



What values and beliefs connect us as humanity and can be disseminated across oceans, across boundaries, from community to community, to inspire and enable leaders to deliver a sustainable future?

## Chapter 2: The Caplor Project

# 2

## THE CAPLOR HORIZONS PROJECT

*"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."* Mother Teresa

### The Caplor Horizons concept

*"To bring about change, you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we fail to try."* Rosa Parks

Caplor Horizons' vision is *"a world in which social, environmental and economic progress is balanced"*. This goal, at face value, might seem unachievable – even impossible. However, it's worth remembering that over a relatively short period of time, human and social values have already changed dramatically. Only 175 years ago, slavery was still customary in the southern United States. 100 years ago, many women in the UK didn't have the right to vote. Only 50 years ago, the world wasn't aware of climate change and global warming. And it's only just over 25 years ago that South Africa held its first democratic elections, at last giving people of all races their say. At each point in the past, most people thought that change would be unachievable. And yet, here we are in the twenty-first century, in a changed world, incredulous that such things are such recent history.

But, as Martin Luther King (1994) stated in his open letter from Birmingham jail (over 50 years ago), "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere", and there is still a great imbalance in fairness and justice on a societal level across the globe.

So, at Caplor Horizons' conception stage, we started with the "why" question. Why does an organisation like Caplor Horizons need to exist? Why would it make a difference? Why would people support it? And why would it be valuable – in all the senses of that word?

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From the outset, we wanted to contribute to a movement for change. We sought to form an organisation that would influence other organisations to learn differently, think differently and act differently.

We wanted to make a distinctive impact, leading to greater social equity across the planet. We wanted to inspire and enable leaders to deliver a sustainable future.

This was our thinking: we appreciated that there were many individuals within society who were committed to making as big a difference as possible. We also appreciated that a great many of these, whilst having tremendous knowledge, experience, energy and commitment, lacked an effective and efficient opportunity (or means) to help other individuals and organisations make the changes necessary for a fairer world.

And so, we felt that if we could attract these people – practitioners, business leaders, entrepreneurs, academics and government officials – to our cause, we could form an organisation that would be able to provide an impressive knowledge bank of expertise, a wide variety of skill sets, real world experience and practical help.

We thought that if these people contributed their time on a voluntary basis, *pro bono*, then this new organisation would be able to provide professional skills and experienced knowledge to other charities and organisations that couldn't usually afford that level of expertise.

So, we sat down to define exactly what the “value proposition” of the organisation should be. Where it should be focused. And how it might go about helping to inspire and enable leaders, and future leaders, to deliver a sustainable future.

At an early stage, we agreed that the organisation's “value” would be built around the three elements of leadership, strategy and influence. And that, as a specialist in organisational effectiveness, it would focus on helping individuals, teams and organisations to contribute to meaningful, positive and effective long-term change in a challenging world.

And so Caplor Horizons was conceived.

We believed that effective leadership leads to effective strategy and effective influence. And that leaders can be anyone and everyone. We also believed that leaders help themselves and others do the right things. They help to set direction, create change, inspire and enable.

And we believed that leaders also need coaching and mentoring, and a good understanding of how to look after themselves, as well as their teams.

## How is Caplor Horizons different?

*“Imagine what a harmonious world it could be if every single person, both young and old shared a little of what they are good at doing.”* Quincy Jones

Right from the start, we knew that our vision of *“a world in which social, environmental and economic progress is balanced”* might seem unachievable to many people. We recognised that it’s easy to feel overwhelmed by the economic, political and societal forces that surround us. Faced by the world’s many challenges, how can we, as individuals, make a difference? After all, it’s simpler sometimes just to become indifferent.

In forming Caplor Horizons, we wanted to contribute to a cause that overcame that indifference. We wanted to introduce new ways of learning, new ways of thinking and new ways of acting that would open up shared searches for solutions to the many problems that our world faces.

We wanted to make people curious, as curiosity leads to finding out about things and thereby a better understanding of the many issues. This engagement leads to commitment and mutual value can be added through collaboration. Sustainable change can then be brought about through collective creativity and the whole cycle cascades to expand involvement and broaden results.

