



2022

**SPACE**  
EXECUTIVE

# Women in Business Series

Celebrating and Learning from Inspiring Women  
in Leadership



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# Introduction

Welcome to our 2022 edition of Celebrating Women in Business. Women account for 47% of the current global labour force, however the UK and Singapore represent a higher proportion, with the female employment rate in the UK standing at 72% and in Singapore it is 57%.

Looking at directorship and company ownership it's interesting to consider that 36% of small businesses worldwide owned by women and within the UK women account for 34% of all board directors. This is encouraging although there is still room for improvement to match France and Norway where women account for over 44% of all board directors. While the FTSE 100 only has 9 women CEOs, in Singapore women hold 13.1% of CEO positions in Singapore, the highest in the world.

As part of the celebration for Women's Equality day, we interviewed women who have contributed to business including a Women in Product Award winner, a CEO and someone who shifted from a large corporate to make a difference within an SME. Our interviews celebrate the individual success stories of the women, and while each story is unique there are certain themes which bring them together.

Each one has benefited from supportive employers, recognised what they enjoy and what they are good at and been open to opportunities. They have also all given something back either in the form of mentoring or supporting other women.#

The interviews span a range of industries and job types; hopefully they provide the inspiration and celebration of what can be achieved by women in business today.

Marek Danyluk  
CEO Space Executive

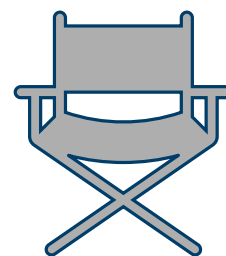
# Key Trends

During our conversations with our inspiring women leaders, there were some key trends that we found. These takeaways can be used as useful advice for our readers if you're looking to take that next step in your career or wondering how you can make an impact.



Build a network to expand your reach. Provides you with an opportunity to meet a wide variety of individuals and expand your knowledge

Get yourself a sponsor/mentor who you can call upon for advice. This can be one or multiple people that are able to open door for you or provide advice



Embody a growth mindset – be willing to expand your horizons and learn skills outside of the development opportunities your employer offers

Be brave and confident to take that next step. Astonishingly almost 75% of women feel Impostor Syndrome however there are ways to overcome this

# Sue Chapple FCICM

## Chief Executive Officer, Chartered Institute of Credit Management



As part of Space Executive's 'Celebrating Women in Business' we spoke to Sue Chapple, CEO of Chartered Institute of Credit Management (CICM) about how she shaped her career to become the leader of one of the UK's leading professional bodies.

### Personal experiences and a confession:

We knew it would be an exciting conversation when Sue started off with a confession! Sue said, "The first thing I have to confess is that I never had a plan! I'd like to say that each role was a natural stepping stone that has culminated in me becoming a CEO, but I have to be honest and say all my roles have come organically to me." She mentioned however, that **each role provided a rich source of experiences and learning opportunities** which have allowed her to continuously develop herself.

Like many of us, it's hard to know what you want to be at an early age. Sue was confident that she always wanted to be a teacher, however, as she progressed, her ambitions changed through a series of experiences. **She always had a strong work ethic** to achieve what she wanted, juggling two paper rounds and working in the fruit and veg shop while she was at school on Saturdays, a shoe shop on Sundays and this has always remained.

During our conversation we discovered further **interesting characteristics that Sue possessed in her early years** which have contributed to her career success. Sue remembered a moment recently where she found diaries of sums from her weekend jobs where she would plan how much she'd need to spend against what she earnt. She has always been of the mindset that you get back what you put in.

## Showcasing resilience and key life influencers:

When she left school at 16, university wasn't an option, and with the high levels of unemployment at the time, she took the initiative to apply to 12 local banks to join as a Junior Clerk with mere mock results under her belt. She was offered roles at five banks and decided to join TSB. During her time as a junior clerk, Sue enthused herself into the role, taking on any task given and learning any job thrown her way. Sue recalled, "In fact on my first day I was still in the bank at 6.30pm; when the Bank Manager, Mr Coke, enquired why I was still there, I responded that I was waiting for permission to leave."

