



Visionary

linking local sight loss charities

Leadership Conferences 2019

Wrap up report

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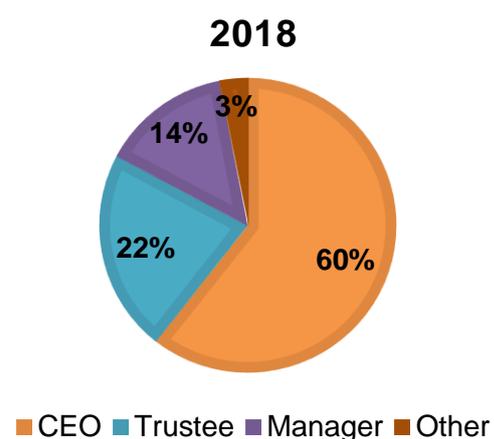
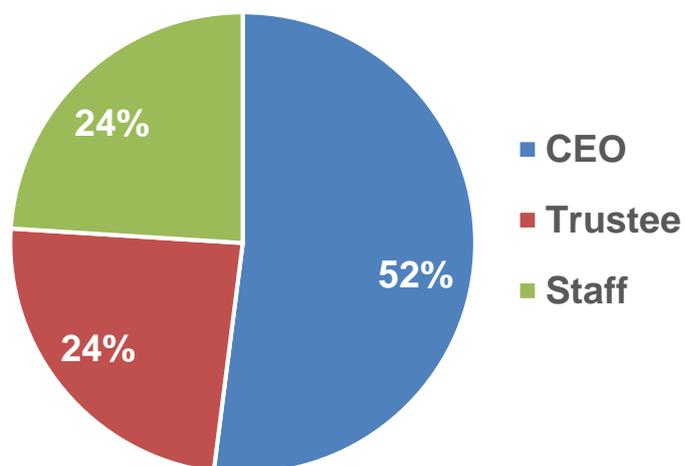
Overview

Leadership conferences are created by Visionary as an opportunity for sight loss charity leaders to come together to learn about new initiatives and support around certain areas of work as well as an opportunity for networking between Visionary members.



In total 66 delegates (20 in Newcastle, 26 in London and 20 in Birmingham) came together over three conferences to problem-solve, network, feedback to the Visionary team about their needs, learn something new and find out about new initiatives in the sector.

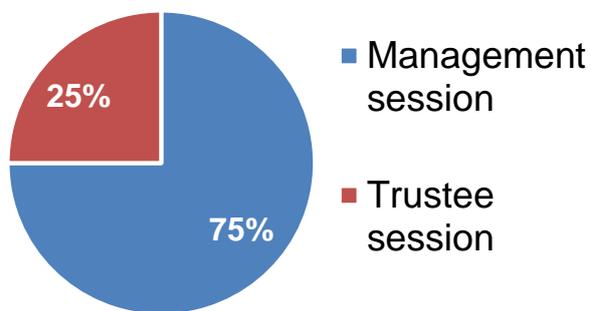
Delegates job role 2019



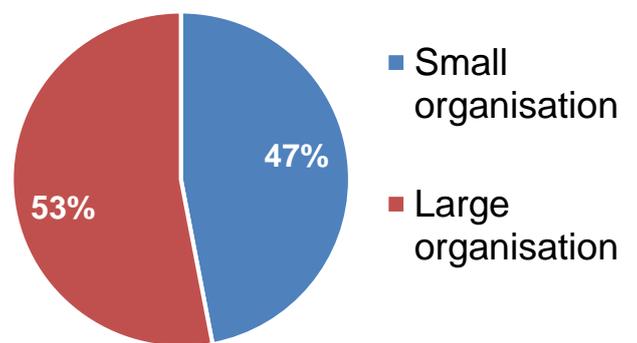
Specific sessions for job role and organisation size

Last year we listened to your feedback when you said you wanted separate sessions for trustees and leaders and small and large organisations. In 2019 we created a specific session for smaller organisations around all things volunteers. For the larger organisations we ran a workshop around dealing with a multifaceted organisation.