So, when setting out on our voyage, we imagined bringing individuals, teams and organisations together to contribute to a movement for positive change across all sectors.

We wanted to make connections between the academic thinking and writing of our experts, our preferred experiential learning approach and the practical, real-world experience of our clients and advisors.

We hoped that our distinctive approach to learning and development would be disseminated across boundaries, from community to community, to broaden our impact and help create a world in which social, environmental and economic progress is more balanced.

### Caplor Horizons' impact

*"Grace happens when we act with others on behalf of our world."* Joanna Macy

It would be easy to gloss over the early stages of getting the Caplor Horizons project "off the ground"! However, as with any new organisation in a "start-up" position, we spent a lot of time researching what other similar thinking organisations were doing, then talking through exactly what it was that we were trying to achieve that would be different, drafting several business plans (that slowly improved with each iteration!), prototyping ideas, getting people engaged, building momentum and gaining traction.

Nonetheless, within a short time of its formation, Caplor Horizons had begun collaborations with many other charities. It had worked extensively with other organisations in sub-Saharan Africa, helping to put knowledge and learning at the heart of development. It had embarked upon a number of strategic partnerships in India, working to reduce poverty. It had worked with students and lecturers at the United World College, to develop programmes for future leaders. It had produced over 200 downloadable resources and thought leadership papers, aimed at a global audience and with the purpose of inspiring and enabling change. It had established a core of 50 Advisors who contributed nearly 1,000 days of their time per year. And its regular "Updates", providing information, facts and learning, reached people in 30 different countries around the globe every week.

This was a small start. However, as with ripples on a pond, the impact of Caplor Horizons' work continues to spread outwards. Our influence emanates from an initial impetus that then creates ripples of effect. Firstly, at an *individual level* involving the personal learning of the people who work with us; then at an *organisational level*, as we help to improve organisational practice; and finally, at a *societal level* in the wider world, as more effective organisational practice leads to a more sustainable future.



### **Caplor Horizons' Theory of Change**

## What do we do?

We believe that the ability to learn – quickly and thoroughly – underpins all successful leadership and all successful change. The most effective leaders are constantly learning, challenging themselves and others to grow, develop and improve. They use experience, both positive and negative, as a spur to move forward and drive change in knowledge, behaviours and attitudes.

We see this learning journey, both for ourselves and everyone that we work with, as a voyage.

Very early on this was reflected within our brand imagery – our sailing ship (to take people with us on the voyage); our crow's nest (to see further over the horizon); our "vision" compass (to ensure that we never lost sight of our purpose); our lighthouse (to see through the fog of everyday problems); our "voyage map" (to remind ourselves where we were heading and what was important); and the "islands" that we would land on as we explored the best navigational path.

We want to actively support leaders and organisations in their learning. We believe that learning is about being creative, igniting new ideas within each other to enrich knowledge and understanding of ourselves, others and society. And that learning is about growing skills and an awareness of the world which we live in and want to sustain.

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We therefore offer stimulating and exciting learning opportunities to a broad range of people. Learning that is relevant to them and that shines a light on future possibilities.

As a result, Caplor Horizons has developed many tools and models that help other organisations to learn differently, think differently and act differently. Many of these are based on established research themes, academic concepts and the work of prominent thinkers.

Some of our most distinctive tools, approaches and models include:

- **The Caplor House**, a model that provides insights into behavioural preferences, developed by Ann Alder and Geoff Cox from the work of Ned Herrmann – read chapter three for more information.
- **A strengths-based approach**, an approach inspired by Charles Handy’s saying: “do the best at what you are best at for the benefit of others”. It involves working with individuals, teams and organisations to identify what they are best at, how they can build on these going forward and how they can work towards their goals through harnessing and developing their strengths.
- **The Caplor Voyage Board**, a tool for plotting exactly where you are on your voyage so far, and what compass heading you need to follow to achieve your objectives going forwards – read chapter five for more information.
- **The Caplor Islands**, a model for leading strategic change based on John Kotter’s 8 Steps – read chapter five for more information.
- **The Caplor Culture Tree**, a model for helping to define, manage and strengthen an organisation’s culture, based on thinking from Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes, as well as ideas from Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn – read chapter nine for more information.
- **Human Horizons**, an online tool based on the latest insights from Clive Hyland about the complex world of neuroscience when analysing our thoughts, feelings and instincts – read chapter seven for more information.

