



**Karen Thomas-Bland**

# **Chair, non-executive director and business consultant**

Specialising in business growth, transformation,  
turnaround and M&A



# Profile

I am a chair, non-executive director and business consultant with over 25 years' experience leading business growth, transformation, turnaround and M&A integrations. I am a former managing director to \$4.5bn, consulting partner and fractional executive.

## Quick summary

I have been on, or an advisor to, several boards and executive teams in the PE and listed business space to drive value creation, achieve significant transformation or advise on a major fundraise or exit, working alongside notable investors. I have the certificate in Corporate Governance for Board Directors from INSEAD Business School.

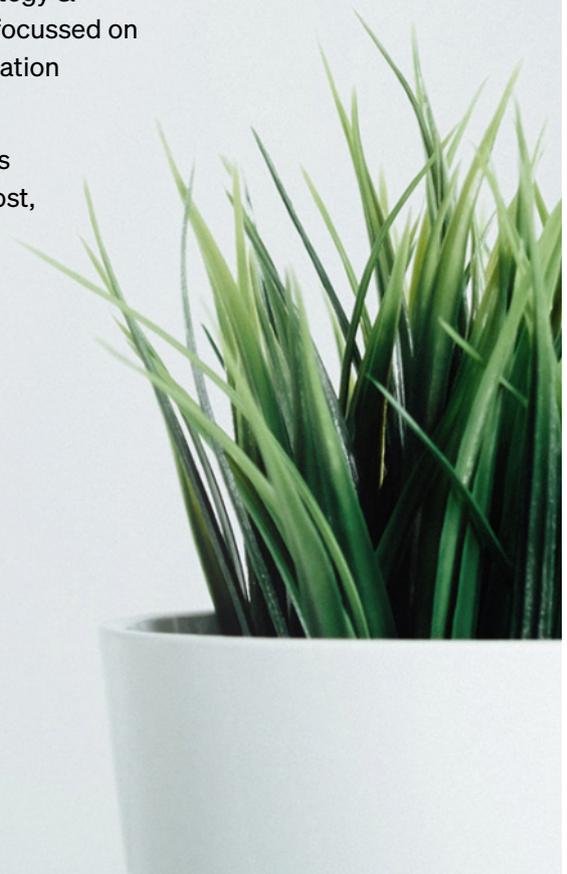
Prior to my portfolio career, I was an executive at IBM Global. During this time, I was based in New York, Dubai and Sao Paulo, and led IBM's global transformation, integrated 10 major businesses, ran a \$4.5 bn full P&L and rapidly scaled a new global consulting and data analytics business to £500m turnover.

Before IBM, I operated as a management consultant, building KPMG's Strategy & Transformation practice and worked in a range of boutique consultancies focussed on developing and delivering M&A, performance improvement and transformation solutions with a strong people and culture focus.

I have proven expertise in strategy and transformation of global businesses involving the creation of new and disruptive operating models to reduce cost, grow the top line, extract greater value from data and technology, create new dynamic cultures and deliver customer centric and digitally delivered customer experiences — all underpinned by technology innovation.

## Contact

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# Background

By background, I am a chartered organisational psychologist and started my career leading the people side of change including embedding career pathways, creating development frameworks and developing compelling cultures people want to work in. I am experienced in leading and advising organisations to navigate through change.

I am a seasoned board-level operator and an accomplished commercial leader with significant influence and leadership to deliver results. I am used to operating at a strategic and tactical level and quickly hitting the ground running, gaining trust and respect. I bring a blend of working in, and with, SME businesses with large scale-up plans, alongside leadership roles in management consultancies and large FTSE corporates.

My clients since 2011 have included Accenture, Microsoft, EY, Invesco and RELX Group where I have successfully led or advised on major programmes of change across people, process and technology.

I am a regular writer, presenter, panellist and podcaster on business leadership, M&A and transformation issues for publications such as *Raconteur*, *Financial Times*, *CEO Today*, *Management Today* and the Association of MBAs (AMBA).

# Specialisms

- Advising on or leading business transformations to achieve cost, turnaround, growth and restructuring ambitions
- Undertaking and advising on mergers and acquisitions, ca. 50 deals including due diligence and valuation, investment thesis, deal strategy, synergy case, TSA, close and post-merger integration
- Corporate strategy development for FTSE companies to achieve up to 30%+ growth
- Full global P&L experience to \$4.5bn turnover
- Technology expertise in digital and big data analytics
- Scaling new business ventures to £500m turnover, from MVP to launch and scale-up
- Operational excellence across all functions and markets
- Ensuring robust governance and risk management on the boards I have sat on and advised
- International experience — lived and worked in the USA (East & West coast), Middle East, Latin America and Europe



# Brief career history

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2011 onward    **Chair, non-executive director and advisory roles**  
• Chair/NED and advisory roles

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2011–2021    **Interim executive roles**  
• Interim executive committee roles and consulting engagements

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2005–2011    **IBM Global Business Services**  
• Consulting Managing Partner  
• Managing Director  
• Chief Transformation Officer

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2003–2005    **KPMG LLP**  
• Strategy and Transformation Leader  
• Account Director

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1997–2003    **Boutique management consultancies**  
• Consulting and leadership roles in strategy, human capital and transformation

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# Chair, non-executive director and board advisory roles

## **Chair of Optima, a consulting and data science business**

- Guiding the growth and scale up of the business towards an exit, following PE investment.

