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## BETTER BUSINESS TOGETHER

Notes from the Midlands EOA network meeting, October 2018, Hosts ttp, Cambridge.

*“How to make full use of the benefits that employee ownership can bring to an organisation is one of the biggest challenges EO leaders face. If it’s in your organisation’s DNA, what really does it give you and if you have worked that out, how can leaders use it to their advantage?”*

*For some EO is about individual responsibility, others will call out the freedom and ability to be innovative and then there are the intrinsic values that seem to flow through the core of most EO businesses.*

*With all that going on, how do leaders fully utilise what is at their disposal to make a difference, not only to the business but perhaps more importantly to the co-owners.*

*How do leaders inspire and create a culture that instigates innovation?”*

Our hosts for this event were the technology partnership or ttp. An organisation that for the past 30 years has evolved but grown from a culture of freedom. “The freedom to explore new technologies. The freedom to share new technologies with their clients and the freedom to invest in their own business. The world of Technology has significantly changed but they are very clear the ethos has stayed the same as it’s the freedom that creates the space where by breakthrough inventions happen”.

Following coffee and introductions, Keith Haddow, a director at ttp welcomed us and gave us a brief overview to their ownership model. There is no getting away from the fact that the internal share market that ttp have, allowing all in the business to have direct ownership in some small % is very different to most EO models used by business and always creates a great conversation.

As Keith said it works incredibly well for them but recognises it wouldn’t be everyone’s preferred way of setting up an eo business today. He is aware that they also perhaps face some challenges in the future.

From Keith’s welcome he introduced us to a colleague of his, Dr Douglas Bradshaw. The brief was to share with us how leaders in ttp approach inspiring the co-owners of the business. By sharing a personal perspective and his own insight as a leader in ttp we were treated to a thought-provoking presentation that clearly captured many in attendance.

Working backwards it became clear that Douglas saw 4 attributes required by leaders

### Curiosity, Insight, Engagement and determination

He went on to unpick the attributes, from ensuring you have the right raw ingredients (people) to an intrinsic motivation and drive. The growth mindset approach and learning by your mistakes in a positive way.

Douglas mentioned the freedom that is afforded to all partners, sharing the risk, reward in house and the client. He spoke about the “clear purpose”, meaning be clear about what it is you want to change – Understand the impact, the value and always enquire around the progress being made.

He then touched on how freedom nurtures creativity - not in the ‘fluffy colouring sense’ but being bold and exciting, having the courage to remove barriers. Ensure you as a leader have mastery – be good at what you do, add a depth to your knowledge and demonstrate it.

He then spoke about Employee ownership bring a sense of ‘being in it all together’. It ensures the cultural values are slightly edgier with a different philosophy and that their business is only successful through trust and collaboration.

Whilst a presentation, attendees were invited to instigate conversation, ask questions as Douglas spoke which was a great way of everyone testing their own thoughts around this subject.

There were questions relating to the sharing holding option, how and if there are measures, kpis, who has the final decision on innovations and new ideas, projects, how the structure works if it is so flat, what it’s like to be a leader with so much freedom and if ttp were to begin again would it make a difference if it was indirect ownership with different incentives.

In need of a break, Douglas and Keith joined us for lunch where the conversations continued.

Following on from lunch we had an EOA update from Alden Whittaker-Brown who very kindly stepped into the role with his chairperson of the EOA members council hat on:

He went through the subjects of the Ownership dividend, Scotland for EO, a reminder of the Annual conference, EOA turning 40 and the EOA hub forum and discussions.

Sharing some of the findings from the dividend report Alden informed us

- \* EO business tend to have more engage employees,
- \* How EO is contributing to improving UK productivity
- \* EO offers a resilience as shown in businesses across the regions when economically times are tough.

From the report there were also some recommendations that came: one being the creation of a national strategy for business ownership.

Alden then moved on to providing us with an insight into Scotland for EO the collaboration between the ILG (industry leading group) and the cooperative development for Scotland and the EOA. An exciting venture to increase the amount of EO businesses in Scotland to 500 by 2030.

An update re the conference inspired a couple of new attendees to make further inquiries to places at this year conference with all being very positive about the event.

A quick tour around the EOA turing 40 and the EOA hub then got us back on track for the afternoons next session.

Given the success of the morning and the amount shared there was a request to forgo open space and spend some time investigating further what individuals would take away from the network event as a result of the mornings session.

The question therefore asked:

“based on what you have heard this morning what will you take away to overlay/enhance in your own organisation?”

Based around 5 topics –

Innovation, Inspirational leadership, Culture – behaviours, Values and Business structure.

After much discussion and sharing of ideas around the room and in smaller groups everyone agreed they would take something a little different away. From attendees who are just thinking about the transition towards EO – and therefore investigating the model of EO business further, to those who work in business who have been EO for a while – and require a fresh approach to behaviours and ethos, all felt they had got value from listening, contributing and sharing.

With thanks to our hosts and all attendees the meeting concluded.

A plea for a future host and a ‘watch-out’ for further dates of our next meetings was shared.

Philippa Meaden

Facilitator of the midlands event

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