

WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS?

Business mentor, strategy adviser and life coach David Carter wants you to be the best version of yourself. In other words, don't be a slave to money and do make a difference, says Mark Nayler

Drawing on his extensive experience in the financial sector, David Carter is a mentor, coach and adviser to business owners, celebrities and entrepreneurs. He assists business leaders and CEOs in sharpening their strategies, articulating their goals and, in some cases, with problems in their personal lives. His work with his clients is always guided by the idea of helping them to become the 'best versions of themselves' — a catchphrase of his that even appears as a signature on his emails. He can also cook a mean omelette, as I found out when I went to interview him at his Wimbledon home.

Carter set up his first mentoring company, Merryck & Co, in 1997, selling it in 2010 to start up David CM Carter Ltd. Before this, over a twenty-year career in finance, he held executive positions at a number of banks and financial institutions, including Barclays, the Hong Kong Bank Group and Security Pacific Corporation.

But, as he states on his website, revealing a taste for rather dramatic statements that is much in evidence during our interview: "The names and dates on my CV tell you where I have worked, and how long I stayed there. They can't begin to tell you who I am, what I did, or what I learned."

One thing Carter has learned is not to let anyone with a 'negative vibe' into his life. He's picky about the company he keeps, it would seem, both in this personal and his professional life. But between the two, he says, he marks very little difference, treating clients as friends once he has taken them on. The people he likes to spend time with, however, do share one common feature.

'One of the things that I have noticed,' he explains while chopping

an onion, 'is that the people I am really interested in hanging out with are people who are interested in what is going on in the world. Most of them are bright, smart people and enjoy a conversation with other like-minded people along the lines of "Well, what do you do to make a difference?"'

This has led him to eschew those whose main concern is money. 'In the last year and a half,' he tells me, while gesticulating with an enormous knife, 'I've had several people, half a dozen or more, come to me and say, "I want to hire you as my mentor. I've heard you're the best, money is no object and I want you." And I think, "I would no more want to work with you than jump in a pile of poo. You have no social consciousness, and this is about the accumulation of wealth and power for you."'

Carter starts by asking each client: 'Do you know who you really are?' I ask him how people react to that. 'Most people think it's the most amazing question they have ever been asked, and it's very scary for them when they have to admit they don't know the answer.'

If you can answer that question, says Carter, you're in a position to work on becoming the best version of yourself. Not that it's a straightforward process: 'It's a rather annoying question because [with] everything you do every single day you have to ask yourself, "Am I being the better version of myself?" You don't need anybody else to answer that question for you. You know instinctively, intuitively whether you are.'

He employs some trusted methods, one of which is the leadership values assessment 360. Carter asks his client to write down how they perceive themselves, and the client's colleagues, friends and family to do the same. The



client can then see how their own perception fits with other people's.

Other methods are more quirky. Carter went out with one recent client, spent £300 on magazines and sat until 2.30am helping the troubled billionaire to create a collage depicting how he wanted his life to be five years down the line. 'One of his comments was, "I had no idea I could design the rest of my life." That's the same with most CEO's I've worked with, who can be very tunnel vision.'

So what makes Carter's offering unique? 'There aren't many people who have got the combination of being a CEO, of having run a business, sold a business and floated a business. I've got all the business experience, I'm spiritually interested and my life purpose is being a better version of myself and making a difference.'

Carter certainly seems to have found his vocation. 'Now I wake up and throw off the duvet because I'm absolutely being authentically conscious. I'm completely conscious of what I'm doing — and I won't do something unless I'm being completely authentic. At long bloody last I am happy — I'm doing something I was sent to this planet to do.' *J*

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