

INSPIRING GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS

Q4, 2024



**STEPHEN
PURVES**
NAVIGATING
THE EVOLVING
BULK ANNUITY
PENSIONS MARKET

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WELCOME

Hello and welcome to the eighth edition of the **IGA Talent Solutions** magazine – Inspiring Great Achievements!

At IGA, we pride ourselves on being a values-driven recruitment and talent solutions consultancy, dedicated to offering genuine insight and independent advice to both candidates and clients in the markets we serve. In this edition, we bring you a variety of thought-provoking articles and expert insights, designed to keep you informed about the latest trends and challenges in recruitment and talent solutions.

In this issue, our MD, [James Craven](#), speaks with [Stephen Purves](#), Head of Risk Settlement at XPS Group, to delve into the evolving bulk annuity pensions market, offering valuable perspectives on industry shifts. [Phil Husbands](#), Principal Consultant from Enfuse Group, provides insightful advice on why you already know how to get your data ready for AI. We also speak with IFoA Member of Council, [Richard Galbraith](#), to discuss how systemic coaching is transforming leadership in financial services.

We feature highlights from the Qorus Reinvent Forum in Dubai, with [Jack Rodnight](#) sharing key takeaways on digital transformation and the UAE's rapidly evolving business landscape. Additionally, we celebrate our team's achievements and milestones, including a recap of our successes and incentive wins.

Finally, we're proud to announce our participation in the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), underscoring our commitment to sustainability and transparency in environmental practices.

As always, we value your feedback and ideas. If you'd like to contribute to future editions, please reach out to our in-house editor, [Katie Thompson](#).

Happy reading!

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NAVIGATING THE EVOLVING BULK ANNUITY PENSIONS MARKET: KEY INDUSTRY INSIGHTS FROM STEPHEN PURVES, HEAD OF RISK SETTLEMENT AT XPS GROUP



INTERVIEW BY JAMES CRAVEN

IGA founder and MD, James Craven recently caught up with Stephen Purves, Head of Risk Settlement at XPS Group, to discuss his career journey, recent changes in the bulk annuity market, and the evolving landscape of pension scheme risk transfer.

With over two decades in risk settlement, Stephen has experienced the industry's shift from a focus on schemes with insolvent employers to today's thriving de-risking market. In the following interview, Stephen offers insights into the current challenges facing smaller schemes, and what XPS is doing to guide clients through seamless transitions. He also shares his outlook for the industry's future, as demand for bulk annuities surges and new market players emerge.

HI STEPHEN, YOU HAVE HAD A LONG AND INTERESTING CAREER CONSULTING WITHIN THE BULK ANNUITY AND RISK SETTLEMENT SPACE. TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY SO FAR AND YOUR CURRENT ROLE AS HEAD OF RISK SETTLEMENT AT XPS GROUP.

Hi James! Well, my whole career has been in risk settlement, going all the way back to my first buyout transaction in 2001 which feels like a lifetime ago now. Since then, the market has evolved rapidly from one which basically only served schemes with insolvent employers to the emergence of the "de-risking" market that we know today. My own journey has included a number of roles across several consulting firms in the market culminating in my current role as Head of Risk Settlement at XPS. I also spent 3 years on the insurer-side at Aviva, where I led the origination and deal structuring team - which was a real eye-opener and really valuable in seeing things from the insurers' perspective.

HOW HAS THE ROLE OF A CONSULTANT BROKERING RISK TRANSFER DEALS CHANGED IN RECENT TIMES?

I'd say the main difference has been the change in market dynamics. Pre 2022, it very much felt like a "buyer's market" with insurers hungry for most deals that you'd take to market. Following the rapid rise in interest rates in 2022, funding positions across lots of pension schemes has improved significantly, moving us towards more of a "seller's market" with schemes needing to work harder to get insurers' attention and insurers becoming more selective on which schemes they bid on than ever before. Having said that, at XPS, we've found that as long as you approach the insurers in the right way, it's possible to get strong competitive tension on most deals and we've seen some fantastic pricing on our transactions this year.

RECENT MARKET REPORTS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT SMALL SCHEMES ARE STRUGGLING TO GAIN TRACTION IN TODAY'S BUSY BULK ANNUITY MARKET. WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF CAPACITY ACROSS THE INSURANCE MARKET FOR SMALLER BULK ANNUITY TRANSACTIONS?