- **The Six Senses of Teamwork and Partnership**, a means of analysing team and partnership effectiveness developed from the research findings of John Adair – read chapter nine for more information.

By widely sharing these tools and models via the “Voyage”, our online resource website, we hope to create common understanding, common goals – *a world where social, environmental and economic progress is more balanced* – and a common language that contributes to a greater willingness to learn from each other.

And then pass that knowledge on, with the overall aim of bringing about positive and lasting change by uniting people and ideas

## Caplor Horizons’ approach to sustainable development

From the very beginning “*helping to ensure a sustainable future for our world*” influenced everything that we did. Inspired by John Elkington’s “triple bottom line” (people, planet, profit), the 5Ps of the Sustainable Development Goals (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships) and the Brundtland Report’s (1987) definition of sustainability, we have defined sustainability in a way that allows us to focus on where we believed that we could make an impact:

- **Purpose** – The north star of our vision compass symbolises our guiding principles. It entails viewing all our stakeholders as valued members of our Caplor community, working towards shared goals and a common purpose
- **People** – tackling social injustice, addressing inequalities and promoting human rights wherever possible
- **Planet** – treading softly on the Earth’s resources in as many ways as possible, looking after our fragile ecosystems and controlling our use of natural resources that future generations will depend on
- **Prosperity** – ensuring that all human beings can enjoy equitable and fulfilling lives in harmony with nature





***Caplor Horizons' 4Ps of sustainability***

Wherever we live and work on this planet, we can all share a common aim, to enable the people, animals and plants of the world to thrive and live together, preserving our resources for future generations. We understand that there is no simple formula for achieving this, but we are of the firm belief that education and leadership are key. And that contributing to a growing understanding of the many systemic and interconnected issues that can either enable or destroy our sustainable future is a worthwhile goal.

Through working collaboratively with other organisations, we address issues around diversity, equality and human rights. We examine the unconscious biases that we all have and how these can sometimes negatively impact fundamental equalities. And we also explore ways in which we can help to develop communities, social groups and organisations so that they can sustain themselves into the future, without depending on external support.

We involve ourselves with the challenges surrounding the use and preservation of the Earth's natural resources, the ability of the planet to renew itself, the damaging impact of human activity on the natural world and the need for the replacement of outdated technology with

new, sustainable solutions. And we encourage people to think in ways that consider the long-term effects of their short-term actions.

We aim to support the development of ideas that contribute to a sustainable future, even if there is a short-term cost. One of our key objectives, therefore, is to help other organisations achieve sustainable change through renewing their strategy, strengthening their leadership and improving their influence.

## A commentary on Caplor Horizons

### **by Charles Handy**

Charles Handy has a global reputation for being one of the leading thinkers of our time and has been proactively supporting Caplor Horizons since it was established.

Charles Handy was born and raised near Naas in Ireland and now lives in London. He is a social philosopher, writer, broadcaster and lecturer. He regularly features among the top names in 'Thinkers50', the list of international management thinkers, and in 2011 was awarded his first Lifetime Achievement Award. Charles was the first significant international authority on organisations and leadership, with over two million books sold around the world, mostly dealing with the future shape of work and life in our changing society.

Below summarises a conversation with Charles in early 2020 about his involvement with, and thoughts relating to, Caplor Horizons. The conversation also covers his most recent insights on other topics mentioned later on in the book such as the soul of an organisation, the best ways for organisations to stay relevant in today's everchanging world, his advice to the younger generation, and how to reduce the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss.

The conversation took place at Charles's home, sat by his fire.

