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SOCIAL MOBILITY

Elevating Social Mobility as a Business Force for Good

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intelligent
ethics



CONTENTS

Page 3: Forewords by Tracey Groves & Tea Colaianni

Page 4: An Introduction to Social Mobility

Page 5: Why Social Mobility Matters

Page 7: Social Mobility as a Responsible Business Imperative

Page 8: The Role of Leadership and Culture

Page 9: Case Study (Compass UK&I)

Page 10: Practical Tips and Hints

Page 12: Conclusion

Page 13: Further Resources

Page 14: About Us

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FOREWORD TRACEY GROVES

CEO INTELLIGENT ETHICS & PARTNER STONeturn

In September 2021, WiHTL hosted a webinar entitled 'Social Mobility: Creating a Level Playing Field for All'. The speakers were Rt Hon. Justine Greening, Founder of Social Mobility Pledge and former Minister for Women, Donna Catley, Chief People Officer Compass Group (UK&I), André Flemmings, Head of Diversity, Inclusion & Wellbeing at WHSmith and Tracey Groves, CEO Intelligent Ethics & Partner, StoneTurn.

The wide-ranging panel discussion included defining what is meant by the term 'social mobility', if and how the pandemic can be a catalyst for change within the hospitality, travel and leisure (and other) industries, how companies can seize the social mobility opportunities that now present themselves, and how an organisation might measure its success and impact in driving change across the social mobility agenda.

This white paper summarises the key points emerging from the discussion and aims to help organisations understand the topic in greater depth, by providing reference to current thought leadership, sharing of practical case studies and highlighting leading research in this area.

FOREWORD TEA COLAIANNI

FOUNDER & CHAIR WIHTL/DIR

The rupture in the UK employment market during the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the hospitality, travel, leisure and retail sectors and amplified the pre-existing challenges of a growing opportunity gap. There are multiple benefits to upward mobility – both for individuals and for society as a whole. These extend from increased self-identity and engagement by employees aiming for an improved quality of life, to the broader reach of positively impacting society through the creation of a healthy and dynamic economy. Employer-led intervention can be a driving force in achieving social mobility goals while collaboration helps inspire new ideas to ensure that everyone in society is given fair and equal opportunity. Looking through a social mobility lens, creating higher ambitions to bridge the gap for those who might get left behind on the career path, focuses businesses on advocating for change. By investing in the potential of employees who have a less privileged background, there is a greater likelihood of inclusion for all.

We have put together our first ever Social Mobility Guide with the objective of inspiring employers across the hospitality, travel and leisure and retail sectors to ensure there are equal opportunities for people from all socioeconomic backgrounds across all levels and roles. Upward mobility will take a continuous and collaborative effort and examples of policies and practices from within the industry will show a clear path to sustainable and progressive change in this area.

I would like to thank Tracey Groves CEO Intelligent Ethics for bringing depth and significance to this fascinating topic and to André Flemmings from WHSmith, Donna Catley from Compass and Justine Greening from the Social Mobility Pledge for their insights and contribution.



INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility is multi-faceted and can be complex. It can also be absolute, where we consider by how much the level of socio-economic outcome has improved or deteriorated over a person's lifetime, or it can be relative. Relative social mobility considers people's positions on the social ladder, either comparing their rank with that of their parents or at different points in their lives. As countries across the world reach higher levels of development, progress in absolute terms slows down in some key areas, such as in education or health. It is this issue of relative mobility that is gaining in importance in many of the more advanced economies, and warrants the full attention of leadership.

