



Regional Network Meeting: Scotland

Host: Bright Ascension

Date: 12th June 2018

Facilitator: Jacqui Martin

This meeting was hosted by Bright Ascension at Code Base in Edinburgh and attended by 28 people. In addition to Bright Ascension, companies in attendance included Black Light, Castlefield, Collective Architecture, Computer Application Services, David Narro Associates, Fitwise, I 4 Product Design, Mike Stoane Lighting, Network ROI, P4P Creative and Scott & Fyfe.

EOA Update

- EO Day – 29 June 2018
- The Ownership Dividend
- EOA Annual Conference
- UK EO Awards 2018

Gavin Stewart who is a member of the EOA Membership Council also gave an update on the first year of its operation.

Further details can be found on the accompanying presentation.

Member Spotlight – Mark McCrum, Bright Ascension

Mark was asked questions about the background of the company, the reason behind the move to EO, funding that had been received for expansion, what's changed since becoming employee owned and their focus for the future as far as EO is concerned.

Mark stated that the key reasons behind their move to employee ownership were fairness and the fact that it's a great platform for employee engagement. Currently, 20% of the shares are held in an EBT, 20% are held by investors (Capital 4 Colleagues) and 60% are held by the founders. The changes that have happened since their move to employee ownership are mainly due to the additional funding provided by Capital 4 Colleagues which has enabled them to hire more people. With the increase in staff numbers there has obviously been the

requirement to put more processes in place. Focus for the future is to work towards building a strong ownership culture.

Attendees were then given the opportunity to decide on a question to ask Mark in their groups. These covered topics such as employee engagement and whether their plan was to move towards 100% employee ownership.

Building a Strong Ownership Culture

This topic was the main focus of the day so participants were initially asked to discuss what they thought a strong ownership culture means. Responses included transparency, communications and financial rewards.

We then considered the fact that an ownership culture means sharing;

- Information
- Power
- Rewards (& risks!)

Groups then discussed questions (detailed on the slides) on each of these components.

Jacqui then gave examples of three companies that she believes have strong ownership cultures and also suggested a STAR model for describing key components of an ownership culture;

- **Self-managing** with opportunities for **Self-development**
- **Transparency** and **Trust**
- **Authenticity** and **Accountability**
- **Recognition** and **Rewards**

People were then given the chance to choose to join two discussions on topics related to ownership culture in EO companies. Feedback from these was as follows;

How should decisions be made?

- Depends on the decision
- Decision boundaries should be agreed in writing e.g. which decisions should be taken by Trust, Board, Management Team, anyone.
- Requires more time to get buy in for a decision but this results in a stronger decision

How should people be rewarded?

- Bonus structure (but these can be toxic and reward the wrong types of behavior)
- Free shares
- Verbal praise/ appreciation
- Social activities
- CSR activities

- Small treats (cakes etc)
- Flexi Time
- Extra holidays for long term employees

Should there be job descriptions?

- Yes - focus is important
- Yes – purpose in what you do
- Yes – describes a role and function
- Clarity of roles
- Needs to be open to flexibility
- Should it include obligations of being an owner?
- Different to title

How should salaries be set?

- Salary bands/career structure
- Ask for it and demonstrate value
- Appraisals can be demotivating
- Better to have continuous feedback
- Need to analyse budget for affordability
- Be aware of market rates
- Level of responsibility
- Geographical location needs to be considered (e.g. London weighting)

Should there be performance appraisals?

- More of a discussion that focus on performance
- Two way conversation - appraising staff but also comments on company etc.
- Frequent and short
- Include assessment as an employee owner
- Tangible outcomes (not just a box ticking exercise)
- Don't link them to bonuses
- Who should do the appraisal – colleagues/superiors?

The workshop concluded with people being asked to consider actions that they could take once back at their workplaces in relation to strengthening their ownership cultures.

EO Day

Finally, there was a session at the end of the event when people were asked to discuss what they'd done in the past to celebrate EO Day and what they planned to do this year.

Oliver mentioned that a digital pack can be downloaded from the EOA website which includes ideas and templates for inviting your MP to visit.

People had used EO Day in the past as an opportunity for the team to get together and celebrate being employee owned. Castlefield are holding a 2 day team event and CAS are planning on doing a hackathon.

Attendees were also given an opportunity to think about “telling their story” and practice this with others.

Wrap Up

Oliver mentioned the One Show clip featuring Hugh Facey of [Gripple](#) that could be of interest and the recent BBC Breakfast clip featuring [Riverford](#)

Our next network meeting will be in September but date has still to be set.