

## Ruth Handcock

### **I live to get things done, and quickly**

My role has two key functions to it: focusing on the commercial aspects of Octopus Investments, and also delivering on the Octopus mission. I want to be known for impact and change. Although I'm very commercially minded, what inspires me is the desire to leave the world better than I find it. I have a bias towards action, which means I think that making a wrong decision, and then correcting it, is better than no decision. We can always talk about what worked, and what didn't, afterwards.

### **I think a lot about what motivates other people**

I believe we're all more likely to succeed if people feel happy, motivated, and stretched. I enjoy collaborative, honest relationships and I'll try lots of different ways to make it work if it doesn't feel that way. I'm more likely to be kept awake at night by a poor human interaction than a delivery screw-up.

### **I'm a natural 'completer'**

I like to see things through from start to finish, and I'm an analytical, detail-driven person. This means I sometimes have difficulty letting go, so I need to feel confident I can trust you to own your role. One of the best ways to do this is to show me that you care about the details and that you don't let things drop when they get hard. I like working with people who think beyond task delivery to always owning the challenge of how we can improve: growth should be in all our job descriptions. Come to me with a problem, and I'll ask you what you think the solution is, and how I can help you to deliver it.

### **Meetings should always be about moving forward**

Everyone's time is precious, so meetings should be as short as possible. You can achieve this by making sure everyone has been given a chance to prepare and come ready with a point of view. I like to see an agenda in advance, with details of what we're looking to address. If it's your meeting, always be totally clear why we're in the room and what decisions or actions should be taken before we leave. I'll also expect you to summarise the meeting afterwards and to send round the actions to the attendees. I also hope that people are mean with their time. If you don't think you need to be there, say so.

### **You will take the lead in our one-to-ones**

I'm here to help and unblock, not to manage and direct. So, please come to our one-to-ones ready to let me know what I can do to free up your time and help you get things done. But if you think something is important, you don't have to wait till your next meeting to discuss it with me. Even if I look busy, you can always swing by my desk with questions.

### **Career planning should be a dialogue**

Our career discussions will not just centre on what you can do for the company, but also on whether you're happy in your role and feel like you're growing and making a valued contribution. While I can help you to understand what the business expects of you, your objectives are yours to own. Each trimester, I'll expect you to drive the conversation on how you're progressing. I'll encourage you to be honest and open

about your career ambitions too, even if that means changing role or even thinking of life outside of Octopus.

## **I set rules for myself – you should too**

I've learned to set boundaries to help me focus on what's important. Having kids means I enforce these rules more strongly than before. Since I'm not generally with my kids during the day, when I do get to spend time with them, I won't spend it answering work emails. I leave the office at 5.30pm most days, and when I get home, I leave my phone by the door. Once the kids are in bed, I spend my time catching up on the day. I work every other Friday from home and avoid working weekends unless I need to.

At the beginning of every day, I scan my meetings and make sure I'm prepared for all of them. In my notebook I keep two lists; the first is for urgent tasks, the second is for priorities. I find this helps me to get the right balance and avoid always rushing from fire to fire. Also, I like to keep two hours of thinking time free in my diary each day, so if Emily is strict on not booking a meeting, she's just keeping me sane. At the same time, I try to be flexible and make myself available, because helping other people around me be productive is a big part of my role too.

My train journeys are used to field emails. Coming from a start-up, I have quite a relaxed email style. Don't be surprised if you receive a one-line message from me. I'm not trying to be rude, I'm trying to be quick. If I send you an email at 8pm, that doesn't mean I expect a reply right then, but if I've asked you to do something, I'll expect a timely response, just to let me know that you're on it.

## **Managing my strengths and weaknesses**

On the SDI chart, I'm somewhere between a Green (Assertive and Autonomising) and a Red (Assertive and Directing). This means that when I'm stressed, I have a tendency to micromanage and direct others rather than delegate. I know this can be frustrating, and I'm working hard on learning when to 'let go'. If you feel I'm not getting the balance right, I'd appreciate you speaking up and letting me know.

## **Feedback is invaluable to the culture here**

I know it's not always easy to give or receive feedback. When I'm giving feedback, I try to make it considered and honest, and because it isn't always easy to hear, I hope people take it constructively. I will always welcome your feedback, although I'm a perfectionist, which means if you have some developmental feedback for me, it's likely I've had a word with myself about it already. My golden rule is that you should only write down (or say to someone else) what you'd be happy to say constructively to someone's face.

## **Always be passionate about what you do**

We spend half our time at work. There's no point doing that if you don't enjoy it, and I love my job. I don't expect you to work all hours, but I will expect you to care enough not to walk away. You need to be true to yourself. I'll never apologise for leaving the office at 5:30, but I'm not sure I could do my job well unless I picked up again in the evenings. That's my choice, and I think it's important to focus on delivering brilliantly, regardless of when you do it.