

A Russam GMS Initiative 1st February 2011

HELPING VINCE

Offering free advice to a clever man doing a hugely difficult job in arguably the most perilous economic times of our generation

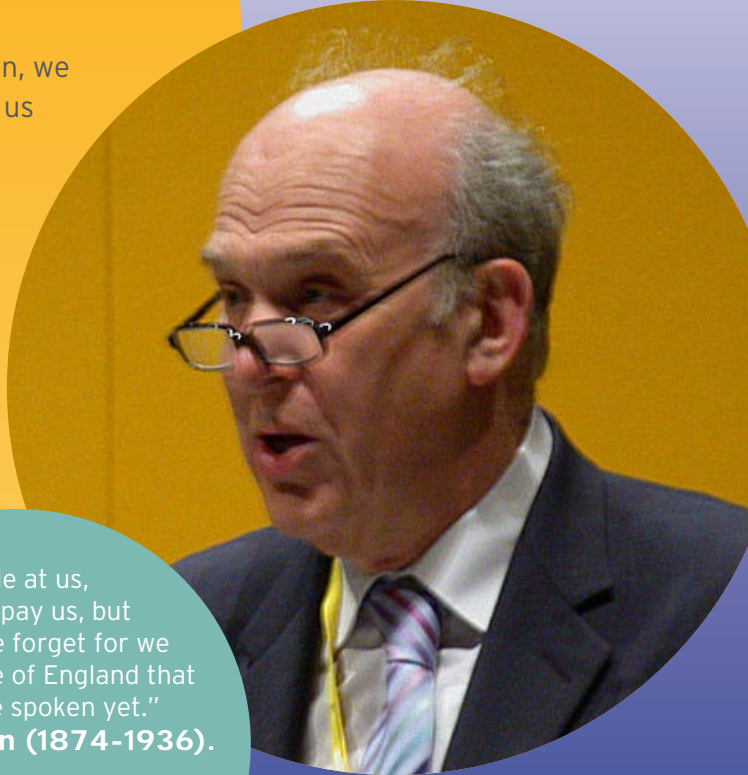
Russam GMS Ltd is the longest established mainstream Interim Management Provider in the UK and sits on top of the most comprehensive working database of senior executives operating as Independent Consultants and Interim Managers in the UK.

Towards the end of 2010, as our End-of-Year Competition, we asked all 11,000 of the Interim Managers registered with us this question:-

What do you think Vince Cable ought now to do to power UK business forward?

This is the story of that competition and the list of winners and includes 64 contributed pieces together with some of our own comments.

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"Smile at us,
pass us, pay us, but
do not quite forget for we
are the people of England that
never have spoken yet."
GK Chesterton (1874-1936).

(probably anticipating the yet-to-come impact of IR35 and other unnecessary vexations imposed on the self-employed Business Leaders and Management community in the UK.)

1. Introductory Comments

At the time we launched this competition, we wrote that there are many who say that Vince Cable, who may well have been a reluctant candidate to be Business Minister, is probably the best equipped for decades to do the job - and at a time when the UK business landscape is arguably at its lowest point ever as regards any world-class wealth generation capability - particularly international. [Click here](#) (if you are reading this online) to see his widely respected speech at the Liberal Democrat Conference on 25.10.10. The core to this speech was this:-

“But the big long-term question is: how does the country earn a living in the future? Natural resources? The oil money was squandered. Metal bashing? Mostly gone to Asia. Banking? Been there, done that. What is left? Actually quite a lot. People. Skilled and educated people. High tech manufacturing of which we already have a great deal. Creative industries, IT and science based industries and professional services. In my job I meet many outstanding, world class, British based companies. But we need more companies and more jobs in the companies we have.”

Before all the entries had been received, Vince ran into a bit of bother with the Daily Telegraph but this did not seem to make any material difference to this competition or the sentiments expressed by the contributors. The sentiments that were expressed were ones reflecting some embarrassment that he should have actually said what he did say - and, in particular, that he should have been caught out in the way that he was - but little surprise that he felt the way he did. The hope clearly remains that he's up to the job and to the positive expectations held by many when he took up the job.