Some advisers have reported capacity issues at the smaller end of the market, but at XPS we've always found at least one insurer that's been able to deliver competitive pricing for our clients. We've also seen some insurers taking steps and creating new propositions to better serve this end of the market and it's working well in terms of increasing insurer capacity. Testament to this, is that we've already seen a record number of pension schemes complete transactions in H1, 2024 (despite overall premium volumes being lower than expected). We're also seeing several new entrants coming into the market this year who are likely to target smaller transactions first, which again is welcome news for the market and for our clients. ▶

MORE AND MORE SCHEMES ARE COMPLETING FULL SCHEME INSURANCE TRANSACTIONS, RATHER THAN JUST PENSIONER-ONLY DEALS

HOW DO XPS SUPPORT CLIENTS THROUGH THE TRANSITION TO INSURER? WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGE SCHEMES THAT ARE LOOKING TO TRANSFER?

We've invested heavily in this area in the past couple of years to help our clients move efficiently through the post transaction phase of their projects and in some cases right through to buyout and wind-up. This is an area that's becoming so important in the industry as more and more schemes are completing full scheme insurance transactions, rather than just pensioner-only deals which are much easier to finalise. At XPS we've got lots of specialists who focus exclusively in this area which we find works really well for our buy-in and buyout clients; this part of the team isn't distracted by completing deals and have deep expertise across the insurers and what's needed to complete the post transaction workstreams quickly and cost effectively.

“ WE CAN ALREADY SEE THE HUGE PIPELINE OF DEMAND COMING FROM PENSION SCHEMES LOOKING TO BUYOUT WITH LOTS OF INSURERS ALREADY REPORTING VOLUMES OF £50BN FOR NEXT YEAR ”

WHAT ARE THE COMMON MISTAKES THAT PENSION SCHEMES MAKE WHEN TRANSITIONING THEIR LIABILITIES? WHAT ARE THE KEY PITFALLS TO BE AWARE OF?

Lots of schemes these days have found themselves in a position where they can afford to move to buyout, often after being in significant deficit positions for decades. There is then, of course, often a big focus to transact with an insurer as quickly as possible. However, moving too quickly, without carrying out the right level of preparation can be a big pitfall for some schemes. This could mean nasty surprises emerging post transaction, which could have big cost implications for the sponsor. Similarly, rushing to market could have an adverse impact on the choice of insurer, the competitive tension from the insurers and ultimately the value for money available.

WHAT ARE YOUR PREDICTIONS FOR THE BULK ANNUITY MARKET OVER THE COMING YEARS?

We can already see the huge pipeline of demand coming from pension schemes looking to buyout with lots of insurers already reporting volumes of £50Bn for next year, which is only likely to grow. I think we'll see more of the “jumbo” transactions take place in the market, with H1 next year likely to see some very large deals complete and it being the busiest start we've ever seen to a calendar year. We'll see good capacity at the smaller end of the market, with lots of insurers building capabilities in this area and with more automation helping insurers quote on more transactions. I also expect we will see at least some of the new entrants establish themselves in the market which is good news for our clients. In short, I think the market is going to be incredibly busy over the next decade! ■



WHY YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW TO GET YOUR DATA READY FOR AI

BY PHIL HUSBANDS, PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT - ENFUSE GROUP



Enfuse Group is a multi-award-winning consultancy and a trusted transformation partner for some of the world's most recognised brands. Specialising in end-to-end digital transformation, they support clients from strategic planning through to successful delivery. Enfuse bring deep expertise in transformation, change & delivery, and data services and in doing so, help businesses leverage the power of people, processes, data, and technology – enabling them to thrive and lead in the digital age.



In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has dominated conversations in financial and professional services, as it has in all other sectors. Many business leaders are fascinated by AI's transformative powers, trying to determine if it may be the missing piece that could unlock their organisation's true potential, and how to make that happen. A survey in the second half of 2023 of 334 CDOs and data leaders, revealed that 80% agreed that AI would eventually transform their organisation's business environment.¹

And while AI certainly has that potential, there's something you need to realise first – preparing your business for AI is far from a recent challenge.

Tapping into the full potential of AI, requires an evolution of the same principles you've known about for years: building the right balance of data capabilities, and ensuring people remain central to the equation. At its core, AI technology isn't a departure from doing what you already know needs to be done.

If your organisation is serious about generating value from AI, you must start with what has always been key – data readiness. And even more importantly – people readiness. The attitudes and behaviours of people within your organisation are as crucial as ever to unlocking the full potential of AI.

AI: A NATURAL PROGRESSION, NOT A COMPLETE DISRUPTION

It's natural to think of AI as something completely new and different – a revolutionary force that operates in a realm far beyond the familiar. However, the reality is that AI represents just the next step forward in decades of technological evolution.

