

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS **FROM £6 MILLION TO £600 MILLION**

HOW TO DEVELOP **THE LEADERSHIP CULTURE**

John Ashcroft
February 2013

EXPERIENCE WORTH SHARING....

**Want to grow your business
from £6 million to £600 million ?**

And your profits from £600,000 to £60,000,000....



If you want to grow your business from £6 million to £600 million, you have to develop a strong leadership culture.

This is the Blue Book, the Coloroll Culture and Philosophy handbook written in 1986. This was the year we were on track to double sales (and profits) from £120 million to £250 million.

Eight years earlier in 1978 I had joined a private family business with sales of just £6 million. Within 12 years sales increased to £600 million. Profits increased from £600,000 to £60 million and the value of the company increased from £10 million to over £500 million. The private family business had become a publicly quoted international business.

We developed a strong culture and philosophy, with very strong financial discipline. In the end, the recession of the early 1990s took its toll. The company did not survive. There were many reasons but a lack of leadership culture was not amongst them.

JKA



COLOROLL CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY

A Coloroll : A Belief in the Business

B Coloroll : The Operating Maxims

1. The White Book
2. The Yellow Book
3. Death Rae
4. Involvement and Communication
5. Financial Control
6. Market Orientation
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8. Coloroll is a Sales Machine
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C Problems of Managing Growth

1. Delegation not Abdication
2. Too many Intellectuals
3. Beware of the Marketing Men
4. Beware of Overhead Creep
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6. The Entrepreneurial Factor and Loss
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8. Zero-Basing: Back to Basics
9. Loss of Integrity
10. Loss of Philosophy Culture

A COLOROLL : A BELIEF IN BUSINESS

Managers must believe in the business in terms of the growth, successes to date and the potential for the future. Remember the business has grown from £6 million in 1978 to £60 million last year. This year, the sales will almost double beyond the £100 million mark. Profits have kept pace, from £0.5 million to £6 million and £9-10 million planned this year.

In 1978, we made 3.5 million rolls of wallpaper, in 1986 35 million rolls. In 1978, 3% of the wallpaper market, in 1986 over 30%. In 1982, sales of £200,000 to USA, 1986 £6 million to North America. In 1980, zero textile sales, in 1986 £10 million for the division.

The business has the potential to achieve the £250 million sales target and then much more. The company is providing the best training ground for senior line managers in the UK today. In return, we ask for and demand belief.

So ask yourself "Do you believe in Coloroll?".

It's more than a business, it's a way of life.

"Every company we acquired, the people would say, you have to understand this business or industry is different. Everybody knows everybody else, there are one or two key players, your Coloroll guidelines won't really apply, we do things differently". We always found the same issues and challenges. The Coloroll philosophy worked just fine every time".

In 1987 we were working on a US textile acquisition, \$1 billion HLT high leveraged transaction. We were working with Samuel Montagu, Goldman Sachs, First Boston and Wasserstein Perella. Bruce and Joe had just set up their Corporate Finance Boutique. It was a big deal. Bain and Company were the Corporate Strategy Consultants...

B COLOROLL : THE OPERATING MAXIMS

1. **The White Book**
2. **The Yellow Book**
3. **Death Rae**
4. **Involvement and Communication**
5. **Financial Control**
6. **Market Orientation**
7. **Leadership**
8. **Coloroll is a Sales Machine**
9. **Management by Gossip**
10. **Don't Picnic in the Jungle**

COLOROLL : THE OPERATING MAXIMS

THE PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE

1. The White Book

The original White Book was produced in 1978, the audit of Coloroll as a prelude to the expansion programme. The White Book is principally an audit of the Company and assessment of every facet of operation, sales, systems, production, finance etc. Developed in the context of the three to five year growth plans, market conditions and competition. The White Book is a useful method of introducing line management into a new company situation. Who better to implement the plan than the author?

Ongoing operations and executive directors should ensure that their own external assessment of performance vis-a-vis the competition is maintained (See No.10 "Don't Picnic in the Jungle")

2. The Yellow Book

The original Yellow Book was produced in 1978 as a detailed quantified assessment of market, customers and competition. The degree of quantification should include sales x customer x product x competitor analyses on an unequalled basis. Assessment of industry performance (financial) ratios should also be available within the document.

