

PRAISE FOR THE FIRST EDITION

‘John hits the mark with this book: a practical and inspired approach that offers a structured framework to help anyone succeed.’ **Martyn Proctor, Executive Director, Ernst & Young**

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‘What this bold and thought-provoking book shows is that there is an urgent need to rebuild trust through developing leaders that don’t just “talk the talk”, but who also “walk the talk”.’ **Paul Kehoe, CEO, Birmingham Airport**

‘Highly readable and addresses both the theory and the practice of the trust-building challenge.’ **Jane Frost CBE, CEO, Market Research Society**

‘The red pill moment represents the choice between living the status quo or embracing a new reality. Well-written, thought provoking and practical – here’s to the nice guys!’ **Rob Edwards, Managing Director, FARM Digital**

‘Written with an energetic and accessible style, John combines his personal experience with insight from research and executive interviews to outline a path for building truly trustworthy organizations.’ **Steve Larke, Vice President, Capgemini**

‘*The Trusted Executive* is a myriad of timeless wisdom, practical examples and great models demonstrated beautifully through a personal narrative.’ **Kate Marshall, Vistage Board Chair and Executive Coach**

‘A book that challenges the fundamentals of leadership and the role that leaders and organizations can play in society. Easy to read; it’s a toolbox to help develop modern leaders.’ **David Biggs, Managing Director, Network Rail Property**

‘This is a thought-provoking, practical and inspiring book, which challenges staid approaches to leadership. A must-read that will change the thoughts and approaches of all who read it, such that they can make a positive and lasting difference in their own businesses.’ **Larraine Boorman, CEO, Optima Group**

‘Filled with personal examples, coaching sessions and CEO interviews, *The Trusted Executive* is a must-read for any existing or aspiring executive in any industry. Take the red pill now and develop the new habits of success.’ **Lance McCarthy, CEO, Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust**

‘*The Trusted Executive* is mindful, mind-bending and mind-expanding reading. I thoroughly enjoyed the balanced use of theory, research, personal examples and practical tools.’ **Ingrid Riddervold Lorange, CEO, Global Shared Services, Telenor**

‘In *The Trusted Executive*, John provides a provocative analysis of the skills that the forward-looking CEO needs to lead a firm through a world of disruptive and unsettling change.’ **Andrew Parry, CEO, Hermes Sourcecap**

‘*The Trusted Executive* will have significant value for leaders, and aspiring leaders, who need new perspectives and extra tools if they are to thrive in the coming years.’ **Steve Thorn, Senior Vice President, CGI**

‘*The Trusted Executive* is an invaluable, forward-thinking handbook for every existing or aspiring leader.’ **Gina Lodge, CEO, Academy of Executive Coaching**

‘An excellent resource for leaders seeking to improve their practice.’ **Professor John Rudd, Warwick Business School**

‘This is a well-researched and thought-provoking book. I would thoroughly recommend it to leaders in all sectors – it’s time to take the red pill!’ **Heath Monk, CEO, Future Leaders Trust**

‘A compelling and inspirational book which presents a robust framework for a dramatically new style of leadership.’ **Martin Mackay, Chairman and CEO, Exporior Group**

'The Trusted Executive is a must-read for every executive who is serious about growing their business with a long term vision. Given recent headlines, this book has been launched at exactly the right time!' **Kannan Ramaswamy, Founder, Ganymede Advisory Partners**

'With The Trusted Executive, John Blakey has delivered an accelerated course to give today's leaders the knowledge, methods and tools to thrive in a 21st-century context.' **Frank Contrepois, Senior Director of Automation and Innovation, Virtustream**

'Brutally honest, John opens up his own life experiences, as well as a lifetime of research, to deliver a clear set of principles defining modern business. Trust him and you will fly. I'm glad I don't take the blue pill.' **Richard Hyams, Director, AStudio**

'If you want to succeed as a leader, you must become a trusted executive. John shows you how in this clearly written and highly practical gem of a book.' **Bob Vanourek, Former CEO of five companies and award-winning author**

'A highly enjoyable read.' **Martin Newman, CEO, Practicology**

'With The Trusted Executive, John knocks it out of the park! Amazing insights that can be easily applied whether you are a corporate leader, captain of a team, a mum or a dad.' **Rick Schaltegger, General Counsel, Microdynamics Group**

'This book is a must-read for all business leaders who believe that trust is inherently right, strategic and necessary for success.' **James Rouse, Vistage Board Chair and former CEO, Arrhythmia Research Technology, Inc.**

'The Trusted Executive provides a fascinating glimpse into the pitfalls to avoid and the proactive steps required to achieve your goals.' **Andrew Baud, Founder, Tala PR**

'John has set all CEOs a challenge! The examples given, the interviews presented and the insights provided made me think more deeply about trust as a fragile and critical key performance indicator. John, thank you for a great book!' **Alan Saunders, CEO, Illustra**

‘*The Trusted Executive* should be a mandatory read for all those who sit in the boardroom of power.’ **Jonathan Worsley, Founder and Chairman, Bench Events**

‘*The Trusted Executive* offers practical guidance and actions to help leaders get to where they need to be.’ **Jason Smith, CEO, Crestawood**

‘The management book I’ve been waiting for! I am excited about applying what I have learnt in our own business.’ **Robert Postlethwaite, Managing Director, Postlethwaite Solicitors**

‘A refreshing, thought-provoking and inspiring book that will appeal to all courageous leaders. John challenges us to think differently to many traditional leadership norms.’ **Kate Fletcher, Vistage Board Chair and Managing Director, XI-erate**

