

The executives who will run telecoms in 2020

Introduction by Joe Gallagher

The telecoms industry will become ever more critical to our world over the next decade. And the growing globalisation of communications will increasingly influence the profile of those leading the sector.

The leaders of today have overseen radical developments in the ways in which we communicate and this spirit of innovation will be key to the sector's future success. Businesses need to be identifying and recruiting the right people for the future and training them to have the right skills for the global businesses of the next decade — and beyond.

There is yet to be a truly global telecoms operator similar to those in other sectors such as food, with Nestlé and Kraft; the oil sector with Shell, BP or Exxon; banks such as Barclays or HSBC; or consumer goods companies such as Procter & Gamble and Unilever. There are very large players, many of which serve increasingly global enterprise customers — but from a consumer market perspective, the focus is often on one or just a few countries.

As consumer demand for communication and mobility continues to increase in the coming years, there will be a need for truly



Joe Gallagher is head of telecommunications at KPMG UK

global players in order to compete effectively and offer customers the services they expect.

This ambition will require global business people with a global outlook and increased experience outside the telecoms markets. They will need the commercial, political and cultural awareness that cross-border, cross-sector working can bring to equip them to run the companies of the next decade.

Senior executives — like all people — often develop and/or recruit others in their own image, but well-run companies recruit to fill in the talent that is missing at the top. They identify the gaps in skills and experience when they work to complete their leadership team.

We are already seeing telecoms companies starting to recruit much more from other industries, hiring executives with skills outside technology and other traditional areas.

As consumers and enterprises grow ever more demanding they will turn to the companies who can deliver instant service. Consumers — and leaders — of the future have grown up with the technology and know what is possible.

Over the past 10 years the telecoms industry — apart from a some blips around 2000-01 — has shown itself to be more resilient to the economic downturn than others. It is already an industry that pervades our lives.

The executives who will run telecoms in 2020 will be as much at the centre of the world's public and political life as those running the financial services sector today. The industry will expect much of the men and women who lead it in 2020 and beyond.

Succeeding in a changing world takes talent. I would like to congratulate the 40 individuals recognised here, who are helping to drive the future of this dynamic sector, many of whom could well be leading the behemoths of 2020. ■