

BUSINESS ROCKS

The Very Best Of Stuart's Five-Minute Friday Focus

Volume 1



STUART CROSS

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INTRODUCTION

Why are so many business books so big? Don't the writers know that successful, busy executives simply don't have the time to read these tomes?

What's more, at the heart of every thriving business I know are people with a great deal of common sense. And common sense doesn't need too much explanation. You pretty much 'get it' straight away.

These two insights were the foundation for my Five-Minute Friday Focus emails. First, I know you're busy and that your time is precious, and second, I realise that most good business ideas can be captured in just a few words.

To add even more interest, and to get you whistling your way through the day, I also decided to include some song lyrics that relate to that week's management insight to each email.

This booklet is based on the best of the first year's Friday Focus emails. Rather than simply list them in chronological order, I've grouped the mini-articles into five topic groups. I called it "Business Rocks" both because of the music connection, but also because it contains nuggets of business insight that you can pick up and use.

My recommendation is that you take the following approach to using this booklet:

- *Periodically dip into it and take one or two of the topics that seem relevant to you and your business*
- *Discuss the insight and any associated questions with your team, and identify up to three rapid actions you can take to improve your performance*
- *Commit to these actions – with specific names and deadlines – and follow-up to review the impact these actions have had*
- *Finally, download the songs onto your favourite MP3 player*

Enjoy!



Stuart Cross
Newark-on-Trent
January 2013

1. BUILDING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE MINDSET

WHAT WOULD YOUR 60-YEAR OLD SELF DO?

I was once struggling with a career decision, wondering whether to leave my salaried role and start my own consulting business. I discussed the decision with a few close friends and advisers, one of whom said to me, “Stuart, what would your 60-year old self tell you to do?” At that point everything became clear. I knew instantly that I had to leave my job and launch Morgan Cross Consulting.

Our time here is short, and, as my coach constantly tells me, we’re not here to dip our toes in the water, we’re here to make waves. What actions – both at home and at work – are you putting off, waiting for a better time, when, deep down, you know that you should be making them happen now?

Off the record: Sunrise, Sunset by Sheldon Fiddler On The Roof (Harnick and Bock)

Swiftly flow the days

Seedlings turn overnight to sunflowers

Blossoming even as we gaze

First published 3 June 2011

MONTE SAINTE VICTOIRE

Does the impressionist painter, Paul Cezanne, hold the key to driving new growth in tough markets? Cezanne’s favourite view was Monte Sainte Victoire, near to where he lived in Provence. He liked it so much he painted it over 60 times. But although the view was the same, each painting was different. Cezanne looked at the mountain with fresh eyes every time he picked up his brush.

Similarly, over the past year I have worked on several growth projects where a new perspective, rather than radical new ideas, was sufficient to kick-start growth. Spotting unmet customer needs, moving into adjacent markets and making more of under-utilized capabilities were sufficient to generate material results.

What new opportunities would you see in your business if you were to look at it with fresh eyes?

Off the record: You Don't See Me by Keane

Radiant people in splintering light, all moving at the speed of life

But you're moving so fast through this beautiful scene

You don't see me, you don't see me

First published 7 October 2011

MY GOOD FRIEND WHO WASN'T

On Tuesday, ahead of seeing Paul Weller in concert, I met with an old university friend for dinner. I got to the restaurant slightly early and waited for him. After 10 minutes a man walked through the door, and I quickly spotted that it was Gary. I stood up and waved to let him know where I was, but as he walked towards me I realised that it wasn't Gary, but a total stranger.

The stranger I waved to was similar in height to Gary and had some facial similarities. But he was clearly not Gary. If I hadn't been waiting and looking out for Gary I wouldn't have looked twice at this guy.

The things that you're looking for shape how we see the world. If you're looking for signs that customers are satisfied with your service, that your teams are slacking, or that a new idea will work brilliantly, you can probably find the evidence you're after.

