SOCIETY OF LEADERSHIP FELLOWS, ST GEORGE'S HOUSE, WINDSOR CASTLE

KEEPING THE BUSINESS HUMAN IN A TECH WORLD

From 6.00pm on Wednesday 24th September until 4.00pm on Thursday 25th

At our recent Fellows dinners this theme of 'Keeping it Human' has emerged probably as the most powerful and universal concern and commitment. Our aim in this Conversation is to create a space where we can get granular about this, to turn concern into concerted care, wisdom and action. The Conversation will also follow naturally on from previous Conversations on the impact of AI and some of the other 'gamechangers' that are making themselves felt in our leadership contexts right now.

Our focus will be on maintaining 'humanity' in a technology-driven world, with its increasingly pervasive 'machine' underpinning of human (inter)activity. We are all experiencing this in various ways and will find it unconsciously driving our behaviour and responses. This Conversation will keep us conscious and awake to what must be remembered as well as re-formed.

An interesting historical parallel is how Taylorism and Fordism shaped leadership in the early days of mass production, which then led to a counter- response that became known as the 'Human Relations' movement.

We will be exploring:

- Human v. Machine: Practically, exploring what tasks technology can perform better than humans and vice versa. Philosophically: what do we really mean by 'human'? ...and 'machine' – itself, of course, a creation of human hands and minds?

- Rehumanising Work: the issue of 'pathological productivity' and ways to make work life more humane in the context of modern technology.

- Safe Spaces: how to make space for the conversations that get technological change embedded safely and inclusively, particularly for vulnerable groups.

- Collaboration with Technology: the potential for technology to augment human capability and interactivity without diminishing the human quality of this.

- Social Impact and power relations: the broader social implications of tech on business and community life. 'Winners and losers'. 'Exploiters and Enablers'

- Navigating Change: strategies for transitioning to more tech-integrated work environments whilst maintaining focus on the wider human 'good'.

AGENDA

Who is this for?

If you are finding yourself, from your own experience, asking yourself significant questions about 'what is going on' at a human level in your system(s) or even questioning how your own leadership is being shaped by these forces, then please come to this Conversation!

How will it flow?

We want this to be a radical and inspired enquiry into perhaps one of the greatest leadership issues of our times - not a sentimental one, concerned about the 'feelings' around all this, but profoundly rooted in the wisdom of the heart of what it really means to be human living and working in the 21st century. We will delve into:

- The role of Technology: tasks technology can perform better than humans. What should remain human-centric and why: challenging ourselves on this.
- De- & Re-humanising Work: "pathological productivity" and historical perspectives on the evolution of work patterns through the industrial revolution to modern times.
- Balancing Human and Machine: How to hold a balance of human values and technological value. 'Letting go' to tech without compromising ethical standards.
- Personal and Organisational Reflection: How personal interactions with technology can dehumanise us. The impact on personal identity and behaviour.
- The Dynamics of Tech Absorption: the balance between being 'online' and 'offline' in the use of technology. Psychological effects of over-reliance: "tech-anxiousness."
- Leveraging Tech for Human Benefit: collaborative potentials that enhance human capabilities rather than replace them. Addressing fears and resistance to this.
- Supportive Work Environment: Building resilience and fostering a mindset of flourishing. Creating safe spaces that enable the necessary vulnerability for this.
- Impact and Inclusion: Strategies to include diverse voices and the marginalised.
- Empowerment and Advocacy: Encouraging curiosity and proactive dialogue about the 'right' use of technology in business – how and where it can serve us well.

AGENDA

Following our usual three-phase structure, the Conversation will proceed as follows:

- **"This is Me"** – taking stock of where we find ourselves currently in relation to this theme and the questions that are arising from our experience

- **"Tell Us More"** – enquiring more deeply into our learning and insights as we probe into this experience

- **"Yes I can, Yes I will"** – turning wisdom and insight into intention and practice

"THIS IS ME!"

We will open the Conversation by sharing our personal stories in relation to this theme. How have we learned, sometimes painfully, to get the balance right between the human and the 'machine'?

We will ground the Conversation around particular questions or concerns we are bringing to it, noticing how both 'head' and 'heart' are at work in these. Where are we feeling hopeful or troubled about keeping the business human in our contexts? This will set the base for our deeper enquiry – both practical and ontological.

