Right Pear

NETWORKING TAKEAWAYS · OCTOBER 2026

Beyond *Finance.*

What it takes to step up from CFO to CEO, from two finance leaders who've done it.



Andy Morris
CEO, CIRENCESTER FRIENDLY

Paul Hughes
CEO, QLM TECHNOLOGY

THE SPEAKERS

Two different routes.

Paul Hughes

QLM TECHNOLOGY

CIMA & Treasury qualified. Graduate Management Accountant progressing through industry until first CFO role at Series A start-up QLM Tech. Previous CEO & Co-Founder was stepping back, and Paul stepped into the seat.

> *How it happened: Walked into a Boardroom meeting as CFO, and walked out as CEO.*

Andy Morris

CIRENCESTER FRIENDLY

Big4 CA with a career rooted in financial services, including investment banking. Cirencester Friendly was the 2nd CFO role of his career, owning a broad remit, which put Andy in good stead to replace the retiring CEO.

> *How it happened: Seven month process, four interviews.*

Grounded in *fact*.

How they knew they were ready

- **People-focused.** Becoming less technical, with more focus on what the business was doing and getting people on board with the journey. Communication is critical.
- **Strategic by nature.** The focus shifted from the numbers themselves to where the business was heading, and being able to make a direct contribution.
- **Owning what you don't know.** Being comfortable knowing you don't need to master everything. Let your peers and counterparts be the experts, too.

The Finance advantage

Deal in fact.

Very used to making decisions based on the numbers. Clarity of data, not opinion.

Set emotion aside.

You weigh up what's practical, and what your experts are telling you.

Play to *your strengths.*

Both felt it stepping up. Here's how they dealt with it.

01

Start with what you know

What am I good at? What can I build and develop? Put your energy there first.

02

Bring in the experts

Where the expertise isn't in the business, introduce the right people. Try to be an expert at everything and you become an expert at nothing. Let others shine.

03

Steer the vision

Your job is aligning people to where the company is going. You are accountable for everyone who reports into you, as much as you are for those above you.

LEADING THE TEAM

Low ego, *high trust.*

Not the loudest voice in the room

Both lead with a low-ego approach. They give specialists room to step up, have their own voice and be heard. If your aim is to be CEO and that's all you can think about, there's a chance you'll miss what's important along the way.

Letting go of finance

Handing finance over to their own senior finance leader has been a learning curve for both. It takes time and it comes down to trust: mentoring, developing and giving them the autonomy to own the role completely.

SHIFTING MINDSET

Bring the board *with you.*

PREVIOUS MINDSET

I report to these people.

Numbers reported upwards to your Manager, Directors or Board.

THE CEO MINDSET

We're in this together.

Get the chair, investors or other senior stakeholders on the journey with you. Focus on collaboration - working towards a common goal together.

NEXT STEP

See you at *the next one.*

Thank you to Andy, Paul and everyone who joined us at The Ostrich, Bristol. We bring business and finance leaders together across the South West. Sign up and we'll invite you to the next one.

Sign up for networking | **Book a call with Giles** | **Book a call with Jonny**



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