Preconceptions are inevitable, but can be dangerous. How do you ensure that your preconceptions don't blind you to reality?

Off the record: Time Passes by Paul Weller

I saw you today, or at least I think it was

It's hard to say, we've all changed so much

First published 23 March 2012

NOTHING FAILS LIKE SUCCESS

Many successful companies struggle and fail not because they're bad at what they do, but because they're great at what they do. The trouble is that they stick to what they know, refuse to evolve and simply get overtaken by events. Kodak, Olivetti, HMV, Woolworths are all businesses that were unable or unwilling to change as fast as their outside world.

Don't wait until success starts to wane before reinventing your business, because by then it's often too late. Instead you must constantly look at your business with fresh eyes, raise the bar on performance and evolve and change your business while you're still succeeding.

Off the record: It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding by Bob Dylan

He not busy being born

Is busy dying

First published 27 May 2011

DARREN CLARKE'S SELF-BELIEF

Having nearly given up the game earlier this week, Darren Clark lifted the famous claret jug and won the Open Golf Championship on Sunday. The secret of Clark's success was not a new swing or putting stroke, but a change of mindset. With the help of his manager and a sport's psychologist Clark changed his self-talk from a limiting set of beliefs, that focused on the fact that he hadn't won a tournament for years, to a focus on the fact that he'd won more than 20 tournaments and was a key player in the European Ryder Cup team. In other words, Clark started to believe – really believe – that he could win a major championship.

We all carry round a set of beliefs, but all too often we allow negative beliefs to take over and dictate how we perceive our abilities and ourselves. What are your beliefs and how do they affect your self-talk, and what more could you achieve if you were to adopt Darren Clark's winning mentality?

Off the record: Lucky Man by The Verve

How many corners do I have to turn, how many times do I have to learn,

All the love I have is in my mind?

First published 22 July 2011

2. LEADING FOR GROWTH

IDEAS ARE THE CURRENCY OF STRATEGY

Ideas are the currency of strategy. All great strategies start with ideas, not analysis, and it's critical that you get your ideas out there and encourage your people to do the same. Your initial thoughts may not be perfect, but new ideas need the oxygen of discussion and debate if they are to live and grow.

Be a big spender in giving your ideas away to others in your business. That way people will own them, they will become stronger and more effective, and they will be far more likely to be delivered and drive new value.

What new ideas for growth have you shared this week?

Off the record: This Is The Sea by The Waterboys (Scott)

Once you were tethered, and now you are free

Once you were tethered, well now you are free

That was the river

This is the sea!

First published 21 October 2011

MANAGING WITHOUT INFORMATION

How would you run your business if you had no management information? What would you do differently to make sure that your customers were receiving a great experience, your operations were effective and your people had the skills, capabilities and desire to do a great job?

In my experience too many managers are fixated on the numbers and distant from the actual business. Management information should be a confirmation of what you already know, not a weekly or monthly surprise.

My guess is that your immediate response to my opening questions was that you would spend far more time on the front line of your business with your customers, your suppliers and partners and your people. Well, why not do it?

Off the record: Living By Numbers by New Musik

*So you're living by numbers
And numbers you answer to
You can count all the numbers
You bet that someone's counting you
We're living by numbers*

First published 9 December 2011

THE POWER OF 6,000

When executives communicate their vision or a major initiative, they typically focus on a big set piece event. But relying on these events – and the associated mouse mats, banners and t-shirts! – to gain support and commitment for your strategy is misguided. Simply put, your people won't necessarily believe you.

It is your daily actions and decisions that your teams will use to gauge the real importance you attach to the new strategy. I tell my executive coaching clients that they should expect to communicate their strategy at least 6,000 times. This is because a strategy typically lasts at least 3 years, you have at least 200 work days each year and will attend 10 meetings a day – $3 \times 200 \times 10 = 6,000!$

How many times have you communicated your strategy? And how well do you relate your strategy and high-level goals to your daily actions and decisions?