As for the competition, Tell us what you think Vince Cable should do now, we asked. The best three, in our judgment, will receive a case of wine. Our plan, we said, was to publish the views we received. We'll pass the best views on to Vince Cable (In fact, we decided to pass all

of them on) and to anyone else in lofty places who we think takes the view that in order to spend money, it helps to earn it first. Closing date for entries was 31.12.10. More importantly, we would also give a case of wine to the best three who, in our judgement, answered this question “What role could Interim Managers play in this process - and how?”:-

To demonstrate how crucial this whole area is, this is what David Cameron said at the Lord Mayors Banquet on 15.11.10:-

“Now, there are some who say that Britain is embarked on an inevitable path of decline, that the rise of new economic powers is the end of Britain's influence in the world, that we are in some vast zero-sum game, in which we are bound to lose out. I want to take that argument head on. Britain remains a great economic power. Show me a city in the world with stronger credentials than the City of London. Show me another gathering with the same line-up of financial, legal, accounting, communications and other professional expertise. You know even better than me that Britain is a great trading force in the world. Whenever I meet foreign leaders, they do not see a Britain shuffling apologetically off the world stage. On the contrary, they respect our determination to get our economic house in order so that we can remain masters of our nation's destiny. They can see the immense advantages of doing business with Britain. We are already ranked first in Europe for the ease of doing business, and we intend to become the first in the world.”

But the big long term question is: how does the country earn a living in the future?

2. Choosing the winners

In the end, we moved away from the idea of awarding three prizes for the best three entries to the first question and three prizes for the best three entries to the second question and decided to award ten prizes generally. It was simply too difficult to make meaningful assessments. Every entry had something to say that needed to be listened to.

We had 64 entries - there are 65 listed, but number 18 is duplicated with number 50. Many thanks to all the Interim Managers, who spent time over Christmas and the New Year recording their thoughts on what Vince Cable ought now to do to power UK business forward. It has been an incredibly difficult process deciding who the winners ought to be and apologies to those who are not amongst the prize-winners. Probably, the truth is that they are all worthy winners and will have been unfairly overlooked on this occasion.

We also invited two external experts for whom we have the highest regard to offer their views on who should win and we were delighted that **John Philpott** and **Russel Griggs** very kindly agreed to do this. It is important that we make it clear that both John and Russel made their selections in the festive end-of-the-year spirit within which this competition was promoted. In no way do they associate themselves with any of the contributed content or editorial comment in this publication unless they have specifically made this clear.

Professor **Russel Griggs**, OBE, is a leading UK business Academic and authority, particularly at SME level. He is Chair of the National SME Council which is the CBI's body which formulates their policy and issues on SMEs and also Chair of the Scottish Government's Regulatory Review Group which is tasked with making Scotland the best place for business in Europe in terms of better regulation. Professor Griggs also acts as an NED for a number of businesses.

Russel Griggs says:- "I have picked the four on the attached sheet - so I'll leave it to you to choose the final three. It was a difficult choice but it was interesting to read the, although some were a bit introspective, which, while worthy, was not part of the brief".

Professor **John Philpott** was appointed Chief Economist at the CIPD in November 2000. He is helping the CIPD to advance thinking on a coherent policy strategy for boosting business efficiency, maintaining full employment and raising real incomes in the UK and other developed economies. His regular Perspectives essays survey 'big picture' labour market and employment policy issues. He also writes a regular blog for the CIPD website

John picked as winners, numbers 11, 33 and 61. **John** comments, 'It was a difficult choice. There were many detailed and well considered submissions and most will be of interest to Mr Cable. There is, as might be expected, a fair amount of common ground between several of the submissions. I think 11 and 33 convey the gist of the widely held positions as well as being strong submissions in their own right. I thought 61 was unusual in its ideas for encouraging job creation. These latter ideas may or may not be practical but it would be interesting to see how Mr Cable responds to them.'

So we took these to be numbers 6, 14 and 25. As for the Russam GMS in-house judges, it's turned out to be a hugely difficult job to make any selection, but in the end we chose numbers 12, 16, 31 and 48."



3. These are the Winners

These are presented here as they were submitted to us - synopses here and their full version in Section 5. This explains the occasional typos and what some might regard as inelegant expression. We accept no responsibility for any detriment or negative reaction that may arise from any reaction to or reliance on them.

David Morgan - david@contractjob.net

Entry No 6: Successful Businessman with his own start-up company

This is a strong plea for greater recognition of the financial support available for R&D spend and alerts us all to the difficulties in managing the process. A lot of start-ups and product developing companies don't realise that R&D can be offset against corporation tax - so also reducing the risk.