### **What did you think about Caplor Horizons in its early stages?**

*Well, Caplor Horizons, I thought it was a wonderful idea really and I do congratulate you for discovering what you wanted to do.*

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*Many people, either themselves or their organisations, are on the brink of what I call a second curve, rethinking their mission and how they're going to go about it. And I do think that expanding your horizons is an incredible and very important part of that.*

*Asking lots of people who may not know you very well to give you ideas may spark all sorts of things. I don't know who particularly sparked Caplor Horizons but the idea of people giving their time is not new. But giving their time in such an organised way to help voluntary organisations seems to be rather inspired really. It was sort of a business-like approach to non-business organisations which I liked.*

*From what I have seen myself about Caplor Horizons' work on the ground, it's basically about lighting a spark in an organisation. Like this fire. You know, you press a button and it suddenly fires up and I think that that's what your Caplor teams do. They suddenly get people excited so that they can be more exciting as an organisation and deliver more exciting things. And that's very exciting to be part of.*

### **How would you describe your story of involvement with Caplor Horizons?**

*When we met Caplor Horizons, Elizabeth and I, we understood it was a volunteer consultancy organisation that went out to the developing world mostly to help voluntary organisations with their strategies and so on. To be honest, it did seem worthy and good, but I can't say we were very excited with the thought. Particularly my wife Elizabeth who's a photographer and fascinated by people, but not that fascinated with managerial ideas. She was a great organiser and manager, but she didn't like the words related to that. However, when we got to Caplor Horizons people were drawing pictures and talking about what they did when she photographed them. I interviewed them a bit and we produced a booklet and it came alive.*

*Because in the end organisations are groups of companions – companions with a common purpose. But above all they are people, interesting people, or they wouldn't be valued. So, when we found out what their interests were and what they contributed, suddenly everything came alive. So Caplor Horizons wasn't just a name and an idea, it was a group of fascinating people. Suddenly it was always a thrill to meet some of them.*

**Early April 2020 marks the sixth birthday of Caplor Horizons: reflecting on the following poem by A.A. Milne, do you think this has any relevance to Caplor Horizons or any organisation reaching this milestone?**

**When I was One, I had just begun.**

**When I was Two, I was nearly new**

**When I was Three, I was hardly Me**

**When I was Four, I was not much more**

**When I was Five, I was just alive**

**But now I am Six, I'm as clever as clever.**

**So, I think I'll be six now for ever and ever**

***Now we are Six by A.A. Milne***

*Well yes in the sense that I think all organisations when they reach this early midlife have to think of themselves as perpetual explorers. Perpetual young kids. Young people are curious and young organisations soon cease to be curious because they go up to the first curve and become successful and think that they've got it now, we've got the model. But I think that's dangerous. I mean I do actually remember when you produced your Caplor House model, I thought "hmm this is a bit dangerous". Not because it isn't good, but because it stops you from making another one.*

*And I say the great thing about being six forever and ever is that you're forever asking questions. Quite fundamental questions like, "why did God create the world?" or "why do we exist?" and "would we exist if we didn't exist?" and so on. So, don't lose your curiosity just because you're successful.*

*But it's very tempting. Both as individuals and as organisations. Very tempting once you've got through that early stage of doubt and insecurity and found that it does work. You think "ahh it's okay I've got the recipe". Well you have, but it may not be the best recipe. And so asking people questions like you're asking me is a very good discipline I think.*

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**What ‘second curves’ might Caplor Horizons consider over the next three years and, in particular, what do you think might be the biggest opportunities and risks during this time?**

*Well I’m the wrong person to ask. You ought to ask yourselves. However, if I were to say something, I’d say that I don’t think you’ve plumbed the possibilities within your organisation enough.*

*It seems to me that your project teams, I’d like to know what dreams they have. Because they know roughly what Caplor Horizons is capable of. I think dreams are very interesting things. Unless you’re Martin Luther King, it’s not your dream that matters, it’s the dreams that come from within the organisation. And it’s worth asking them “in their wildest dreams what do they think Caplor Horizons should be doing?”. My children always used to say, “dreams give wings to fools”, but I actually think that’s okay. I think you can be foolish, just as children are foolish.*

