

Alistair R B Forbes

“Oh if the gift some power would give us, to see ourselves as others see us.” - Burns (translated)

No leader has all the answers for long. The speed of change in markets, technologies and demographics are such that business conditions are constantly changing. I have personally felt those daunting challenges and experienced the loneliness that accompanies them. Every leader needs a coach.



Alistair specialises in working with established senior executives and high potential managers who will be the senior executives of tomorrow. Much of his work is focused on supporting leaders to transition into new roles or coaching established leaders who are leading their company through complex organisational change. Alistair's coaching is founded on the twin pillars of a 34 year business career and his qualifications from Ashridge as an accredited Master Coach.

Business Experience

Alistair had a corporate career spanning 34 years which literally went from shop floor to the boardroom. He joined Sears Holdings aged 18 on a management training scheme and by aged 23, “through hard work and good fortune,” was General Manager of a store on one of the worlds busiest shopping streets. “You learn an awful lot about resilience in a busy shop with 60 staff. You cannot plan for the difficulties, complexities and unexpected moments that happen day to day, but you must recover quickly, spring back into shape, learn by it, and make sure that your team do the same.”

Alistair developed his business experience through the roles in Area Management at Schering Plough and Regional Management at the Burton group where he launched a retail business “Principles for Men.” After 16 years in retailing he switched to ‘business to business’ by being appointed as the Managing Director of a division of Thorn-EMI. “It was two years before I was truly effective. The changes in the business dynamic were enormous. **I went from fashion to technology, from receiving customers to building relationships, product to solutions, volume and margin to profit and cash-flow.** The biggest change required in my new organisation was me.”

During his 15 year tenure, Alistair took the business through the demerger of Thorn and EMI and ownership from public company to private equity. (Nomura Principal Finance). The business became the market leader in EMEA and produced the highest return on sales in the World in its market sector. In 2004 Alistair joined GI Partners as CEO of one of its Portfolio Companies in its first fund. The strategy involved the buying and integration of four competing European technology companies, rebranding into one, building a range of digital TV and broadband products and setting up global distribution. “I was like a kid with a new trainset, but a trans- continental one. Every business problem conceivable arose with this assignment. Learning to get the best out of management teams with differing languages and cultures whilst meeting the expectations of my Private Equity partners was my greatest challenge. I learnt to talk less and listen and enquire more.”

On successfully selling the business to Asian investors, Alistair exited the business and corporate life.

Coaching Expertise

Alistair believes that his management experience and style has provided a solid base for his coaching work. “Where I added value was in communicating strategy, helping people prioritise projects, facilitating collaboration, tackling conflict, and supporting career development.” Alistair now helps his clients to maintain their focus on their leadership and people agenda whilst driving their business objectives.

He studied for an MSc in Executive Coaching at Ashridge Business School. He was keen to gain as deep an understanding of the methods and techniques of coaching as possible in order to compliment his extensive business experience. “I want to deliver a no-nonsense, jargon free focused approach to business coaching and build a level of confidence and trust that enables a dialogue for learning and change”.

Examples of his recent assignments where Alistair has been most effective are:

- Helping a Marketing Director transition to the role of CEO of a major charity
- Supporting a CTO deliver complex organisational change in a banking organisation
- Support a newly appointed executive team member of a finance organisation
- Develop the executive team of a Private Equity business
- Coach the CEO of an energy company
- Coach the EMEA CEO of a global services business

Alistair also is Chairman of a start up energy conservation business.

Outside of work, Alistair plays veteran senior county tennis, golf and enjoys visiting his children in USA and New Zealand.

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