We've already seen how data insights, predictive analytics, and data science have reshaped industries. AI is simply the latest iteration, albeit a particularly powerful one, in a long history of tools that emerge to help businesses make smarter, data-driven decisions.

The one thing all these technologies have in common, is that they are only as effective as the data they are fed. AI may

be able to process enormous datasets, but to some extent and in many scenarios, it is still reliant on people to curate those data, maintain data quality, and decide what questions to ask. This is where your organisation's existing experience with data comes into play – you've always understood the importance of having clean, well-managed data to inform decision-making. AI amplifies the possibilities, but it

doesn't change this fundamental truth.

TAPPING INTO THE FULL POTENTIAL OF AI, REQUIRES AN EVOLUTION OF THE SAME PRINCIPLES YOU'VE KNOWN ABOUT FOR YEARS: BUILDING THE RIGHT BALANCE OF DATA CAPABILITIES, AND ENSURING PEOPLE REMAIN CENTRAL TO THE EQUATION

THE HYPE PROBLEM: DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR DATA CAPABILITIES

Amid the excitement of AI, it's easy for organisations to get caught up in the hype, rushing towards implementation

without truly assessing whether they are ready. This eagerness to embrace AI can

lead to an imbalance in data capabilities, where technical capabilities outpace the cultural readiness of the business. The focus might shift entirely to the technology itself, leaving behind the crucial work of preparing people to use it effectively.

This imbalance often results in disappointing outcomes. AI tools may be adopted, but without the proper data inputs or a workforce equipped to interpret and act on AI's outputs, the value promised by AI technologies goes unrealised. A strong foundation of both technical and cultural data capabilities is essential to ensuring your AI initiatives deliver the business impact you expect.

This is where organisations need to pause and ask themselves two simple questions: "what data capabilities do we really need?" and "do we have the right data capabilities in place to get the most out of our data?"

If your organisation is focusing solely on implementing the latest AI tools without also paying appropriate attention to data governance, data quality, and data literacy, you risk repeating the mistakes and ignoring the lessons learnt back

when those data analytics projects from a few years ago, got tripped up by poor data quality and low data literacy...

THE CRUCIAL BALANCE: CULTURAL AND TECHNICAL DATA CAPABILITIES

The businesses that extract the most value from their data and from AI, are those that invest in developing both cultural and technical data capabilities.

It's not enough to have the most advanced algorithms or the largest data sets. What's required is a workforce that understands the importance of data, can identify its relevance, and can integrate the insights from AI into their daily operations.

This balance between cultural and technical capabilities is not a new concept. For decades, businesses have understood that tools are only as useful as people's ability to apply them. Whether it was early ERP systems, advanced analytics platforms, or today's AI, the success of each has always been dependent on people's understanding and willingness to engage with the technology.

The challenges faced by the CDOs are mostly organisational and behavioural, rather than technological. "Difficulty in changing organisational behaviours and attitudes" is the most frequently mentioned challenge in the role, with 70 percent of CDOs facing it!

When organisations fail to develop both sides of this equation, they risk seeing their data investments go to waste. Just as even the most data-literate workforce will struggle if they are working with outdated tools or poorly structured data, an AI-driven recommendation system is pointless if decision-makers do not trust the data behind it, or if they lack the skills to interpret the AI's suggestions.

DATA STRATEGY: THE KEY TO HARMONISING CAPABILITIES

A successful data strategy doesn't just focus on technical innovation. Instead, it must define and implement the right mix of data capabilities – both cultural and technical – to ensure sustainable value from AI and other data technologies. Your data strategy must clearly outline how to develop data capabilities in synergy, rather than treating them as separate initiatives.

For example, while your data strategy might include investing in new technology and infrastructure, it must also address the need for training and skills development within IT and business teams. It's about building data literacy, data fluency, and good data citizenship at all levels of the organisation, ensuring that even non-technical staff understand the relevance of data and AI to their roles.

This kind of data strategy ensures that AI is not just for your data scientists, but something that empowers your entire workforce.

Equally, data strategy should reinforce strong people-focused practices, making sure that data quality, accessibility, and compliance are all well maintained. AI may be able to process huge volumes of data, but like any data system, its outputs are only as good as the data it's given. Without proper governance, the risk of feeding poor-quality data into AI systems increases, potentially leading to flawed insights and decisions.