Yellow Books should be updated on an annual basis for presentation in February/March of each year with the business plans. Analyses of competitor P/L's and balance sheets and customer P/L's and balance sheets should be also made available at the same time.

Managers should ask themselves "When did I last update the Yellow Book?" and "When did I last see my competitor/customer accounts?"

The principles of white book and yellow book analysis are just as relevant today. The white book includes an assessment of the structural and financial ability of the organisation to meet the challenges of the market place.

The yellow book market framework is invaluable as a planning tool. Desk research, trade articles, competitor accounts, informal interviews, all are essential in the process. We always encouraged our sales teams to talk to buyers and ask about sales and buying plans. We wanted to know who was getting the business we were not!

3. Death Rae

- 3.1 The death “rae” to management inertia is developed from the belief that managers should be:
- R responsible for their decisions
 - A accountable for their decisions
 - E exposed to the effects of their decisions
- 3.2 Large companies can develop unwieldy management structures where the effects of good or bad decisions are neither identified nor the perpetrators rewarded or chastened.
- 3.3 The death rae principle endeavours to create an organisation chart and structure which facilitates the responsibility, accountability and exposure maxim.
- 3.4 The structure creates autonomous business units with specialised management teams with profit (or cost) responsibility for every profit or cost centre in the group. Each area of operation should be defined as a profit or cost centre.
- 3.5 Managers should be accountable for their decisions and profit responsibility should be reward- identified via the bonus system.
- 3.6 In the case of PLC Directors, bonuses are based on earnings per share. Divisional Directors, divisional profits and so on.
- 3.7 The Death Rae ensures that each individual within the management structure identifies with the profit goals of the company and spends the company money as reluctantly as if it were his own. NB. Poland Principle.
- 3.8 The structure should be tactically flexible, dynamic and action orientated with a positive attitude to risk.
- 3.9 In the Coloroll structure, line managers are all powerful. Staff functions should be limited or eliminated.
- 3.10 Keep organisation charts up to date.
- 3.11 Organisation charts and overhead structures should like, Coloroll management, be “Lean, Mean and Hungry”. No Fat Cats and no Fat Cat structures in the Coloroll group.

4. Involvement and Communication

- 4.1 There should be few secrets within the senior management structure in terms of management information, performance etc. PLC sensitivities may limit circulation of price sensitive data but in the main managers “holding on to information” which could usefully be passed down the line are exposing a feeling of insecurity or inadequacy in their own position. A feeling which is counter-productive to the common good.
- 4.2 Managers have a duty to keep all employees informed of their own company progress. Employees have a need and a right to know “how the company is doing”. If you listen, they ask often enough to demonstrate their concern. Quarterly briefing meetings are essential.
- 4.3 Coloroll employee and management philosophy is based on respect for the individual. People will be committed if they are proud of what they are doing. Which really means they need to know how they are doing. So tell ‘em.
- 4.4 There should be no “I and My(ty)” management terminology. Never talk about “My Division” or “My Directors” as a manager. I and Myty is too near High and Mighty. Respect the individual and treat them as adults and they will respect you in return.
- 4.5 Where possible, introduce performance and incentive programmes with substantial reward mechanisms. Don’t confine the programme to the sales force. Remember the shop floor.

Walking around the shop floor, the most common greeting and frequently asked question was “Hi John, How are we doing”. People wanted to know, how we were doing - if their jobs, bonuses, mortgages, car payments or holiday plans were secure.

So we introduced a network of “How are we doing boards”, placed around the company in the offices and on the shop floor. Information on orders, production and sales with daily updates. Staff were better informed and more engaged as a result.

5. Financial Control

5.1 Major instruments of financial control are:

- a. Accountancy Information
- b. Budgetary Controls
- c. Cash Flow Forecasts
- d. Costings
- e. Monday Morning Meetings

5.2 Immediacy of data is a prerequisite of financial control within the Coloroll group. Divisional managers should make their first assessment of trading profits at 5.00 pm on Friday and follow with a more detailed evaluation on Monday morning.