Session 1 delegate split



Session 2 delegate split



Conference programme

10.00 – 10.45	Alison Oliver – Welcome and updates
10.15 – 11.45	Key note speaker John Grounds: The integrated organisation and the role of brand, communications and marketing.
11.45 – 12.00	Short coffee break
12.00 – 12.30	Plenary discussion break-out session 1
12.00 – 12.30	Plenary discussion break-out session 2
12.30 – 12.45	Feedback to whole group
12.45 – 13.30	Lunch and networking
13.30 – 14.45	Management session 1 Alison Oliver: Resilience and self-care (Main conference room)
13.30 – 14.45	Trustee session 1 Fiona Sandford: Being the best you can be (Break out room)
14.45 – 15.00	Coffee break
15.00 – 16.15	Small organisation session TPT volunteering team: Volunteering for an integrated small or medium organisation
15.00 – 16.15	Large organisation session Philippa Crowther: Dealing with a multifaceted organisation
16.15 – 16.30	Summing up

Thank you to all our speakers at the conferences: John Grounds, Philippa Crowther, Rachel Wilkinson, Kirstie Palmer, Steve Moffat, Susan Hoath, Fiona Sandford and Alison Oliver.

Morning session

Opening comments

Alison Oliver, Visionary CEO, opened the conference and discussed the upcoming changes in the funding relationship with Thomas Pocklington Trust and the implications that these might have on Visionary going forward.

She reiterated how Visionary is in a great position moving forward and invited members to share their thoughts around Visionary's future direction to input into a current review of its structure and strategic focus.

Putting brand, marketing and communications at the heart of your organisation

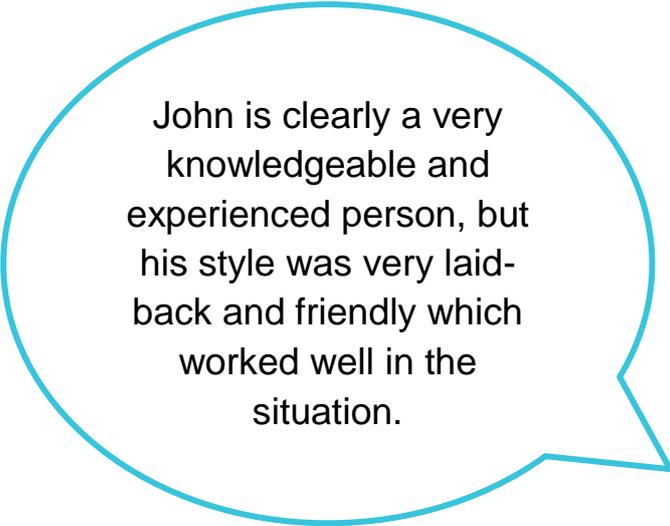
Brand, communications and strategy has consistently been a subject that members have asked for some support on and so, this year, our conference put this at the heart of these leadership sessions. John Grounds, having spent nearly 30 years working at the highest level with some of the UK's leading not for profit, public and private sector organisations within the brand and communications arena, was the perfect person to run such a session.

In just over an hour and a half, he convincingly showed that whether large or small, brand, marketing and communications is the heart of every organisation's success and strategy. John was able to show in clear and simple ways, just how to develop a more integrated organisation through straightforward marketing and communications strategy models. Using practical examples from many years of experience in the sector the session gave delegates confidence and the tools to reinforce the role of brand, marketing and communications in developing the strategy for their organisations.

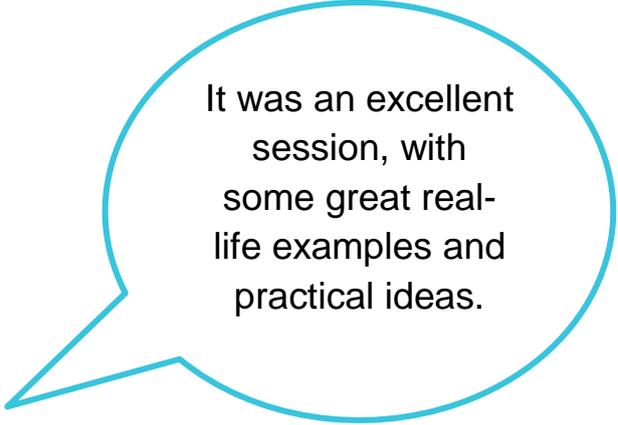


John Ground's session at the Birmingham leadership conference.