Social mobility is a global, social, economic and political issue which is increasing in prominence on the responsible business strategic agenda. Headline findings from The Social Mobility Barometer 2021¹ include:

- Four in five adults (79%) now believe there is a large gap between different social classes
- Three-quarters (74%) of people think there are large differences in opportunities across Britain
- A third (35%) of adults across the UK believe everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their hard work will take them. Only one in four (25%) people from black and ethnic minority groups believe we live in a fair society.
- An increasing number of people think that employers should have to take action to improve social mobility – 42% in 2021 compared with 31% in 2019. Ethnic minorities are more likely than average to say that employers should act (58%)

Social mobility is about where people end up in comparison to their parents or relative to their peers. It is widely adopted as a way of describing the importance of creating opportunities for individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds to enable them to become more economically successful. Research undertaken by the SMC has broken new ground, deepening knowledge of geographical inequalities, showing how social class and background can hold people back in the workplace, and demonstrating that the choices people make are circumscribed by the impacts of economic status and place.

In a recent open letter to the UK Prime Minister, the Commissioners of the Social Mobility Commission stated:



*It still pays to be privileged in Britain and career progression for those from disadvantaged backgrounds can often be restricted even if they do get the job.*²

However, the fundamental truth of social mobility remains stark. Without a more equal society, we cannot build a mobile society where people have equality of opportunity and are able to flourish and prosper. Business leaders cannot afford to wait to be told how to redress the bumpy playing field through government policy or regulation. A growing sense of inequity is undermining trust in institutions and business leaders are increasingly expected to lead on societal issues. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer reported 86% of people surveyed agreed the following:

"I expect CEOs to publicly speak out on one or more of these societal challenges: pandemic impact, job automation, societal issues, local community issues", and 68% agreed that "CEOs should step in when government does not to fix societal problems".³

The UK Social Mobility Commission (SMC) is an advisory non-departmental public body which was set up in 2018 to create a United Kingdom where the circumstances of birth do not determine outcomes in life. The SMC defines social mobility as the following:

*Social mobility is the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents. Where there is a strong link, there is a lower level of social mobility. Where there is a weak link, there is a higher level of social mobility.*⁴



RT HON. JUSTINE GREENING, FOUNDER OF SOCIAL MOBILITY PLEDGE AND FORMER MINISTER FOR WOMEN

"The reason I founded the social mobility pledge back in 2018 is because I believe that companies are at a nexus of really extending opportunity to people, particularly people who find it harder or who have had less opportunity in their lives before."

WHY SOCIAL MOBILITY MATTERS

To address social mobility is to play the long game, to look at the rippling effects over decades, not just years, and across organizational, institutional, geographical and governmental boundaries. Arguably, we are now at one of the most critical points in time for social mobility. The global pandemic will have an enormous impact for decades to come. People have lost their jobs, their loved ones, and for some people, their way of life. With the ending of governmental furlough schemes, benefit payment changes, global supply chain challenges, labour shortages and an inflationary crisis looming, there are more difficulties to come. The hospitality, travel, leisure and retail industries have been hit particularly hard and, together with the disproportionate impact on women during the pandemic, the opportunity for inequality to be amplified even further is a harsh reality that must be addressed.

This is the time for business to be an active force in helping to rebuild people's lives. We need to put people at the top of the agenda and at the heart of why business exists. People, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, should not be overlooked in the existing or future workplace. They need skills, training, opportunity, support and hope, wherever they live and regardless of their background.

When persons from low-income families have little chance of moving up while those from well-off families are almost guaranteed to retain their privileged positions, the 'social elevator' is broken.⁵ This can result in harmful economic, social and political consequences that significantly impact business and sustainable growth, as well as hurting people.

Social mobility is good for society, and if it's good for society, then it's good for business. Low social mobility can erode the foundations of economic growth, for example, when talent and skills remain under-developed for those at the bottom of the ladder and can significantly impact future growth potential and business opportunity. In addition, mobility prospects are an important indicator of health and well-being of people; those who gain in socio-economic status compared to their parents tend to fare better along a wide range of social and well-being dimensions, leading to a more engaged, higher performing and satisfied workforce.



DONNA CATLEY, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER COMPASS GROUP (UK&I)

"There is a commercial imperative for us to do things differently, to reach into all pockets and corners of society, to invest in building the skills of everybody in this country.... the pandemic has awakened within society a real sense of the importance of the hidden heroes in this country. It's the people that work in many of our businesses. The people that kept the lights on, kept the country running, they're not the best paid jobs, but they're the jobs that are absolutely critical to society."