5.3 Budgetary Controls - should be evaluated monthly for actual performance against budget, using the accounts pack as a working tool for divisional directors. Overspends in cost areas should be corrected within the quarter, if not the following month.

5.4 Cash flow forecasts are now a critical element of group planning. Managers should place equal weight to their cash/borrowing promises as they do to profit and sales.

5.5 Costings are a working document, not a handbook for filing on receipt. When did line managers last compare costs to standard and prior years?

5.6 Monday morning meetings are the main contact a divisional MD should have with the directors for the week. On Monday mornings, managers should discuss critical aspects of:

- a. The prior week P/L
- b. The prior week balance sheet
- c. The coming week's sales and profit commitment

5.7 One key to financial control is the strength of the financial controller network. The financial controller is afforded "financial director" rank (but not title) within the division. The financial controller should report to the line manager within the profit centre, with a clear, concise brief on responsibility and activity.

5.8 Each profit centre should have its own financial controller reporting to the line manager and each cost centre of viable size its own cost accountant.

5.9 Coloroll managers care about costs. The Coloroll managers travelling companion is the famous Australian heroine 'Emma Chisit'.

5.10 The cheapest source of finance is supplier finance. The 90-day rule can generate substantial cash and interest relief.

6. Market Orientation/Close to the Customer

6.1 Don't ignore the customer. Ensure that the business and the managers are close to the customer, listening to the customer and endeavouring to meet his needs.

6.2 Ensure that the National Accounts Planning guidelines are:

- a. Sell/Contact at every level in the organisation
- b. Sell/Contact at every level in the organisation frequently
- c. Know the business, how much of the business you don't have, and more important who has it?
- d. Ensure the National Accounts Planning books are updated, including organisation charts, sales histories, buying capacities etc.

6.3 Never surrender market share.

6.4 Hunger for market data. The jigsaw mentality - don't settle for one or two pieces of information, ensure you can see the whole picture (see Yellow Book).

6.5 Be obsessive about service:

- 6.5.1 Empty bins make no noise at tills.
- 6.5.2 Ensure LORD¹ and OOS² are minimised.
- 6.5.3 Measure LORD and OOS weekly by major account if necessary.
- 6.5.4 Give stock control to the marketing team. There are two jobs in any business, production planning and stock control. Production planning is a production function - stock control is a commercial function.

6.6 The only "entertainment" that's encouraged within Coloroll is customer entertainment. Coloroll managers should rarely, if ever, enjoy supplier entertainment, and certainly not enjoy supplier lunches/days out/dinners etc. too often.

6.7 Customers and managers might enjoy a drink but the Coloroll rule of No Alcohol on Company Premises takes precedence.

¹ LORD Lost Order Analysis

² OOS Out of Stock

Lord was a lost order analysis. An assessment of orders which could not be completed because of out of stocks. The development of the DIY trade, with B&Q, Texas Homecare, Smiths Do-It-All and others created a focus on "stock presence at point of sale" to maximise sales. To assess profitability in store, we created STAMP, an analysis of Stock Turn and Margin Performance of individual lines in store. This ensured we were talking the same language as our key customers.

7. Leadership

- 7.1 All businesses need strong management teams with strong leadership. Above all, they need continuity of management and strategy.
- 7.2 Strong leadership means giving clear direction to the business or operating division by clearly stating the objectives and success measuring parameters.
- 7.3 Strong leaders should be visible within their operating environment to all employees. Creating the concept of management by wandering around.
- 7.4 Specifically, operating managers and divisional managing directors should be on site with the troops EVERY MONDAY MORNING AND EVERY FRIDAY AFTERNOON. They should be around the plant or plants once or twice each week. Seeing and being seen.
- 7.5 Coloroll is not a “strut and tut” management system. Managers should wander around and discuss.
- 7.6 Discussion at any level is a prelude to action, not dissent. Once policy decisions have been formulated at board level, implementation must be committed and total by all the management team.
- 7.7 There will come a final stage of the management democracy where
“Democracy is everyone agreeing to do what the leader wants”
THEN
“Don’t think of it as being over-ruled. Think of it as seeing it from my point of view”
- 7.8 Remember Sun Tzu and the stories of the eager officer and the dissident harem.

