

# Business as a force for good

How Blueprint engages  
with business



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## Introduction to Blueprint

A Blueprint for Better Business is an independent charity whose purpose is to create a better society through better business. We help business to be inspired and guided by a purpose that benefits society and respects people and planet through stimulating and energising a different way of thinking and behaving in business.

We also convene forums and events, and work with investors and influencers from wider society, including NGOs, academics, business schools, coaches and advisors, to help create the environment for purpose-led business to thrive.

We are a charity and not a consultancy. Our engagement with business is non-financial in order to retain our independence, build trust and enable us to be free to bring constructive challenge. Our work is funded by grants or donations from charitable foundations, individuals or businesses, recognising that the work we do helps to create a business world that is purpose-led, and that this transformation will have huge societal benefits.



## Creating a better society through better business

Our engagement with business contributes to our purpose by:

### Inspiring

CEOs and senior business leaders are guided by a purpose that benefits society and respects people and planet.



### Activating

Changemakers develop the confidence to disrupt 'status quo' practices, creating conditions for change to flourish.



### Amplifying

Companies openly share learnings and insights to catalyse change more broadly.



*Blueprint changed my company's behaviour, utterly and fundamentally. My company was hugely influenced by Blueprint.*

## How we engage with business

### Nurturing the will, rationale and courage for change

Engagement with Blueprint is a joint endeavour in service of people and planet. Through regular touchpoints we create spaces for leaders and changemakers to surface how implicit assumptions and beliefs influence decisions and behaviours. By championing better quality dialogue and relationships with stakeholders, we explore and challenge the norms and constraints that often limit human potential and raise awareness of the agency a company has to create sustainable value for society.

Our approach is anchored in Blueprint's Framework and Principles and in a belief that being purpose-led not only contributes to a better society but also builds a better, more resilient business, delivering long term sustainable performance. The decision to orientate a business in this way is not just a matter of technical challenge, process or strategy. It is crucially about the shared understanding and belief the company leadership has about how the world is a better place as a result of their success.

Our style of engagement draws heavily on coaching, we don't offer a 'how-to' to becoming purpose-led. The journey with us is one of uncovering, discovery, critical reflection, productive discomfort and deep listening for greater self, shared and systemic awareness. In our experience it is with this level of awareness that operational changes are sustained and truly transformative of a business.



*Across our stakeholder groups in 45 countries, people have different views on what purpose means . . . I loved hearing Blueprint say this has to be authentic, practical, and inspirational. I keep coming back to this. It allowed us to liberate many people's thinking about what we could be.*



## A distinct point of view

While our style of engagement draws on coaching, we do have a point of view; being purpose-led orientates a company to make profits by creating value for society. This value lies not only in the quality of goods and services it provides and for whom, but also in the positive relationships it cultivates, and its wider impact on people, communities, and nature.

Blueprint's Framework and Principles are a distillation of the charity's point of view. The Framework outlines how Blueprint defines purpose, and the behaviours to build character and achieve purpose. Blueprint's Five Principles offer a high-level picture of what an organisation animated by this way of thinking and acting could be. For more detail see pages 10-12.



*[Our] understanding of purpose was too simple. The sense of human dignity is something we never thought about. That philosophical challenge about humanity, spiritual thinking, changed [our] thinking. . . We realized how smug we were about our systems. In many cases, we were pretending to do things. So the tools, the methodology of questioning [from Blueprint], is very valuable.*



*You [Blueprint] have been a meaningful and long lasting impact, not just on us individually as leaders but the business as a whole, helping define and change strategy which means we are thinking for the long term for all stakeholders and having an impact as a business on society... .. We are better leaders and a better organisation because of you. ”*



We engage directly with individual businesses in 3 ways:

## Intervention

An initial 3-6 month engagement with the CEO and Executive team to introduce Blueprint's Framework and Principles.

## Social Contract

A sustained engagement over 24-36 months to challenge and support organisations on their journey to becoming a purpose-led organisation.

## CEO forums

A group of 4-5 CEOs meet quarterly to explore what it means to be a purpose-led business in practice. In these facilitated forums CEOs have the space to make sense of their emerging experience and context with others, learn from one another, identify blind spots, and build the courage and self-awareness to act in complexity.