What our delegates said:



John is clearly a very knowledgeable and experienced person, but his style was very laid-back and friendly which worked well in the situation.



It was an excellent session, with some great real-life examples and practical ideas.

John's presentation and resource are now available in the [Communications section](#) of the Knowledge Hub on Visionary's website.

Afternoon sessions

Management session: Resilience and Self-care

Alison Oliver facilitated this session to discuss how important it is to look after yourself as a leader of an organisation; to positively influence the culture of your organisation by being the best you can be.

Delegates shared some top tips for doing this. These included:

- Give yourself permission to take time out to reflect and recharge;
- Give yourself 'me' time and take a break – you don't need to justify it!
- Develop practical tools to manage stress and know what works for you, for example:
 - Structuring time, doing things you don't like first – or a don't like sandwich – picking 3 priorities/day and always include one you don't like
 - Peer support – picking up the phone to speak to someone else in the same position
 - Exercise
 - Audio books
 - Mindfulness
 - Creative activities
 - Other hobbies
- Develop a mentor relationship and consider mentors both within and outside the sector;
- Use team building exercises to promote more cohesiveness across your team by better understanding each other's personalities and preferred ways of working e.g. Myers Briggs or Belbin models;
- Share the load – let other members of your team know when you're under pressure so that they can be aware and offer support when needed;



You wouldn't let this happen to your phone.
Don't let it happen to you either.

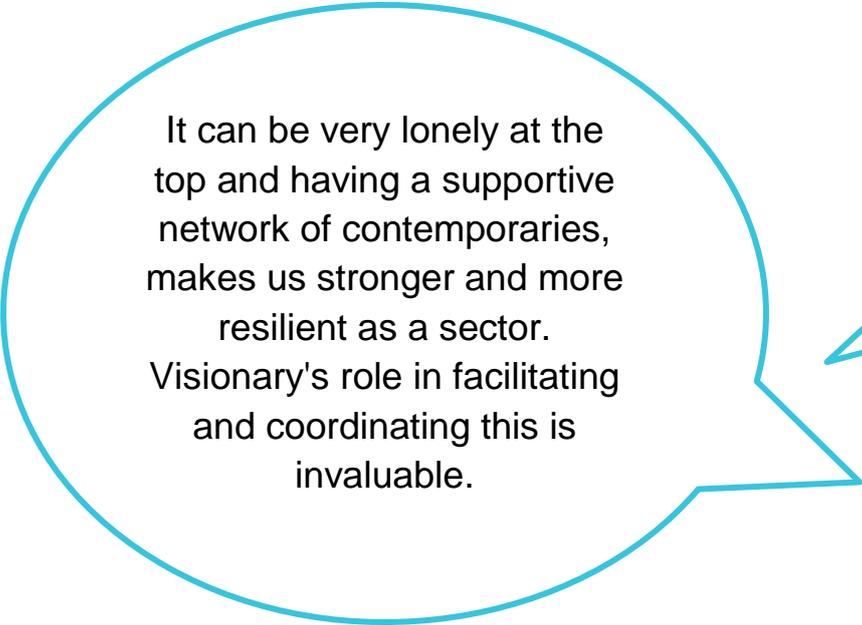
SELF CARE IS A PRIORITY.
NOT A LUXURY.

- Let go of issues/problems that are out of your control – if you can't change it don't worry about it;
- Develop your relationship with your board – call on their support when you need it.