8. Coloroll is a Sales Machine

- 8.1 Coloroll is a sales machine that exists to sell and meet the needs of the customer.
- 8.2 Every manager is a sales manager and every person is a sales person. Everyone has an opportunity to sell the Coloroll story at every encounter outside the company.
- 8.3 Every manager should be trained to sell, no matter what the organisational discipline.

The Yellow Card was created to outline the Coloroll guide to successful negotiation. Managers who breach the Coloroll negotiating guidelines should be shown the Yellow Card.
- 8.4 Production is subservient to the market place. Distribution, finance and marketing are all directing their efforts to meet the sales objectives.
- 8.5 Production is not a problem in the Eighties, the challenge is marketing and sales.
- 8.6 The most heinous crime a sales director, sales manager or sales person can commit is to miss a short-term profit forecast.
- 8.7 There is only one thing worse and that is to miss a short-term forecast frequently.

James Hanson of Hanson Industries gave me some great advice. “Never become overly identified with your company!” A bit rich coming from James. Many of us were convinced the bid for ICI was motivated by the potential creation of “Imperial Hanson”. An opportunity too good to miss!

Hanson also advised, if you are going to buy something, buy something big. You get just the same problems if you buy something small but the rewards are much bigger!

9. Management by Gossip

- 9.1 Of all the widely-used management terms e.g. matrix management, management by objective,.... management by gossip is the most damaging.
- 9.2 The Coloroll information system has been created to distil the essential barometers of performance into a limited number of electronic papers with historical comparisons.
- 9.3 MINIS (Management Information in Seconds) is a precious management tool to be maintained where in existence and recreated at the earliest opportunity in any new acquisition.
- 9.4 TILL was created to ensure that short-term sales pressure is maintained within the operations. Where possible, it should be recreated within the operating divisions and new acquisitions.
- 9.5 Scenario planning and Option Evaluation. Data is the prerequisite of decisions. Coloroll managers are expected to be fluent in two languages as a minimum, English and Visicalc (Excel). Decision making can only be based on facts. Facts must be in the format of option evaluation.
- 9.6 Presentations should be based on facts. Salesmen should be banned from discussing "ORDERS IN THE BRIEFCASE". The only valid order is an "ORDER IN THE SYSTEM". Don't discuss what may happen next month when you should be discussing what didn't happen this!

John F. Kennedy would say : The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie, deliberate, contrived and dishonest but the myth, persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Belief in the myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

So it was, in any business acquired, we discovered management by myth and gossip, without reference to fact. The back to basics, first principle analysis was an invaluable process.

10. Don't Picnic in the Jungle

- 10.1 When you are in the jungle, just because you find a nice clearing and it happens to be a particularly nice day, it's still no time to bring out the picnic basket. Very soon the smell of all that food will waft through the trees and attract unwanted guests.

So too in business just because you have carved out a nice niche in the market and things are going particularly well, it's still no time to relax and take it easy.
- 10.2 Coloroll managers don't picnic in the jungle; they don't let success become a platform for failure. They take what rest they can, when they can get it. Which isn't on the job.
- 10.3 In your constant competitor evaluation process, don't take success for granted. Just because you wish the competition isn't there, don't think it isn't.
- 10.4 Finally, there is no time for picnics.

In Coloroll.....

"If a thing is worth doing then it probably should have been done before now. So do it fast".

The maxim is even more appropriate in the present day. In strategic management, we teach Porter's Five Forces. I find it easy to remember CBS News, competitors, buyers, suppliers, new products, new players.

Compared to the 1980s, markets are much more dynamic and subject to change from new (disruptive) technology, shorter product life cycles and syndicated manufacturing processes. Trends in on line and e-commerce are exacerbating and accelerating the change process.