Without being prompted, Sue reflected that Mr Coke was one of the biggest influences in her working life. Sue explained "He helped me to understand that being enthusiastic, interested and diligent were just as important to learning as being academic. He supported me in taking my banking exams and understanding the fundamentals around credit and debt."

This proved a valuable tool, as Sue joined South West Water managing the accounts centre and call centre, just as the impacts of the Water Reform Bill were being felt. Suddenly the water companies could no longer turn off or threaten to turn off water if people went into debt. During her time at South West Water, Sue met her second biggest influencer, Ken Hill the Finance Director. Sue explained "He suggested it would be worthwhile joining a professional body so that I could begin to network with similar people and ensure I was keeping myself up to date on credit management. That was my first introduction to the CICM."

## Building up valuable skills and experience:

Sue continued to work within the utilities industry, heading up client services at Severn Trent Water, Senior Client Manager at Convergys and Head of Revenue Management at EDF Energy. She was also part of a joint venture (JV) with the Cabinet Office. Sue reflected "All these roles were centered around things I enjoyed: dealing with people and helping to solve problems."

# Sue Chapple FCICM, CEO, Chartered Institute of Credit Management (CICM)

## The making of a CEO:

Having been a longstanding member of the professional body by now, Sue was delighted when the opportunity to actually work for CICM came about in 2018 – Philip King, the CEO at the time – was looking for someone to grow the institutes strategic relationships, working with members clients and partners. Sue recalls, this felt like a dream job, I couldn't believe that I was so lucky as to do something I loved (speaking to people!!) for my own professional body and get paid to do it! A shock came at the start of 2020, when Philip moved on and Sue was asked to step in as Acting CEO – a position she had never even thought about, never mind aspired to! Being formally appointed at the beginning of March 2020, heralded a whole new chapter as the world entered the pandemic.

Sue's leadership skills were put to the test immediately, having to take a radical view on what the strategy for the professional body would be when people weren't able to come into the office, exam centres couldn't open, and members couldn't meet up. She said, "The result was as a team we had to rethink how we protected the revenues and protected our reputation." They moved from a physical to a virtual approach, with online exam centres and proctoring for our professional exams, linking members in different ways and using Teams to keep our team connected. Sue explained that they became focused on how they could deliver value to members in the most effective way, culminating in the move to modern fit-for-purpose offices in Peterborough earlier this year.

We found it fascinating when Sue revealed that although she is a CEO, she has never been particularly ambitious; highlighting that she has "always been reliable and diligent, people know that if I say I will do something then it will get done. I have also been flexible, using my skills to take on new challenges and roles."

## Final words of advice:

The CICM values are: Brave, Curious, Resilient – I firmly believe these are effective values for life – be brave, take that step out of your comfort zone, say yes to that event, activity; be curious – never stop asking 'why' and above all be resilient – the sun will come out tomorrow and the majority of things that are keeping you awake today, will not matter this time next year.

# Deepika Murthy

## Manager of Pricing and Platform at GoJek



With Deloitte's prediction that women in technology at global firms will be accounting for a third of all roles, we are pleased to celebrate the success of Deepika Murthy, Manager of Pricing & Platform at GoJek, who took time out of her busy diary to talk to us about her experiences.

### Background, early career and the step to success:

Throughout Deepika's career, she has been fortunate enough to be supported and encouraged by both male and female bosses. Although she recognises that not everyone is as fortunate and has learnt that part of her success is preparing yourself for both your current role and future role. Deepika stated that she understood that in many circumstances it's very difficult to see beyond the role you're in and that's why she said, "speaking to others and building your network is so important because the conversations you have given you fresh perspectives and allow you to expand your horizons." In many situations it's difficult to see if there is better out there and whether the workplace, you're in is really the right fit for you culture or growth wise. That's why Deepika's advice is to "always trust your gut", she encourages everyone to speak to others and ensure you don't stay stagnant in your career but instead challenge yourself and take mindful risks to grow.