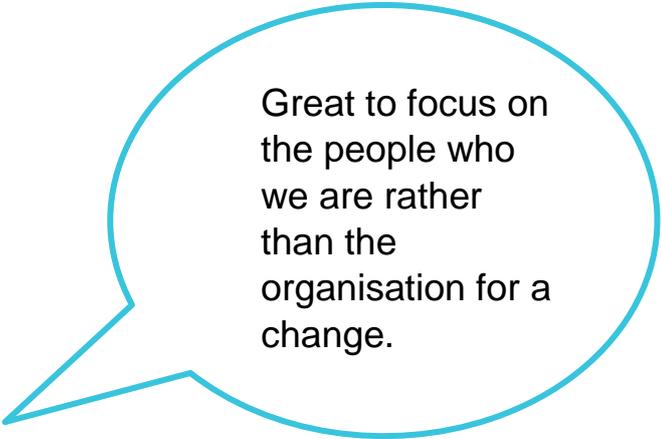
There were some ideas around how the Visionary network can help with this too:

- Connecting people – member to member – facilitating members to share good practice;
- Getting information about good practice/examples of items in the knowledge hub out effectively – get the message out in different formats – e.g. picking a couple of items to share in the newsletter as a way of promoting the knowledge hub – using the briefing to highlight knowledge hub updates;
- Mentoring and buddying outside the sector – potentially introducing members to an external national scheme;
- Use webinars and online forums – based on themes that are common to members.

What our delegates said:



It can be very lonely at the top and having a supportive network of contemporaries, makes us stronger and more resilient as a sector. Visionary's role in facilitating and coordinating this is invaluable.



Great to focus on the people who we are rather than the organisation for a change.

The resilience and self-care resource is now available in the [Policies and Governance section](#) of the Knowledge Hub on Visionary's website.



Trustee session: being the best you can be

Fiona Sandford discussed with trustees how important their roles are in the present and future success of any charity. With Fiona ill in Birmingham, Gareth Brydon stepped in to run the session there.

The workshop discussed with delegates their own contribution to this and how boards can work well collectively. Areas discussed included:

Why are you there?

Why are you in the role? Do you have a good reason to be there? What motivates you? What is important to you? Delegates mentioned different reasons including: having a lot to give; experience of slight loss at a personal level; a sense of obligation or responsibility; wanting to see a job well done; a challenge to achieve; a good skill set for the role.

Who are you when you are there?

Using an adapted article by Julia Unwin, delegates considered what role they adopt in their board and the roles that other trustees play. They questioned how helpful these roles are and looked at whether there were important roles on the board that no one was adopting.

How do you know it is working?

There was some time for delegates to discuss how their board currently works and explore some areas to consider in this respect. These included: undertaking a skills audit; clear recruitment strategies; mentoring while in the role; training for trustees; succession planning.

What our delegates said:

Small group with large impact. Very well facilitated - great opportunity for cross fertilisation.

This was a helpful session and allowed us to see that we are not the only Board that has problems.

A resource from this workshop is now available in the [Governance section](#) of the Knowledge Hub on Visionary's website.

Large organisation session: dealing with a multi-faceted organisation

Philippa Crowther (London and Newcastle) and Susan Hoath (Birmingham) facilitated this session which challenged delegates to take a fresh approach to selling its services.

The focus was on adopting a more customer/product-centric approach to open up more ways to bring in income and create more opportunities and support for our members' main beneficiaries:

people with sight loss. Below are two examples of the exercise that took place during the session.



Dealing with a multi-faceted organisation

Time to think outside the box

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linking local sight loss charities

Delegates were given 25 minutes to consider an audience to sell their services to. They were asked to consider:

- What your audience need could be (even if they don't realise it yet!)
- The services you currently offer and how you could adapt these products and skills creatively to offer something compelling to this audience.
- How would you 'sell it' to your audience according to what their need is?
- What the cost elements are behind delivery?
- How does this benefit people affected by sight loss?

Example 1: Sport Centres

Audience: Local or chain sport centre

Services: Visual awareness and sighted guiding training; pan disability environmental audits and support in sourcing accessible sports equipment.

How to sell it: VI training would be sold for staff and assistance in sourcing and researching accessible equipment. This would benefit the centre through an increase footfall leading to increased revenues by attracting new members. Could ask sports companies to sponsor events that would help cover costs and give those sports companies, some opportunity to sell their equipment.

Cost elements behind delivery: Costs would need to be covered for staff,

training and travel. Use of volunteers where possible to assist. Could accredit the training and could partner with pan disability organisations to extend the offering.