SOCIAL MOBILITY AS A RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS IMPERATIVE

No matter the industry or sector, the performance, productivity and commitment of your people are critical to your organisation's success. Yet businesses are arguably missing opportunities to recruit, promote and retain some of the most talented and driven people from across different localities. Hospitality, travel, leisure and retail are industries which encompass all parts of the UK and has a unique opportunity to access talent and skills from all corners of the country, given the scale and geographic breadth of its presence.

As an integral part of its sustainable business strategy, an organisation that (a) wants to get the best out of its workforce, and (b) is committed to social mobility, will ultimately create a workplace environment where an employee's start in life does not limit what they can achieve in their career. Socio-economic diversity and inclusion are a key element of the Social ('S') strategic business agenda, a critical component of the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) risk factors underpinning an organisation's sustainable growth and are critical drivers of long-term prosperity. This means extending the inclusion and diversity strategy to embrace wider socio-economic characteristics, as well as those of gender, race, ability and other minority characteristics, whilst recognising that socio-economic diversity is complex. A coalition of businesses, NHS Trusts, Councils and universities have committed to driving levelling up on the ground in the UK through the Social Mobility Pledge.⁶ Together with civil society and cross-party MPs, they have produced a leading architecture for truly purpose-led organisations, called the Levelling Up Goals.⁷

Chaired by Justine Greening, this purpose architecture is setting the standard on the social aspect of ESG, being adopted by many organisations, NHS Trusts and 15 UK Universities amongst others.



ANDRÉ FLEMMINGS, HEAD DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & WELLBEING, WHSMITH

"There are so many factors that feed into socioeconomic statuses that make them less straightforward to determine or understand than other legally protected diversity characteristics. Certain aspects of someone's life, such as refugee status, care status, whether they themselves are carers, where they live (there can be massive differences street-by-street in some locations), schooling, or even parental educational levels and occupations are incredibly important. Each influence an individual's life chances and trajectory in very subtle and unique ways."

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RT HON. JUSTINE GREENING,

"The 14 key levelling up goals are the things we need to shift the dial on if we're going to deliver equality of opportunity. Some are focused on education, others are focused on how to connect and gain access to opportunity. And then some are on those other things that can make or break whether we can get on in our lives, for example closing the digital divide or housing."

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

An organisational culture where individuals can thrive and flourish, regardless of their background and socio-economic status, does not happen by accident. Culture can happen to an organisation by default, or it can be purposefully designed to enable and empower. This demands intentional and purposeful leadership at all levels of the business and a clear strategy, where the commitment to developing a socio-inclusive culture is compelling, consistent and aligned.

Leaders must be held accountable for a socio-economic diversity narrative that extends beyond words and translates into tangible actions; not only articulating its importance and why it matters, but also sharing a clear vision of the desired socio-economic goals and a clear action plan to support progression towards those goals. As visible role models, leaders can help to create an inclusive workplace climate by walking the talk every day, such as encouraging more conversations and story-telling about social mobility, and ensuring the reinforcement of relevant policies and procedures with aligned decision-making.

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RT HON. JUSTINE GREENING

"Start to get a sense of where you are on social mobility and start to have those discussions with your company right now. It's very sensible, because you'll be ahead of the curve quite frankly, on what's probably coming down the line policy-wise over the next few years."



TRACEY GROVES

"Social mobility takes determination and resilience. This is not a tactical play that you can dip in and out of. It requires leaders who act with integrity and are trustworthy, to activate organisational purpose and bring it to life over the long term through the strategic actions they undertake, whether through Outreach, apprenticeships or other collaborative programmes. This is a business transformation which requires ethical and intentional leaders who are focused on putting things right."