Deepika discovered her talent for maths at school which biased her choice of engineering versus medicine at university. Remarkably she knew that the natural fit for her career choice would be engineering, thus defining her career. This showcases the need to play to your strengths when considering your career path and her advice would be to avoid blindly following others' opinions if you know within yourself that a certain route is your passion. To this point, Deepika said "it's interesting that when I look back, the things I was taught at university weren't that helpful in the real world. I have found that continuously learning on the job and pursuing a growth mindset provides far more useful skills." It's about going out there and getting the skills because you can truly master anything if you put the time and effort in.



# Deepika Murthy, Manager of Pricing and Platform at GoJek

We learnt Deepika's new magical word which is 'yet'. She explained "rather than saying I'm not good at this, change it to say I'm not good at this YET and you'll see the impact this has on your feeding your growth mindset and knowing that anything that you want can be done, just in good time."

Going back to her early career, Deepika was recruited for her first role from the University to a start-up called Ittiam, this was a company formed by ex-leads of Texas Instruments. They were well funded and considered pioneers in their field, and as an engineer she worked on the design and development of chip level programme hardware for MPEG2 and MPEG4 Video Encoding. This work of low-level programming set the foundation for perseverance and problem solving as resolving bugs was a slow process revisiting fundamentals. Remaining within the role and company, she was successfully promoted to Senior Engineer after 3 years.

## Perks of a start-up and going the extra mile:

"Being part of a start-up team was exciting and when I moved to Singapore, I joined Cinemacraft, another start-up." As a software engineer, Deepika continued to use her expertise in video technologies while also developing other skills in product and design as part of the 5-person start-up, and then she moved to Viki. Deepika's transition to Viki is incredibly inspiring because she had a very short period of time to find another job to keep her visa because the Cinemacraft role moved to Tokyo.

Despite searching for positions in video start-ups, Deepika found she was unable to find any positions that would suit her experience at Viki. She sent a blind email to the CTO and recruiter stating her skills and providing her CV and that they could benefit from her skillset, and she received a response back within an hour! In the interview itself, Deepika was asked whether she could solve specific challenges they were facing, and she responded "yes, but you have to hire me first".

# Deepika Murthy, Manager of Pricing and Platform at GoJek

Deepika showed confidence in her abilities; strangely however, she didn't hear from Viki and despite her attempts to contact them via email and given her visa situation, she had a "nothing to lose" attitude. In her last email, she told them that she would drop by the office to try and catch someone due to the urgency on her part to make a decision. Her strategy paid off because she was able to catch the CTO on the staircase, and they agreed to hire her. Deepika's journey demonstrates a resilient and determined mindset that all of us can learn from and apply to our own careers.

"It was at Viki that I was further supported by my boss to develop my skill set and move into a product manager role." Deepika saw a shift away from her hands-on engineering which meant she had to develop both her leadership and people management skills. During this time, she also became involved with personnel issues, working with the HR team to ensure a more equal approach to the workforce, particularly around maternity leave and return to work. Deepika found it encouraging that the company worked with the women to see how they could level up the maternity leave policy and provide dedicated space and facilities for returning-to-work mothers.

It was during this period that Deepika also became the Chapter Lead for Women in Product. A global organisation designed to help women navigate their careers and prepare for starting new roles. Deepika explained, "It is a very collegiate set-up where we share experiences and help each other, whether that's practising an interview, dealing with specific work issues, or considering scenarios. Being able to help younger women consider what they want out of their career has been hugely rewarding and I am proud of the way our women are ready to help each other." Being part of this extra-curricular organisation enabled her to seek support and advice that otherwise wasn't openly available.