Off the record: Everybody's Talkin' by Harry Nilsson (Neil)

*Everybody's talking at me
I don't hear a word they're saying
Only the echoes of my mind*

First published 25 November 2011

WHAT'S YOUR ROLE IN DRIVING GROWTH?

A couple of weeks ago I met the CEO of a major UK plc. I commented on his desk and how clean and tidy it was. "Well," he replied, "that's because I don't allow myself to get involved in operational affairs. I want operational decisions to be made as close to the front line as possible and if I got involved I'd probably only make matters worse. My role, as I see it, is to set the direction, clarify the goals and sharpen accountabilities."

Perhaps you can't achieve such an arms-length management approach, but what impact could you have on your own performance, your customers' experience and your company's results if you better focused your time on setting direction, clarifying goals and sharpening accountabilities?

Off the record: I Can See Clearly Now by Johnny Nash

*I can see clearly now, the rain is gone,
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's gonna be a bright, bright sun-shiny day*

First published 10 June 2011

OH NO, ENGLAND CRICKET IS NOW WORLD #1

Earlier this week, the England cricket team achieved their long-held goal of becoming the world's #1 team. But just as there is a danger of failing to achieve your goals, there is also a danger of achieving them. In 2003, for example, the English rugby team won the World Cup. The team, led by Clive Woodward, had, in the previous 3-5 years, focused so much on achieving that goal that, after their triumph, the team quickly split up and the results declined.

There is no Everest in business, no single peak that you reach, plant your flag and then make your way back down. Business success is Sisyphean, it is a never-ending process of finding the next peak. If they haven't done so already, the leaders of the English cricket team need to raise the bar and identify their next high-performance goal, and, as a leader of your business, so do you.

Off the record: Bullets by Compton Cricket Club (an LA-based cricket club set up to curb the negative effects of gang activities in the Compton area of the city – yes, really!)

From bullets to balls, from bats to gats

From the streets of concrete to grass and mats

We're playing cricket!

First published 26 August 2011

3. CREATING A TRULY DISTINCTIVE BUSINESS

IS YOUR BUSINESS A COVERS BAND?

Earlier this week I went to see Nick Lowe in concert. Best known for his song, *Peace Love And Understanding*, Lowe has a small but committed fan-base, and he continues to earn a decent living from royalties and gigging. His 90-minute set contained no cover songs whatsoever.

I also play in a band – but we only play covers. Unsurprisingly, other than being offered free beer, we don't get paid, and would struggle to make any kind of living.

What's true in music is also true in business. The organisations that prosper and grow are those that innovate and play their own songs. Companies that seek to play covers and imitate their market leaders' proposition are the also-rans, struggling to survive. You see it in markets as diverse as low-fare airlines, coffee shop chains and tablet computers.

What kind of organisation do you lead? Are you a breakthrough band, creating your own music, or are you a tribute band, that relies on playing cover versions of others' songs?

Off The Record: Weather To Fly by Elbow

So, in looking to stray from the line

We decided, instead, we should pull out the thread

That was stitching us into this tapestry vile

And why wouldn't you try? Perfect weather to fly!

First published 2 March 2012

ANDROMEDA

There is a fuzzy star in the night sky, just below the Cassiopeia constellation, that is clearly visible to the naked eye. The thing is, though, it's not a star – it's the Andromeda galaxy, consisting of a trillion stars.

Many companies, too, see their products and services as individual stars when they could be creating galaxies: mini-universes of interconnected and mutually reinforcing products, services and solutions. Apple's creation of iTunes, App Store, the iPod, the iPhone and the iPad, for instance, is a galaxy, as is BSkyB's offering of TV, internet and phone services.

How could you transform your star products into galaxies?