This is me!

"TELL US MORE"

We will work in small groups on some of these arising themes, with the option to choose what we want to explore, digging into things at a practical level, for example:

- How do we create trust in the collaborative potential between human and tech?
- Areas and experience in our organisations where technology enhances human interaction and where it may be hindering it. How are we observing this?
- How we are engaging our people in this and what we are learning as a result.
- How we keep clear sight vision and values as guiderails for implementation?
- How we enable challenge by the 'human system' to the 'technical system'
- How are we handling issues of pace and timing as the AI revolution evolves.

It will also allow us to dig deeper at a more personal, intuitive level, for example:

- What is the difference between wisdom and intelligence?
- As we listen to 'gut' as well as heart and head, what challenges us in our own leadership of this?
- What do we want to be asking of people as the real added value they bring as AI takes up more of the strain – the real possibilities here for human excellence?
- What is the wake up call, the 'shift in seeing' that we may be being blind to?

"YES I CAN!"

In this phase of the Conversation we will help each other ground and consolidate what is significant for each of us, what we will do and how we will retain our focus once we return. This may include specific leadership actions and interventions around things like:

- The quality, approach and focus of how we are planning the integration of technology thoughtfully into the business
- How we challenge or lead strategic re-envisioning of how technology can handle operational tasks while people focus on creative and interpersonal aspects.
- How we address potential conflicts, whether of values or interests, that arise from technological integration.
- How we set and frame personal and organisational goals to ensure technology enhances rather than replaces human interaction.
- How we communicate and bring to life a vision for what is really possible

It will also hopefully set us thinking about our own role as leaders in all this:

- How and where we may need to take a different stance or step into challenging conversations to prevent our system slipping into foreseeable dehumanising.
- How and where we have become aware that we are being dehumanised too and what we want to do about this.

We will close the Conversation by helping each other articulate our personal commitments to fostering a human-centric approach in our embracing of the new 'machinery' of business. There will be the opportunity to support each other in these commitments after the Conversation and to come back together to review our progress and learning in a follow up call.

Timings: Wednesday 24th September

1430	You are welcome to check in to your room in St George's House.
1630	Tea/ Coffee available in the Sitting Room of the House.
1705	Evening Prayer *(optional)*.
1750	*Vicars' Hall.* Gathering together. Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm. Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: "*This is me!*" We work in small groups sharing our stories and experience.
2000	Working dinner in the House Dining Room.
2130	We go back to the Sitting Room for tea/coffee, and after dinner drinks.
2145	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing the Sitting Room (optional).

Thursday 25th September

0745	Breakfast in the Dining Room of St George's House. Please clear your personal belongings from your room and bring them down to the Vicars' Hall, so that the staff can prepare the rooms for the next group.
0845	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall and begin by noticing what is present to us as we start the new day, working in small groups and as a larger group. As we share our experiences and questions, we identify specific aspects and challenges in our different situations that require more focused attention and quality thinking time. At roughly 1030, we move on to Stage 2: "*Tell us more*", where we start to 'mine' these topics for the wisdom that can unlock them.
1100	Break for tea/coffee.

1130	**'Tell us more' cont**... Working in a variety of pair/trio or small group conversations, we delve together into the particular issues that have most resonance and significance for us.
1300	A hot buffet lunch in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups, reflecting on how our insights from the morning are speaking to us and our intentions as leaders.
	At 1.50 we have a team photo on the West steps of the Chapel (weather permitting!)
1400	Back together as one group, we draw out our lunchtime reflections and engage in our final round of small group work as we clarify and solidify our intentions. Where is the invitation for each of us more fully to embody the wisdom we are accessing?
1500	We invite each of you to work in pairs or trios over tea or coffee to sharpen up your personal resolves and commitments in the light of your intentions.
1545	Closing words and 'gathering up' of the wisdom that has flowed, however large or small.
1600	Conversation close.

Zoom follow-up:

At the end of the Conversation, we will confirm the arrangements for our follow-up zoom call to check in on the progress we have each made in progressing our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time in this is for Fellows to post a brief Whatsapp beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have been getting on, and especially which ones you found the most challenging. We then take it from there!

Date and time: Friday 16th January, 4pm – 5pm.