

# The Chocolate Biscuit Test

Leadership is an art requiring much more than just making things happen. It's about creating the right atmosphere - it requires Warmth, Humour and Empathy.

We call this skill set Emotional Intelligence - encouraging people to provide new thinking and challenge the status quo by bringing into the business the perspectives of customers, employees, shareholders and stakeholders.

It's not simply about showing a clear vision, mission and purpose. Effective leadership needs to bring together:

- an understanding of the market,
- a clear strategy,
- real financial focus,
- harnessing of people skills,
- clear decisive action.

The important but not urgent must be delivered alongside day to day imperatives.

Such a multi-faceted approach helps me to develop the impact of CEOs and to run Boards more effectively. It is important to build strong relationships and develop mutual respect and trust – these are at the heart of good leadership. But it is also critical to set the bar high and move with pace whilst at the same time having the flexibility to adapt when the environment changes and the unexpected happens.

Fashion is a fast moving and very demanding leadership environment where

speed of thought and action are essential to staying ahead of the competition. There is a premium placed on making multiple things happen fast as I found when launching the Next Directory in 1988 through to the present day with [jisp.com](http://jisp.com) linking on and off-line retail for customers on an App.

It is a difficult combination of skills to balance, especially at pace, however we can all recognise when it is working. Yes, cost control is important, but so is humanity and getting things in proportion with a focus on what is important.

So I have my "chocolate biscuit test".

Some believe in ruthless cost control and eliminating "fripperies" like chocolate biscuits, believing it "sends a signal".

I have found however, that it is the small human touches that make a difference and chocolate biscuits are a great motivator for a minimal cost. There are many other cost efficiencies to be made for significantly greater gain.

I know when I meet someone that their answer to the "chocolate biscuit question" will determine whether we share the same values.

With my colleagues at Board Mentoring we all work as Mentors and Chairmen/board members across very different businesses and industries.



## We all share three key attributes

Leadership track record as Directors and CEO's

Current C-suite & Board leadership roles

Excellent coaching & Mentoring skills & track record

We work on active challenge both for you and your business.

People often ask "What is the difference between coaching and Mentoring?"

In reality this is a continuum but Mentors have considerable business leadership experience and our style is more challenging and interventionist than traditional coaching.

In practice we Mentor on business issues and we Coach on personal performance and

behavioural issues.

We have all held the leadership and Board and C-suite roles that enable us to Coach and Mentor based on current and career leadership experience as well as good practice. We are a diverse and International team and can offer extensive geographic coverage with a deep understanding of specific business cultures.

We add to this our differentiated 360 process. We engage in one-to-one structured conversations with key people including reporting lines, colleagues and direct reports to enable us to understand the dynamics of the relationships, the strengths of the executive and development focus.

This insight enables us to structure the mentoring to maximise effectiveness and impact.

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