



Shaping company culture through servant leadership

Written by Chris Cardwell, CEO,
Be | Shaping the Future UK

Be SHAPING
THE FUTURE

Several years ago, I was introduced to the concept of servant leadership, a theory devised by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970's which suggests a leader of an organisation operates in a synergistic way with their employees and sees it as their job to serve them, rather than the other way around.

I'm a true believer of this theory; it's something I'm passionate about and I strive to reinforce the servant leadership principles in everything I do.

The principles of servant leadership (listed below) cover all aspects of how a leader should behave towards their employees, they are interwoven into a way of thinking and behaving – which when done passionately and consistently – can be extremely powerful.



Listening



Conceptualisation



Empathy



Foresight



Healing



Stewardship



Awareness



Commitment to the growth of people



Persuasion



Building community

Why is servant leadership important?

In a people-based business such as management consulting, I believe servant leadership is critical to building, fostering and maintaining an excellent company culture, especially when that company grows.

Everyone is given a wide range of learning and development opportunities,

encouraged to share their ideas and get involved in innovation and internal initiatives, looked after (from a wellbeing perspective) and made to feel part of a business rather than just another cog in the wheel only delivering to their client.

Beyond a philosophical affinity to this way of working, I think it makes commercial sense too.

If a firm can create a strong bond with its employees, then their commitment

and dedication in supporting the growth of the business is enhanced.

Furthermore, this way of operating allows us to differentiate ourselves from the market and helps us to attract and retain talent.

Our clients also feel the benefit of this culture, as our employees are responsive and truly care about the outcomes they are delivering to their client due to their desire to grow the firm being reciprocated in the personal and professional development they receive. This well motivated workforce delivers fantastic work for clients, and happy clients help us develop more business opportunities.

be built upon to accelerate opportunities for all employees in a larger and more successful business.



"Our clients also feel the benefit of this culture..."

The servant leadership way of working is demanding of leaders; they must put the needs of the firm and its employees ahead of themselves.

However in a growing business, it creates solid foundations which can be

"The servant leadership way of working is demanding of leaders; they must put the needs of the firm and its employees ahead of themselves."



How do we embody servant leadership at Be UK?

I joined Be UK in October 2019 with a vision to position it for growth and I believe that servant leadership has been instrumental in helping us (as a team) achieve our goals.

I meet each and every single one of our new joiners as part of our recruitment process. I do this because I want to ensure every person we hire is a good cultural fit for our business, but also to ensure I'm a friendly face who they feel comfortable approaching and talking to from day one.

I've formed a leadership team who genuinely care about our people and who truly enjoy seeing their people grow and develop.

We have a flat hierarchy, where we actively encourage our employees to come and talk to myself and the rest of the leadership team – we encourage

"I meet each and every single one of our new joiners... because I want to ensure every person we hire is a good cultural fit for our business, but also to ensure I'm a friendly face who they feel comfortable approaching and talking to from day one."

them to share ideas and we host a weekly "chat with a partner" session where employees have the opportunity to get to know a partner, ask them anything and raise any issues they may have.

We have a rich learning and development curriculum, with weekly sessions where employees share their knowledge, experience and useful tools and tips. We also provide all of our employees with annual learning credits, so they have the autonomy to drive their learning in areas they're interested in.

We brief managers at all levels within the business on their responsibility to actively focus on the development of



their team, thus creating the next generation of servant leaders.



We hold a weekly “huddle” where we share updates on our progress and celebrate employees who have gone over and above or who have received great feedback from a client – these are all ways in which we empower, recognise and reward our employees.

Lastly, I try to be empathetic to each person as an individual, celebrating their uniqueness and understanding of the challenges they face whether that be in their personal life and / or related to their career.



| In summary

Servant leadership is a great way to foster a high-performing company culture, but it needs to be consistently delivered by all leaders at all levels of the business.

This culture must also be monitored and policed so any counter cultural behaviour is managed quickly, this is something which is critical to maintaining the culture as the company grows.

I’m delighted and proud that our employees describe our company culture as: collaborative, friendly, welcoming, inclusive, entrepreneurial and diverse and that our 2021 employee net promotor score was 43, which is classed as “excellent”. This score is testament to the excellent culture we have developed at Be UK and one we wish to maintain in future years.

"I'm delighted and proud that our employees describe our company culture as: collaborative, friendly, welcoming, inclusive, entrepreneurial and diverse."

About us

Be | Shaping the Future UK (**Be UK**) is a subsidiary of Be | Shaping the Future, a well-established management and technology consultancy with over 1,800 consultants located across 12 European countries.

We work with the leading financial services organisations to shape their future through our transformation consultancy and advisory services, covering the following sectors:

- Cards and payments
- Retail and commercial banking
- Capital markets
- Finance
- Risk, regulatory and compliance

We take pride in building relationships with our clients and we work collaboratively to drive change for a bigger and better future.

Contact

Chris Cardwell
CEO



Chris joined **Be UK** in 2019 with a vision to position it for growth.

He has over 20 years of financial services management advisory and delivery experience, having worked across a variety of markets, including: risk, finance, capital markets and regulatory change.

Throughout his career, Chris has led a variety of large-scale projects, with a strong track-record of delivering operational risk strategies, operating model efficiencies, regulatory compliance and cost savings. In the latter part of his career, he has focused on growing high-quality management consulting businesses.

Chris is a true believer of servant leadership and is passionate about looking after **Be UK's** employees, ensuring they have all the tools, resources, training, development and support they need to succeed and thus deliver great service to our clients.

E: c.cardwell@beshapingthefuture.co.uk
W: www.beshapingthefuture.co.uk