CASE STUDY: COMPASS GROUP UK&I

The people agenda at Compass Group UK and Ireland is based on social equality. Supporting colleagues to progress is a fundamental part of the strategy, and the foodservice giant has created clear career pathways for employees, helping them understand the progression routes and opportunities to upskill or reskill on their Compass journey.

Working at Compass provides many different opportunities – operating in over 6,000 locations across the UK, employing tens of thousands of talented people across sports stadiums, schools and universities, military bases, hospitals, blue-chip offices, and visitor attractions. Compass has a long-standing partnership with leading hospitality charity, Springboard, both passionate about developing the future generation and making sure everyone has access to the first rung on the career ladder. Working together to develop and deliver pre-employability programmes where learners can gain a Level 1 Award in Skills For Employment. Springboard is one of five fantastic charities involved in the Evening Standard and Independent Skill Up Step Up initiative to provide young people in London with key employability skills.

Until Springboard, Devonte had few prospects. By age 15, he'd already been expelled from three schools, he'd failed his GCSEs, lost his mother to cancer, and become homeless. But despite these setbacks he never lost the drive to improve and make something of himself –and it's that that led him to Springboard. After hearing about it from his social worker, Devonte threw himself in Springboard's three-week course, discovering the ins-and-outs of the hospitality sector, learning key employability skills and gaining confidence in himself. And that's where Compass comes in. Compass has partnered with Springboard for over 10 years and guarantee participants an interview at the end of their course.

When Devonte came to Compass, he made an impression and was offered a job. Now he's working at the O2 Arena, a valued and enthusiastic team member that has a real future in the industry. He says, 'I love working at such an iconic venue – and it's all down to the pre-employability programme. It gave me a chance when no one else did. Now, I am on my way.'



PRACTICAL TIPS AND HINTS

A critical starting point for business when addressing social mobility is a belief that an individual's talent and determination should decide how far they progress in their career. People should not be held back because of where they grew up, where they went to school or what their parents did for a living. This is not only about giving people more access, awareness and aspiration that will advance their relative social mobility but, arguably even more importantly, enabling them to flourish and prosper as human beings.

A key step in making this step change is the ability of business to gather data and analyse where progression starts to slow down, or even come to a halt for some individuals. Businesses need to understand, for example, who is and who is not progressing through the levels in their organisation, at what pace, and in which parts of the business. At what point does progression falter, who is being affected and what are the root causes. With this level of insight, it is possible to identify what is making progression difficult on an informed basis and what needs to change, so that individuals are able to overcome those difficult points in their career progression.

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TRACEY GROVES

"Data is the magic bullet. Once you've gathered your data, you can baseline the current position and you can start to measure and report on progress, as well as frame social mobility as a force for good, both for business and for people. Data provides answers to questions such as where do the barriers exist, at what point in the employee lifecycle do blocks to progression emerge, and where does the social mobility gap take root and for whom?"

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ANDRÉ FLEMMINGS

"It's the little things that you do that can make the difference, such as reviewing every step of your selection process through the lens of social mobility, questioning everything you do and why you do it, and challenging every assumption that you're making."

PRACTICAL TIPS AND HINTS

Here are our top 5 tips for business to advance social mobility and for organisations to play an active role in society:

