

## HR DIRECTORS BOARDROOM Skanska 2019

Business Ethics – How HR can set and uphold an ethically strong culture



Delegates gathered at Skanska in Maple Cross and participated in a thought provoking and inspirational HR Director Boardroom event. The session was introduced by [Karen Brown – Senior Business Manager](#) for Ashley Kate HR & Finance with [Amanda Underhill – HR Business Manager](#)

[Harvey Francis Group HR and Communications Director and Executive Vice President](#) led the event, and gave us a great insight into the journey which Skanska had undertaken in over the last 10 years with Business Ethics.

Harvey introduced us to the size and scale of Skanska, and this was important to the discussion to appreciate not only the sector in which Skanska operate, but the complexity and fragmented nature of the business. With over 5,700 employees in the UK, spread across numerous locations, the journey of this business ethically is impressive.

Harvey had split this vast topic into three component parts:

The Rising Bar

The Journey

The Role of Leadership

This has been 10 years in the making, and whilst much has been achieved, Harvey clearly sees that this bar is ever rising in this area. So taking us back to the beginning, there were some key factors that prompted this change. And it was a step change from where the business had been, and indeed where the sector as a whole was and for many still is. Harvey highlighted the contrast between ethics and Health and Safety, you can't always see ethical issues or their importance until it sometimes goes wrong. And something did go wrong, which made Skanska start on this journey.

The first two years of the journey were spent in discussion, to ensure that everyone was in agreement on what this meant and ensure that this was linked to values and purpose.

The Skanska purpose – We build for a better society

The Skanska Values

We Care for Life

Act Ethically and Transparently

Be Better Together

Commit to Customers

And most importantly, these values are lived within the business and utilised, which is vital for the organisation to move from a state of compliance to commitment. These values needed to be embedded in the culture and this was achieved through a huge variety of methods including:

Living our values week

Every team discuss an ethical dilemma called “what do you think” each month

Deep Green way of working

A strong Diversity and Inclusion vision

And one of the keys to ensuring this is embedded is a true commitment at senior levels, to get the organisation talking and comfortable to talk about things that may have been uncomfortable before. To train and then to test understanding and very importantly to be enough to make tough calls, and to be seen to be making these. The discussion and experience of many round the table was that the commitment is often there at senior levels, but only to a degree, especially when tough calls need to be made.

In addition, Skanska have:

A code of conduct for employees and also suppliers and partners

A values led recruitment process, employees are very aware of the ethical standards and values prior to starting with Skanska

An ethics committee made up of very senior employees, including Harvey

Getting the company comfortable talking has been a real focus for Skanska, and the only way to truly embed a strong ethical culture in a business. Moving employees from being uncomfortable to comfortable talking about “difficult” topics has been driven in a number of ways including:

Including specific questions in the employee survey on this area

Looking at key indicators

Having a scorecard and roadmaps

A confidential hotline hosted by an external provider

Sharing “Value Moments” – these are case studies to generate debate on an ethical issue, these are a broad range of topics and recognise that it is difficult to talk about many of these things, but the more we talk, the more comfortable we become. Examples of these are accepting hospitality, and relationships at work.

A great example of how the senior management team are involved in a very practical way is that investigations are conducted into all issues raised through their confidential hotline, and many at senior levels.

One of the areas that seemed to really resonate and impress the group were the examples given to demonstrate that there really is consistency in approach and application. At Skanska it genuinely doesn't matter how senior, or valuable to the business you are, you will be dealt with in the same way. Whilst recent news around high profile figures in the public eye has highlighted that no one is immune, this certainly has not been the case until very recently and was the not the experience which most round the table had witnessed.

One question raised was whether this level of activity and zero tolerance gave employees at Skanska a feeling of comfort or has generated a culture of fear? Harvey felt it certainly wasn't a culture of fear, but recognised that their level of ethical standards was not right for everyone, and if it wasn't then it wasn't the employer for them.

So where next? Is it job done? Absolutely not Harvey assured us, there was still more to do and the bar is continually rising, now from ethical to moral. Many things that were acceptable 5-10 years ago, are just not now, but also the move is now from ethics to morals and this adds additional complications. Employees are generally more enlightened, you have the court of public opinion and everyone is entitled to their views – but what happens where these are not compatible?

It was clear that everyone around the table was very impressed with the ethical journey of Skanska and it was clear that this was a real passion for Harvey. It was great to see everyone contributing with their own experiences and challenges, and it was clear that they were all inspired by the results achieved in the sector in which Skanska operates and the complexity of its operations.

Harvey summed up by reminding us all of the key role which HR play by helping businesses deliver on their ethical promises and ensuring that standards are applied fairly and consistently right across the organisation.

Our exclusive HR Directors Boardroom discussions gives you unprecedented access to valuable business and professional contacts as well as providing you with unique opportunities to debate topical and strategic HR issues. We have dates in place for 2019 for the debates and well as essential Employment Law Updates.

Please email [hrnetworking@ashleykatehr.com](mailto:hrnetworking@ashleykatehr.com) to find out more or to book your place.



The flyer features a purple background on the left with white text and a black and white photograph of a woman presenting to a group of people in a classroom setting on the right. The text on the purple background includes the Ashley Kate HR & Finance logo, the name 'EVERSHEDS SUTHERLAND', and details for two event series: 'EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATES' and 'HR DIRECTORS BOARDROOM'. The dates and locations for each event are listed under their respective series.

**Ashley Kate**  
HR & Finance

**EVERSHEDS  
SUTHERLAND**

**EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATES**

**SPRING**  
Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May – Manchester  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May – Nottingham  
Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June – London  
Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June – Cambridge

**AUTUMN**  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November - Birmingham  
Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November - London  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November – Leeds

**HR DIRECTORS BOARDROOM**

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October - Cambridge  
Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October - London  
Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November - Nottingham  
Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November - Manchester