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C PROBLEMS OF MANAGING GROWTH

1. Delegation not Abdication
2. Too many Intellectuals
3. Beware of the Marketing Men
4. Beware of the Overhead Creep
5. Beware of Data Delay
6. The Entrepreneurial Factor and Loss
7. Loss of the Traders
8. Zero-Basing Back to Basics
9. Loss of Integrity
10. Loss of Philosophy and Culture

COLOROLL : THE OPERATING MAXIMS

1. Delegation not Abdication

The formation of the autonomous business unit and independent management teams does not mean surrendering overall control. Delegated managers have objectives and guidelines clearly stated, with performance parameters regularly reviewed. Delegation of decision does not mean abdication of decision responsibility.

2. Too many Intellectuals

A business doesn't need too many intellectuals. The malaise can reveal itself in over-cumbersome information packs, lengthy or frequent memos, or complex reports bereft of succinct recommendations. Coloroll reports created for their brilliant simplicity in 1979 have become weighty documents rarely, if ever, read.

3. Beware of the Marketing Man (or the new manager)

Most marketing men have been trained in how to spend money not make money. The challenge is to turn the marketing men into general managers in the shortest possible time. Stock control by the marketing men is a great "down to earth". Margin control and profit exposure are essential. In the raw state, the marketing man in Coloroll is a dangerous animal.

4. Beware of Overhead Creep

Overheads should be reviewed monthly and cut back quarterly to within an acceptable % increase on prior years. There is no point managers taking delight in overhead spending at budget level if sales and/or gross profit are off. The easiest way to make money is to cut costs.

In a growth situation, ensure that income is generated before organisation. The overhead burden created can kill a new project at the slightest set-back. During the Coloroll growth phase organisation lagged growth in sales. Pressure on staff resulted but pressure equals profits.

5. Beware of Data Delay

As the business expands and the organisation becomes more complex, system managers will claim that data deadlines are impossible.

The Coloroll timetable is geared to avoid this data delay syndrome. The timetable of meetings is "written in stone" and is only amended with extreme reluctance, posing a serious health or career hazard to the manager who would seek or create a delay.

6. The Entrepreneurial Factor

Private companies acquired may often surrender one or two return on sales points as the entrepreneurial factor (EP) is eliminated. Owner managers are prepared to work harder and spend their own money more reluctantly than the regular managers in large organisations.

In Coloroll, we will not surrender the EP bonus since managers are expected to work hard and spend company money as if it were their own.

7. Loss of the Traders

Traders buy and sell things, managers should be traders buying and selling goods and services. Measure yourself on the corporate “geezer” trader index:

Am I a corporate geezer	(Score 0)
Am I a trader	(Score 6)
Am I a corporate trader	(Score 10)

The Yellow Card is used for buying and selling and buyers should be equally sales-trained on negotiation techniques.

8. Zero-Basing: Back to Basics

8.1 It's not the ability to plan or create a sense of direction for the organisation that is important in itself, it's the ability to lift the organisation periodically and put it back on plan, heading in the right direction.

8.2 Periodically, a re-statement of company objectives is required to ensure the business stays on track.

8.3 Often it may involve a re-assessment of overheads or circulating management data or capex rules. Hence the Condition Red/Amber/Green guidelines.

8.4 No matter what, a “Back to Basics” programme should be undertaken before the crisis happens, not because it happens.

9. Loss of Integrity

The business should create and maintain standards of integrity to:

- Employees
- Shareholders
- Customers
- Suppliers

No deterioration in standards should be allowed.

10. Loss of Philosophy or Culture

The business philosophy or culture is most at risk during a period of rapid expansion. New managers or directors add strength to the business organisation but pose a threat to the culture, style and philosophy, unless they are quickly introduced and involved in the maxims.

Acquisitions are a problem of integration, unless the guidelines are written large and clear.

Communication Cascade - The Team Briefing Process

We discovered the concept of team briefing with the acquisition of Staffordshire Potteries in 1986. The practise had been in use within the pottery company for some years, with great success.

Until that time, communication and exchange with the shop floor had been a challenge.

The original Coloroll workforce was fully unionised with strong print unions SOGAT and NGA in full sway. Relying on the FOCs (father of the chapels) for briefing and communication to the shop floor did not always work. It was as if to rely on Prada, to deliver the Conservative Party Manifesto in Moscow. The real essence of the message did not always get through.

Stopping production to talk to the whole shop floor was sometimes a necessity but was not always a possibility. All shifts were not covered and direct communication, undermined the management hierarchy.