How does this benefit people affected by sight loss? A sports centre that is more inclusive and accessible and where sport can really be enjoyed by everyone. Demonstrates to other venues that it is possible to include people affected by sight loss in its activities and offer.

Example 2: Restaurants

Audience: A local independent restaurant.

Services: Visual awareness training for staff, development of audio menus, potential use of Sim Specs/Eyeware

How to sell it: Pick a time when traditionally restaurants are quiet, ie Monday evenings. Advertise a Low Vision, VI evening that is an enjoyable event for friends and families of VI individuals as well as those simply interested to come along. Services provided will increase footfall on a quiet night, develop a new market of clients.

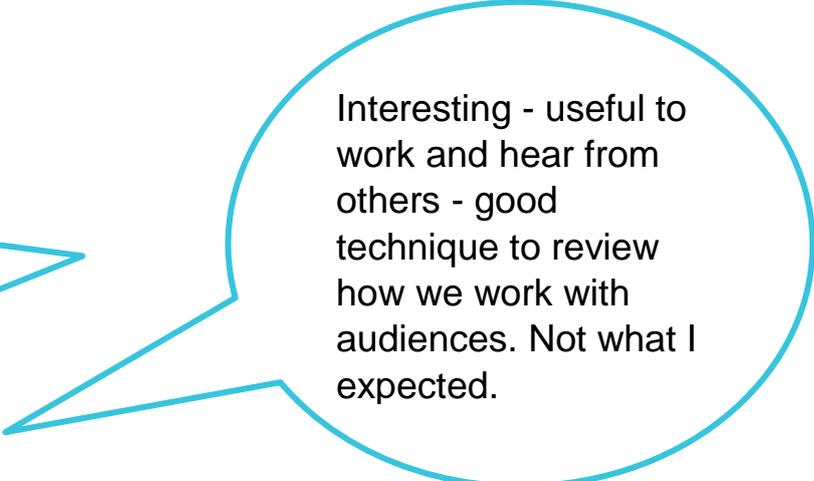
Cost elements behind delivery: Pay for trainers and consulting time. Pay for this by taking a % of revenue on the night.

How does this benefit people affected by sight loss? Using a quiet time such as a Monday night to work to empower the community and help raise awareness of Visual Impairment. A great evening out for individuals who would otherwise not be able to use the restaurant as easily.

What our delegates said:



Excellent presentation that really challenged the standard charity approach.



Interesting - useful to work and hear from others - good technique to review how we work with audiences. Not what I expected.

A resource from this workshop is now available in the [Income Development](#) section of the Knowledge Hub on Visionary's website.



Small organisation session: Volunteering for an integrated small or medium organisation

The TPT volunteering team's session focused on supporting members to understand what was preventing them from being able to grow their volunteer number and workshop some potential solutions and ideas to help. Below are some examples from the session with some ideas around potential solutions.

“Volunteering is under resourced – it is often an add on”

Having someone dedicated to volunteering within your organisation will bring you most success. As will investing in the learning and development of everyone expected to work with and manage volunteers.

“We struggle to recruit enough volunteers”

Find out what the root cause of this is by holding a focus group with staff and volunteers. Is the problem down to: People? Systems/Tools/Technology? Process?

“Too much competition”

Identify who your competitors are; Is your USP clear/compelling? How can you work with your competitors?

“We don't have enough time to do this well”

Build a business case for more staff; Consider funding bids to secure more resource; Could corporate volunteers help?

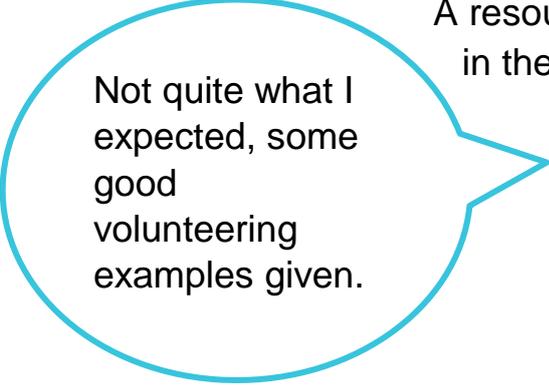
“We cover too large an area”

Consider a hub and spoke model approach; consider better use of technology; partnership working.