*So I’d ask them to come for another gathering and this time talk about dreams. Think as unrealistically as possible because dreams don’t have to be real. “What in your wildest dreams would you like to see Caplor Horizons doing?” You have some very capable people in your organisation, but I don’t think you are using their dreams and curiosity enough.*

**What is the best way for organisations to measure and demonstrate their successes?**

*I remember once I gave a talk and John Humphreys was in the chair at this conference and afterwards he turned to every speaker and asked them questions, you know. And I wasn’t worried about that because I know John quite well from my radio talks I used to do but John catches you unawares. So he turned to me after my talk and he said “well Charles, you’ve given advice to many organisations, how many of them have actually done anything as a result?” and I couldn’t answer the question. So what I did in the end was that I answered a different question. I said that I don’t advise organisations. I work with individuals who hopefully do something different as a result in the organisation. I don’t keep statistics, but I can tell you some stories. And I can imagine you have lots of stories. And I think that’s the most interesting way of convincing people that you’ve got something important to offer. You ought to have two or three stories up your sleeve to show how your intervention has actually changed things around or made things more exciting.*

*For example, “when we arrived everybody was rushing around, it was a very busy organisation, but it was a boxy organisation. Everyone was busy in their own box. And someone had written down for them what to do in those boxes. But they weren’t talking to each other. The boxes were on paper all linked up like an organisation chart. The fact that these boxes were full of human beings seemed to have escaped their notice. And one of our great triumphs when we left was that they were singing a song and they were connected and working together. When we arrived, it was all busy but boring and when we left it was busy but joyful.” Make it as personal as you can.*

*You do need some numbers to show that people wanted your intervention. But stories are actually the only way you can convey what it is you do. You could have lots of boring managerial words like “communication” and so on. But you need to bring it alive with a story. And simple words like a “boxy organisation” help people know what you mean, don’t use managerial words. And the more personal you can make it the better. Give people a feel of what you do. And metaphors are very important. It’s what Luther King and Churchill were very good at. Finding metaphors that catch people’s interests.*

**What do you think the soul of an organisation is all about and how can it thrive if you think it’s a valid idea?**

*I think you know from your experience when you walk into an organisation. You sort of feel “this is a good place to be” or “this is an exciting place to be” or “this is a very dull place”. I mean I always say if you want to cheer yourself up go into an English primary school in the early morning and you feel the joy and excitement and thrill of learning that’s in the room. It’s just a feeling actually. And so the soul of an organisation is a kind of feeling that drives you on, why you’re there. In the primary school you’re there for these kids.*

*You must feel that when you go into an organisation. I remember going into an organisation in India with Caplor Horizons and feeling that this is a very laborious organisation full of worthy people doing worthy things. It wasn’t until they started talking about what they did everyday and I got to understand what drove them that it became clear that it was quite an exciting organisation. So suddenly you discovered that there was a soul there and a heart. Something that they felt was important to them.*

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*But it's a feeling really and I don't think you can find words. People write vision statements and so on but I don't think that's it. Unless you're Martin Luther King it's very hard to find the right words to describe dreams and so on. But it's a feeling. And its captured mostly by stories. People will say "well I remember the time that we went to this Indian organisation and it wasn't until people started talking about their own experiences that it came alive".*

*And as I say, I think what Caplor Horizons really does, at its best, is set the spark that gets the fire going. And that's probably just by talking with people. People love to talk about what they're doing. And I'm sure one of the things you could get them to do more is that. And getting them to talk in the semi-public and they'll resonate with it or not. I thought it was very exciting that morning it really did come alive.*

*Another example is Jaipur Rugs, who I visited with you last year. You had to see the women weaving to understand what they're all about. They were really about two things. One was making the rugs and the other, more importantly, was about giving meaningful work to the women in the villages. You had to be there to find it. It's hard to find the right words for it. I mean to me it was so revealing I can never forget it. It's so obvious to me that they were about making these rugs with these wonderful women who were all so beautifully dressed. And I thought that there's something about organisations where the women dress up to go to work, it was very moving.*

