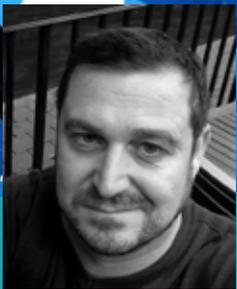




Paul Caulfield Senior SME Fellow, School of Management



The Research

Paul's research involves exploring how to build better relationships between business and society. The research can be sub-divided into two: firstly, understanding how corporations use employee volunteering and secondly, how corporations might be better designed to become more inclusive of social and environmental concerns. Paul's research focuses largely on the UK at both national and local levels.

The Engagement:

The key 'publics': Public, private and voluntary sectors.

The type of engagement: Receiving from these specialist 'publics' views, skills, knowledge and experiences that can be used to shape research and maximise its impact.

Paul has engaged others in his research through varied means over the years – video, large focus groups and surveys to name but a few. What has remained constant to his engagement, no matter the means, has been **a desire to really hear how practitioners are experiencing things on the ground:**

"Listening to people's perspectives has really helped me to make sense of the academic literature. Conversations have brought clarity to my thinking and I think the merging of academic and practitioner knowledge has helped elevate my research."

In his engagement, Paul often draws upon his past experience as a practitioner working for a multinational corporation in External Affairs. In this role, he had to forge many relationships and believes that **humility and curiosity are core to building successful partnerships:**

"If you're genuinely curious about the problems people are facing or their perspectives on an issue, then this curiosity will lead to natural conversations. Always be humble though and mindful of what's in it for the other person. It shouldn't be just about taking information from someone else; you need to think about how they might benefit, why they should speak to you."

Paul's experience of engagement is something that he extends into his personal time as a trustee of **Bath's Volunteer Centre**. This gives him the opportunity to draw on his knowledge base and to have more impactful conversations on the Board but also, it keeps him attuned to new issues / ways of thinking in the voluntary sector.

Left: Prize winners from Bath Volunteer Centre's Social Enterprise competition
Right: Volunteers in action.

The Motivation:

As a previous practitioner in what is now his research space, Paul still enjoys maintaining a link with practitioners to help shape and develop his thinking:

"Practitioners are constantly coming up with things that I don't know anything about, and that's what keeps it interesting for me. I like the fact they're dealing with different challenges all of the time and that I might be able to leverage resources from the University to help them out."

He believes that the tendency to think of academia as one way – as studying and then pushing out answers to publics – is unhelpful. Rather, **if academia is really in the service of all that's possible, then surely it's better to identify the questions that are on people's minds first, before coming up with answers to them?** Such an approach leads to research being more impactful; Paul finds the fact that his research will make a difference hugely motivating.

The Professional Development:

Paul draws on his engagement experience in a variety of ways to enhance his teaching. The networks that he has built up provide a ready source of contributors to his teaching units on business and society. So for example, other trustees from Bath's Volunteer Centre act as judges for presentations given by undergraduate students on business and society topics whilst local business representatives are often invited to talk about specific issues.

Paul's networks also provide a source of final year research projects for undergraduate students. The Volunteer Centre has hosted a number over the years, providing a win-win situation – the students develop personally and professionally, the Volunteer Centre benefits from their business knowledge and insight.

Paul believes that **good teaching is similar to good engagement:**

"Good teaching is when you can explain something really simply and that also makes for good engagement – you've got to be able to understand what it is you're interested in researching, and be able to explain the benefits to your partner."

Top tip:

"Pick up the phone to your prospective partner – don't dither over trying to formulate the perfect email to them! Call them to have an open-minded conversation; be willing to be flexible!"



"If you've got an interesting research question that's arisen from a real-life problem, then you'll find people more than willing to talk to you about it."

The Learning:

Paul is able to draw upon the networks that he has developed but is keenly aware that transactions are not one way; he can only pull in favours as he is open to helping out others as and when asked. This comes naturally to Paul though; it is his innate way of working.

Engagement suits Paul's preferred learning style, that of an iterative process. He has to start by having a real conversation with a partner before progressing to researching and thinking on the issues raised. He's also learnt that engaging at the end of the research – putting the research out into the world – is important for him:

"Preparing presentations for varied audiences really forces my thinking into shape and makes me look for metaphors, for plain language explanations. When I've mastered those, I know that I really know my research!"

Finally, Paul has noticed that some are intimidated by the fact that he works at a University; they might only reveal this once the partnership is fully forged. He feels that there can be a 'fear' of engagement amongst potential partners, a fear based on their concern that they might come across as 'uninformed'. As a researcher, it is important to be sensitive to this and mindful of language used.

"Mutual listening and understanding is important. Such transactions underlie any successful relationship."