“We don't have the right opportunities for volunteers”

Involve your volunteers in the creation of new roles and the review of existing roles; Break larger, more complex and demanding roles into smaller, more manageable roles; Ask for feedback from existing volunteers.

What our delegates said:



Not quite what I expected, some good volunteering examples given.

A resource from this workshop is now available in the [Volunteering section](#) of the Knowledge Hub on Visionary's website.

Your feedback

Evaluation survey

Our evaluation survey was completed by 24 delegates across all venues.

This year you gave our conferences an overall rating of **8.7 out of 10** (8 out of 10 in 2018 and 2017).

- **84%** of you rated the pre-conference communications excellent or good
- **88%** of you rated the networking opportunities excellent or good
- **92%** said they came away having learnt something new. And of those, **95%** said that knowledge gained during the conference would make a difference to their work.

Some specific comments from the survey can be found below

Split between manager/trustee and smaller/larger organisation sessions

- I found this to be beneficial as both parties have differing needs and the split makes the most effective use of limited time.
- Worked for us as CEOs but not sure about the trustees as there were only a couple!
- I think people should be able to choose a workshop based on interest and not size.
- Spot on - although my group didn't get to look at the trustee perspective on the first exercise which I would have welcomed.
- Much prefer this to the previous format.

Did you go away having learned something new from the day?

92% Yes; 8% No

- Learnt that I am doing many things right that I hadn't really had the words for before to say I was doing right which was very reassuring. Some good tips about recruiting volunteers.
- How to be 100% better. How to be more ambitious. How to remember to make time to look after myself

- Visionary meetings always leave me inspired with new ideas or improved approaches.
- It's years since I went on a leadership course and if I only took away "OASIS" from it, I feel it would have been valuable.

The difference attending the conference will make to your work and your organisation

- My organisation is currently undergoing a strategic review and part of that process is to consider our brand, logo and marketing. John Ground's session was therefore particularly relevant.
- I not only increased my knowledge but also made some really good links for joint working. The strategy session with John helped me focus my thoughts and evaluate where we are.
- It will help us to more effectively connect our different strategic threads.
- Lots of ideas that will benefit me as a trustee and the services I am involved with.
- in due course; better integration leading to more effective service delivery and, hopefully, better reputation / more community support for organisation going forward. Tips on managing stress etc. hopefully will delay my breakdown!
- One of the most valuable elements of the conference is the opportunity to speak to fellow CEOs. Almost every challenge I am facing, however big or small, has been faced by at least one other person at the meeting. Having the opportunity to speak with them and get their advice saves so much time and so many headaches.

Visionary's vision, mission and values

Visionary is a membership organisation for local sight loss charities. We are a locally led movement of national significance and, by joining Visionary, we believe that the voice of your organisation will be stronger and louder.

Our vision

A world in which people living with sight loss can access the services they need at local level where and when they need them.

Our mission

To develop a strong national network of good quality local sight loss societies covering all parts of the UK.

Our values

We will develop inclusive partnerships by: acting with **integrity**; instilling **trust**; being **creative**, being **brave**

Our strategic priorities

1. **Identify**: identifying the unmet needs of blind and partially sighted people;
2. **Develop**: developing the roles of local sight loss organisations in meeting these needs;
3. **Share**: developing a strong national network and working with partners to support the effective delivery of consistently high quality services for people with sight loss.

Our promise to our members

- We will strive to empower our members to provide the best possible services with and for the visual impairment community.
- We will provide professional, expert support, guidance and skills.
- We will be honest and transparent.
- We will engage with members in an efficient, timely and courteous manner.
- We will communicate with a unified voice ensuring members receive consistent messages in their preferred format.
- We will ask for and acknowledge feedback

Find us online

Website visionary.org.uk

Twitter @visionary_uk

Visionary: Putting local service delivery and blind and partially sighted people at the heart of the sight loss sector.

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