A STRATEGY ROOTED IN PRACTICALITY

Data strategies that do not 'talk in the language of data capabilities' tend to rot on the shelf. Organisations may develop grand visions of becoming fully AI-driven without acknowledging the practical, real-world

steps necessary to get there. These kinds of data strategies are difficult to implement and leave businesses in a constant state of catch-up, trying to retrofit capabilities that should have been developed earlier.

By contrast, data strategies that take a more pragmatic approach, focusing on building the right mix of data capabilities from the ground up, are far more likely to succeed. They recognise that AI is not a panacea, but rather the latest tool that must be integrated into a (probably already complex) ecosystem of data processes, technologies, and human interactions.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT: STILL AS IMPORTANT AS EVER

Despite AI's potential to revolutionise business processes, people remain the most critical link in the chain – at least for the time being. The role of individuals in feeding meaningful, clean data into AI solutions, interpreting AI outputs, and applying those insights to real-world business challenges cannot be overstated.

While AI's capabilities will undoubtedly grow, and we will see increased (or perhaps one day even complete) AI-driven automation, people are for now still essential to bridging the gap between data and outcomes.

As you move forward on your journey to become more AI-driven, remember that

your organisation already has much of the knowledge and experience needed to prepare your data.

You've been here before

– devising data strategy, investing in technologies, and ensuring your workforce can harness the potential. AI may be new, but the principles for success are not.

In summary, the key to getting your data ready for AI is about doing what you've always known to do – balance the right data capabilities, invest in your people, and ensure your data is primed to deliver value, no matter what technology you're using. ■

AMID THE EXCITEMENT OF AI, IT'S EASY FOR ORGANISATIONS TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE HYPE, RUSHING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION WITHOUT TRULY ASSESSING WHETHER THEY ARE READY

THE ONE THING ALL THESE TECHNOLOGIES HAVE IN COMMON, IS THAT THEY ARE ONLY AS EFFECTIVE AS THE DATA THEY ARE FED

References [AWS - CDO Agenda 2024: Navigating Data and Generative AI Frontiers](#)

INTRODUCING THE ENFUSE X IGA TALENT PARTNERSHIP

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT ENFUSE AND THE WORK THAT YOU DO...

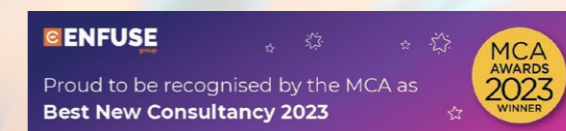
Awarded 'Best New Consultancy' by the Management Consultancies Association (MCA) and ranked the FT's Leading UK Consultancies list for the past 3 years, Enfuse Group is a London-based transformation and delivery consultancy. Enfuse Group works across the entire transformation lifecycle from strategy to delivery, providing services centred around people, data, process and technology.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES TO CLIENTS OF THE PARTNERSHIP WITH IGA?

The IGA Talent and Enfuse Group partnership gives clients access to complete end-to-end talent and workforce solutions across permanent, temporary, and consulting services. Enfuse Group brings deep expertise across areas of transformation, change & delivery, and data & technology that can be leveraged by IGA clients. This partnership provides greater flexibility of resourcing solutions and gives an outcomes-driven focus to shape and deliver key client goals. This also expands IGA's ability to provide strategic advisory services to clients that are undertaking transformations; giving clients instant access to the outside-in thinking and expertise they need.

WHAT SERVICES WILL YOU BE PROVIDING?

As part of launching this partnership, we are delighted to offer free half-day advisory workshops for newly appointed leaders. Leveraging Enfuse Group's strategic advisory expertise and IP, the workshop focuses on the first 100 days in your new role, helping you think through how to best shape your role, plan your strategic agenda, and focus your efforts: ensuring you make an instant impact in your new organisation.



CLANDESTINE COACHING: TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERING TEAMS IN FINANCIAL SERVICES



As a Member of Council with the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries and an independent Leadership and Systemic Coach, **Richard Galbraith** is passionate about the sustainable global development of the actuarial profession and about supporting, developing, and improving the lives of those around him by using his combined experience as an actuary and a coach.

With over 25 years' experience in the Financial Services industry, Richard works with individuals, teams, and companies to be more effective in an environment

of constant change. Drawing on a deep technical and cultural understanding of the people he works with, he uses individual, team, and systemic coaching tools to help create strong and effective relationships, influencing stakeholders to achieve more with less.

IGA Senior Talent Sourcing Manager, **Katie Thompson**, caught up with Richard to find out more.



CLANDESTINE COACHING

Hi Richard. You've had a long and really interesting career so far, starting out as a consulting actuary in 1999 and progressing through to Senior Enterprise and Operational Risk roles at Aviva and latterly with Canada Life.