*Charity status gives Blueprint the ability to believe that they are on your side. . . It is a genuinely mutually beneficial relationship.*



## How do we choose the companies we engage with?

As a small charity we engage with a small number of businesses with the following characteristics:

- The curiosity to learn and experiment; the generosity to share learnings with us and with other companies; and the wisdom to listen and build something better to be held and enjoyed as a common good.
- The willingness to be ambassadors for this way of thinking, through leadership networks, employees and supply chains.
- The scale and reach to have a significant positive impact combined with a commitment to contributing to a movement of purpose-led business to help catalyse change more broadly.

Our experience shows that the most effective relationship, whilst not commercial or legal, is co- created by both parties to ensure efficacy and a shared understanding of, and commitment to, our collective endeavour.

## What does an Intervention involve?

Our initial Intervention typically consists of a series of workshops or other facilitated discussions with the senior executive team over a period of 3-6 months. We co-design the engagement with 1-2 members of the executive team and agree joint objectives up front, with support from the CEO.

At the end of this period, there is an evaluation, feedback and learning session to reflect on progress. At this point we will explore our ongoing engagement and consider a Social Contract.



*They [Blueprint] understand the issues and provide direction. They are a sounding board, like having a mentor, to think through solutions. But they also hold a mirror to us to keep us honest through the process and ask the tough questions.*



## What does a 'Social Contract' involve?

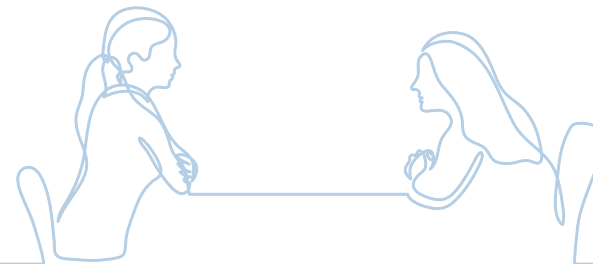
A non-legal non-financial partnership with Blueprint where the company is aware of and committed to the deep evolution becoming a purpose-led business requires. It is important that our engagement is across the Executive Team to explore what being purpose-led implies for the future of the business, day to day decisions and leadership.

In co-creating the contract, we recommend:

- Determining joint aims i.e. what difference would we like to see as a result of our relationship in 24-36 months? What progress would we like to make in 6 months?
- Agreeing the structure and regularity of the engagement. Based on our experience to date we recommend the following:
  - Quarterly 1:1 with the CEO, offering a safe space for reflection, an exploration of challenges and a deepening of understanding of the Blueprint Framework and Principles.
  - Quarterly commitment to our CEO forums to learn alongside other leaders on the journey to becoming purpose-led, helping to make sense of changing context, identify blind spots and build the courage to act in complexity.
  - Quarterly Executive sessions in groups of 3-4 to encourage critical reflection and collective sense-making of emerging challenges.
  - Annual engagement with the Board and/or Chair to build coherence.
  - Monthly meeting with changemakers leading key initiatives to offer support, challenge and to help identify opportunities for change.
- Agreeing structure and regularity (minimum every 6 months) of evaluation, feedback and learning to reflect on progress, clarify joint aims and re-contract (or exit the contract) as required.



*I value the [quarterly executive] sessions, they are a useful opportunity to take a step back in the intensity of the work we are doing to reflect and discuss the big issues as a team amongst a smaller group.* ”



## Working with third parties

While orientating a business to become truly purpose-led cannot be outsourced, third party support can help build the capacity, capability and expertise as the company evolves. Subject to further discussion, we can support teams in procuring, briefing, and onboarding third parties to create a shared understanding of Purpose and develop a shared intent of work undertaken by third parties. However, any third party support a business might choose to contract with (be that suggested by us or not) is contracted by the business directly and we do not take commission.

## Blueprint's Knowledgebase

If an intervention or social contract is not an appropriate approach for your business, there are other ways to leverage Blueprint's experience. Our Knowledgebase, accessible on our website, provides access to resources to help guide an organisation on their journey, drawing on our thinking and insights from our work.

If you would like to discuss working with Blueprint please contact:



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## What is a purpose-led business?

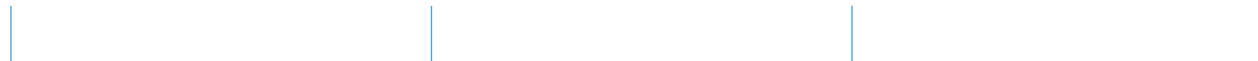
A purpose-led business is:

### 1. Guided by a purpose, which benefits society

- It seeks not simply to make profits but to identify goods and services it can provide that help meet the needs of people and the planet, without adding more problems or exploiting people.
- It envisages a positive impact on the world, which shapes its thinking and drives decision-making in the core business, so there is a clear, simple and credible narrative that links the purpose to the strategy; and to the outcomes and impact that arise from the strategy (both financial and non-financial).
- It seeks to use its agency in the system – and through its relationships with customers, suppliers, communities, investors, and regulators – to promote changes in behaviour that advance positive change. It also identifies problems it cannot fix alone, but where collective action can shift how the market works, promote better regulation which genuinely serves the common good rather than self-interest, and hold itself accountable for its broader social and environmental impacts.

