

# kha Newsletter

Summer 2000

## Who are kha?

kha is a new name on the coaching scene, having been set up in March of this year. Behind the name is a wealth of coaching and international experience. We founded our partnership because we share a conviction that properly focused coaching is the most powerful and cost effective way of developing senior people. Our experience is at the most senior levels of organisations and we have worked with whole boards as well as individual directors.

Though new, we have worked with a range of organisations in the private and public sectors including

**BAE Systems, the BBC, Coca-Cola Enterprises, Halifax Plc, House of Fraser, the Post Office, Rolls Royce and Bentley Cars and Vickers plc.**

For more information on kha, turn to the back page

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## Building long-term international alliances

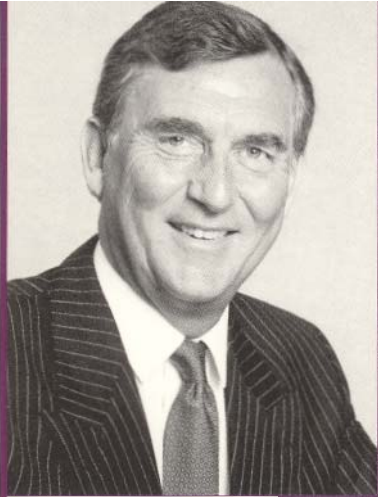
### Interview with Trevor Taylor, Deputy Chairman, Inchcape Plc

Alliances, mergers, joint ventures - they are very much part of the business scene today. What drives them? Well, sometimes it is the desire to be the 'biggest show in town'. Sometimes it is just plain defensive. Sometimes it is a genuine desire to create a better whole from the sum of the parts, which sounds like a bit of 70s jargon: synergy. Sometimes one party is good at manufacturing and the other has the marketing access or expertise. Whatever the motives might be, financial engineering and legal issues often dominate the marriage process and obscure the real 'make or break' factor - the strength and enduring quality of human relationships behind the headlines.

One man who has a passion about the importance of relationships - and has made it work with brilliant results - is Trevor Taylor, who heads up Inchcape's global Toyota Division. For more than a decade he was worked in partnership with the Toyota Motor Corporation of Japan to distribute their products in countries as diverse as Greece and Singapore as well as through the more familiar Toyota (GB). When we talked to him it was clear that Trevor's abiding principle is "building a relationship that is so secure that it can withstand commercial pressures and the test of time **beyond anything envisaged in the legal agreements**"

A noble aim indeed, but how does one get there? Taylor sees six fundamentals that have to be addressed on a day in, day out basis: reputation; organisation; people; culture; values; results.

On reputation Taylor reckons that "once won, our reputation is one of our company's most precious and most delicate assets ... as senior managers we have to recognise that we are actually the 'model' of what the organisation is all about ... we have to act in the most professional and ethical way in every situation because, just as people associate a quality product with a given organisation, so they will associate quality with a group of employees who demonstrate integrity for that organisation"



Organisation might sound dry but not for Trevor Taylor: "We all have to be diligent students of our partner's organisation, understanding how they work and reflecting this in our structures as far as we can. Organisations are multi-dimensional and don't stand still. Never, ever rely on the chief executive to chief executive interface: build interfaces at every level in both line and staff functions. One particular lesson learned from the Japanese was their dislike of regional structures in their partners: "They want to deal with the people who most directly affect performance - the local CEO and team. Then they want to deal with the most senior executive accountable in head office".

Probably, nobody would have difficulty with the idea that "the most important commitment of my time that I will ever make is that spent on the recruitment of good people", but how many of us truly put that into practice? For Taylor "parting company with a senior underperformer is costly, but the disruption to the business and the on-costs of replacing them are the real killer. I feel so strongly about this that I will always argue to have a vacancy rather than compromise and make an expedient appointment".

"Our partners really don't like frequent changes of key people: they want continuity and stability on our side. On the other hand, we have to provide headroom for our best managers to develop as fast as is possible or we risk losing them". Squaring this circle is a challenge for most organisations. Taylor's approach is to plan management succession for the key interface roles, and then make sure that these individuals are given every opportunity to meet with senior members of the partner company. "Thus, when it is time for a senior manager to be promoted, the replacement can move in without any surprises and continue the relationship, seamlessly". Another tip: "Always keep in touch with people as they move around in their organisation: you never know when they might return in a more senior position and interface with you again".

Other cultures can be a tripwire for the unwary. Earlier in his career, Taylor was visiting a senior managing director in Tokyo and believed that he had reached agreement on a number of product design and pricing issues. Back again in London, he wrote confirming that he had implemented the decisions. "Very quickly came a curt fax saying that nothing had been agreed until the MD's group had discussed our recommendations. Had I taken the trouble to learn about their decision-making process, I wouldn't have hit this problem" Knowing the minutiae of every culture is impossible but, as Taylor suggests, "Go with an open mind, respect the differences - and you won't go far wrong. Your attitude is far more important than specific knowledge".

Every modern organisation has to have a set of values, often as not emerging straight from the word processor of someone in the PR department. For Taylor, "They have to become a culture etched in the minds of every single one of our employees - never just a campaign that fizzles out after a few months. Only spend time articulating the values when you are sure they are real and embedded right through your business. And always remember that your actions, and those of your senior colleagues not only speak much louder than words. They are the cue that everyone else takes".

All of these are admirable sentiments, but only sentiments, if business results do not underpin the relationship. "We set ourselves very ambitious targets", says Taylor, "which are more ambitious than our partners and then we exceed them. We do everything in our power to be as efficient as we can be. We always aim to respond positively to their ideas and innovate wherever we can. And then we communicate what we are doing at every opportunity and at every appropriate level in their structure. In that way we can continuously address change together, rather than one party pushing or pulling the other into action".