*I remember, I'm sure they don't do it anymore, but Marks and Spencer used to have a tradition when the Chairman and the top management team would meet every morning for their regular routine management meeting, the first thing they did was pass around an item of clothing just to remind themselves what they were all about. They were about high-quality clothing for the middle classes. It was just this is what we're all about. And I think you need to have visible, tangible evidence of what it's all about and stories help.*

*I had a very interesting time in hospital. I remember lecturing the more senior nurse about the curse of efficiency. They were so keen on improving efficiency that they'd forgotten why they were here. And why they were here was to help me get better. And they seemed to have forgotten that and they were trying to make you behave like a robot and get up at a certain time and eat certain food and so on. I said the danger is of course an organisation has to be efficient, it has to work well we all know that, but there's such a thing that philosophers call a*

*“category error”. If you take what is a necessary condition and make it into your purpose you have made a category error. It’s very easy to do because it’s very easy to improve efficiency and to make things work better like getting rid of a few people, you can tighten up targets on certain areas, you can improve communication or shorten waiting times. It’s very easy if you know where your benchmark is. But in the process, you forget why you’re there. So you need people like me around to say “hey you’re here for me”.*

*Businesses have to make a profit to survive, but it probably becomes their purpose, so they lose the spark. They’ve made a necessary condition into a purpose. This is very dangerous and it’s so easy to do. Particularly if you’re a consultant. Because you see things that aren’t working very well, like people not talking to one another, and you think if we can do that then we’ve done a great deal. Well yes you have, but you may have missed the point.*

*The most important person in an organisation is the receptionist. They are the first person that nearly all of the outsiders meet. So they’re incredibly important. If they’re friendly and welcoming and interesting then that gives a flavour of the organisation. I remember once when I was still working for the BBC they handed over the reception to Securicor. And you’d walk into the BBC and there would be people with guns on the reception desk. That gave you a funny feeling about the organisation. But when I pointed out “doesn’t that matter” they said there needed to be a security force and I said “well yes but that’s not the image of the BBC that you want to present to strangers is it?” So that’s all about the feel, you know.*

*One of the first things I think you should do when your teams visit an organisation is that they should record their first impressions of the organisation and feed them back and say this is what we felt when we walked in. “This is a cold, efficient but inhuman place” or whatever. Because most of the organisations you work with are engaged in the people world so they must be welcoming. And it takes time. I mean with Caplor Horizons we eventually got the feeling that it was an exciting organisation, but it took quite a long time to dig through all the words and the managerial stuff until people started talking about their own experiences.*



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**We are living in a complex, volatile, ever changing world, what strategies or tips would you give to organisations to remain relevant in this complex world?**

*It's easy to say, but difficult to practise, but remaining curious. You need to be doing what other organisations are doing. Keep your eyes open all the time. And your ears open. Organisations are fascinating things; you can get ideas from all sorts of places if you think how they go about things.*

*I think it's very important that you become what I call a "learning organisation". By which I don't mean you have lots of courses and so on, I mean you should know how to learn from your experiences. I think that real learning is experience interpreted in tranquillity and reflected upon away from the actual experience. That's how we learn in real life. We have an experience and say we won't do that again or we could've done that better.*

*But in order to do that you have to have a blame free culture. For example, the American Seals have a very detailed debriefing procedure after every operation which is totally confidential and totally blame free so that they can actually say "well I made a terrible mistake there", "I fired my gun when I shouldn't have" or whatever. So you could actually say I made a mistake. But it's very difficult.*

*You're in a great position to do that exact sort of thing and in the process, you develop a wonderful comradeship amongst your teams. Everybody loves it when someone makes a mistake and you have this great comradeship and so on. I discovered when I became a professor and started giving talks to students that they loved it when I told them about my mistakes. They didn't want to know what I had achieved. So you develop a great comradeship and trust in the group. You have to trust them that they won't spill the beans and say "do you know what so and so told me". You create this kind of trust. And you will see this permeate the whole organisation.*