## The impact of mentoring:

Having a mentor can make a huge difference to the way you develop and when Deepika joined Gojek, she became actively involved in the mentoring programme. Deepika faced a huge challenge at this time as she started her role just as Covid hit, which meant she was joining a new company, managing a new team and understanding new processes remotely. Deepika reflected, "Being part of the team that was crucial to the long-term strategy of the company, managing the delivery fulfilment across all the countries, meant we were seen as core, so the team were able to continue working throughout."

# Deepika Murthy, Manager of Pricing and Platform at GoJek

As mentioned, during her working career she has been lucky with the support she received from bosses, both men and women, and was always encouraged to stretch to the next level. We were delighted when we heard from Deepika that she had been featured within the Women in Product Top 20 awards by Product Management Festival, not once, but twice, and she remains committed to sharing her experiences with others to support them as they grow into their next role.

## A few words of advice:

We asked Deepika to provide a few words of advice based on what she has seen and experienced throughout her career and we're certain her words will resonate with many of our readers and illustrate how you can make a change:

"Based on what I see at work and within the Women in Product Chapter, I find that before women will consider their next career move, they try to fully prepare and develop all the necessary skill sets and experience, whereas men will go for the job and then learn in the role. It would be good to see more women having the confidence to apply for roles or ask for help in developing their careers. Remember my journey before joining Viki and believe in yourself. There really is nothing stopping you – so my advice: go for that dream role and ask for responsibility!"

# Nikki Walker

## Chief Executive Officer of Quality Compliance Systems



Space Executive had the opportunity to speak with Nikki Walker who leads QCS and is accountable for their ambitious growth targets and enabling QCS to scale. Nikki's journey is both incredibly interesting and inspiring to read with many useful takeaways for our readers.

### Succeeding in the battle to join a corporate organisation:

Nikki explained that she started her career in finance and is a qualified accountant by profession. After starting her career in a traditional finance role, she quickly moved into commercial finance supporting sales teams. Having a polytechnic degree meant that Nikki's desire to join a blue-chip company was incredibly difficult and it was a major challenge to break into the blue-chip corporate world. While the playing field is far from level now there has been huge progress since the days when people without a university degree wouldn't even get a look in.

Ultimately, it was Nikki's sheer determination and resilience that got her through the door to her corporate career. The secret to her success? Nikki just kept knocking on the door until they eventually agreed to give her an interview opportunity. The second hurdle then came which was being in male dominated teams which she confesses was hard. If there's one thing we should take from Nikki's journey, it's to always keep trying for what you believe in and you will succeed.

Nikki has had a successful career in finance roles at the likes of Coca Cola, Schwarzkopf and Cisco. Her time at Cisco, enabled her to move into a wide variety of functions and build really broad experience. The many opportunities Cisco provided allowed her to grow her skillset and widen her horizons.

# Nikki Walker, Chief Executive Officer at QCS

The roles that Nikki took on at Cisco certainly elevated her career. For example, she mentioned that she was part of the big deal team, and her role was to work with sales teams to make sure the best terms were being negotiated and mitigated the risk on the very big deals. She was part of Cisco's first ever billion-dollar deal which she described as 'interesting!' Her career at Cisco provided her an opportunity to move into a strategy role to build the business within Emerging Markets.

## Driving forward change for the future with a blank sheet of paper...

After successfully leading on that team, she was asked to move into more of an operational role on the EMEA board, leading the inclusion, diversity, and sustainability teams. What was fascinating about this role, was that the direction came from a customer in New York who stated that if Cisco wanted to keep working with them in a few years' time, they'd need to change how their teams looked and thought because at that time, everyone looked and sounded the same. Nikki said, "that was enough of a burning platform for the leaders to say we've got to drive change."