And the acid test of all this hard work and dedication: "You will know when you have got it right because your partner will want to share confidences with you. They will respond favourably to your requests because they totally respect your judgement. You will have built the relationship to a point where neither of you would want to work with anyone else in the marketplace".

*"Go with an open mind, respect the differences - and you won't go far wrong. "*

## Balancing Work, Family & Life Aims at Senior Executive Level

Striking the appropriate balance has always been difficult and is an increasingly important issue in the workplace

For example, this summer, Rosemary needed to balance a workshop for Coca-Cola in Sutton Coldfield with her children's school holidays. The answer was her PA who added walking, Monopoly playing and Adventure Park guiding to her range of skills. Rosemary still managed to see her kids at the beginning and end of each day and Coca-Cola had a successful workshop.

Senior people, both men and women have to deal with similar tensions every day.

Companies around the world are currently implementing a range of new ways of working: annualised and flexible hours, Internet and intranet use, video-conferencing, hot desking and home working, financial support for childcare/care of the elderly, and menu-based personalised benefits.

Do these work? Keys to success seem to be in giving employees more personal control *and* in successfully creating an environment where such choices are viewed positively.

In our experience, the barriers to success are summarised by the three C's: Cost, Control and Culture.

There is undeniably a cost associated with the introduction of many of these measures. However, this is often quickly offset by decreased overheads, savings in travel time and costs, and very importantly, reduction in stress related absenteeism and resignation. Usually cost is not the real barrier, but rather a matter for careful cash flow and cost benefit planning.

For some, control of where, when and how people work is how they exercise power.

In reality, greater control is actually gained by a more focused, goal-oriented approach. There is mutual up-front agreement on objectives, measurable outputs and on the consequences of high and poor performance. Clear two way communication and feedback facilitate ongoing learning and success.

In our experience, the real barrier is culture, and this is perhaps the most difficult because it requires an organisational mind-set change. In many companies, regardless of the policies in place there is an unspoken understanding that senior people should commit their lives to the company. It is made clear that people at the top should make the choice between work and home and the choice should be work.

The stress induced by this attitude is a major source of burnout and inefficiency for both senior men and women. One of Rosemary's early personal mentors, Sir Graham Day, former Chairman of Rover and BAe knew this. He focussed on effectiveness and made it clear that staying late at the office on a regular basis was a sign of inefficiency. He recognised that at senior levels the role should be more about quality of judgement than timesheets.

Do the current economic conditions support the work/life balance? We believe yes. For certain the trends towards globalisation will continue and increasing competition will bring increasing turbulence. Companies will respond by more mergers, acquisitions and alliances. This is a highly complex world where many customers and employees are on different continents, and have very different cultural expectations. Traditional management skills are not enough and there is a business need to work differently and encourage different leadership models. The real ability is to manage complexity and conflicting objectives. Personal agility, ingenuity and win-win approaches to decision making are essential attributes. These are precisely the ones needed to achieve personal balance.

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# What does kha do - and how do we do it?

Our coaching has a pragmatic business orientation and we are challenging and rigorous in our approach, yet always supportive. We take a lot of trouble to analyse each individual situation and the overall business issues in order to set the direction of the coaching work.

Coaching programmes are tailored to each individual but, for example, areas we have covered in recent coaching programmes include:

- Leadership development of a newly appointed Director or CE •
- Turning the top executive group into an effective team
- Reconciling cultures post acquisition or merger

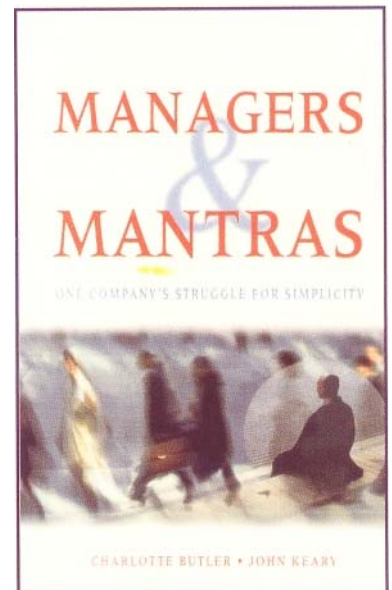
*kha* is dedicated to senior level coaching, but we know that organisations are often also looking for broader solutions that will support major change. Our alliance with *Castleton Partners*, who are at the same address in central London, offers services such as development and assessment centres, climate surveys and change management processes. One exciting piece of technology relevant to any company operating across international boundaries is a framework for *international* management competencies. We and Castleton are actively seeking clients who might 'pilot' this very new and system.

*Rosemary Harper and John Keary are the founding partners of kha*

Rosemary Harper - her career has 2 major themes: strategic change and human resources management. As a director of a major plc, her experience ranges from portfolio review to culture change. She has also been active in the setting up and running of Euresas, a business school in Toulouse. Rosemary has consulted for 7 years in most major regions of the world. She has successfully integrated her

career with raising two young children and is an keen advocate of the business benefits of achieving a balanced life style.

John Keary - his career embraces both marketing management and management development at director level, working globally and in the UK for companies as large as the Inchcape Group and as small as a manufacturing startup. John has applied this breadth of experience as a consultant for 4 years. He is co-author of *Managers and Mantras* recently published by John Wiley & Sons, which has been described by the Financial Times as "wise and humane" and "a searching enquiry into the nature of management and the circus of theorists, charlatans and honest practitioners that surround it".



John and Rosemary are assisted by David Hill (left) who recently joined kha as Client Support Manager. After enjoying an eight year career in hotel management, David has recently gained his BSc in Psychology with the intention of developing a career in Human Resources consulting.



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