How did you get into becoming a Leadership Coach? When did you start Clandestine Coaching?

Over the years since I qualified, I have had the opportunity to step into several very different roles, both in the professional world and within the actuarial profession. During 2020/21, more people came to me for informal advice about working with boards, the actuarial profession, or how to improve as a leader. I found that, although I had experience in these areas, the advice I shared wasn't resonating with those seeking it, as they hadn't had the same experiences. I wanted to find a way to share my knowledge in a way that could become a useful learning experience for others.

In 2021/22, I attended Henley Business School part-time over nine months for a Professional Certificate in Executive Coaching. I went into this with the mindset that it would be a useful tool, but it completely changed the way I think about everything around me. Coaching is not just a powerful conversation; it is a way of thinking, being, and helping those

around us. I agreed with my company that I could take on a small number of clients in my own time, as long as I avoided any conflicts of interest.

What I realised quite quickly is that people often ask for coaching when they are unsure of their own direction, leadership skills, or when they have something they want to think through but don't know who to approach for support. In a way, these conversations—while always confidential—felt a little clandestine for them, and it helped them maximise their potential. This is when Clandestine Coaching was born, in January 2022.

Who are your typical clients and the people that you work with across the finance profession?

I began my coaching journey by calling it 'inclusive' coaching, meaning that everyone can benefit from coaching, which I still believe is true. I've had the opportunity to

work with recently qualified actuaries, as well as C-suite CROs and CEOs, both actuaries and non-actuaries, as current clients. I learn something from every single person, and it's a privilege to be with them as they think. Recently, I've been focused on supporting technical people who have moved into leadership roles but lack experience in people management. I find that by helping leaders develop those skills, it also benefits their teams and their companies.

Lately, I've been more involved in Team and Systemic Coaching. As coaches, we typically learn to focus on the self and the individual. However, every person I coach is part of a team and a wider system, usually

“PEOPLE OFTEN ASK FOR COACHING WHEN THEY ARE UNSURE OF THEIR OWN DIRECTION, LEADERSHIP SKILLS, OR WHEN THEY HAVE SOMETHING THEY WANT TO THINK THROUGH”

their organisation, and many of our conversations revolve around improving leadership skills to benefit the team, enhancing team effectiveness, and influencing within the business. If we don't acknowledge

the outside-in influence of the system, we miss a massive opportunity.

I'm really excited about this work because, over the past decade as a Risk Actuary in Enterprise Risk Management functions, I've wanted to improve engagement between different parts of the business. As a Systemic Coach, I can draw on my prior experience to support the wider business as an independent consultant, and this aligns perfectly with my coaching ethos.

What are the most common team and leadership challenges that you typically come across? What techniques do you use to specifically address these?

In leadership, many people are promoted to senior positions because they excel in the technical aspects of their profession. However, when they become leaders, they often turn into task managers rather than people leaders. It's not possible to manage large teams with multiple tasks; we must lead people to complete those tasks. If not, teams—who are often experts in their own right—become quickly exhausted, and leaders risk becoming micromanagers because they feel it is their role to take ownership of the tasks rather than guide individuals to complete them. This can be exhausting for the leader, leading to burnout, while the team loses motivation because they don't have ownership of their work. This dynamic ▶



CLANDESTINE COACHING

can also result in imposter syndrome for the leader, as they may feel inadequate in their ability to manage a team.

By helping a leader build trust with their teams and delegate tasks with the mindset of using this as a training opportunity, it allows the team members to step up, support their leaders, and develop themselves. As a coach, this includes focusing on influence, communication, presentation skills, and various other leadership abilities.

Regarding teams specifically, new teams often start as a group of individuals working on different tasks, rather than as a cohesive unit with a shared purpose to serve their stakeholders. As a team coach, I like to help teams find their purpose and values by considering their stakeholders and the role they should be playing. This often involves building trust within the team, enabling them to share challenges and work together towards a common goal.

In the wider system, teams often struggle due to siloed working, focusing on internal tasks rather than being outward-facing. Supporting teams to work in a more integrated way improves communication and trust, and fosters a collaborative culture. The company's goal is to support its clients or customers, and aligning teams with this purpose can reduce the frictional cost of work.

There are many tools from rigorous research that I use to support individuals and teams, but often, it comes down to building trust. By creating an environment

where open and trusting communication happens, amazing work results. I discuss this on LinkedIn. One technique I'd suggest is establishing a contract at the start of meetings or within teams to hold each other accountable and to call out when things aren't working. That permission enables teams to keep each other on track.