## **Advisor to Savannah Group, a recruitment, consulting and HR technology business**

- Advising the business on expansion of a consulting and SaaS business.

## **Advisor to a PE-backed engineering company**

- Advised a Middle East-based company on the acquisition of a listed business carve out to create a global professional services company.

## **NED at Cappfinity, a PE-backed talent technology business**

- Engaged to help the business grow following a major US PE funding round which included international expansion, product roadmap, hiring and talent development and SaaS strategy.

## **Advisor to Grey Consulting, part of WPP Group**

- Advised the Grey Consulting founder and CEO to build a consulting business that combined management consulting best practice combined with advertising and branding capability.

## **Chair of Pivigo, a VC-backed data science platform and consultancy**

- Engaged to help the business grow including international expansion, product roadmap, operating model development, talent engagement and managing the investor base.

## **NED at Massive Analytic, a PE-backed big data software business**

- Engaged to support the growth of a professional service and SaaS business with a series of data analytic and artificial intelligence products.

## **Advisor to Impero, a UK and US-based educational technology business**

- Supported the turnaround of the business including developing a new growth turnaround strategy, international expansion and replacement of key leadership roles.

## **Advisor to a Swiss-based content marketing business**

- Advised post-PE funding on the growth strategy and international expansion plan. Established a new board and supported hiring of critical new C-suite roles.



# Interim executive transformation and turnaround roles

- Created a new £200m consulting and managed services business for **EY Global Advisory** comprising strategy, cyber, digital and data & analytics IP-based services, by sector. Established transformation programme office, developed operating model and organisation design, hired partners and executive directors into key roles, carving out existing resources. Established company as legal entity and developed three year corporate strategy and implementation roadmap to achieve revenue growth of 30% year-on-year.
- **Interim Chief Transformation Officer RELX** — led a restructuring effort and subsequently designed and implemented a commercial transformation programme. As a result, costs were saved (10%+), margins improved (10%), customer satisfaction through NPS uplift increased, efficiencies achieved through new processes and technology leverage, new capabilities were embedded and businesses were repositioned for growth.
- **Interim Chief Transformation Officer for National Grid** — developed and implemented a three year strategy and implementation roadmap to identify long-term opportunities. Created and delivered a global transformation leading to the identification and development of plans for \$200M+ revenue opportunities in US and UK.
- **Leader of a global sales strategy transformation programme for Avanade** resulting in account growth (20% plus), margin improvement (10–15%) and higher win rates (from one in six to one in three). Established transformation office and led multiple cross functional workstreams.
- **Integration Advisor for Invesco** — advised on a US merger, successfully bringing together two of the world's largest asset management companies with different cultures. Advised and led on all elements of the acquisition, achieved significant synergies, new capabilities and 10%+ cost savings.
- **Built acquisition strategy for Avanade's Europe, Africa & Latin America business** across 22 geographic markets and integrated acquisitions with a £30M+ plus revenue. Drove business strategy and planning process.
- **OS Ventures Managing Director** — established a new commercial entity 'global ventures' offering consulting and managed services that leverage world-class data capabilities. Drove and delivered a new business to meet £100M+ target in three years, built a team of 50+ people, established strategic partnerships including two 'Big Four' partners to win £10M+ of business and built contracts with data partners e.g. Apple and Google.
- Led business and market strategy for **EY Global**, planning and budget alignment and set out one-year and three-year plan for growth across 170 countries, 28 regions and four areas to achieve 15% growth.



# Permanent positions

## **IBM Global**

### **Partner Business Services: Strategy & Transformation, MD, Turnaround**

- Built a \$500m turnover business analytics and optimisation business, around utilising data to improve decision-making, a significant growth engine, built team based on carve out, acquisition and new hires (2000+ people).
- Led \$4.5bn P&L and experience for top customer accounts driving sales and growth, pipeline management, proposition development and account leader skills uplift.
- Developed business strategy for Europe (\$3.5b) and growth markets (\$2b); analysed market, drove annual and three-year strategic planning process and significant M&A (10+ deals).
- Led and implemented a turnaround strategy for Latin America business to return to profitability, upskilling management team and building long-term customer relationships.