Dr. Colin Thompson - colin@cavendish-mr.org.uk

Entry No 11: A former successful Managing Director, Author of several publications, research reports, guides, business and educational models on CD-ROM's/Software and over 400 articles published on business and educational subjects worldwide and an International Speaker

We need to sow seeds for our future success. This is a strong plea for better education - at all levels. Our workforce is a strategic asset. Mature Workers with skills and experience will fill the `Skills Gap`. By keeping mature (skilled and experienced) people and attracting others from retirement is a better way of solving our skills shortage than importing in migrants. Research from the Employers Forum on Age suggested that ageism remained deep-rooted in the workplace. Six out of ten people were said to have witnessed ageism at work in the last 12 months. The Employers Forum on Age has said that 200 claims a month were now being lodged with the Tribunals Service and increasing rapidly. UK schools and hospitals are already showing the strain of catering for an influx of younger workers from Eastern Europe. There is an issue with the language and illnesses that our hospitals cannot cater for!

Mike Loginov - mike.loginov@ascotbarclay.com

Entry No 12: An experienced and pragmatic Interim Business Transformation Leader, Programme Director and General Manager with a 'can-do' attitude.

The theme of this submission was too many businesses have cut too many costs by firing the very people upon whom the future of the company depends. People are our most important asset - and then you fire them! 'Humanity' can be a sound business policy.

Paul Xiberras - paulxiberras@xoassociates.com

Entry No 14: An Executive with a significant track record in driving Strategic Change and Transformation helping organisations select, design and deliver the right options for change aligned to their business goals and objectives.

It is the management of growth which will test whether the government has been successful and our economy has recovered. The key will be its ability to EXECUTE policy but more importantly to get the right skills and resources to make a real impact in the following areas - Remove the Shackles from SME businesses; Public and Private Sector Handshake; Links with Emerging Markets.

Roger Jones - rjones378@googlemail.com

Entry No 16: Seasoned Operations Director having completed a total of 10 Operations director roles in FMCG companies over an 8 year Interim career.

His theme was 'In the UK, we are best at the small things; focus on them.' What was impressive about this submission was the detailed setting out of those sectors where the UK ought now to be seeing its economic salvation.

Ashley Barlow - cabarlow9@btinternet.com

Entry No 25: A Senior Executive and accomplished Director / Technology Director / CIO with a successful track record spanning Global, European, National, SME, Start-up and Household Name businesses and brands.

Put career development loans on a par with university fees. i.e. Loan now, study now, pay back once earning above a certain amount. The current JobCentre plus is woefully inadequate when it comes to putting skilled people back to work. Also for people wishing to start up their own businesses, more help in the first year with recruiting staff, finding premises, cheaper deals for IT kit, telecoms etc help to take on and train new staff - the 'Business Start-up' discount applicable to any new business or business looking to grow etc.

Andrew Luce -

andrew.luce@associatingsolutions.com

Entry No 31: A Senior Consultant and Programme Director / Manager who combines CXX level business understanding with programme management methods.

This was a detailed plea for developing green energy and recycling. In particular, it contained specific ideas and proposals.

Graham Smedley -

grahamsmedley@btinternet.com

Entry No 33: A highly commercial Board Director with considerable experience as FD or MD in SME's, plc's or in near Board Senior Line Management in multinationals.

The SME sector will be the innovation & growth engine for economic and employment growth. The UK can only recover its lost GDP by export growth. Europe may not enter a double dip but general growth will be sluggish and home based SMEs in Europe will seek to satisfy their respective home markets. With a few exceptions therefore the rest of Europe does not, in the near term, offer significant market growth opportunities for UK SMEs. Some interesting practical suggestions.

John Hesketh - jbhesketh@btinternet.com

Entry No 48: Highly Motivated Business Developer, Previous Board level roles in Business Development, Commercial JV / Partnership Creation and Management.

This is a plea for optimism rather than pessimism and quotes as a leading example of what the UK's best at the engineering excellence in motor sport and in both design, engineering and performance of Formula 1.

Jeff Demicol - jeff.demicol@btinternet.com

Entry No 61: Versatile General/Business Unit Manager with strong Commercial, Business Development, Project and Operational Management experience

This offers much creative detail around a few things that could be done relatively quickly to generate jobs in the private sector the cost of which would be paid for by savings made by taking people out of the benefits system, companies looking at job creation as an investment rather than a cost, incremental revenue/profit earned by the new recruits coupled with the additional tax take that the additional employees would pay into the treasury.

If we had to pick a single winner...

...and this is all about our own whims and sentiments - and a provocative thing to do in the face of 64 splendid submissions ...we think we would award equal honours to **No 12** and **No 16**.