Area of Focus	Actions
<p>1. Measure what you are doing</p> <p>What is the best measure to assess someone's socio-economic background and their levels of social mobility? We need a question that's easy to understand, achieves high response rates and is applicable to all ages and geographies</p>	<p>Whether your business is just starting its social mobility journey or already has a social mobility strategy, ask job applicants, apprentices and the workforce this one key question:</p> <p><i>What was the occupation of your main household earner when you were about aged 14?</i></p>
<p>2. Collect Data</p> <p>Any forward-looking socio-economic diversity and inclusion strategy begins with data to inform and shape any future actions</p>	<p>Invite applicants and staff to disclose their socio-economic background anonymously (such as asking the question above)</p> <p>Provide the context (the 'why') and share how the data is being collected and analysed, in order to understand socio-economic diversity along with other diversity data, and progress the social mobility agenda</p>
<p>3. Purposeful Leadership and Culture by Design</p> <p>A diverse workforce is a more productive workforce and creates an inclusive culture, so embed this ambition into your business strategy and frame it as a leadership priority</p>	<p>Educate and equip your leaders to be able to not just talk about social mobility but to actively demonstrate their commitment to it through their behaviours and key decisions</p> <p>Hold leaders accountable and responsible for social mobility goals and integrate these with other strategic business aspirations to create an aligned and empowering workplace culture</p>
<p>4. Community</p> <p>Identify where and how your organisation can play a positive role in advancing social mobility across communities</p>	<p>Become a cornerstone employer - invest in the successful and sustainable delivery of careers education for young people</p> <p>For example, join a leadership group of local businesses to support the schools, colleges and young people in your area</p>
<p>5. Recruitment</p> <p>Ensure practices are accessible and fair to all applicants</p>	<p>Identify any barriers in place, such as qualifications or geography, and consider changes to the policies and procedures to overcome these</p> <p>Ensure all candidate assessment processes are transparent and applied consistently, assess how your business is engaging and attracting a diverse range of candidates through apprenticeships, trainee and internships, college leavers schemes etc</p>

CONCLUSION

Organisations need to start now, if they haven't already, to plan how they can unlock the talent and unlimited potential that social mobility can deliver. Leaders must begin with the right mindset and a belief in socio-economic diversity. Admittedly there will be challenges and hurdles to overcome, as in any strategic or transformational change. But they need to have the belief, the commitment and a strong conviction that social mobility is a force for good.

This is not about achieving perfection overnight. It is more about how business can demonstrate progression, start to overcome the barriers and move consistently towards a workplace where everyone can reach their full potential, no matter what their socio-economic starting point is in life.



DONNA CATLEY

"Don't wait for a master plan, start something tomorrow, start it structurally, start celebrating the stories of progression in your frontline, and take it from there. Together as an industry, there's a huge opportunity for us to make a really, really big positive difference"

FURTHER RESOURCES AND READING

- Organisations need to start now, if they haven't already, to plan how they can unlock the talent and unlimited potential that social mobility can deliver. Leaders must begin with the right mindset and a belief in socio>About the Social Mobility Commission:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission>
- Social Mobility Commission website: <https://socialmobilityworks.org/>
- Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility, OECD, 2018:
<https://www.oecd.org/social/broken-elevator-how-to-promote-social-mobility-9789264301085-en.htm>
- The Levelling Up Goals - a leading architecture for truly purpose-led organisations:
<https://www.levellingupgoals.org/>

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-barometer-2021>

2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/open-letter-to-the-prime-minister-from-social-mobility-commissioners>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission/about>

4 <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2021-trust-barometer>

5 <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/Social-Mobility-2018-PolicyBrief.pdf> : A broken elevator? How to promote social mobility

6 <https://www.socialmobilitypledge.org/>

7 <https://www.levellingupgoals.org/>



ABOUT US

ABOUT WIHTL



WiHTL is a Collaboration Community devoted to increasing Diversity and Inclusion across Hospitality, Travel and Leisure. Our mission is to support companies across these industries to create diverse and inclusive environments and to positively impact 5 million employees globally by 2025. For more information please visit www.wihtl.com

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ABOUT DIR



At Diversity in Retail we believe that through collaboration we can amplify the impact of individual diversity initiatives, that together we can have a bigger, louder voice for the good of the retail sector. Our mission is to support companies across the retail industry to create diverse and inclusive environments and positively impact 1 million employees globally by 2025. For more information please visit www.diversityinretail.com

Contact: info@diversityinretail.com

ABOUT INTELLIGENT ETHICS



We are passionate about how leaders define and embrace what 'doing the right thing' means to business, wider stakeholders, civil society and the planet.

We apply organisational culture, corporate purpose and business integrity as critical levers for driving value-led change and delivering risk-resilient sustainable business, enabling growth and optimal performance.

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