



Criticaleye, the peer to peer Board Community, brings together a wide range of leadership experience, offering CEOs and senior executives the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and skills set by engaging with peers outside their own personal and professional networks.

Our Community offers leaders the opportunity to be inspired and informed on how to achieve personal and professional success.



Martyn Fisher is CEO, Northern Europe at Veolia Water Technologies and has been an Executive Member for ten years. Criticaleye supported Martyn's transition into his leadership role, provided an experienced Board Mentor and assisted him in navigating the peer to peer Board Community via his Criticaleye Relationship Manager Julian Goldsmith.

What is moving into the CEO role for the first time like?

Martyn: It's unlike any other job move you can make. Suddenly you are in charge and colleagues are reporting to you. You feel a tremendous pressure and responsibility to the company and to the people working for you. It's also very lonely, especially, as was the case for me, when your Group function is based in another country. Who do you turn to for advice? Are you doing a good job? Will someone from corporate come and bail you out if you make a mistake? When I took on the CEO role I was told not to focus on what we had been doing previously so it was really crucial that I could get an external perspective on things and benchmark new things we were trying.

What value did you get from your Criticaleye Board Mentor?

Martyn: Having a mentor means you can immediately get an outside view on things. I felt I could ask questions and be open. My Criticaleye mentor was completely independent so there were no politics. In many cases, my mentor did nothing more than validate what I thought was the right approach to a problem but that was exactly what I needed – validation that I was doing the right things and taking the business in the right direction.

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How important is validation as a CEO? Did you also get it from the Criticaleye Community as a whole?

Martyn: Very important. I sometimes attended Criticaleye events even when they did not seem 100% relevant as I knew there would be value in meeting other leaders in the Community and this would help me be a better leader. Also, as a CEO you really have very little time so meeting people and experts at Criticaleye events was a great way of having lots of high-value meetings in a relatively short timeframe, speaking to individuals who were, perhaps, closer to customers than I was and getting a range of perspectives – a brilliant use of my very limited time.

Julian: Martyn has invested time in Criticaleye and is a great example that you get out what you put in. We work hard with all our Members to understand their challenges and ensure we are introducing them to the right people at the right time. In Martyn's case we have been able to make some valuable connections for him at various times, for instance, we put him in touch with the then Chief Sustainability Officer for Marks & Spencer and one of the driving forces behind it's 'Plan A' initiative when he was looking at sustainability issues across his business. Similarly, we made a valuable introduction to one of our Advisory Members at PA Consulting, when he was exploring ideas for digital transformation and this resulted in an ongoing commercial relationship.

Martyn: One of the main differences with finding answers within the Criticaleye Community is that you are amongst other people who are also looking for insight. It's very much about gaining perspectives and ideas via a two-way dialogue rather than getting a consultancy to tell you what they think. When people are looking for answers in an open and non-sales driven environment, it makes for a very rich and valuable conversation.

How have you evolved as a leader and what impact has Criticaleye had on that over the last ten years?

Martyn: Criticaleye has given me a lot more confidence as a leader. Certainly, when I took on the CEO role I was driven by a strong sense of responsibility – you are constantly in the spotlight with everyone looking for something different from you, from inspiration and creativity, to providing direction and making decisions. Having the courage and confidence to make every intervention right and still be human in the process is no mean feat.

Being part of Criticaleye, and particularly having access to a Board Mentor, provided a chance to step back and gain perspective. No one can understand the weight of expectation that rests on you as a new CEO. Criticaleye offered me an opportunity to meet and hear from great leaders, as well as those who are developing those leadership skills – the chance to get input from a range of different voices in one place and use this insight to better your own leadership ability.

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What, in your view, is the biggest challenge you face as a leader?

Martyn: Definitely employees' changing expectations. As a leader you need to have an awareness of many different groups and different demographics. These are shifting at pace and it is easy to become isolated and out of touch.

What about your Relationship Manager? What impact has he had?

Martyn: My Relationship Manager plays a vital role as the orchestrator of connections with other Members, and in helping me navigate the Community. For instance, my RM was able to put me in touch with a highly relevant individual within the Community who helped me navigate challenges we were having with a multi-million dollar project. As a consequence we managed to close it earlier than expected and save millions in the process. Similarly, I was able to get some fantastic insight from a fellow Member on Iraq and opportunities which we were looking into there, as well as help and experience on municipal contracts which was invaluable.

Julian: We are in quite a unique position here at Criticaleye, in that we can often tell CEOs and leaders what they need and this might be completely different to what they want. We also find that during the conversations that take place within the Community, Members can get a level of agenda-free honesty and openness they would almost certainly never get from internal conversations. Their peers and our Board Mentors are able to offer an independent and unbiased view on things; another perspective on the challenges they might be facing.

Here at Criticaleye, we believe the fundamentals of great leadership transcend industry, sector and discipline, which is why our Community is broad and highly managed to ensure each and every Member is fully engaged. We also believe that world-class leaders cannot operate in isolation, and that individual and team development go hand in hand which is why our Community caters for the individual as well as the executive team.

We represent almost half of FTSE 100 companies, have an unrivalled team of Board Mentors with a collective experience of more than 100 CEO roles and over 300 chair and non-executive roles and over 15 years' experience inspiring, energising and informing leaders and their teams so they can address challenges, drive strategy and perform at the highest level. For more information visit www.criticaleye.com



CRITICALEYE

The peer to peer Board Community

Inspiring Leaders to Succeed

Our Values

Respect: an appreciation for diverse and varied views and experiences is crucial to high-performance leadership

Collaboration: working together to share knowledge and expertise is a defining characteristic of effective executive teams

Challenge: strategies and ideas need to be constructively challenged to reach the best outcome

Trust: leaders need to trust their colleagues and peers in order to work effectively and drive results

Integrity: we inspire leaders to succeed by providing a closed and confidential environment where Members can share openly

To discuss in more detail, please contact:

Criticaleye (Europe) Ltd

WeWork, Aldwych House
71-91 Aldwych
London, WC2B 4HN

T: +44 (0)20 7350 5109

Criticaleye (Asia) Ltd

1203/4 Chinachem Hollywood
Centre, 1-13 Hollywood Road,
Central, Hong Kong

T: +852 3158 2999

www.criticaleye.com

