

Curriculum Vitae



John Nelson, BSc (Econ) Hons

Chairman

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John has been nationally prominent in the UK rail industry for twenty five years and for much of that period a leading figure in the drive for more efficient railway management structures. Following a career that took him to the top of British Rail, John founded First Class Partnerships in 1997 and has been its Chairman since expanding the company in the year 2000. In that role he has seen the consultancy grow from its early base to the point where it is now pre-eminent amongst those UK based companies providing strategic, commercial and operational advice to railway industry clients across the world.

John has been a management consultant since 1997 and has advised many commercial train companies as well as government authorities in the UK on various aspects of process improvement and strategy. He counts amongst his personal clients all of the UK's principal railway authorities and several of the owning groups operating franchises. He has also worked with a number of European Union countries providing similar strategic advice, usually at Board level.

Since privatisation John has established several businesses, all of them transport related. He has also served on the Boards of four passenger train operating companies (two franchises, two open access operations). From 1998 to 2006 he was a director of Laing Railways (now DB Regio UK); owners of the Chiltern franchise, the first to be re-let; and between 2003 and 2006 fulfilled a similar role on the Board of South Eastern Trains (Holdings), set up following the termination of the Connex franchise and before it was re-let to Govia. He is with Mike Jones a shareholding Director of Hull Trains, a Company established in 1999 to exploit "open access" opportunities for express trains to London and a shareholder of Wrexham & Shropshire, set up in 2006 to do the same there. He is a Director of Renaissance Trains, a promotional vehicle for new rail ventures.

He is also currently a board member of TRACSIS plc, an AIM listed company that provides automated resource scheduling software to worldwide transport markets and of YourRail, a supplier of electronic ticketing systems including via mobile phone. John, who places strategic counsel at the top of his list of capabilities, is a highly successful and influential consultant, possessing a unique understanding of the modern railway context, its structure and contractual matrix. He specialises in the development of strategy, interface management, process improvement and managing change in railways, especially in commercial environments. In a personal capacity he recently led an independent review team engaged by the UK's Office of Rail Regulation to evaluate the processes adopted to determine the periodic review settlement for Network Rail known as Control Period 4 (2009-21013).

For five years prior to 1997 he was Chief Executive of BR's largest business, Network South East, (London's commuter railways). There he led a change programme that brought about a continuously improving performance of the railways' punctuality and reliability throughout his tenure, launched the Passenger's Charter, and delivered £300m to the bottom line over a period of less than two years from a combination of overhead reduction and revenue generation despite a severe recession at the time. From 1994 in the run up to privatisation John was also given the unique responsibility of creating 13 new Train Companies and developing them for privatisation. He chaired each of these until the task was completed in 1997.

Before the privatisation era John headed up BR's Eastern Region (1987 and 1992), then a quarter of Britain's rail network, where he was responsible for all passenger, freight and infrastructure operations. His 5-year tenure saw the modernisation of the East Coast Main Line between London and Scotland including the launch of Britain's fastest trains. All told John has worked in Britain's railways for 41 years and although he has a wide experience, there has been an emphasis on business operations and commercial activities.

Until 1983 he worked mainly in the passenger sector, amongst other things planning with the West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executives the expansion of their rail networks that took place in the 1980's but following a year as personal assistant to Sir Robert Reid (probably the greatest railwayman since the War), John was appointed to run the Red Star Parcels business. In a period of 3 years John demonstrated his entrepreneurial flair in tripling the turnover from an inherited £20m in a very competitive market place, whilst substantially improving the group's profitability.

This grounding in all commercial, operating and technical aspects of running railways enabled John to create and develop the multi-faceted railway management consultancy that First Class Partnerships has become. It also enabled him to pursue a successful career in a number of other fields as a director of other companies, enhancing his previous experience with an understanding of the contemporary privatised environment.

John was also for five years until 2002 the part time Non Executive Chairman of a NHS Trust based in Yorkshire. He is currently a member of the Advisory Board of the National Railway Museum. John has an Honours degree in Economics that he took at the University of Manchester in 1968. He is a past President of the Railway Study Association.