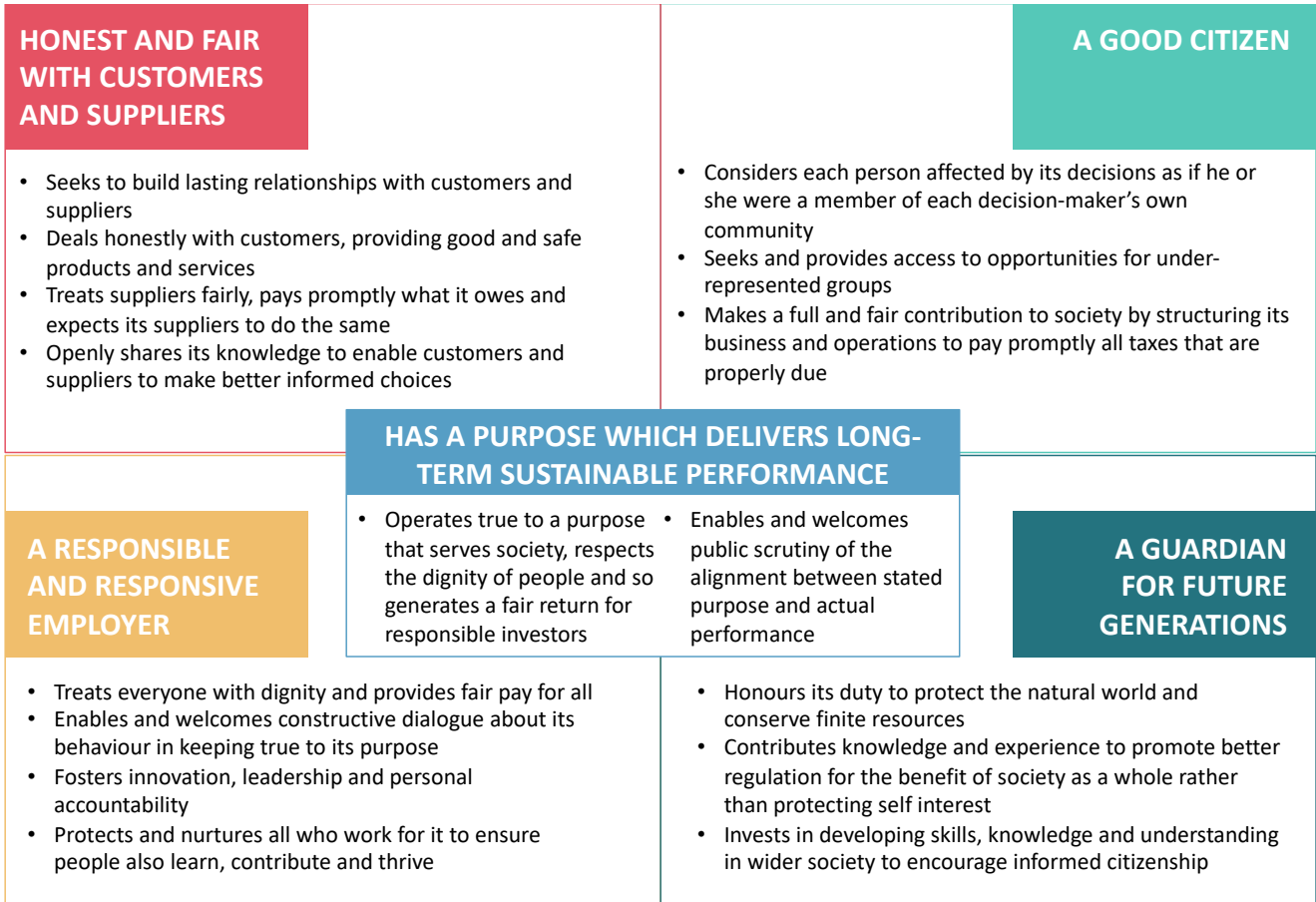
### 2. Has a way of thinking about people – where each person ‘is a someone, not a something’

- It respects the dignity and value of people and seeks to have a positive impact on the lives of all those it touches.
- It sees the business as a set of relationships and understands that the long-term success of the business depends on the quality and sustainability of these relationships – with its employees, customers, suppliers and investors, as a citizen in society and its responsibilities to act as a guardian for future generations.



