



MU CEO Richard Moore Celebrates 25 Years at MU This Year

We interviewed him about “why MU” and what he has learned from 25 years of leadership and leadership consulting.

25 years is a long time at one firm, Richard. Why did you join MU, and why have you stayed so long?

I’m just very happy that I found a place where I could spend my working life—with great ideas, exceptional colleagues, and lots of different and diverse people and topics.

In most firms 25 years’ service would be exceptional, but in MU in quite many meetings I am still the newest starter in our team. So, it is a long time but it’s not unusual here. Periodically we do some ‘stayers’ studies’ to understand why so many MU’ers spend their whole career at MU. I think I fit the pattern. As one of my more experienced colleagues puts it:

“If you would like to do this kind of work, then you must do it here”.

Underpinning that is a complete match between MU’s core beliefs and what I believe: leadership effectiveness is decisive for organisational success. Results are achieved by people. People’s success at work matters—and leaders have the biggest impact on people’s success.

The next important reason is a commitment to results and a science-based way of working. The MU DNA has four solid commitments at its heart. Firstly, to tailored, result-based advice for clients in their context—not general concepts. To evidence-based ways of working. Tested and proven process that can be trusted to lead to good results—structure and thoroughness not intuition or guesswork. Quality assurance, certification and responsible ethical work practices. And finally, clarity about the whole purpose—to get decisions about leaders right so people succeed and their organisations can outperform.

Finally, and as importantly, is my amazing colleagues and clients. I am genuinely privileged to work with such a diverse and intelligent team. Some days are very challenging, some days full of fun, but always inspiring—you might go to work because what you do has high meaning for you, but you stay at work because you enjoy being with people. The MU team is remarkable—all ages, genders, nationalities—and beyond that different characters, motives and interests. But still all connected though a common bond to each other, to our values and to what we believe.

Can you remember what it was that attracted you to join MU all those years ago?

Actually, I can, vividly. Even if I have forgotten a lot of other things from 25 years ago!

I met an MU Consultant, Lorraine. I was working for a big retailer and was involved in recruitment. Lorraine asked me how consistent we were in selecting successful leaders. This simple question set my mind racing. As an early career leader, I had worked in 5 or 6 of our huge retail sites—the idea was that they would all be close to identical—same products, customers, store layouts, organisational and salaries etc. But they were all different.

I realised early that business performance—and how happy people were at work—was mostly affected by leaders. I could see that, at MU, they could make better decisions about what clients would need from leaders in the future. Working with reliably finding out which leaders would succeed in the future was what I wanted to learn and do.

And what has your career in MU been like?

I have had almost all the jobs in the company and enjoyed them all. I started working with experienced MU selection and development experts—supporting with administration, project management and over time interviewing and report writing. By learning MU’s leadership assessment methods, the science behind them and how to apply them in practice, I moved into a role as a leadership assessor. From there, I started to develop a client platform—a big transition for me at the time. My work then expanded into account management, and increasingly international assignments. Within a few years, I was working with global clients and collaborating with colleagues across borders and cultures. I loved it. One project in my early days as a consultant was a turning point. We worked with a leading global technology firm. I remember it well. We quickly met and formed this global delivery team. At this time the client was transforming parts of its commercial strategy and this meant leadership challenges, changes and opportunities. We did hundreds of executive assessments everywhere from Stockholm to South Africa. And I thought, this is definitely the kind of people I want to be with and the kind of work I want to do. It opened the door to a global leadership career.

I realised MU was not simply a workplace, but a professional home for me. It was also a springboard into becoming a Team Leader within the MU London team and a Practice Head, for our Global TMT Practice. Spending time coaching executive teams, coaching leaders, recruiting and selecting executives was and remains the most rewarding work. I learned so much. Sometimes people say that the problem with consulting is that you don’t get to make your own decisions and see things through long term, but with my clients this just wasn’t true. I felt every success and every failure just as they did—and learnt that in consultancy it is possible, and necessary, to take accountability for results.

Alongside my own client work, I was asked to get involved in MU company development initiatives. It was a challenging time to juggle client work with large clients and projects to develop MU. What helped was moving to live in Copenhagen and then Stockholm. And on top of those experiences, my work trying to help improve MU was all a good preparation for my future leadership roles in MU, even if I did not know what they were at the time! In 2016 our remarkable Owner and founder retired, and they donated MU to a foundation. When it was time to help prepare the MU team for this new permanent future as a Foundation (Stiftelsen Mercuri Urval) I felt ready to take on Board work and ultimately be appointed CEO.

So, after all this time leading in MU and advising clients, what have you learned about leadership?

Leading with consistency of purpose matters—especially in a changing world. Much of my CEO career has been characterised by high change and increased complexity—in our own firm and especially in our clients. One lesson I have learned is that consistency matters and effective leadership is rather consistent. Have clear convictions, focus on facts and logic in decision making and look after people. For me as a CEO our convictions, my conviction, has stayed the same: To improve clients’ results through more effective leadership.

What has evolved is how our work is delivered, precisely what our clients need and how to care for and develop our team. The key is the combination of steadiness in ‘the why’ and adaptability in ‘the how’ and ‘the what’. And the most important ingredient is to have the right leaders in place. MU, being a foundation, will be around forever. But making MU more successful now is something our leaders do for our colleagues and our clients. Those with us today, and those that will come after us. It is people’s success at work and the results they achieve when they work well together that matters most.

What achievements have the MU team made that leave you feeling most proud?

The big things do matter of course—to be a well-run business with steady profit performance and excellent client services and client care.

But what stands out most is the 100s of smaller more personal achievements in our team. It’s far too many to mention—a new colleague’s first client project, promotions to Partner, anniversaries, and colleagues’ personal wins at home and at work. Watching other people be successful, grow and achieve is what stands out most. And especially for me seeing different colleagues work together and form teams that achieve more than the individuals ever could alone.

And what is most important for the future of MU and its work with clients?

Looking beyond these first 25 years, I see our work is becoming more relevant than ever. In a world increasingly dominated by conversations about AI, geopolitics and volatility, the central issue is leadership. What decisions will leaders make and how will they achieve their goals, live their values and strengthen their ability to execute through change.

Organisations need the right leaders in the right roles more than ever. And this conviction underpins my hopes for the future of the Executive Search and Leadership Consultancy industry. While external conditions will continue to evolve, clients will have a growing need for evidence-based, trustworthy advice about the leaders they need in the future. Leadership has always been important but it’s even more important in our future.



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