Off the record: The Whole Of The Moon, by The Waterboys (Scott)

I pictured a rainbow

You held it in your hands

I had flashes, but you saw the plan

I saw the crescent

You saw the whole of the moon

First published 13 May 2011

I ONCE SAVED AN INJURED SPARROW

When I was six I found a sparrow in our family garden that had a broken wing. My mum and I put it in a box and gave it some milk and bread. The following morning the bird had disappeared – my mum told me that it must have got better and flown away.

It was only a couple of years ago, when I asked her if she remembered the injured sparrow we had saved, that my mum – after her laughter made her spit out the cake she was eating – turned and said, "Stuart, you idiot, the bird died – I had to put it in the bin!"

For nearly 40 years I didn't question my belief that the sparrow had recovered, but we all carry assumptions around with us that we fail to challenge – sometimes to our cost. Blockbuster's focus on videos and DVD's, at the expense of digital streaming, Kodak's inability to respond to the rise of digital photography, and Tesco's recent profit warning can all be seen as a failure to challenge long-held assumptions.

What assumptions do you hold about your customers, your markets and your business that you haven't challenged recently?

Off The Record: Blackbird by The Beatles (Lennon and McCartney)

Blackbird singing in the dead of night

Take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life

You were only waiting for this moment to arise

First published 3 February 2012

STEVE JOBS – YOU GO YOUR WAY AND I'LL GO MINE

The death of Steve Jobs has highlighted the huge impact that he had on the world. Under his direction Apple introduced personal computing and made it progressively easier to do (my mum has no idea how a PC works, but is totally at ease with an iPad), changed the way people buy and listen to music, and turned a mobile phone into a computer that you carry in your pocket. Irrespective of its size versus its competitors, Apple has always been a leader, and has relentlessly raised the bar in its areas of expertise.

If you're not leading, you're not succeeding. Like Apple your organisation may be a product leader, but you could also be a cost leader (Ryanair), a convenience leader (Amazon), a service leader (John Lewis) or a solutions leader (IBM).

You can choose how you lead, but you have no choice whether or not to lead. In what ways is your business a leader?

Off the record: Most Likely You Go Your Way (And I'll Go Mine) by Bob Dylan
(one of Steve Jobs favourite records)

Time will tell just who fell

And who's been left behind

When you go your way and I go mine

First published 14 October 2011

THE DEATH OF KODAK

Over the last few years I have been writing and speaking about my observation that 'nothing fails like success', and that many companies don't fail because they're bad at what they do, but because they're great at what they do. They simply fail to adapt quickly enough to changing markets. One of the examples I use is Kodak, which sadly, but perhaps inevitably, filed for bankruptcy protection earlier this week.

There are no easy answers for successful companies wanting to succeed today and also catch the next wave of growth. But you can only do it if you are genuinely engaged in driving future growth. One CEO I know ensures that he and his team seek to spend 80% of their time on current year performance, 15% on growth in the next 2-3 years, and 5% on longer-term growth.

Are these splits of time correct? I'm not sure, but it seems like a pretty good start. So how about you? As a leader of your company are you spending at least a day a week on growth initiatives that will pay off in over 12 months time?

Off the record: Kodachrome by Paul Simon

When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school

It's a wonder I can think at all

And though my lack of education hasn't hurt me none

I can read the writing on the wall

First published 20 January 2012

4. TRANSLATING STRATEGY INTO SUCCESS

FIRST THE WHAT, THEN THE HOW

In my experience, one of the biggest time-wasters in business meetings is where a decision on whether a new project should be pursued (a WHAT decision), becomes overtaken by a discussion on the various ways it could be pursued (a HOW decision). Recently, for example, I was working with a retail executive team that was discussing whether they should enter a new product category, when the discussion was hijacked by a debate on whether the retailer could fit the new ranges in its existing stores.

This new debate was a distraction. The company had many alternative ways to offer the products to customers – in-store, on-line, direct – and a decision on that issue was irrelevant until the team had decided whether or not they wanted to enter the new category in the first place.