## Five principles of a purpose driven business

The **Five Principles** offer a picture of how a business might look if it is genuinely led by a purpose that benefits society.



## A framework to guide decision making

The **Framework** outlines how purpose should be defined and sets out the behaviours needed to sustain purpose. It also provides the link to the underlying provenance of **Blueprint**, which is one its distinguishing features.


### DEFINING PURPOSE

<b>Each person is a someone, not a something</b> (DIGNITY & VALUE OF PEOPLE)	Show respect for the dignity of each person and for the whole person; never use people merely as a means to achieving business objectives. Respecting the whole person includes thinking of people in all their various roles in relation to the business: as employees, customers, suppliers, investors and citizens. Demonstrating respect means setting a purpose and seeking outcomes that enable each person to reach his or her full potential, not least being able to contribute fully to building relationships and communities both within the workplace and beyond. Such purposes and such outcomes engender trust between people and between business and society.
<b>Delivering value by serving society</b> (THE COMMON GOOD)	Genuinely aim to promote the good of society as a whole through the provision of goods and services that benefit society; never use stakeholders, and society as a whole, as a mere means to business success. This gives meaning to the purpose of the business within society and demands innovation to achieve that purpose alongside a financial return. Society and communities of people determine the licence, and freedoms, of business to operate and grow; these will be broader if business actively aims to reduce harm and produces goods that are truly good and services that truly serve.

### BEHAVIOURS NEEDED TO BUILD CHARACTER & ACHIEVE PURPOSE

Other people matter (SOLIDARITY )	Freedom with responsibility (SUBSIDIARITY )	Building trust and trusted relationships (RECIPROCITY )	Valuing diversity and building bridges (PLURALITY)	Stewardship of people, values and resources (SUSTAINABILITY)
Judge decisions as good, or not, in the context of the best values, expectations and needs of those with whom we should seek to build relationships. Do not make decisions in a self interested, self determined, closed world that does not weigh sufficiently the impact on others. Make a fair contribution to society and avoid actions that cause inequality. Opportunities should be sought to serve the broadest community, including the underserved, the under-represented and the excluded; not to emphasise the divide but rather to bring people together, through new job opportunities, innovative goods and services, and new markets.	Allow people to develop by being able to contribute to making decisions at all levels. Do not create dependency through reserving decisions unnecessarily to higher levels in the hierarchy, or lose accountability through inappropriate delegation. Give people the freedom, and support where necessary, to take on the risk of decision making and to have a voice in their work, thus fostering innovation, creativity and a sense of shared responsibility.	Start with basic honesty and integrity so that each and all receive what they are entitled to or can reasonably expect. This is the first stage of building trust. Then go beyond this minimum, using knowledge and capabilities to provide benefits that people desire and value but cannot expect or demand, in particular in situations of information asymmetry or power imbalance. Fair and efficient markets depend on trust and trusting relationships	Be clear as to who you are and what you stand for, combining this with an openness to enrichment from others, valuing diversity of thinking and cultures. Favour curiosity and inclusion over suspicion and exclusion of those who think differently. Maintain consistency of purpose and values whilst embracing diversity, encouraging closeness to people, markets, innovation and growth.	Acknowledge and seek to measure the impact the business has on people, values, resources, and the environment. Accept responsibility for those impacts. Then take steps to develop people, nurture values, preserve and restore existing resources and create new ones where possible so that others may enjoy their benefits. Use your knowledge, influence and experience in collaboration with others for the benefit of all.



*Blueprint has been a crucially important critical friend throughout our purpose journey. Without them, I doubt we would have been able to achieve the depth of understanding we now have about the value our business could bring to society. Working with Blueprint has broadened our thinking and given us tools to openly, critically and collectively make decisions which positively impact a wider group of stakeholders than we ever thought possible.* 

The quotes included in this document are from senior people in businesses we have worked and have been gathered as part of our impact reporting. To find out more about our progress see our latest impact report and learning evaluation at: [Our progress | Blueprint](#) ([blueprintforbusiness.org](http://blueprintforbusiness.org))

For more on our work:

Visit our website: [www.blueprintforbusiness.org](http://www.blueprintforbusiness.org)

Connect with us on LinkedIn: [A Blueprint for Better Business](#)