Coincidentally, Nikki had been leading the Women's network when she was approached by the President of EMEA at the time who asked her to go for the role which she thoughtfully turned down on multiple occasions. Another interesting theme we see throughout this series, is that our incredible women leaders all had mentors or sponsors they'd turn to for advice or support. Nikki's mentor at the time asked her what it would take for her to say yes to the job. She stated several wants that she personally felt needed to be successful in the role but thought she wouldn't get. Her mentor's response was "well why don't you ask for that then?" Hesitantly, Nikki responded with the fact that she'd never get all of those things to which he instantly responded, "well you won't know until you ask and at least if you ask and it's a no then you can walk away." Another key takeaway from this conversation with Nikki was that we should always ask for what we need upfront if given the opportunity as it could lead to something great and the worst that we can be told is 'no'.

To Nikki's surprise, the President agreed to everything she asked for and her new journey within the business began for five years until she decided to leave the corporate world and pursue a different type of career.

# Nikki Walker, Chief Executive Officer at QCS

## Starting multiple business from scratch and participating in peer advisory groups:

After Nikki left Cisco, she set up three companies, which related to building inclusive cultures, supporting and coaching CEOs and a webinar platform to enable global organisations to maximise their female talent. She later met the founder of QCS via her work with CEOs. Nikki started her work with QCS through some consultancy to help them define their strategy. After completing that the CEO asked her to come and work for him which she declined and again the campaign to get her on board started! In 2019 he decided to move to Australia and Nikki agreed to lead the UK business. This meant that Nikki's career has successfully spanned the mega corporate, tiny micro and now this was the opportunity to work on a scale up.

Nikki's experience leveraging the advantage of building inclusive cultures that truly leverage diversity has been constant throughout her career. Her desire to understand that someone can feel like the 'only one' for many reasons; maybe because you're young or English isn't your first language and any of these factors can make it challenging in the workplace. Her focus on inclusion and helping people to really understand both what it feels like when you're not included and how those in power and privilege can play a big role in supporting others. There are still many instances that Nikki witnesses or hears that show we still have a long way to go to build really inclusive workplaces.

Throughout her career she has seen examples of women receiving a lot more scrutiny when placed into leadership roles and her response to that is "if a woman is placed into a leadership role, it's unusual that she isn't a great talent. To survive at the highest levels, you've got to be good and it's very rare that I come across a senior woman who isn't."

## Get yourself a sponsor and put your growth first:

Nikki said "having people that sponsor you is so important. I was lucky that I joined Cisco when it was a smaller organisation, and I rose on the coattails of great sponsors, most of whom were men. Having people that open doors for you, that ease the passage for you, was really important for me and I believe is still really important now." Nikki continuously challenges leaders who talk about diversity and asks them what they're doing to accelerate change.

# Nikki Walker, Chief Executive Officer at QCS

Although Nikki did have a lot of training as part of her corporate roles, she maintains a growth mindset and believes strongly in constantly learning. Nikki will only stay in a role if she is: learning, making a difference and having fun. She's constantly challenging herself and looking at ways she can improve and grow.

Nikki admits her biggest learning has been in the last 3-4 years since she joined QCS. The challenges of growing a company, trying to scale and systemise whilst being agile and flexible is an enormous task and provides constantly learning. Nikki mentioned the opportunity the role gives her to talk to people like our Space Executive CEO Marek Danyluk and bouncing ideas off people.

One of her learnings is that while formal leadership training can be really important there is so much available for free now. She said "so, if you're not being given the training you need, then you can go out and find it. There's so much free content, podcasts, and all sorts of amazing things." When she's hiring, she looks for talent that has a growth mindset. Another key takeaway for our readers is to showcase your ability and desire to learn – having that growth mindset will set you apart from others and elevate your success.

