



Business Unusual Conversations

The best stories about COVID responses have been about businesses being unusual - when the conventional hierarchies, traditional silos, and assumed certainties about business rules were thrown into the air.

The reality is ‘business as usual’ was not only insufficient to deal with something so dramatic and unexpected, it wasn’t creating the conditions for people and businesses to perform at their best in an already changed world of expectations that existed before the pandemic.

The questions people are now asking are about how to learn the lessons from this period of uncertainty and ‘business unusual’, consider the type of organisation we want to be, reflect on when we were at our best during the crisis, and make being at our best all of the time ‘usual’.

So what’s next?

Looking to 2021 many organisations find themselves needing to reorientate, to become more sustainable and responsible. That’s easy to say, but not simple or straight forward in practice. It requires:

- careful stakeholder engagement, acknowledgement that every person and business is at a different stage on the journey
- recognition that many answers already exist within organisations
- individual and collective ownership and accountability across the board, integrated thinking, and effective collaboration
- leading standards and principles of responsible business, and perspectives and learning from other organisations
- conscious action, experimentation and learning at a pace that the business can absorb without losing determination and momentum

The process often starts with ‘Business Unusual’ conversations that don’t happen as part of the normal rhythm of activity in companies.





What are 'Business Unusual' conversations?

Business Unusual conversations happen when time and space is created to reflect and take stock, for points of view to be openly shared and honestly challenged, and for fresh thinking and new ideas to flourish. They are carefully facilitated 2-3 hour sessions that bring together the various constituents of a leadership team, and their diverse perspectives and priorities.

Leaders are presented with a series of provocations of what it means to be a leading sustainable and responsible organisation, supported by robust theory and evidence, and brought to life with real experiences - both good and bad - of other organisations to safely benchmark against.

They are iterative and bespoke; they don't involve predetermined solutions or checklists for change.

What value do they bring?

For those already on the responsible business journey, or just starting out, the sessions:

- convene leaders around a shared agenda and a common start point
- challenge assumptions, provoke fresh thinking and catalyse new ideas
- elicit the pertinent challenges and obstacles facing an organisation becoming more purpose-led
- help create alignment on the collective priorities that leaders need to focus on
- offer practical steps and a way forward that reflects the needs of the particular organisation

Who facilitates them?

Neil Davy, who is the former Global CEO of Corporate Citizenship, a management consultancy specialising in sustainability and responsible business. He's lived and worked in Asia, Europe and the US and supported senior leaders and their cross-functional teams in global and local businesses, NGOs, international development organisations and governments.

Neil helps leaders and teams in organisations looking to become more sustainable and responsible by:

- orchestrating cross-functional and multi-disciplinary stakeholders convened to own and lead change
- elevating purpose-led thinking and practice by bringing in external views and perspectives
- challenging in the spirit of critical friendship, asking difficult questions, highlighting uncomfortable truths
- facilitating alignment on a way forward through advisory, and leading implementation programmes

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