## **KPMG LLP**

### **Executive Director: Strategy & Transformation Consulting**

- Built and led a new Strategy & Transformation board-level practice, taking offering to FTSE 100 clients and hiring team to support new practice offering (50+ people).
- Developed new business, exceeded personal annual signings target (£10m).

## **Boutique management consultancies**

### **Senior Consultant to Senior Director**

- Designed and delivered organisational change programmes for FTSE, SME and PE backed businesses.
- Types of projects included culture change, restructuring and organisation design, mergers and acquisitions, career frameworks and pathways.





# Qualifications & professional memberships

- **INSEAD** Board Director's Programme and Certificate in Corporate Governance
- **Chairman's Network**: Fellow
- **NEDA** (Non-Executive Director Association): Member
- **AFBPS** Associate Fellow British Psychological Society
- **C.Psychol** Chartered Business Psychologist
- **MSc Organisational Psychology**
- **BSc (Hons) Psychology**





# Public profile

Writer, presenter, panellist and podcaster on business leadership, M&A and transformation including:

## Business transformation

### 1. How to spot the early signs of a failing business transformation

*Raconteur*

### 2. Signs that you need to transform your business and how to do this

*CEO Insight*

### 3. PJ Tips Podcast with Karen Thomas Bland talking business transformation from the trenches

*PJ Tips*

### 4. How do you balance a digital transformation and operating the business?

*CEO Digital*

### 5. Unleashed podcast featuring Karen Thomas-Bland

*Unleashed Podcast*

### 6. Inside Track podcast episode 45 featuring Karen Thomas-Bland

*Inside Track*

### 7. Embarking on a digital transformation? Why your ambition must be bolder and more courageous

*CEO Digital*

### 8. Top 10 tips for overcoming the biggest business transformation risks

*TB Tech*

### 9. Overcoming the arguably hardest business transformation risk — changing human behaviour

*Association of MBAs*

## M&A integration

### 1. How to avoid technology being an afterthought in M&A integration

*Channel Futures*

### 2. Ego, culture and learning: three critical factors to an M&A deal

*Global Banking & Finance Review*

### 3. Elon Musk and Twitter: how do you contain egos in a takeover?

*Management Today*

### 4. Merge ahead: smarter techintegration is critical to M&A success

*SAP Insights*

### 5. When two cultures collide — how to ensure M&A success

*World Finance*

### 6. When merger talks break down

*Finance Derivative*

### 7. How to embed ESG into your M&A deal

*Finance Derivative*

### 8. Where can CEOs and boards play a bigger role in M&A deals?

*CEO Today*

### 9. Post-merger integration panel discussion

*Barton Partnership*

### 10. How do you know if your M&A has been successful?

*Finance Derivative*

### 11. Earn-out not burnout: the secret to post M&A deal success

*Raconteur*

### 12. How to ensure your M&A deal is in the '2 in 10' that increase value

*Finance Monthly*



## Leadership

### 1. What's a good (and bad) way to leave your job?

*Financial Times*

### 2. Leading by example

*Intelligent CXO*

### 3. Five steps we must take to truly create an inclusive, representative and equitable society

*Authority Magazine*

### 4. The five things you can do to become more resilient during turbulent times

An interview with Savio P. Clemente

### 5. What do your employees say about your business when you are not in the room?

*HR Zone*

### 6. Tackling the great resignation — are you a leader people want to work for?

*Business Express*

### 7. Five leadership strategies to reinvent for the future

*Intelligent CEO*

### 8. Coffee with Karen Thomas-Bland, founder at Seven

*City Women*

### 9. Advice for going plural

*Management Today*

## Executive boards

### 1. How can CEOs and board members manage dark triad personality traits?

*CEO Today*

### 2. Successful deals are down to the composite of the board

*Asset Digest*

### 3. Is your board ensuring you are future-ready?

*Entrepreneur Tribune*

## Personal interests

Angel investing, property renovation and interior design, travelling, theatre, hiking and socialising.





#### CEO, FTSE 250 BUSINESS

“In her time here, Karen has achieved an incredible amount. She leaves behind a lasting legacy — in terms of integration planning both for day one and beyond – which will ensure that the integration is an enormous success and that the transaction will fulfil its potential.”

#### CEO, FTSE 100 BUSINESS

“Karen provided excellent leadership and focus across the transformation, engaged exceptionally well with key stakeholders across the business and worked with great pace and energy.”

#### GLOBAL MANAGING PARTNER, BIG FOUR CONSULTANCY

“Thank you so much for all you have done for us. You have made a huge difference in so many ways: getting senior buy in, delivering us a significantly improved approaches, bringing your strategic brain to tackle a myriad of challenges — to name but a few. And thank you for the personal advice you have given me which was always clear and well thought through. I really appreciated it.”