can't be broken overnight. The UK will continue to benefit from that sense of openness to the world, from the idea that it is happy to create opportunities for talent wherever it comes from. It is however of paramount importance that we don't allow our supply of talent to become choked off - avoiding this will require an appropriate degree of openness to welcoming highly skilled people from overseas, and increasingly concerted efforts within the UK to develop the skills and talents of our own workforce.*



## BILL WINTERS

### Group Chief Executive, Standard Chartered plc

*Bill has had a distinguished career in banking, having spent 26 years with JP Morgan in diverse leadership roles, becoming co-Chief Executive Officer of the investment bank in 2004 until he stepped down in 2009. Bill was the only career banker to be invited to be a committee member of the Independent Commission on Banking, established by the UK government in 2010 to recommend ways to improve competition and financial stability in banking. Subsequently, he served as advisor to the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards and was asked by the Court of the Bank of England to complete an independent review of the bank's liquidity operations.*



*Bill founded the hedge fund Renshaw Bay in 2011 where he was Chairman and CEO until he stepped down from the company on appointment to the Standard Chartered PLC Board. He was awarded the title of Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2013.*

*Bill holds dual US and British citizenship and lives in London.*

*There's a fantastic cluster effect.* The time zone, the infrastructure, the ease of getting in and out of London. They all contribute to the appeal, and the impact is self-reinforcing.

*The British know how to work with other cultures.* As a society, the British are particularly open and have been for centuries. They have a combination of pragmatism and confidence which makes them very comfortable being around international society. And that's not just in business. A lot of my American friends find it puzzling that a foreigner like me was asked to join a UK Government commission, but here that seems completely normal. It's easy to overlook how unique that is. When I compare my experience here to what friends and colleagues have encountered when going to live and work in Germany or France, for example, it's worlds apart. You would think seriously about your chances of succeeding in those places - there are few if any role models of successful imported talent. Britain is structurally open, a trading nation, and always has been. And alongside that commercial openness there's an appetite to absorb other cultures. Maybe this links to the genesis of Empire - unless you can work alongside other cultures, you can't build an empire.

*I wonder why Britain doesn't produce more of its own CEOs,* British CEOs of major British companies. It's not to do with a lack of talent, you find extremely successful Brits

who travel abroad and lead businesses. Some of the best British talent operates on the international stage. It may be to do with the scope of what's on offer domestically – for example a FTSE 25 business might be equivalent to a Fortune 250 – so there are inevitably more opportunities outside.

*Very occasionally you find yourself on the outside of a clan system.* When we bought 50% of Cazenove, I found in David Mayhew a real friend and a great counterpart. But there was a sense in some of the corridors of power at Cazenove that the deal was a breach of an unspoken code. There was a telling moment immediately after we'd made the decision, and one of the senior figures from the Cazenove side said in a rather pointed way as I reached out to shake on the deal – “Oh, I'd forgotten how you Americans like to shake hands”. Of course it was nonsense. Everyone shakes on a deal. It didn't mean very much as a comment, but it was a marker, it was meant to suggest an unbridgeable cultural divide. That kind of attempted put-down to an outsider is something I've only experienced three times, it's very much the exception not the rule.

*There are a lot of undercurrents in British society.* One useful characteristic of Americans is that we're oblivious to some things – or at least we can get away with pretending to be. I'm sure there are situations where it's easier to get a hard-charging US type to break through cultural divides which they either don't see, or which they can affect not to see. But at the same time you need to learn when to go with the flow of the culture as well as when it can be helpful to swim against it. Bob Diamond came quite badly unstuck on this front, I think. He never really assimilated culturally, and he became a target for the establishment as a result, particularly for politicians. That was because he refused to tone down his Americanness at all. He missed a beat on the cultural front. His Americanness seemed to be serving him well when the going was good, but all the time it was building huge resentment, and as soon as the opportunity to attack him came it was pretty merciless.

*Being British is vital to our appeal as a bank in most of our markets.* We operate in around 70 countries, and 90% of our business is Asia Africa and the Middle East. These are colonial roots and they still carry some cachet, particularly in some of our strongest markets which are Commonwealth countries and where there is a real value to the Britishness of the brand. Now I think of it, every CEO of the bank as far as I know has been British, it's never occurred to me until now that I might be the first foreigner. Recently we were looking for a new chairman. I'm generally colour blind when it comes to appointments of people with different nationalities, so I was surprised when one headhunter we were working with said “you probably don't want an American chairman.” My initial reaction was – “Why not?” It's interesting that we eventually chose a Spanish Chairman – José Viñals.



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The Ten commandments for leaders in tough times

## 3. Seven Types of Confidence

## 4. Quick Quick Slow

How the best leaders balance short and long term perspectives

## 5. What motivates leaders: hoping to rise, or fearing to fall?

## 6. Three principles of *authenticity*

## 7. The Future Leader

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