First decide on your objectives, and only then determine the best route to achieve them. By splitting these two elements you will make better decisions, faster decisions and have a better chance of successful implementation.

Off the record: You Will, You Won't by The Zutons (McCabe)

You will, you won't

You do, you don't

You're saying you will

But you know you won't

First published 27 January 2012

STEPPING STONES VS. SILVER BULLET

Many business leaders talk about transforming their companies and making 'game-changing' moves in their market. The truth of such moves, however, is that they rarely succeed. Most major gains are, in fact, made through a series of smaller victories, not through a single, 'silver bullet' solution.

A 'stepping-stone' approach to growth builds capability, confidence and momentum without taking undue risks. Aim high, and raise the bar for your

business or team, but avoid the temptation to get there in a single leap. Instead, break down the delivery of your goals into achievable, focused steps.

Off the record: Don't Stop by Fleetwood Mac (McVie)

Don't stop, thinking about tomorrow

Don't stop, it'll soon be here

It'll be, better than before

Yesterday's gone, yesterday's gone

First published 27 April 2012

DISRUPTION IS MANDATORY

One of the problems with the Euro financial crisis has been that too many of the players want the solution but without the change. Some governments have refused to cut costs, others have balked at providing further assistance and many private investors have struggled to accept the need to take the necessary losses on their foolish loans.

I see many similarities when it comes to business strategy. Many CEOs want the results of a new strategy, but refuse to accept the trade-offs. But trade-offs – and change – are unavoidable. After struggling as a full-service airline for five years, Ryanair, for example, only began to prosper when the owners accepted the need to completely change their entire business organisation and become Europe's leading low-fare airline.

When it comes to strategy, disruption is mandatory: don't fight it, embrace it. *What trade-offs and changes are you putting off that, once you accept them, will enable you to drive new growth?*

Off the record: Road Rage by Catatonia (Roberts)

If all you've got to prove is your innocence

Calm down, you're as guilty as can be

And if all you've got to lose alludes to yesterday

Yesterday's through, now do anything you please

First published 28 October 2011

NECESSARY, BUT NOT SUFFICIENT

During the endless discussions on the economy, and the government's drive to cut public spending and deliver GDP growth, someone will say, *"The cuts are necessary, but not sufficient for growth."*

Necessary, but not sufficient: it's a phrase that could apply to many companies' growth strategies. The actions that are agreed in many businesses are sensible and necessary, but are simply inadequate to kick-start major growth. Achieving higher levels of growth requires more ambitious goals, a willingness to take prudent risk in pursuit of new opportunities, and a greater commitment to innovation.

Your growth agenda may be full of initiatives that are *necessary*, but, ask yourself, are they *sufficient*?

Off the record: Move On Up by Curtis Mayfield

So keep on pushing

Take nothing less, not even second best

And do not obey, you must have your say

Move on up!

First published 23 September 2011

HAVE I MENTIONED PEOPLE YET?

Most retailers I work with have a rule of thumb that a good store manager makes at least a 20% difference to a store's performance. I've recently worked with a new client that has hired a new commercial director and seen sales and margins improve almost immediately. Finally, in a recent conversation with a CEO, he highlighted three recent issues facing the business that had been resolved by changing the leadership of the relevant departments.

If you haven't guessed by now, this week's focus is that 80% of your success is based on your ability to attract, develop and retain the best possible people to your team. It's easy to become personally attached to solid and loyal individuals who are, unfortunately, simply not right for, or up to, the role. Where that situation exists, it's not fair on you, them or the business to let the issue persist.

Where do you have talent gaps in your team and what are you doing now to address them?

Off The Record: Only A Fool Breaks His Own Heart by Nick Lowe (Bergen and Coburn)

There's no sense in holding on

To a love that's gone

Only a fool breaks his own heart

First published 10 February 2012

5. DELIVERY EXCELLENCE

LONDON 2012 – READY IN 2011

You may or may not be in favour of next year's London Olympics (personally, I'm a fan), but we should all admire the fact that the facilities are already built – a full 12 months ahead of the first starting pistol.

