

## Implementing the Mindful Business Charter (two ideas and four rules)

The Charter sets organisations some high level goals in terms of implementation :

- To drive forward the actions and change necessary to support the Charter.
- To promote a culture where people speak up early about wellbeing concerns.
- To make performance against the Charter a standing item for relationship review meetings.
- To include responsible business as an assessment area in significant procurement processes.
- To introduce new members.

Inevitably organisations are looking for guidance. For good reason, and reflecting the fact that all organisations differ, there are no hard and fast rules. Collaboration goes to the essence of the Charter: it's anticipated that participating organisations will benefit from involvement on many levels and that they will share both the improvements they've experienced and how they got there.

In that spirit and having spoken to a number of the firms and banks currently getting to grips with their own implementation, here are some thoughts.

First, hold **two ideas** in mind:

### 1. **"In a world where we can be anything, be thoughtful"**

This very simple quote (being used as part of Barclays' Charter implementation) encapsulates so much. Implementation is about exhorting every person we work with to be more thoughtful, more **mindful** about the way we work; as **individuals** – how we structure and go about our working days and as **colleagues** (internal and external) – recognising that the way we choose to work has a great deal of impact on others.

### 2. **The power of the Charter lies in its commercial focus and in its bilateral operation**

Viewing the Charter as a means of improving the service you'll receive or the efficiency or profitability of the firm will clarify and simplify your organisation's involvement and reduce scope for resistance. For the Charter to succeed people will have to change their behaviour; there will be resistance. There will be myriad causes of that resistance, but one very simple one is that we are looking to change the ways we have worked, the habits we have formed, over many years – and changing habits, changing assumptions, takes both time and thoughtfulness in itself. At the simplest level, a commercial driver has more power to overcome resistance. Individuals who commit to and drive the Charter will almost certainly have their own individual motivations, but prioritising the essentially commercial benefits of involvement adds power.

The Charter's bilateral nature is what sets it apart. Client demands largely determine how we work and if we want to change the way we work, we act most effectively in conjunction with the client. The Charter is designed to work in that way. Almost certainly it will be easier to focus on changing things internally rather than addressing client issues. However,

**be brave.**

Openness and respect



Smart meetings and emailing



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in terms of effectiveness – it’s the review meetings and the discussions about how we’re working together that really matter.

Then **four rules**.

### 1. On governance, be clear

Who’s asking us to do this? What are they asking us to do?

The Charter is clear that firm’s must act at the highest (Board) levels when committing to implementation. Some firms look to involve the whole firm from the start, others are trialling things in particular areas. Whatever the approach, clarity of goal setting is important; people need to know when the goal has been achieved. *“To focus on how we work with clients with a view to implementing the MBC”* isn’t clear enough. *“By October, to have identified [three] clear actions we view as necessary to enable us successfully to implement the Charter”* would be.

### 2. Focus on how you are going to attract leaders who will invest personal capital.

One thing above all else characterises the businesses who have most success. They identify and engage leaders in their business who are willing to (and subsequently do) invest personal capital in achieving the goals set. The test, by the way, for whether you have invested personal capital is simple: it’s whenever you put yourself in a position where you look lesser if the thing you’ve been working towards doesn’t happen.

The first question is how do you find these people? As a rule of thumb they will be the people who *feel* most strongly that we need to change the way we work. You may already know who they are. They may already have shown you that’s how they feel, in which case approach them. If not, don’t be guided by hierarchy (don’t approach departmental or regional heads or people at a particular level). Have a catalyst event, invite a provocative speaker or set up an internal debate about how we work. See who comes forward and expresses views, engage with them.

The second question is how do you engage these people and enable them to influence others.

### 3. Involve people, don’t tell them what they have to do.

People seldom, if ever, change anything because they’ve been told to. Invite people to get involved, give them some say in what they should be doing. This is something you hear consistently when listening to positive Charter stories: *“we let them decide what it would look like.”* Don’t prescribe, invite!

If you’re suggesting how someone might focus their efforts, a central message seems to be that **making the conversation about how we work normal is key**. And, going back to idea 2, that’s both internally – with your team - and externally, with clients (and possibly suppliers). One way of normalising the conversation may be to choose your own red lines – things you will or won’t do in terms of when or how you’re willing to work. Then publish them, talk about them, perhaps mention them on your email sign off?

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At the same time, of course, talk about the firm's commitment to the Charter. One challenge that caught the attention was the leader who set out to talk about the Charter more often than s/he talks about Brexit. Remember, it's conversations that change culture. More powerfully think about a story that you can tell: what's made you so adamant that we have to change the way we work? Stories provoke emotional reactions in people and emotions are what drives change.

You can effect real change by setting yourself up as someone to come and talk to when you have a question related to the Charter or just about how we work. Again, that's most simply done internally, but you could do it externally too, you will sort of be doing it by talking about the Charter (inside and outside your firm).

#### 4. Focus on simple wins

The Charter suggest four pillars:

- **Openness and respect** – normalising the conversation and thinking about the impact we have on others.
- **Smart meetings and emails** – many of the simplest wins come here, in how we meet and communicate, perhaps look here first?
- **Respecting rest periods** - evenings, weekends and annual leave periods all need focus
- **Mindful delegation** – how we instruct or request others.

It's for every individual to look at each pillar and to come up with something they can do differently. Many of the success stories seems to start with looking at how we run meetings and who we include on emails etc. But once we start being thoughtful (Idea 1), much follows.



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In April 2019 Matt has published his first book: *"the Soft Stuff: reclaiming kindness for the world of work."*

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