What would be your key recommendations to leaders who are looking to inspire and enable teams?

My first recommendation would be to build trust and foster open communication. This can be challenging for leaders who are used to 'doing' all the work, but allowing teams to gain that experience, while being there to support them with your expertise, is invaluable. To gain trust, you have to give trust. However, that doesn't mean giving away accountability.

Create an environment where two-way challenge is encouraged, and where getting things wrong (and learning from it) is welcomed. As a leader, you're not expected to know everything, but as a team, you can usually figure out most of it together, or know where to go. The power of the team is immense.

To inspire a team, your actions speak as loudly as your words. Celebrate the wins publicly, and commiserate

the losses and learn from them.

There is a great book, *The Leadership Challenge*, by James Kouzes and Barry Posner, that has wonderful insights based on 30 years of research. This lays out 5 practices of exemplary leadership, and highly recommended for any leader, especially if you like research-based theory combined with decades of actual leadership practice. It includes a 360-degree feedback tool called the 'Leadership Inventory Practices' based on the research which can help leaders identify where they are strong and where they can improve.

How has your own leadership style developed over the years? How do your coaching techniques help people to think differently?

Over the years, my awareness is growing about my own leadership. I personally struggled to take on feedback, thought I knew it all, and preferred to work

alone. Through mindfulness practices, I'm aiming to develop my Emotional Intelligence, and be more aware of what I'm feeling and noticing in the moment, and being more sensitive to what the person in front of me may be feeling and noticing. I have presented several sessions on Mindfulness for Technical People to help them improve their wellbeing too.

SUPPORTING TEAMS TO WORK IN A MORE INTEGRATED WAY IMPROVES COMMUNICATION AND TRUST, AND FOSTERS A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE.

On my own early leadership experiences, if I had responsibility for something, I needed to know everything about it from start to finish. It is exhausting. Since becoming a coach, I'm on my own journey of development, and can recognise my weaknesses as well as strengths.

Earlier, I'd mentioned the LPI 360 feedback and I recently took part in 360 feedback for myself, where I learned a lot about my own leadership style and where I need to improve. I'm not perfect, and no-one is, and we can all be better leaders. I learned that I'm very strong on enabling the team through recognising and celebrating the team and enabling others to act through collaboration, but need to work more on challenging the process, and I'm actively working on what that looks like for me.

Coaching, both for teams and individual, is about thinking and challenging ourselves. As a coach, I want to create a safe space for people to think and to hold a metaphorical mirror up to them and challenge them. We all have blind spots, and a perception of how we come across, and tools like the LPI can help identify these, which honestly can be quite sobering, but also insightful. I then work with clients to focus on these areas, develop an action plan, as well as personal accountabilities. If this is, for example, on being more collaborative, or delegating, we will consider ways that the leader could engage the team in a way that is aligned with their style, or how they can let go of some work to enable the team to develop through delegation. Coaching is very personal, and every result will be different.

Encouraging diverse teams and a culture of inclusion and belonging is ever more important, particularly in the financial professions where under-representation is both a historic and ongoing issue. How do you approach DEIB issues within your coaching?

This is such an important issue and much wider than we often think about. I'm aware as a white male (middle aged?) actuary I'm looked at as part of the problem. I strongly believe in allyship, and speaking up where needed. The belonging part is critical to consider here to be part of any company and a team. What needs to happen to truly feel inclusion and belonging?

With the actuarial, risk and volunteering work that I've been involved in over the years, I've had the opportunity to engage with people on every continent. At the moment I'm utterly privileged to be coaching people across ages, gender, culture and country and I genuinely learn from everybody, and the challenges they may face.

While we can't learn about DEIB solely from a book there is a wonderful book by Salma Shah - *Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging in Coaching*. Salma has shared her experiences as a minority woman of colour, and how this has impacted her beliefs, attitude and outlook on life, and how coaches can turn up to consider many different backgrounds. There is no one right way here.

What I've learned here, and from the

many wonderful people that I've had the opportunity to coach, it is absolutely essential that we include diversity of experience, background, age and opinion (not exhaustive) to ensure that we can represent the people that we are supposed to care for as clients and customers.

Ever since university, I've been keen to understand what brings us together, and I've realised that while there are many differences, there are also a massive amount of similarities. We are all human, with our own experience and background, and from the surface, its impossible to say what we've been through, but I can guarantee, its unique, and we can learn from every single person.

As a coach, I will put aside my bias, be in a place of non-judgement, and work through whatever challenges my client brings, and will not put my beliefs and attitudes forwards, that is not my role. It is my role to help people think differently and more broadly.