Most projects I've been involved with typically involve a last-minute rush to bring the product to market, open the store on time or simply complete the business case. Establishing an 'early' completion date and, more importantly, committing to it, ensures pace is built into the project from the start, momentum is maintained and, in most cases, costs are contained.

Which of your projects would benefit from setting more ambitious deadlines and demanding greater pace in delivery?

Off the record: London Calling by The Clash (Strummer and Jones)

London calling, yes, I was there too

And you know what they said? Well, some of it was true!

First published 29 July 2011

THE SPEED OF LIGHT IS NOT CONSTANT

It takes a photon of light just eight minutes to travel the 150 million km from the sun through the vacuum of space to the earth. Yet it takes that same photon 10,000 years to travel the 500,000 km from the sun's core to its surface. The density of the sun means that the photon is forever bumping into other photons. At the heart of the sun, the speed of light is effectively a standstill.

Many business leaders highlight need for pace when they really mean they want the organisation to do more. Yet driving pace without focus creates an organisation packed with photons going nowhere. As one initiative hits all the others it simply loses momentum, slows down and achieves little.

Pace is increased when you do fewer things well, not when you try and do too many things at once. Where do you need to create greater focus to increase the pace and performance of your organisation?

Off the record: Here Comes The Sun by The Beatles (Harrison)

Little darling, I feel the ice is slowly melting

Little darling, it seems like years since it's been clear

Here comes the sun, here comes the sun

And I say, it's alright.

First published 11 November 2011

FIXED ON THE VISION, FLEXIBLE ON THE JOURNEY

I took out one key management lesson from this week's 'autumn statement' from George Osborne, the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer. My big take-out was that the Chancellor has given himself very little room for manoeuvre in managing the UK economy and, as a result, has found that his fortunes are now being dictated by external events beyond his control.

Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, once said that his company was 'fixed on the vision, flexible on the journey'. In other words, while the business has clear objectives, it adapts and flexes its plans and initiatives according to dynamic market conditions. Mr Osborne, on the other hand, appears to be 'fixed on the vision, and fixed on the journey', and that is not an approach I would recommend to any of my clients.

How could you be more flexible in achieving your objectives?

Off the record: Chasing Pavements by Adele (Adele and White)

I've made up my mind, don't need to think it over

If I'm wrong I am right, don't need to look no further

Should I give up or should I just keep chasing pavements

Even if it leads nowhere?

First published 2 December 2011

REVERSING BAD DECISIONS

Politicians love to cry foul when they spot another party reversing a decision. In the UK, for example, there is currently a lot of heat about the government's changes of mind on health service policy and prison sentencing.

But it's better to reverse a bad decision than it is to pursue it regardless. And, at a company level, you sometimes need to let go of traditional businesses to make the most of new opportunities. Whitbread, for instance, no longer brews beer or runs pubs. Instead it has generated growth over the last decade through its focus on a hotel chain, Premier Inn, and its coffee shop business, Costa.

Where are you continuing to pursue bad decisions, bad strategies and bad businesses, when deep down you know that you should be cutting your losses and focusing on other, more attractive opportunities?

Off the record: Hungry Heart by Bruce Springsteen (and in memory of Clarence Clemons, his band's legendary saxophonist, who died recently)

Got a wife and kids in Baltimore, Jack

I went out for a ride and I never went back

Like a river that don't know where it's flowing

I took a wrong turn and I just kept going.

First published 24 June 2011

XAVI'S PASS COMPLETION RATE

Xavi, the Barcelona midfield player, averages 120 passes every game and has a completion rate of 93%. This means that he completes over 20 more passes per game than any other European player, and probably completes more passes per match than my team, Preston North End, achieve in an entire season!

