TALKING @HOME WITH

Talking the importance of praising colleagues and navigating market shocks at home with Sarah Melvin, Head of UK, BlackRock, and Richard Romer-Lee, Managing Director at Square Mile.

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June 2020 - 017

HOW ARE YOU ADAPTING YOUR BUSINESS TO THE CURRENT CLIMATE?

The infrastructure of our systems, platforms and technology has been replicated in employee's homes. This means we can operate from 3,000 kitchens, living rooms and spare bedrooms in the UK. During the first six weeks of the crisis we connected with 47,000 clients. BlackRock Investment Institute briefings were introduced to support clients in navigating the market shocks and for the first time we ran our BlackRock Educational Academy for clients in a totally virtual setting. The experience has helped to bring people together with everyone adapting how they conduct business differently. There's a new appreciation of the multiple roles we play in our lives at work and home.

DO YOU THINK THIS EXPERIENCE CHANGES OUR INDUSTRY FOR THE BETTER IN ANY WAY?

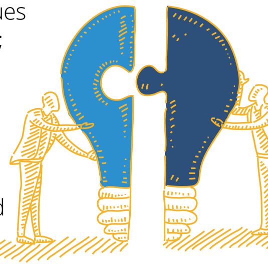
Crisis often brings innovation. We've seen that in how we are engaging with clients and each other through technology that has brought a new level of frequency of connection, which is here to stay. The crisis has also prompted us to re-evaluate how we think about the world we live in, which will translate into greater focus on sustainability and the way business is conducted - and how people invest. The current situation underscores the important role of asset managers to invest in companies and job creation through our portfolios, providing secure retirements for millions of pensioners and supporting our communities.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES TO BE IN FUND MANAGEMENT OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

The long-term economic impact of what has been first, and foremost, a health crisis. We've never seen this speed of recession before, but we've also never seen this scale of policy response, some of which will have significant ramifications for portfolio construction for our clients. One of the biggest challenges for clients and portfolio managers will be risk management – having the right data and analytical tools will be more important than ever.

HOW HAS THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT CHANGED YOUR STRATEGIC FOCUS?

Our purpose right now is helping more people get the support they need. We're doing this through the charitable partnerships we've made for COVID-19 relief efforts and helping clients handle the volatility in the market. We are supporting local UK companies we invest in on behalf of our clients to secure funding they need to safeguard jobs and protect investor value. We are also focused on keeping our employees safe and supported while at home. The current environment has accelerated several strategic trends; one is sustainability. At the start of the year, we shared a series of commitments to make sustainability integral to the way we manage risk, construct portfolios, design products, and engage with companies. Those companies that better manage sustainability-related issues will be more resilient over the long-term; and second, we are on the front end of a profound, long-term structural shift in global investor preferences toward sustainability. We continue to be steadfast in this strategic focus and the current environment has only reinforced the need for this to be maintained.



WHAT IS YOUR TOP TIP FOR WORKING FROM HOME?

Take more time than usual to show your appreciation and to praise colleagues. We underestimate the power of praise and right now it can give a much-needed lift.

WHAT'S THE HEADLINE YOU WOULD MOST LIKE TO SEE ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE FT?

COVID-19 vaccine developed and has now eradicated the virus.