

Chancellor Dharker,

What's your personal brand? Today's honorary graduand, Anna Jones, writes that hers is that she is 'warm, direct and a fast decision maker, but with inner steel'. She is honoured today for her efforts to make two different – yet connected – parts of the business world more equal: her advancement of female representation in corporations, and her support for female entrepreneurship. Such efforts align with Newcastle University's own commitment to social justice and equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Despite spending a lot of her career in London, Anna is still a northerner at heart. She was born in Harrogate and spent her formative years in the North of England. She lived in York as a teenager and moved from there to Newcastle, studying international business management and living in the Richardson or 'Ricky' Road student accommodation. Coming onto campus to study, fuelling herself with a tuna and sweetcorn stottie sandwich, she'd listen to one lecturer draw on their recent experience working for Rolls Royce and buddy up with a classmate to go ask the accountancy lecturer for a bit of extra help. Ricky Road has now been replaced by The Park View Student Village, but stotties are still available. As for the accountancy specialists, one member of the business school now leads research on the intersections between women-specific health and wellbeing needs and the recruitment, progression and retention of women

accountants – a topic close to Anna's own interest in creating a more equal business world.

While at Newcastle, Anna spent a year abroad in Marseilles studying (I'm told) among the much better dressed students of the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce. After graduation she worked in public relations, then marketing. She oversaw the launch of *Grazia*, the UK's first glossy magazine, before moving to Hachette Filipacchi and rising to become the company's digital and strategy director. She acquired here the reputation of a fixer, consistently putting her hand up for tricky roles that no-one else would touch. When Hachette merged with Hearst, she was appointed Chief Operating Officer of Hearst Magazines. When Arnaud de Puyfontaine stepped down from the role, Anna became CEO of Hearst UK. Her friend and collaborator, Debbie Wosskow presents this stage of Anna's career as an example of how to act as an 'intrapreneur', which is to say as someone who employs innovation and an entrepreneurial creativity within a larger company. Examples of such innovation included getting *Men's Health* to start producing its own-brand gym equipment, or suggesting to a member of the board of Asda that her company could produce content for the supermarket's magazine.

Anna was the first female CEO in Hearst UK's hundred-year history. She also became one of very few women at the top of the business world. The statistics

told, and still tell, a discouraging story. Speaking together about it all over a gin and tonic, Anna and Debbie realized that one thing that might help improve matters was supporting women to network beyond their existing contacts.

Working together, they founded the women's network Allbright to achieve this purpose, creating global sisterhoods and venues for women to hear from other women how they have navigated some of the challenges of a business world that is rarely made for them. When she founded Allbright, Anna left her corner office and became a full-time entrepreneur, one of a team of ten that built the company from the ground up until it offered everything from training through to community events and connections to capital funding.

Allbright's capacity to foster a new generation of entrepreneurs and to create a more equal environment where people can thrive stands as an inspiration to Newcastle University's own efforts to support entrepreneurship and social justice. Already ranked among the best in the UK for entrepreneurship (and especially social enterprise), the University continues to advance its work in this area, helped by a recent £1.25 million benefaction: there is the Rob Wood Enterprising Futures Academy and, from next year, there will be incubator space and pop-up stores for student business projects in King's Gate.

Entrepreneurial experience and an entrepreneurial mindset have continued to shape the most recent developments in Anna's career, as she once again

became the first woman to occupy the role of CEO at a major business. This time it was the Telegraph Media Group, where she had already helped champion female talent and where the deputy chairman now praises her as a ‘formidable operator’ who creates the kind of ‘collaborative, inclusive networks which are the powerhouse of a modern successful media business.’ As for Anna herself, she speaks of how her experience of founding Allbright has equipped her with a pace and energy, a desire to embrace tech, a deep conviction that the customer must truly be at the heart of what a business does, and a resilience – all of which has helped her in her new role. She has also, she admits, become even more direct.

Anna’s personal brand is that she is ‘warm, direct and a fast decision maker, but with inner steel’. She brings an entrepreneurial approach to wherever she works. And she is also someone who supports and enables others, looking for opportunities to make the world more equal, be that from the boardroom, when founding and scaling Allbright, or, recently, as a backer of The Better Menopause.

Chancellor Dharker, for her entrepreneurial spirit, her leadership, her support for the advancement of women, and for her ability to reshape the corporate landscape for the better, I present to you Anna Jones as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.