Most problems for football teams happen when their passes go awry and they lose possession. Similarly, most operational errors happen in the hand-offs between colleagues, teams, departments and organisations. If you want to reduce the errors and mistakes of your team, look first at the points at which information, materials, activities or responsibilities are passed from one person or group to another.

Off the record: *Give Him A Ball (And A Yard Of Grass)* by The Sultans Of Ping

Give him a ball and a yard of grass,

He'll give you a move with a perfect pass,

Give him a ball and a yard of space,

He'll give you a move with godly grace.

First published 30 March 2012

DOWNLOAD THE TRACKS

Here's a complete listing of the tracks from each of the articles:

- *Sunrise, Sunset from Fiddler On The Roof*
- *You Don't See Me* by Keane
- *Time Passes* by Paul Weller
- *It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding* by Bob Dylan
- *Lucky Man* by The Verve
- *This Is The Sea* by The Waterboys
- *Living By Numbers* by New Musik
- *Everybody's Talkin'* by Harry Nilsson
- *I Can See Clearly Now* by Johnny Nash
- *Bullets* by Compton Cricket Club
- *Weather To Fly* by Elbow
- *The Whole Of The Moon*, by The Waterboys
- *Blackbird* by The Beatles
- *Most Likely You Go Your Way (And I'll Go Mine)* by Bob Dylan
- *Kodachrome* by Paul Simon
- *You Will, You Won't* by The Zutons
- *Don't Stop* by Fleetwood Mac
- *Road Rage* by Catatonia
- *Move On Up* by Curtis Mayfield
- *Only A Fool Breaks His Own Heart* by Nick Lowe
- *London Calling* by The Clash
- *Here Comes The Sun* by The Beatles
- *Chasing Pavements* by Adele
- *Hungry Heart* by Bruce Springsteen
- *Give Him A Ball And A Yard Of Grass* by Sultans Of Ping

ABOUT STUART CROSS

Stuart Cross is a consultant, coach and speaker who helps world class companies dramatically accelerate profit growth. Since its launch in 2006 his firm, Morgan Cross Consulting, has attracted clients including Avon Cosmetics, Alliance Boots, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Morrisons and GSK.

Stuart is a regular writer and, in addition to his articles and newsletters, Global Professional Publishing published his first book, The CEO's Strategy Handbook, in 2011.

Prior to launching his consulting business, Stuart was Head of Strategy for the UK retailer, Boots the Chemists. He is a chartered accountant (though he rarely divulges this information on a 'first date') and has an MBA from Warwick Business School. In addition to his consulting, coaching and speaking work Stuart teaches on MBA courses at both Warwick and Nottingham University Business Schools.

As part of his mid-life crisis Stuart joined his first rock band, The Imposters, as guitarist. Do not expect them to be playing at a venue near you anytime soon!

"I have worked with Stuart Cross for over a decade. Stuart has always helped me to think and act differently, and that is the key to innovation in any leadership role." *Alex Gourlay, Chief Executive, Boots The Chemists*

"Stuart is a scarce resource. He delivers rapid results, but he also gains the trust and commitment of the executives and managers he works with to ensure longer-term success." *Ian Filby, CEO, DFS Limited*

"We work with Stuart Cross because he takes a pragmatic, hands-on yet insightful approach to strategy that forces us to address some tough questions, but which gives us the tools and support to answer them." *David Johnston, Chief Executive, Aimia Europe (owners of Nectar)*

"We chose Morgan Cross to help us because of their strategy expertise and also because of their ability to involve managers and directors effectively in the work. Stuart used his excellent strategic skills to help us create a new agenda that will drive significantly higher levels of growth for the business." *Stephen Ford, VP Strategy, Western Europe, Avon Cosmetics Inc*

"Stuart rapidly identified material profit growth opportunities for our UK business. He is focused on results, commercially pragmatic and delivers a lot of value – quickly!" *Najib Fayad, Chief Operating Officer, Nelsons Natural Healthcare*



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