Team briefing as a cascade process with feedback became the favoured modus operandi.

A COLOROLL GROUP PLC

- 1978 The Drive for the UK Wallcoverings Markets
- 1980 The Extension into UK Home Furnishings
- 1982 The Move across the Atlantic
The Wallmates Acquisition
- 1985 The Public Company Listing
- 1986 The Extension into Ceramics

B COLOROLL CORPORATE STRATEGY

1. What are the Skills within the Group?

Creativity: In Design
Creativity: In Marketing
Creativity: In Support for the Retailer

Backed up by the obsession with financial control.
2. What are the Natural areas of Diversification?

Two areas:

a. Distribution Related : D.I.Y Home Improvement
b. Product Related : Home Fashion
3. What are Geographical Priorities?

Currently 40% earnings from USA
Aim to maintain a UK / USA Transatlantic Axis.
Developing a sister company in the USA for each UK Operating Division.
4. What is Definition of Coloroll Group?

Home Fashion/Home Improvement on a UK / USA Transatlantic basis.

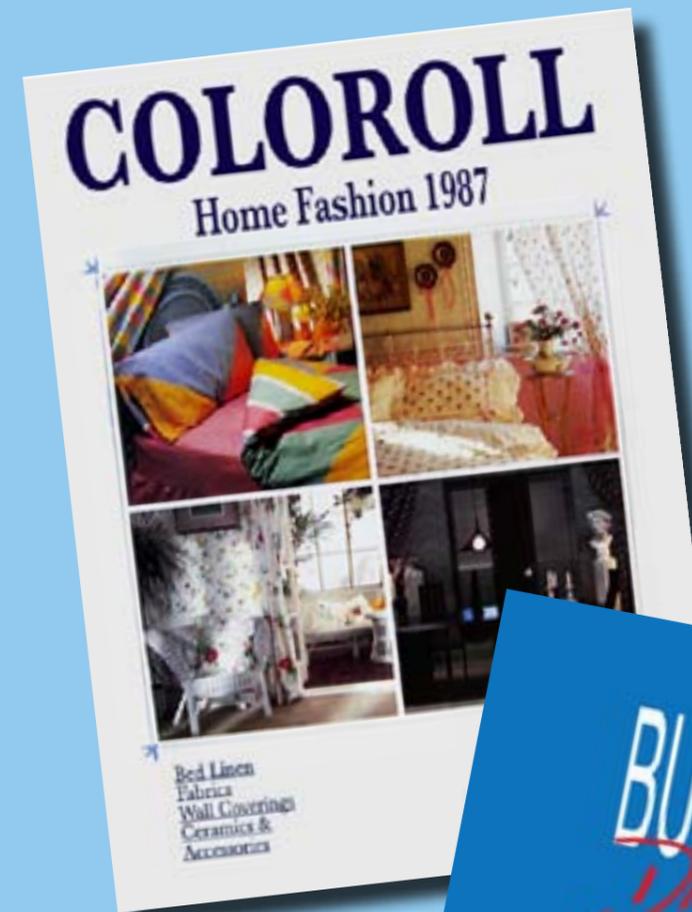
Lead your company to a Stock Exchange Flotation....



Stock Exchange Flotation 1985



CEO of a UK PLC at 37 years of age



C GROWTH TARGETS

1978	£ 6 million Sales
1986	£ 60 million Sales
1987	£100 million Sales
1989/90	£250 million Sales

D MINIMUM PERFORMANCE CRITERION

From each Operating Division

- i) 10% Return on Sales as a Minimum
- ii) 25% Return on Capital as a Minimum
- iii) 20% Earnings per Share Growth as a Minimum
- iv) 10% Progressive Dividend Programme
- v) Gearing Maintained with 30-40% of Shareholders' Funds.