**In your opinion, what do you think a next generation organisation looks like?**

*Well, I think the word they throw around is "agile". I prefer "flexi" really. It's interesting, I was reading somewhere in the paper about "flexi-schools". Where there is a coordinating hub but basically they use all sorts of different mechanisms to get the kids learning things they ought*

*to learn. Some are contracted out to people, some are linked up with other schools, some they create mini-schools, some they hire in experts or whatever.*

*But I think that new organisations can no longer do everything themselves. I mean when I first joined the Shell organisation everything had Shell on it. Shell was totally integrated. Even the people who furnished our houses were Shell employees. It's incredibly expensive of course because they all had to be paid Shell pensions and so on. But the idea was that everything would be Shell. But it worked much better when they became more flexi. I think that's what's going to happen. But the stress will be how do you hold the whole thing together? You can have all the communication systems you like, but what really holds you together is this feeling of "soul", why we're here. It's all about why we're here really. Who are we trying to help?*

**What advice would you have to young people in their careers, given the challenges involved?**

*Dream! Think of times in your life when you were excited or felt inspired. I have this thing about everyone having a "golden seed" within them which is something they are very good at. And somebody will know what it is but probably not you. So keep asking your friends what your golden seed is, what your special skill or talent is. Go and talk to ten of your friends or colleagues that know you well and like you and ask them to tell you one thing you're very good at and then come back and tell me what it is.*

*I remember doing this with an advertising executive who had just been made redundant. And he did this and came back and said, "it's very interesting Charles, they said all sorts of wonderful things about me but no one said advertising executive". So I said, "well it's time for you to move on". But look at all these things you're good at, group leadership, communication etc. Dream a little, put those things together in some other capacity. It turned out that he was also very interested in military history. So I suggested that he should set up an organisation touring battlefields and so on. Which of course he didn't do because he couldn't find a way to make money out of it. But now that he's retired that's what he does. And he's doing very well. So he did it in the end. But you need help putting it all together.*

*Go and tell all your young leaders to find ten friends and get them to tell you one thing about what you're good at and you'll be very surprised what it is and then try to translate what it*

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*means. You may need help with the next bit or how you put it together with something to make a career or a job.*

*I tell a famous story about my mother which I'll tell you again. I was born as the son of a country parson in Ireland. And I knew my parents wanted me to be like my dad and be a country parson and maybe, if I was very successful, I'd be a Bishop or something. But they never tried to influence me and anyway I didn't want to do that, I wanted to get rich and roam the world. So I joined Shell, a big international organisation that promised to make me rich and would keep me employed and send me around the world. I don't know what they thought that was. They had no idea. I think they probably thought I was going to be putting petrol into people's cars. Anyway, my first job was going to be in Singapore so they drove me to the airport and as I got out of the car my mother said "never mind dear, it'll be great material for your books". "Books?!" I said "mother, I'm an oil executive". And she said, "yes dear" but when mothers say that you know they mean "no dear". And you know so ten years later I sent her a copy of my first book. Somehow she knew, I don't know how, that I really wanted to be a writer or could be a writer. So somebody will know before you do. Somebody will tell you "actually you're just so good at understanding what people feel about you ought to be a social psychologist", who knows.*

*The most exciting thing about development for young people is that most of the jobs that will exist haven't been invented yet. So this is a huge area of opportunity it just needs creativity. It doesn't have to be a business, you can get paid for doing all sorts of stuff. And genes are very important. I never became a country parson but I have delivered more sermons than my father ever did and I've counselled more people than my father ever did, not in the vestry but at my breakfast table and I've written more articles than he ever did, I just never ran the services.*

**Climate change and biodiversity loss is very big in the world at the moment. What are you feeling about that and what should we be doing about it?**

*Well, it all seems to be very simple really. It just needs governments to pluck up the courage to do something and pass laws. You know, like we won't have any internal combustion engines after 2050. But you see governments are very unhappy about taking risks because they must win the next election. So there's a huge role for people like you, and to some extent people like me, to get the public ready for new change.*

