



F R E U I D S

PLAN B | BUSINESS UNUSUAL PRESENTS

**WE SEE THROUGH
BRANDS HOOKING
ONTO SOCIAL CAUSES
WITH NO REAL SUBSTANCE**



JULIE RICHARDS

Delivery Portfolio Director, Guardian Media Group

PUTTING PURPOSE BEFORE PROFIT IS A CRITICAL PART OF THE GUARDIAN'S HERITAGE, EVEN IF THE CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF 'PURPOSEFUL BUSINESS' IS A FAIRLY RECENT PHENOMENON.

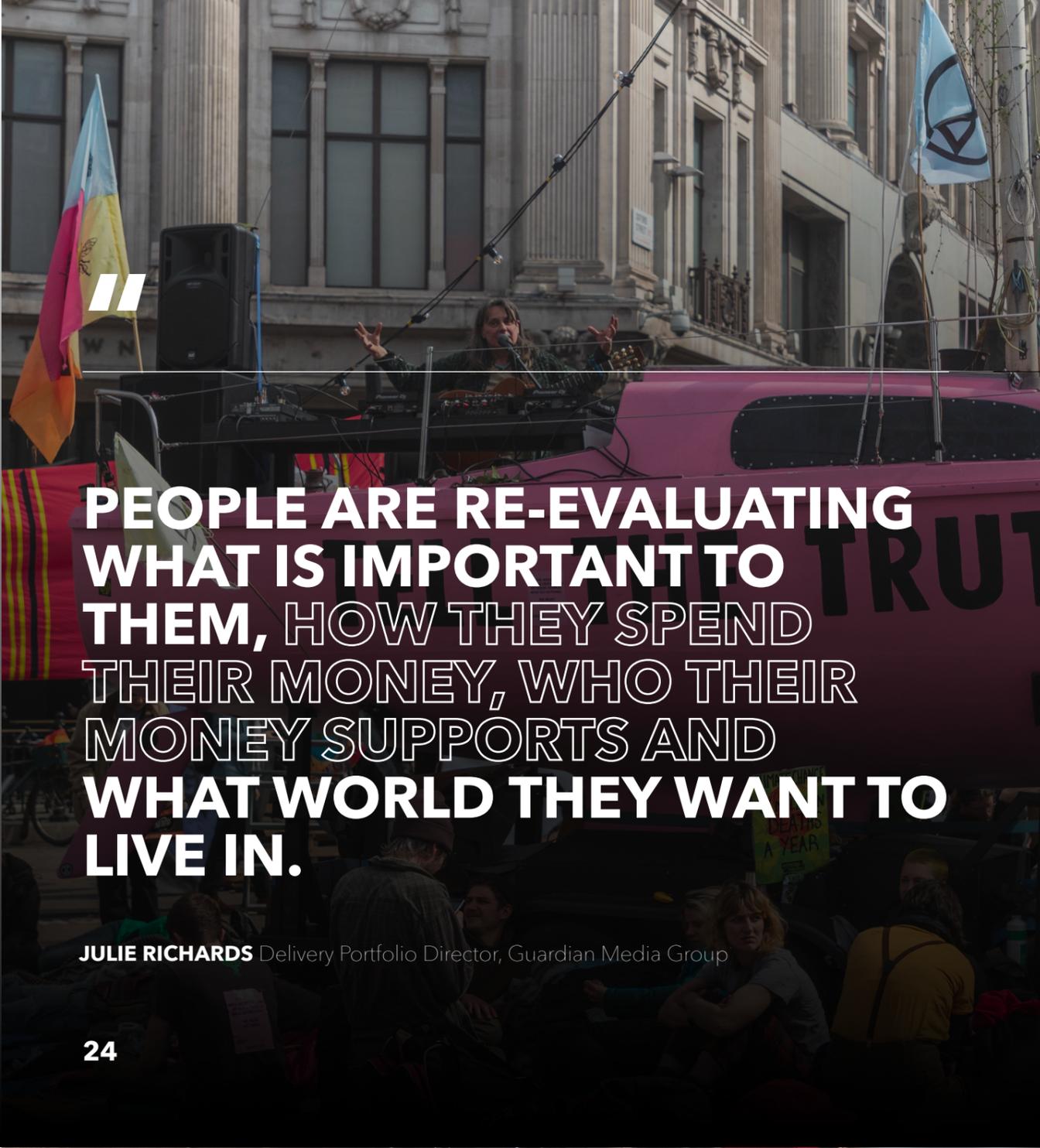
The Guardian was set up in 1821 with a commitment to enlightenment values, liberty, reform and justice, and a desire to hold the powerful to account. For nearly a century the Guardian has been owned by the Scott Trust, whose mission is "to secure the financial and editorial independence of the Guardian in perpetuity and to safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values of the Guardian free from commercial or political interference."