## Nikki's Top 4 Recommendations:

We asked Nikki if she has some key recommendations for women to think about as they progress their careers or are evaluating where they want to be in life, and she said the following:

1. **Never stop learning** – this will benefit you personally and professionally
2. **Don't be afraid to ask** – if you want a sponsor, definitely go and talk to someone about it and have a conversation. Ask if they can help you or open a door for you. It can be as easy as asking to start having a regular coffee catch up.
3. **Be brave** – do some things you're too scared to do. If you're offered an opportunity but don't think you can do it, someone else certainly thinks you can. Therefore, take calculated risks and go for it and ask for what you need to succeed
4. **Be ready to help** – Nikki really believes in always helping first. It's a balance of course, helping first builds a support network of people who will help you achieve things. That isn't the same as rescuing and feeling responsible for everything. She recommends that if you're not getting what you want where you are, consider moving onto somewhere else. There is so much opportunity right now and there are people desperate for female talent. If you're a great woman and your organisation doesn't recognise what you bring, go and be a great woman somewhere else!

# Nicky Young

## Communications and Change Director



Space Executive had the opportunity to speak with Nicky Young who specialises in Communications and Change Management. Nicky is a workplace culture award winner, and she provides our readers with advice on how organisations can make their work a place where employees want to be, along with inspiring us with her career journey as well as other useful takeaways.

### Trusting your gut even when things are going well:

Nicky's journey began when she came to the UK in 1998 with £400 in her pocket. Due to her Italian heritage, she dreamed of visiting Italy and was determined to explore the country. To do this, Nicky realised she needed an income... During that period, it was difficult for Nicky to find work and despite having a first class Bachelor of Arts degree, her lack of experience didn't help. She began temping and had a lucky break into a management consulting firm, PA Consulting, where they had an open role in their Strategy and Marketing practice. Nicky stayed there for just shy of a year and partners within the firm advised her to move into an agency environment if she wanted to pursue a career in communications, which was her passion. They supported her to find work in an agency called at the time Grant Butler Coomber that worked with the likes of Nokia and Ernest Young (EY) specialising in media and analyst relations. While in this role, she met a freelancer who was working at a company called salt Ltd. who suggested that Nicky meet the two founders. She said Nicky would enjoy understanding their unique approach to work - their way of thinking.

When Nicky met with salt founders Richard Cox and Andy Last, she found that they were incredibly ambitious and fundamentally believed there was a better way to do business. Nicky said, "I liked their philosophy and that they believed there was more to communications and being an agency in this field. There and then, I decided to leave a well-paid job in an established company for this start-up because something in my gut told me it was a good move. My advice would be to always trust your gut, it's your second brain."



# Nicky Young, Communications and Change Director

Nicky described joining salt as “a real blessing”: the founders gave her carte blanche to act independently (within reason!), and having this trust meant that she stayed at the company for twenty years. Nicky said, “The founders were ambitious, entrepreneurial, honest and the rest is history. We built the company which then caught the eye of The Interpublic Group (IPG), that acquired us in 2020. Today it’s still going, under the name MullenLowe salt. I may have since left the company but I’ll always look back on it fondly as a great career journey.”

The opportunity to work for a start-up meant that she was exposed to a whole host of learnings; able to build departments, consult clients as well as design and implement business methodologies. Nicky said, “It was an MBA-type experience: I was able to do everything from HR to sales to marketing. It was a joy because there’s nothing better than being given the opportunity to stretch your skillset and see where it takes you.”

## Join a business community to expand horizons:

For a good proportion of her career at salt, Nicky was a member of Vistage: a community of ambitious MDs and CEOs who connect with like-minded executives through a trusted leadership experience that delivers professional, and personal, results. This is where Nicky met our CEO, Marek Danyluk. Nicky particularly found Vistage particularly helpful because during her time there, she experienced many firsts at salt. Being surrounded with likeminded individuals provided a sense of support and reassurance given she had never previously been a Managing Director nor designed departments not to mention driven profit improvement programmes! Nicky said, “It was nice to be in the company of like-minded individuals who wanted to do good by their businesses.”