No 12 is all about looking after the people who work with you - and not firing them. Getting the best out of people in bad times and in good times works best if people recognise that the company will bust every gut to look after them. No 16 sets out those sectors and industries where economic salvation is most likely to come from. Apart for Vince's reference to this at last year's Party Conference - and quoted at the beginning of this publication - the Coalition Government has been remarkably silent about exactly where recovery will be effected. This may be because they don't know. Are they working to a well-thought through cunning plan or are they making it up as they go along? Or, maybe Sir Richard Lambert, the outgoing CBI Chief, was right when he said something around them being a bit short on vision.

4. Commentary and Conclusions

The average Interim Manager is aged 54, earns £613 per day and works around half the days available. (The Russam GMS Snapshot Survey - 31.12.10. These are arithmetic mean figures and need to be treated with understanding!)

Female Interim Managers, from the same Survey, are on average aged 50, earn 10% less (some competent reasons for this) and are (mysteriously) far less numerous in Interim Management than men - between 20% and 30% of the total community.

It follows that as all the respondents to this competition are from this community their comments will likely be from this common perspective. Accordingly, you will see much comment about the value of older workers, the current difficulty in finding work (for whatever reason), the softening of the work ethic (primarily through legislation but also through the social changes that are taking place OTHER than through discrimination legislation, the impact of this usually being seen differently.)

However, there is an utterly compelling case to take this very seriously

- points of view that have no formal funnel for expression. Just look at the summaries of their backgrounds set out in their submissions. These are top of the range business people.

"These are top of the range business people."

When reading their contributions, these are some of the things to look out for:

- There is much mention about reducing taxes. Just as much political as economic. Not really all that helpful, unless you take the almost Thatcherite view that if you leave more money with taxpaying business managers, they'll generate more profit other than for themselves.
- Within this, however, there are some exceptions - taking the form of specific areas of support.
- R&D grants were mentioned several times. We wonder if those looking at these possibilities are able to get the best advice.
- There is some sadness at seeing the demise of Business Links - but none detected about the same fate for RDAs.
- There were several pleas for (extra) funding for SME Advisors and Business Mentors. If the SME sector is really going to be salvation of the UK economy, they need as much help as they can get.





“You know even better than me that Britain is a great trading force in the world.”

- Education featured often as a cause for concern. Preparing young people for business and sowing the seeds of entrepreneurialism, in particular, were highlighted.
- There is minimal Bank bashing although there is widespread sentiment that the current state is of no or very limited help and is likely to be temporary. Some interesting detailed practical suggestions. There are quite a few references to the UK being best at “small” things - suggesting that this where strong focus needs to be. Quoting Formula 1 engineering expertise and contrasting it with the likes of Rover makes a good point.
- There is some concern at our biggest and best companies being taken over - but no ways of stopping it suggested.
- Much comment about the pressing need to export and some ideas about how this might best be done.
- Some comments about NOT seeing Europe as our main export market, at least for the immediate future. They’ve got their own problems (except Germany) and (one expressed view) may become protectionist (maybe in the way that France has always been protectionist.)

- Immigration gets a few mentions. Interestingly, the focus is positive, seeing it as necessary in areas of clear and unrequited skills shortage.....
- what is mentioned nearly as much is the fact that many of our best brains - particularly in manufacturing - have gone abroad following the work. No solutions offered.....
- except do something about the demise of Manufacturing in the UK.....
- so many mentions, here. Many comments can be found about Manufacturing - and some good specific suggestions for sectors where encouragement should be put in place. Cherry-picking got little mention.
- There were some comments about poor UK productivity and also about some failure to recognise competition as an important business driver.
- Somehow, Entry No 18 got duplicated and also appears as Entry No 50. Not a bad thing as it is a point worth repeating! This Entry compares the current German economic power house with the UK which is nothing of the sort at the current time. It’s all about making clever capital goods that the rest of the world wants and being able to do that with well -trained people and secure financing. Isn’t it?

5. These are the 65 Submissions

Entry No: 1

Former senior academic turned businessman specialising in open source software - good market to be in.