Editorial independence and holding power to account remain the cornerstone of Guardian journalism, as our editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner, laid out in her essay – a mission for journalism in a time of crisis. But we are also challenging ourselves more widely across the entire business – looking at how we live up to the Guardian's values in everything we do. As part of this we decided to look externally to see if outside certification could offer something – which is why we decided to start the process to become B Corp certified.

It's a very challenging time for news organisations – quality, investigative journalism takes time and costs money, and we're facing a systemic decline in print revenue and a complicated digital advertising system where tech giants swallow most of the ad money. Many organisations might decide to take the easy route and put values on the backburner whilst getting what revenue they can, but that is not who we are.

We have a strategy built on creating deeper relationships with our readers, and we now receive a growing proportion of our revenue directly from them. This relationship with our readers comes with greater responsibility, and a keener understanding of their expectations, concerns and aspirations. As our editor-in-chief said, "our relationship with our readers is not transactional: it is about sharing a sense of purpose and a commitment to understand and illuminate our times."

Our readers – and increasingly consumers in general – are now incredibly interested in the ethics of the business, and can see through brands who are hooking onto social causes with no real substance. They want to support companies and brands who align with and live up to their values. This makes it even more important that we can demonstrate the values they have come to expect from us in a way that is tangible, meaningful and transparent. The same is true for our staff who care deeply about our mission and values.



PEOPLE ARE RE-EVALUATING WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM, HOW THEY SPEND THEIR MONEY, WHO THEIR MONEY SUPPORTS AND WHAT WORLD THEY WANT TO LIVE IN.

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 **BRIGHT IDEA**
Ban fossil fuel advertising.

Becoming a B Corp, therefore, felt like a natural fit for us. It has a rigorous and exposing process that challenges organisations to think deeply about how to measure and improve across a range of areas – such as environmental impact, governance, transparency and societal impact. We scored highly for our societal impact and working conditions which was great validation of work we’ve done over the years, but certification is part of an ongoing commitment to keep improving across all areas, and we recognise there are areas where we need to improve.

Environmental issues are core to our journalism and increasingly important to our readers who recognise the urgency of the climate crisis. Building on our investigative journalism and initiatives including changing the language we use to describe the crisis, we have committed to reach net zero emissions by 2030. We are now undertaking a thorough review of our carbon footprint and working with our suppliers and partners to make significant changes. We have also since stopped taking any advertising from fossil fuel companies.

We are currently living through unprecedented times with the COVID-19 pandemic, riots in the US and protests around the world. In many ways these crises are shining a light into the way we live, and the structures that underpin everything.

We are looking with new eyes at the role that governments, experts, businesses and we as individuals, play in this world. People are re-evaluating what is important to them, how they spend their money, who their money supports and what world they want to live in.

We are already seeing examples of businesses stepping in to respond in positive ways to the pandemic, and even if and when these crises subside, we will see an expectation for businesses to play a positive role in our societies. The evidence has shown just how rapidly we change things if we really want to, and people will be aware of this and keen for tangible evidence.

News organisations are used to holding others to account and scrutinising the way that they live up to

their commitments, but as an industry we are less used to making ourselves the story and opening up about how we conduct ourselves. By committing to the B Corp process we have exposed ourselves to the scrutiny of outside accreditation.

We recognise that we have room to improve and welcome the challenge, as well as the support and chance to learn from, and share with, the B Corp community. We are proud to have been the first major media organisation in the world to become a B Corp and to set the standard for accountability and transparency in our industry.

In today’s fractured world trust is the most precious commodity for any news publisher and it is one that is increasingly being challenged in our current political and social climate. Our commitment, transparency and ambition to live by our values is an important reason why our readers trust us, and why we hope they will continue to support us and Guardian journalism.

FACT BOX

NAME The Guardian

BUSINESS News platform

MISSION Honesty, integrity, courage, fairness, and a sense of duty to the reader and the community

FOUNDED 1821

FOUNDER John Edward Taylor

EMPLOYEES: 860

REVENUE: £224.5 million per annum

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