## Creating a home away from home:

Nicky mentioned that salt’s workplace dynamic was observed by a PHD student who was doing their thesis on Organisational Design and her summation of salt outlined how, as an organisation, they had created a strong family culture outside of home. For example, she observed that everyone in the company had a nickname, the small, serviced office meant that everyone brought their breakfast in, some even became very comfortable and had their slippers in the office when clients weren’t around! Nicky stated that, “Ultimately, it was home away from home. There was a genuine appetite to be friends with colleagues and to enjoy their company. There was a desire to have a culture that was collegial and familial – this meant there was a natural additional effort applied by employees to their day jobs. It wasn’t driven by money nor benefits; it was driven by a sense of “I genuinely love being here so I want to put in as much effort as possible to make this place the best it can be.”

# Nicky Young, Communications and Change Director

Nicky has always been passionate about the power of culture in the workplace, and she was the first to raise this topic within the Vistage community. She says: “In my view, culture needed to be front and centre of a business plan and this just didn’t exist back then.” Further explaining, “We fundamentally believed that for the success of the business, there had to be three elements working in unison: a strong culture, commercial success and an industry leading product. If either of the three suffered, the business would feel out of kilter, so we worked hard to keep them in balance with one another. We essentially worked hard and created our view of a utopia for how business should be done.” This helps emphasise that culture really does matter within any workplace, ensuring employees are content and feel valued. It makes the case for identifying what the culture is within an organisation one may be exploring to join or whether one can positively raise the topic of culture improvement at a current place of work; making it a focal point for the business to address if it doesn’t feel quite right.

Nicky said, “In my view, the culture within a company needs to be strong enough to make you feel comfortable to not to be at home with your family but to spend most of your day at work. At my time at salt, I believe we achieved this.”

## How to have a voice at the table:

When starting out in a new role, it’s often a struggle to find your voice at the table. Nicky recalled that back then, “It was quite unusual for a female, never mind one in her 20s/30s, to have a place at management meetings. She asked for advice from a successful businesswoman on how to be respected in these settings and her guidance was incredibly helpful. She helped me coach my founding partners to include me in discussions from the outset, to endorse my presence within male dominated business settings. This opened the door for me so I could lean in.” From the client’s perspective, this was a clear endorsement from the founders and by directing their attention to Nicky, it enabled her to find her voice and confidently progress.

We’ve heard of mentors being a consistent theme within the series, and Nicky specifically mentioned our CEO Marek Danyluk as someone she’d enjoy bouncing ideas off. She also admires John Thorpe, who is the Vistage Chairman of the group she belonged to in London. His coaching and support has been hugely valued by Nicky and despite being a young executive and occasionally the only female in the room, John always operated through a principle of inclusion; he always encouraged and involved her.

# Nicky Young, Communications and Change Director

She explained, “John valued my opinion and made sure I had a voice in our meetings. He always had the answers, but he’d coach me to get to the answers on my own. To this day, I try to take this approach with my direct reports. I aim to help them to get to the answer on their own, which isn’t always easily done.” John has been a pivotal mentor for Nicky, describing him as her “rock” when she suffered from clinical depression post the birth of her son and death of her father. Yet he supported her and encouraged her not to see those tough times as obstacles to her succeeding. This further proves the need in business to reach out to people that are inspirational, supportive and find mentor(s) that can advocate on one’s behalf. There are always people out there willing to help others succeed and achieve their goals. Our advice is to find those bonds in external communities such as Vistage, within the workplace or elsewhere.

## Nicky’s Top Tips:

- Surround yourself with colleagues that delight and inspire you to become better. The journey for self-improvement should never end, even if you’re leading your business.
- Trust employees, be there to catch them when they fall and maintain a culture that is nurturing so that employees feel they’ve played a part in the success of the business.
- Get involved in a business network, like Vistage, to supplement your training and development as well as benefit from a wide range of perspectives that may be different from your own. These communities offer personal and professional support that can hugely impact career development and drive personal growth.
- Life’s too short to work in a toxic work environment. If you have the power to change it, do or go somewhere that is open to doing well as well as doing good with its employees and beyond