Appendix II

INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

1. Remember the “General Motors Poem”

Are these men and women workers of the world?
Or is it an overgrown nursery with children - goosing, slapping boys, giggling, snotty girls?
What is it about the entrance way, those gates to the plant? Is it the guards, the showing of your badge - the smell?
Is there some invisible eye that pierces you through and transforms your being?
Some aura or ether, that brain and spirit washes you and commands, “For eight hours you shall be different”
What is it that instantaneously makes a child out of a man?
Moments before he was a father, a husband, an owner of property, a voter, a lover, an adult. When he spoke at least some listened.
Salesmen courted his favour.
Insurance men appealed to his family responsibility and by chance the church sought his help....
But that was before he shuffled past the guard, and climbed the steps, hung up his coat and took his place along the line.

2 Nothing more effectively involves people, sustains credibility or generates enthusiasm than face-to-face communication. It is critical to provide and discuss all organisation performance figures with all of our people.

3 General Motors

“Bringing financial information down to the shop floor is a major step in bridging the gap between management and labour; more than any other single act, it makes the goals explicit and the nature of the partnership concrete”.

4 Ed Carlson: United Airlines

“Nothing is worse for morale than a lack of information down the line. I call it NETMA - No-one ever tells me anything”.

5. Our “Peters and Waterman” favourite story of simple systems, peer pressure and easy measurement was related to a persistent and perilous absenteeism problem at one of AT&T’s Western Electric plants. Management tried everything. The level of absenteeism wouldn’t go down. Finally, they put up a huge visible board with everyone’s name on it and posted a gold star next to each name when people came to work.

Absenteeism dropped dramatically almost overnight.

6. Make People Winners. Let them Stand Out.

“A man wouldn’t sell his life to you, but he will give it to you for a piece of Coloroll Ribbon.”

(World War II: Experiences as a Foot Soldier)

The volume of contrived opportunities for showering pins, buttons, badges and medals on people is staggering at McDonalds, Tupperware, IBM or many other top performers. They actively seek out and pursue endless excuses to give out rewards.

7. Zumwalt revolutionised the Navy’s practices in a just a few short years at the helm. It all stemmed from his simple belief that people will respond well to being treated as grown-ups. He traces his beliefs back to early command assignment:

“What I tried hardest to do was ensure that every officer and man on the ship not only knew what we were about, not only why we were doing each tactical evolution, however onerous, but also managed to understand enough about how it all fitted together that he could begin to experience some of the fun and challenge that those of us in the top slots were having”.

About the Author

John Ashcroft is founder of the pro.manchester SME club, Chief Executive of pro.manchester, a Director of Marketing Manchester, member GM Chamber of Commerce Council, a Member of the AGMA Business Leadership Council, a visiting Professor at MMU Business School, Executive in Residence at Manchester Business School and economics adviser to Duff & Phelps, financial advisory and investment banking specialists.

Weekly publications include The Sunday Times and Croissants, The Saturday Economist, the Corporate Strategist and The Social Media Experts. Specialist web sites include :- www.smexperts.co.uk, www.johnashcroft.co.uk.

Working with the Business Schools in 2008, John updated the International MBA module on corporate strategy and wrote Apple - a case study in corporate strategy, a section of which was published in the ninth edition of the Corporate Strategy bible "Exploring Strategy, by Johnson, Whittington Scholes".

John was educated at the London School of Economics with a PhD in economics from Manchester Metropolitan University. John is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Companion of The British Institute of Management and a member of the Society of Business Economists.

"I have extensive experience of SME and large businesses in the UK, Europe, USA and Australia, working in family owned, institutionally owned and public companies. I have been involved in of over fifty corporate finance transactions including a \$1 billion acquisition in the USA in the late 1980s. I have worked with the great institutions, such as First Boston, Bain and Company, Samuel Montagu, SG Warburgs, Goldman Sachs and Wasserstein Perella."

John has served on the Council of Manchester Business School, the Board of Inward, the President's Council of Business in the Community. He was the founding Chairman of the North West Business Leadership Team, on the President's Council of the CBI, a Granada Telethon Trustee and a School Governor for ten years.

He was managing director, chief executive and subsequently Chairman, of Coloroll Group plc from a period of twelve years from 1978 to 1990.

John Ashcroft PhD BSc (Econ) FRSA CBIM

e mail : jkaonline@me.com

Tel : +44 (0)161 834 3993

Mobile : +44 (0)7595 369363

