



*The following extracts from 'Go' by Barbara Cassani, describe the contribution to an incredible success story of her relationship with David Carter, Chairman & Founder of Merryck & Co., who was her business mentor over these critical years.*

**'In March 1997, Barbara Cassani was asked to set up and run a no-frills European airline for British airways. She was a rare breed in the world of British business: young, informal and American, she believed in doing things differently. Barbara took the £25 million investment from British airways, turned profit in 3 years, led a management buy-out and eventually sold the company to easyJet for an astonishing £374 million, just four years after the company's launch.'**

"For several months I had been having one-to-one sessions with David Carter. Over two and a half years, we met regularly and talked about my performance and the development of the management team. He helped me raise my game as a CEO. Our sessions every few months became oases of calm reflection amid all the frenzy of running a fast-growing operation. I became clearer about my objectives and the way to manage my top team.

When the sale became more of a reality, I realised he had done his own MBO and could offer insights into the psyche of the venture capitalists as well as practical tips on getting the best possible deal for management and employees.

David and a Merryck colleague talked to everyone in the management team individually to find out how much each member of the Management Team was prepared to risk. If I had approached each individual face-to-face they would have felt obliged to declare their loyalty. That would have been unfair; this was a decision that transcended allegiance to me. Everyone had to make their own decision, without undue pressure. The results of the private interviews were unanimous. Everyone wanted to go for it. When David debriefed me, he was deeply impressed with the intelligence, commitment and bravery of Go's top team. He felt we had a rare thing going, I was stunned and grateful.

The big breakthrough came at Merryck's offices in Berkeley Square. I was negotiating with 3i over the phone. For my £1m investment (almost half of what I would earn from the sale), and if my colleagues rolled over half of theirs, we looked close to a deal. In exchange – in a lightning strike of boldness – David Carter encouraged me to ask for 25% of the equity and I eventually negotiated 22.5% of the company. We had secured it with our financial commitment, the only kind of commitment venture capitalists could respect. Frankly, I had never thought we'd get more than 17 or 18 per cent.

I never worried for a minute that we would lose any of our money. I was to keep the same 4% stake I had under British Airways ownership while the remaining 18.5% was to be held by current and future employees and management. I wanted every one (of the 750 employees) to be able to at least earn one times their annual salary in shares after three years, (during which we would double in size). I felt justified in fighting for the big pot of equity. It was for the people who would make or break the future for Go."