If you would like to discuss any of the above coaching practices in further detail, feel free to reach out to Richard via email: richard@clandestinecoaching.com

BRIDGING TALENT AND TRANSFORMATION: KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE QORUS REINVENT FORUM IN DUBAI



BY
**JACK
RODNIGHT**

IGA Talent Solutions Recruitment Consultant, [Jack Rodnight](#), recently visited Dubai where he attended the Qorus Reinvent Forum, a premier event for digital transformation leaders in the Middle East. During his visit, Jack connected with influential industry experts, gaining firsthand insights into the UAE's rapidly evolving business landscape and the unique challenges faced by companies in this dynamic region.

From the increasing focus on Emirate-born leadership to the region's drive for digital transformation and a more inclusive workforce, Jack explores the trends shaping the UAE and the opportunities that attract top talent to this fast-growing hub.

“UAE IS WELL ON ITS WAY TO LEADING IN DIGITAL INNOVATION, BUT THE TALENT PIPELINE REMAINS A PRIORITY TO SUSTAIN THIS GROWTH”

This October, I attended the Qorus Reinvent Forum in Dubai, UAE, where I connected with key leaders in digital transformation and gained deeper insights into the dynamic Middle East market. Having visited Dubai a few times, I'm always amazed by the city's rapid growth and transformation. Since joining IGA six months ago, I've noticed a rising trend of candidates relocating from the UK to the UAE. I was eager to learn more about what attracts so many talented professionals to make this significant move.

Upon arrival, I delved into the forum, an exciting platform for networking and connecting with innovators and industry experts. My main goal was to identify market gaps and explore areas where regional companies face challenges and focus their strategic efforts. Many discussions circled back to common challenges, particularly the pressure on internal recruitment teams to adapt and scale. Here are some of the key insights and themes I gathered during my time in Dubai.

Emirate-Born Senior Leaders

A recurring theme at the forum was the growing need for Emirate-born leaders in senior positions. The UAE's population has experienced significant immigration, with the National Bureau of Statistics estimating over 85% of residents being non-Emiratis. This influx has fuelled substantial growth in sectors like finance and technology, as talent from around the globe has brought fresh ideas and innovative solutions. However, the UAE government's Vision 2030 initiative emphasises a push for Emirate-born leadership, especially in local banks and key financial institutions. This policy shift underscores the need to cultivate local leaders, ensuring that Emiratis play an active role in guiding the nation's future growth and shaping its economy.

EDI Needs in Local Banks

Another topic of interest during my discussions was the ongoing need to strengthen Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within the UAE's banking sector. I met with representatives from First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) and DBS Bank, who shared key insights about the challenges they face in building a more inclusive leadership team. Notably, they highlighted the lack of female representation in senior roles—a gap that both banks are striving to address. As a company, IGA supports inclusive hiring



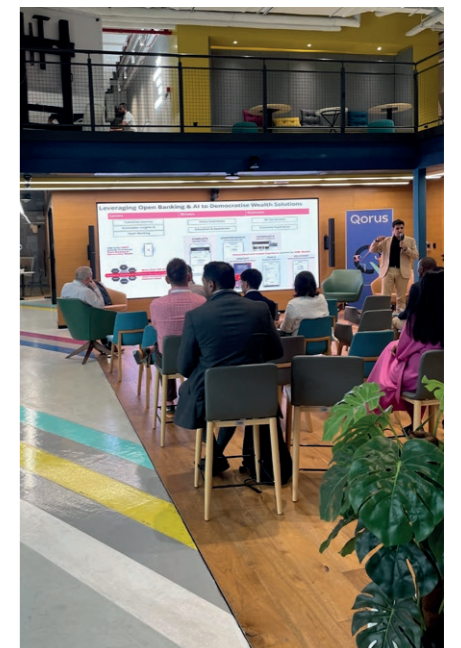
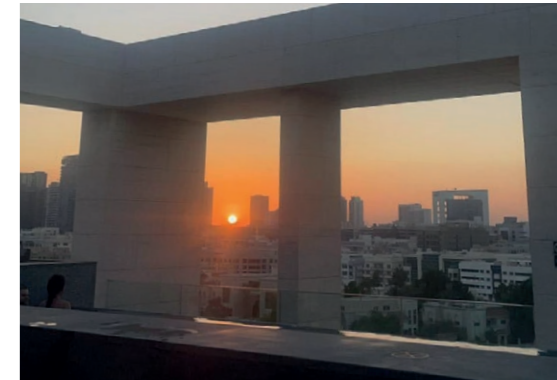
practices, and it's encouraging to see that more institutions in the UAE are prioritizing EDI in their own hiring strategies.

