

**Please cite the Published Version**

Creaby, F (2017) Reaction is the Attraction. The Voice - National Association for School Business Management Magazine, 15. p. 49.

**Publisher:** Manchester: Lansdowne Publishing

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Fiona Creaby

CPD - Reaction is the attraction.

The Voice - National Association for School Business Management 15:49 01 Jul 2017

Change, complexity and uncertainty are consistent words circling the education sector. In a country that has seen waves of education reform come at considerable frequency and speed, there is a constant state of 'gearing up' for the next change across the sector... whatever that will be. And so, practitioners are poised with their hand on the gear stick, foot hovering over the clutch, eyes glued to the landscape ahead ready to take things to the next level. That 'gearing up' metaphor serves well as a reflection on the growth of the school business management profession; indeed, as reforms have entered the education landscape like continuous hills with steep inclines, blind corners and sudden chicanes to navigate, school business professionals are becoming masters of clutch control and have 'geared up' considerably as they have faced the turbulent nature of school leadership, management and administration. The profession is moving beyond the notion of 'keeping the engine running smoothly' as a lifting of the veil from the 'back-office' continues as practitioners are not only beavering away maintaining that engine, but are also increasingly 'gearing-up' to push to the next level, standing side-by-side with other school leaders, as they face and manage major systemic change in their local contexts and consider a range of aspirations and possibilities for the future. Indeed, during the last two decades, practitioners have increasingly developed flexible and transferrable skills, navigated conflicting expectations and traversed an array of school organisational systems, governance and policy arrangements as the range of school types in the UK increase alongside local accountability and performance expectations. As the case studies of the Associate practitioners and SBMs present here, there is an increasing commonality across the profession in the requirement to lead major change and be proactive, savvy and responsive in leading school business into emergent landscapes. As Dr Paul Armstrong's article in the Spring edition of The Voice articulated, the school business management profession is evolving as boundaries are being stretched and there is an increasing need to adapt to policy shifts. The identity of the profession represents great diversity across the sector, not only within varied educational contexts, but within the very practitioners themselves and the roles they hold as they strive hard every day to lead vital aspects of the school system. Indeed, the work of school business professionals has many guises – it may be specialised in one context, generalised in the next – but at the heart of it is a shared agenda based on the underpinning values of improving outcomes for children. It is the value and impact that school business leadership brings to schools that is important.

Overall, School Business Leadership has never been more crucial in enabling schools to navigate increasingly difficult terrain and in the age of constant change, complexity and uncertainty, it is the practitioners on the ground who count, and will be at the heart of school success through increasingly flexibility, forward-thinking and participation in knowledge-exchange networks. Therefore, it is the shared values at the heart of the profession, alongside the expectations, aspirations and vision of those within it, that will continually support the evolution of the profession. It is in challenging role stereotypes, sharing ideas and experiences from practice, voicing vision, aspiration, creativity and the challenges of navigating the difficulties of practice that are imperative in moving the profession forward.

**Dr Fiona Creaby**