*Like they could actually be bold and stop smoking because there was a campaign which basically alerted the public to the dangers of smoking and so when they passed the law everybody said “that’s very sensible so we know what we have to do, stop smoking”.*

*So I think we are the sort of revolutionaries that go out and prepare people for major change in legislation because it’s got to be by legislation, and technology too. But it seems to be quite easy really if you just think “what laws do we need to say”. You could say no gas fires or fossil fuels and make it illegal.*

*I think the first thing is to make Britain car free. Nobody’s allowed cars. And how do you do that. Well you make all public transport free for everybody – not just for oldies like me! And then it makes it sensible for people. But for that to happen we do need thinktanks and so on to start plugging the idea of free transport everywhere. I mean in Ireland, once, they did do that. So my parents used to go on train journeys across Ireland just for the hell of it and they loved it and it was free. I’m sure it was a good thing to do. It just needs courage by governments.*

*But I can understand why they’re frightened. I would wish that they use this conference in Glasgow (COP26) to dream a little about a car free world, not by persuasion but by law. Persuasion has to come first however. I mean the first duty of the Government is to educate people about the future. But they don’t do it very well so it falls to people like you and me in our different ways.*

*For example, earlier on I was very sure that the future of unemployment was self-employment. But it took some time. I remember Andrew Marr coming to interview me. And he was on the radio and I tried to persuade him that to create employment we had to have radical change to self-employment and I came up with this idea of “portfolio careers”. And at the end of it Andrew stood up and he said “I’ve had a very interesting talk this morning with Charles Handy who believes self-employment is the answer to unemployment. And I went to the window and saw a flock of pigs flying by, it’s never going to happen.” And I was furious with him. And I mean, I was right and he was wrong about it. It gradually caught on. I came up with a portfolio career as an alternative. First of all middle aged people, instead of retirement, adopted other forms of work in self-employment. And then the young people discovered it. And now of course we have the gig economy and everyone has work to do.*

## CHAPTER 2: THE CAPLOR PROJECT

*So, to get what you might call paradigm shifts you do have to have some wild thinking and then the mechanisms to make it happen and the words to make it happen. And that's the job for people like me and you and your organisation. To make the impossible seem practical is really what you're about when your teams go out.*

**Lastly, is there anything we should have asked you or any last comments?**

*I think in some sense you ought to do more dreaming the impossible and making it practical in your overseas work and indeed your work here.*

*I don't see you changing the world. I think, rather like me, you have to work through other organisations and get them to change the world. And I think on their own they will know what they need to do. It seemed to be quite clear in India that they knew what they needed to do. But they didn't quite know how to do it. Well they did really, but they didn't know they knew. They had the expertise in that room, and what was needed was for you to give them the confidence, the spark, to know that they could do it and to be curious and experimental.*

*And that's why learning from mistakes is so important. Because you can't dream the impossible unless you're prepared to do the impossible and make a mistake and learn from it. It's very exciting. So I would encourage you to dream the impossible in all of your work to make it practical and the more mistakes the better, because that's the only way you actually learn. You learn your limits and you learn your excitement. And learning from mistakes creates comradeship and trust.*

*And I'm sure you have enough dreams around if you dig deep enough. You get people to be curious enough and exciting enough.*

*It's about finding out what the real soul of the organisation is and that's about why they exist and for what and for whom. And then having these landmark stories that you say "why Caplor Horizons?" and you say, "have you ever seen a group of African ladies dancing because of their organisation, well I have and it's exciting".*

*I do remember in Malawi too these women in this village, I remember watching this case study under the trees and it was lovely and at the end of it, to celebrate their learning, they danced and sang a song, it was sweet. And you thought if everybody within an organisation can dance after a session that would be wonderful. What is it that these people have that we don't have*

*back in England? I mean if you start telling those stories and can produce a photograph people will get excited.*

*But I like the metaphor of setting the fire alight. Because I do think that's what you do even if it's not what you say you do. You talk about planning and strategy and all this kind of stuff, but I don't think that's as exciting as getting people excited about what they do. And singing about it, that's great.*

## **Chapter Two: The Caplor Horizons Project**

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