‘I read this book in a single sitting. John’s writing style drew me in and his practical examples are profoundly credible.’ **Ben Meehan, CEO, QDATRAINING**

‘You only get one reputation. In *The Trusted Executive* John brilliantly guides and inspires us to build that reputation.’ **Andrew Orrock, CEO, Arkessa**

‘John has done a masterful job of describing the nine leadership habits of trustworthiness. I was touched by his inclusion of kindness, humility and bravery.’ **Kathy Green, Managing Partner, Executive Coaching Connections**

‘We live in a time when businesses have an urgent responsibility to earn people’s trust. In *The Trusted Executive*, John expertly identifies the skills that every leaders needs if they are to step up to this challenge.’ **Guy Grainger, UK CEO, JLL**

‘A powerful combination of well-researched theory and personal insight from first-hand experience. As a former colleague of John, I recognize his character authentically shining through this book.’ **Seamus Keating, Chairman, First Derivatives plc and Mi-Pay Group plc**

The Trusted Executive

*Nine leadership habits that inspire results,
relationships and reputation*

SECOND EDITION

John Blakey



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'It is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.'
Paul of Tarsus

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FOREWORD

I define courage as ‘the ability to put the interests of others ahead of your own and be able to absorb personal risks’. Courage comes in many forms. There is the courage to lead a business. The courage to launch a new product or service. The courage to speak up for what you believe in. The courage to write a book. Frequently, courage involves anticipating the future; being prepared to act as if the future were happening today. This is what I hope we did at Unilever under my stewardship and this is what I sense John is doing in writing this timely book.

Yet, however courageous we are, it is also wise to seek help and guidance as we tread our path. I am grateful to all those who have helped me build my own career. I still seek that help today, whether it be through reading books, talking to trusted advisers or listening to Unilever’s various stakeholders. I know that this book will become a great source of help to many, many leaders. It is a manual for those executive leaders who are bravely anticipating the future and yet recognize they need input, inspiration, motivation, coaching and knowledge. It is a gold mine of tips, tools, insightful anecdotes and business best practice. It is a resource to keep close by your side.

For we know that we cannot change the business ecosystem on our own. Unilever is a powerful, global business yet our ambitious ‘sustainable living’ goals cannot be achieved without collaboration with governments, NGOs, pressure groups and partner organizations throughout the world. Similarly, we are not going to rebuild trust in business without a collective redefinition of the purpose of business and a thorough examination of the behaviours through which this purpose is achieved. It is through the research, writing and speaking of authors such as John that this rallying call is being issued to business leaders far and wide. It is then down to each one of us as to whether we are ready to heed that call.

I have little doubt that trust, not authority, is the only glue that will hold organizations together in a diverse, global, technology empowered world. But, as John points out, I fear that we have yet to grasp the scale of this trust-building challenge. It is not simply an issue of ability or an issue of integrity or an issue of benevolence; it is an issue of all three of these

attributes being pursued day in and day out as an integral part of our executive leadership roles. Only through such a sustained and integrated approach will we combat the rampant scepticism that can threaten to take hold amongst customers, staff and the public at large.

Some of the medicine John prescribes through his nine leadership habits will not taste familiar or pleasant. We are well versed in the need to deliver results, to be honest, to be consistent and to coach others, but what are we to make of it when he urges us to evangelize, to be kind, to be humble, to show vulnerability and to be morally brave? Doesn't this fly in the face of the heroic leadership models in which we have traditionally placed great faith? Yes, it does and some will challenge the more idealistic edges of this work. Nevertheless, it would be a brave leader who gambled against this agenda becoming more dominant in the coming years.

In the balance between looking after today and preparing for tomorrow, we will continue to face difficult choices; John does not shirk from pinpointing exactly where these choices lay. As you read the book, it is difficult to resist the wall of evidence he has constructed from his own personal experience as a business leader, his rigorous academic research and the views of the many CEOs he has coached and interviewed. This comprehensive snapshot of the latest academic and practitioner thinking should give us all real pause for thought.

Thankfully, after issuing such a grand trust-building challenge, John readily acknowledges that we will all make mistakes as we grapple with these issues. It is reassuring to find a chapter that helps us recover quickly when things go wrong. As the CEO of a global company, I am conscious each day that trust is fragile; one rash word, one mistake, one accident can wreck many years of good work. It is difficult to recover trust but it is not impossible, and John provides wise counsel on this point.

As we have pursued our 'sustainable living' vision in Unilever, we have recognized the importance of individual leaders role-modelling specific behaviours. Setting this personal example is an important prerequisite in delivering change, but sooner or later it must be accompanied by other organizational shifts if the behaviours are to become hard-wired into the organization. Processes, metrics, structure, incentives and strategy are amongst the many factors that must fall into alignment with the new agenda. In this way, we create organizations that can be trusted out of leaders who can be trusted and these organizations then influence society as a whole.

Unfortunately, this is a never-ending process because, as we change, the world changes and we must keep rewriting our own rules.

Overall, I am greatly encouraged that business leaders are stepping up to fulfil their potential as agents of trust and as agents of societal change. The unique value of books such as this one is that, through giving us a glimpse of tomorrow today, they accelerate the pace with which we create the future. They accelerate the progression and development of tomorrow's trusted executive. That is an exciting prospect and I congratulate John on adding his inspiring voice to the growing clamour for change.

Paul Polman
Former CEO, Unilever