

Imagine the feeling....

Sam Jones asks you to:

- **imagine the feeling** when someone says “ I think you need to be aware” ;
- imagine the feeling when you are sitting opposite a clinician who is bringing you a proposal that you really can't afford, but equally you know you really can't afford not to;
- **imagine the feeling** when you are presenting staff awards to people who have tirelessly given 20, 30, 35 years to the Trust you have just joined;
- **imagine the feeling** reading complaints from patients who have raised concerns and knowing that you are leading an organization that has not got care 100% right and imagine the feeling reading the concerns from people who have entrusted you with their care and you have let them down;
- **imagine the feeling** when you read compliments , many of them from patients and relatives who are so grateful for the superb care you have provided at their time of need;
- **Imagine the feeling** when a member of staff says..”thank you for listening, it has made a big difference to me”
- **imagine the feeling** knowing there are many more staff who would like just 5 minutes of your time and who you just can't get to;
- **imagine the feeling** when you sit opposite relatives of patients who have died in your hospitals and who want to share with you how they felt and what helped/didn't help at that time;
- **imagine the feeling** of the phone going in the night or early morning with an issue the Director on call just wants to talk through with you
- **imagine the feeling** of knowing you are just dealing with today and not tomorrow which will make a difference to today;
- **imagine the feeling** of watching a challenged organization start to light up and the staff within it starting to believe they can make a difference;
- **imagine the feeling** of your Trust being commended for a national patient safety award a year after quality and risk summits;
- **imagine the feeling** when your Medical Director comes to tell you there has been a 25% reduction in mortality rates in a year
- **imagine the feeling** of balancing numerous requests for info, both internal & external and knowing you only have a small, new team in the information dept who are already working 16 hours a day;



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- **imagine the feeling** of trying to be the CEO you want to be , of doing the right thing for patients and staff, even at times of difficulty
- **Imagine the feeling** of trying to keep all the feelings in perspective, keeping rounded and keeping resilient yourself as a person...

All of these feelings are real and are the ones I have felt at different times over the last few years as Chief Executive of West Hertfordshire and are feelings that many of my Chief Executive colleagues have told me they have in their roles.

I remember my first day as a substantive Chief Executive, feeling daunted by the weight of responsibility, of expectations

(mainly mine) and of all the things that could go wrong. Roll forward nine years, and those feelings were exactly the same when I started at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.... & remarkably, were

similar feelings to when I took charge of the ward for the first time as a nurse over 20 years before.

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The role of the Chief Executive according to a quick internet search is to be “ “high profile”, “will harness the substantial experience of the staff”; “ exceptional”; “ will have a track record of delivery of transformational change”; “honest”,” full of integrity”,” innovates and takes risks”

I offer that the role of the Chief Executive is to build a team; to lay the foundations for today; to work with partners to deliver tomorrow; to lead with the Chairman and Board the development of a climate that allows staff to feel safe; that is relentlessly honest, realistic and to know that you are in the most privileged role that you can ever be given. Most of all , to know, you are not the most important person in the organisation, that you cannot and should not try and do it alone and that you are there to enable your staff to do what they can. And never ever forget that you are there for patients. This is what I have tried to do. I know I haven't always got it right.

These jobs are so very challenging, they push you to the personal limits, they are relentless, they can be roller coasters and they are definitely not for the faint hearted. They are also an honour in every way.

Looking back, knowing what I know now, would I do it again? Absolutely yes, without a shadow of a doubt. Making a difference to the delivery of care we provide and to the staff providing it ...who wouldn't want to do that?