



South East

Host: Arup, London

Date: 5/03/2018

Facilitator: Jamie Pyper, Conscious Business People

Meeting Notes

A hundred people signed up for this event that I understand is the most we've had at any network meeting to date. Thankfully we were at Arup who's ongoing generosity and commitment to the EOA is matched by the immensity of their event space and the greatness of their hospitality (love the scotch eggs). So we all fitted in and had a great time. Thanks Alden particularly for being our champion within as well as James and Chelsey for being excellent hosts.

We decided to refresh the agenda to provide a bit of variety this quarter. Suggestions had come from the Membership Council (the ear and voice of the members), some old ideas were dusted down and we created a new formula in the spirit of experimentation to see what worked and what did not. The results have been extremely promising but we are always keen to know where we can make it better, so feedback is very welcome.

I then mentioned the start of some peer support groups and am looking for anyone who might like to participate or support. There are details about this on the EOHUB.

We then heard two very different '**warts and all**' case studies, one from Steve MD of Toucan Computing and one from Charmaine HR Director of Max Fordham. This included a very frank Q&A session where in the spirit of the session they answered honestly about where things had worked well and where they had not worked so well. We intend to include more of these in future events.

Next up, another new segment, some **Speed Networking** hosted by Jeremy Gadd. This was about getting to know one another better to build community.

Open Space segment where a broad selection of issues were discussed:

NB: these notes were captured by the group through discussions with attendees.

EOA Membership Proposition

Special interest groups would be of interest to the membership

Employees becoming co-owners

- Dependent upon business model i.e. where business is based on billable time it's easier to make connection between productivity and profitability and therefore easier to motivate people to be more productive
- Rights and responsibilities
 - You have the right to pay / good working conditions / time off etc
 - You have to take responsibility for... the success of the business (this side of the equation is missing still for some)
- Explore the possibility of not paying a dividend (or forecasting to not pay a dividend based on current performance levels) to highlight the link between business performance and personal remuneration
- Financial literacy skills – does everyone understand how EO works, and if not how can we expect them to be motivated by it?
- Find out what the employees need to experience in order for them to become more active owners – ask them
- People may already be willing to become owners, but what have you done to enable them?
- It's not necessarily just about the money, it's about the culture and the ethos
- How much influence are you prepared to let employee owners actually have?
 - Need to create a “partnership” of equal shares i.e. main company shareholders % v's EO shares % - if the balance is still strongly in favour of main shareholders, how much influence are they really prepared to give away to employees?

Merging an employee owned business

Considerations around structure threw up considerations of if going below 50% the tax liability to be repaid on behalf of the vendor of TensCare.

Regulations around Party A Chinese nationals holding equity / being beneficiaries of a trust

The purpose of the collaboration

Options for consideration

1. TensCare and 'Party A' form a separate JV company – and both companies become subsidiaries of the JV
2. A mutual share swap between TensCare and Party A so we have shares in each other's business
3. A merger of both businesses
4. Sale of TensCare shares to Party A
5. Sale of Party A shares to TensCare

Setting up an employee owned business

Trust options in the form of an Employee Benefit Trust (EBT) or if majority owned in Trust then Employee Ownership Trust (EOT)

Trustee roles are;

- Professional Trustees who could be paid for or pro bono, this would be down to the needs of the Trustee
- Offshore Trust which has tax implications
- Trustees are there for the benefit of all employees, on decisions such as how profit may be paid and to who
- The number of Trustees depends on the needs of the business

Employee Council is set-up to feed the Trustees the views of the workforce, and can enable employee representation on the Main Board.

Transparency in employee ownership

For; Openness = Shared responsibility

Against; Commercial sensitivity (some employees also work in competitors)

Salary; Potential recruitment tool

- Some can deal with transparency
- Levels are complex – experience / efficiency / skill
- Culture from day one vs. imposed later
- What would people do with the information

Be clear about WHY you don't share the reason to the 'EO's' culture / belief

Surveys for employee engagement

Need to consider;

- What do you want to measure?
- Why are you doing a survey?
- Who is the survey going to?
- What do you want to do with the data?

An annual survey could be done, as well as regular pulse surveys based on different topics

If action is not taken from the survey results then people will stop responding

Should publish the results for transparency

Allowing anonymity can cause issues

Employee benefits

The John Lewis Partnership's provision for working and retired Partners (you get benefits in retirement with 15 or more years' service if you retire at 55 or over).

These include:

- Confidential emotional support by an internal accredited telephone helpline available Monday to Saturday. Face to face case management if needed. You can easily buy Employee Assistance from external suppliers at a relatively low cost per head.
- ACAS trained mediators to resolve conflict
- Financial assistance - either loans or gifts for Partners in financial hardship. £1 million spent last year.
- Internal health service with escalation to external counselling provider
- Volunteer wellbeing champions in individual branches
- Mental health first aid training for managers
- Bring Yourself to Work week - an annual celebration of what makes each Partner unique with locally generated activity.
- Internal networks with a focus on age, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, learning styles etc, each with a senior sponsor.

We closed with networking, snacks and fine wine.

Jamie is requesting input for future sessions or from anyone who would like to be involved in the growth and development of the South East Network. His contact information is jamie@cbp-uk.com or 07769 882245. Also, if you have any questions or ideas, please get in touch.

Next meeting will be in June but TBC.