Digital Transformation and Technology Adoption

A topic that consistently came up was digital transformation, a driving force in the region's economy. Dubai's commitment to becoming a global technology hub is apparent, with smart city projects and increased investments in AI, blockchain, and financial technology. Many of the business leaders I spoke with shared their experiences of embracing digital transformation to remain competitive. However, there are still challenges, especially for companies that are rapidly expanding. The conversation often centred on finding the right talent and bridging the skill gaps needed to support this technological shift. It's clear that the UAE is well on its way to leading in digital innovation, but the talent pipeline remains a priority to sustain this growth.

Navigating the UAE's Unique Cultural Landscape

Beyond its tech ambitions, the UAE's unique culture is a big reason why so many professionals are drawn to the region. The country offers a blend of tradition and modernity, creating a welcoming yet unique environment where newcomers are expected to adapt to local customs. Many of the people I spoke with emphasized the importance of “cultural agility” for those moving to the UAE—that is, the ability to adjust and respect the cultural practices here. Companies are increasingly looking for



candidates who can adapt well, and they're also making efforts to create workplaces that feel inclusive for both Emiratis and expatriates. This cultural awareness is becoming essential in supporting a successful and diverse workplace.

Attending the Qorus Reinvent Forum was an invaluable experience. I gained a clearer view of the UAE's growth plans, the hurdles local industries face, and the region's promising potential for transformation. Returning to IGA, I'm excited to use these insights to strengthen our strategies and help our clients connect with the talent that will play a key role in shaping the future of the UAE and the Middle East.

If you would like to have a chat to discuss the UK or UAE markets and the digital transformation happening there, feel free to connect with Jack via LinkedIn or email at: jrodriguez@igatalent.com

TEAM NEWS

A FOND FAREWELL TO IGA LEAD RECRUITER STUART BROOKE!

The end of October marked [Stuart Brooke's](#) last day with **IGA Talent Solutions**. Stu has been a phenomenal member of the IGA team since 2019, joining in year 1 as employee no.7

He has been an integral part of the Contract Team over the last 5 years and it has been a genuine pleasure for all who have worked closely with him. But much more than that, Stu has been a crucial part of all things IGA, a true team player who has contributed heavily to developing the culture and success of the business.

Stu - we wish you all the best in your new role and keep making the most of that Cornish lifestyle!



YORK RACES

Following a strong business performance in Q3, the Leeds team celebrated their collective success in style with a day at York Races. Dressed to impress, they enjoyed the highs and excitement of the horse racing, followed by food and drinks in the beautiful city of York. Well done, Team Leeds!



CREATING A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: IGA JOINS THE CARBON DISCLOSURE PROJECT

At **IGA Talent Solutions**, we are committed to becoming a more sustainable business and actively reducing our carbon footprint. We recognise the importance of transparency in our environmental practices and are taking steps to enhance our sustainability efforts.

To support this goal, we are participating in CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project), a UK-based not-for-profit organisation established in 2000. With a presence in 50 countries, CDP enables cities, states, regions, and companies from over 90 countries to report their environmental data, making it the most widely adopted sustainability and carbon disclosure system globally.

By reporting to CDP, we aim to earn a Carbon Disclosure Rating that will help us integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors into our

business strategy. This is the first step in helping us identify areas where we can improve our ESG strategy. CDP's comprehensive framework provides valuable resources and guidance that can enhance our ESG methodology, helping us track our progress and benchmark against industry standards.

This collaboration will not only guide us on our environmental disclosure journey but also encourage us to take meaningful actions that contribute to a more sustainable future. All environmental reports submitted to CDP are publicly accessible, promoting accountability and sharing best practices across industries.

At IGA, we believe that by prioritising sustainability and leveraging CDP's expertise, we can lead by example and make a positive impact on our community and the environment.



IGA SCAVENGER HUNT

It was great to have the whole IGA team together recently as our London team braved the cool northern October temperatures to join the Leeds team for a scavenger hunt around the city.

We split into 3 teams to decipher clues that would take us to various locations around Leeds where we had to complete activities and send back photographic evidence. No cheating allowed!

We certainly got our steps in, running around the city and covering locations as far apart as City Square, Royal Armouries, Leeds Market, Corn Exchange and the Northern Quarter, with some teams even making it as far as the famous Dry Dock pub in Woodhouse!

A huge thanks to [Jon Garrod](#) for organising a brilliant team event.

