



**‘I would encourage co-secs to explore how they can use this influence in a healthy way to drive meaningful change’**

Justine Lutterodt is Director of the Centre for Synchronous Leadership – a leadership consultancy and think tank dedicated to systemic change in the corporate sector. With over fifteen years of experience working with senior leaders and their teams on how to become more ‘in sync’ with themselves, their organisation, the changing business landscape and society at large, she talks to *Governance and Compliance* about incorporating an ethical approach into her work, mindful exclusion and the future board.

INTERVIEW BY SONIA SHARMA, EDITOR OF *GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE*

**What attracted you to the sector? Why did you decide to create the Centre for Synchronous Leadership?**

I started my career in management consulting. Through my formative years – working at Monitor Group – I began to understand the impact of business culture and decision-making on society, starting with employees. As Director of Marketing at QTS, I gained first-hand exposure to the synergy between delivering lasting value to stakeholders and growing a profitable business.

I launched the Centre for Synchronous Leadership in 2010 because I believed that a new approach to leadership was required. One that helped C-suite leaders reconcile the tension between profit and purpose, rebuild trust following the financial crisis and stay in sync with new trends in a rapidly changing global marketplace.

Having just completed my Master’s thesis entitled *The Ethical Leadership Dilemma*, I had developed a specific model for achieving this. It would have been a lot easier to join an existing consultancy. However, I struggled to find one that embodied these insights.

**You run a leadership consultancy and think tank dedicated to systemic change in the corporate sector. What are some of the biggest changes you have seen over the last 5-10 years?**

The biggest change has been an increased understanding of the interdependency of business with larger society. This takes many forms. The Companies Act of 2006 was significant in requiring directors to look beyond the interests of shareholders to consider the company’s impact on other stakeholders such as employees, the environment, and the local community. The financial crisis and numerous scandals since have also woken us up – raising awareness of the reputational risk and financial consequences of unethical behaviour.

There has been a subsequent shift in terms of how much things like responsible investment or diversity & inclusion are valued and invested in by business. Ten years ago, the role of Head of Responsible Investment did not exist in many investment houses, whereas now it is quite common. Additionally, there is a growing call for workplaces to be more humane and

for values to be integrated in how business is done. This is partly driven by Generation Y, who has entered the workforce with higher standards.

Our belief is that companies must shift to a new paradigm of leadership to adapt to these changes, becoming more in tune with the ecosystems that sustain them. This involves redefining power dynamics in how they relate to stakeholders – both internally and externally.

**In your opinion, how much progress has been made diversity-wise on boards? How can ‘mindful exclusion’ be used in the boardroom?**

The conversation has most certainly shifted. Aspiring for gender diversity is no longer taboo and, more recently, other forms of diversity have also become discussable. This has been fuelled by extensive research on diverse teams and high performance. Studies like McKinsey’s Diversity Matters have been game-changers. The challenge now is how we deliver on these aspirations to achieve meaningful change.

Some tangible progress has been made, and it is important to acknowledge it – particularly around gender. Initiatives such as the 30% Club have played a significant role in driving this change. However, we cannot afford to become complacent.

Equally, we must avoid common pitfalls that can undermine these efforts in the long-run. Often when people think of inclusion, they assume that it comes at the expense of business performance. This can result in people filling quotas with the wrong people and then declaring diversity efforts a failure. Instead, I think the emphasis should be on excluding more effectively. This involves getting a clearer sense of what really matters for performance, rather than relying on norms that are laden with bias, and casting a wider net in identifying and cultivating talent.

**You are Chair of the judging panel on the UK Diversity Legal Awards 2019. How did this opportunity come about? And what are some of the things the judging panel will be looking for?**

I was invited to serve as Chair of the awards in 2016, following an article I wrote for the Diversity League Table – a pioneering publication that started tracking



The ICSA Annual Conference: The Future Board will take place on 9th-10th July at ExCeL London. Justine Lutterodt will take part in a panel discussion on the company secretary as changemaker on day one.

To find out more please visit [icsa.org.uk/annual-conference](http://icsa.org.uk/annual-conference)

diversity statistics in the legal sector ahead of its time. This is my fourth year now and it's a privilege to remain involved.

The judges will be looking for individuals and organisations in the legal sector that have demonstrated a commitment to change, an innovative approach and genuine impact. The goal is to highlight best practice and examples of excellence that help to inspire sector-wide change.

**At the Annual Conference, you will be sitting on a panel where the topic is the 'company secretary as change maker'. How are global workforces transforming? How can those in governance roles position themselves in order to take advantage of what the future can offer?**

There are a lot of changes afoot – including the usual suspects of technology, global connectivity, Generation Y, etc. – and organisations continue to grapple with significant uncertainty. Rather than just having the answers, being able to ask the right questions has become increasingly important. Hence, the role that company secretaries play in holding the space for productive debate and ensuring that the right questions are asked is more crucial than ever. I would encourage co-secs to explore how they can use this influence in a healthy way to drive meaningful change.

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**What advice would you give to a governance professional or company secretary at the start of their career?**

Cultivate and develop your influencing skills. You will need them to be able to listen and tune into what is happening around you and also challenge your colleagues in a way that they can receive.

Also, make it your business to understand the old world and the new world. The way things have been done, what people are used to – you will need to understand this language, at least to the extent it exists in your company. However, you will also need to tune into what's coming and to people who may not have historically been in the boardroom, but who will become increasingly relevant. If you can help to translate between those two worlds, you'll be in a great position to influence.

**How can psychology be used to facilitate leadership in organisations?**

Through our signature Walk the Tightrope leadership programme and course, we have supported numerous executives in dramatically improving their organisational impact and performance. All of these

success stories have involved leaders becoming more conscious of their natural tendencies, the associated ripple effects, and how these support or hinder their organisational objectives. Helping leaders to understand their own psychology is a huge part of this process. Equipping them to understand the psychological forces at work amongst their colleagues and in their organisational culture is also key.

**What do you envision the future board to look like?**

I envision future boards to be mindfully exclusive, with candidates selected based on a shrewd understanding of the purpose of the business and how the business needs to connect beyond. I believe this will result in boards that are more representative of the stakeholders that their companies engage with. ■