1. Scrap the immigration cap for qualified staff. The simple rule should be that if you can't fill a post from the UK, you can fill from anywhere. In my industry (embedded electronics), there is a current shortage of UK graduates (that's a separate issue). You can work around this by filling the vacancies in a UK team from overseas. However if this becomes impossible because of an immigration cap (as it has since the election), you instead export the jobs overseas (the whole team) and the jobs are lost to the UK for ever. Many of the UK players are multi-national (think ST Microelectronics, ARM etc), so that is an option that is easy for them. Allowing immigration actually *protects* UK high tech jobs.
2. Interim staff (not just managers) add huge flexibility in the work force. Scrap the complex self-employment rules, including IR35, to create a uniform taxation scheme, which is the same whether you are a single person limited company or on PAYE. That could remove a swathe of central bureaucracy at a stroke, while making it much more attractive for people to work as interims.
3. Ensure we don't introduce rules that treat interim staff as employees. We want to protect conventional employees, but those who choose to work as interims should benefit from offering their services "at will". That should not be just a UK thing, but something to push for across Europe.

Entry No: 2

A degree qualified engineer whose route to general management has been through manufacturing and operations.

- 1) Persuade the chancellor to drastically reduce corporation tax - this will encourage wealth generation
- 2) Close the Business department - businesses drive business, not governments
- 3) Resign

Entry No: 3

Over 20 years successful senior executive experience with some of the best-known, well-recognised and trusted multinational specification brands/businesses

Sirs, regarding your question "What should Vince Cable do power UK businesses forward?"...

Without wanting to hugely oversimplify the issue, or boil it down to simple economic and marketing concepts it is all to do with 'competitiveness': the competitive businesses succeed, those that aren't, don't. It's the same for countries.

It's a hugely competitive market (globally and domestically) with lots and lots and lots of choice for the buyer. When buying products or services, the supplier that offers the best solution (price, delivery, performance, care, product, benefits etc) wins the contract/sale.

Vince Cable's issue then is this, does the UK offer the best 'solution'? No, no it doesn't. Why? People with high level manufacturing skills go to where there is a requirement for their manufacturing skills - abroad. The people with the best marketing skills go to the best businesses that are growing and that market themselves well - abroad. The smartest guys go to where the business is and, guess what, they make those businesses even better, smarter, faster, brighter, more competitive and so on. Since there is no real UK manufacturing base anymore, and no real need for the skills of the supply-chain expert, the best sales guys, the best manufacturers, the best HR guys and so on and so forth it becomes death by a 1000 cuts.

So, if the best products are made abroad, we import them, and at the same time, we of course export less! A vicious downward spiral that will end the way that lots of great British companies have. Who own Cadbury, Rolls Royce, Bentley, Mini, Jewson and a thousand others we can name? Not us, that's who.

Why can't we be competitive? How is it that the imported product (which has had to be shipped here from abroad) can be 'better' than the one made here? How is it that all of the call-centres are set up abroad? Cost! It's cheaper to make it overseas, and then ship it here, and to make it here in the first place. What makes it so expensive here? Taxes, and no government support!

So that's the problem, what's the solution? Incentivise British industry! SIMPLE. Lower taxes (corporation, capital gains, and personal), reduce red tape, offer real financial schemes that offer real benefit, lower rates, low rents, support manufacturing staff wages, supplement material sourcing etc etc etc.

Get creative, Vince. Why not part fund 'consultancy'? Get the government to offer business consultants (interims) to go into a business and show them another way forward; another way to compete.

Consumers buy the 'best' offering, and we can be better at home and abroad, but we need to encourage the skills to stay here, and then encourage them to make Britain Great again. British used to mean 'best', now it means 'expensive'.

Entry No: 4

Highly experienced, commercially oriented independent consultant, working successfully across a number of business sectors and functions.

The one area that Mr Cable needs to address is simple. Its productivity. At present the UK is some 20% behind the USA and 16% behind France and Germany in terms of GDP per hour (latest 2008 data).

Interestingly, manufacturing productivity appears to be almost as good as the USA, but still a lot behind other countries such as Korea, Japan and Sweden. The problem is that the UK has been behind for many years and seems to be unable - or unwilling to make the big effort to catch up. This puts the UK, its products and services at a competitive disadvantage.

We have all seen and felt the consequences of this over the last 20 years! Think of what a 10% gain in productivity could do. It's almost like giving everyone a 10% pay rise!

If UK plc does not do something dramatic in the whole area of doing more with less - in other words being more productive, the nation is destined for second best with a lower standard of living than most of Europe.

Successive governments have attempted to address the issue, with a singular lack of success. The gap is lower than it was in the '80s but still huge. A recent report into construction productivity noted the gap between the UK and the US (11%) and Western Europe (6%), with all sorts of ideas to address the issue. However, in my view, unless managers and directors of the businesses themselves get passionate about doing something differently, nothing a government will do will make any difference to productivity growth.

Mr Cable needs to be very creative in how the government works to improve productivity. Simple exhortation is not enough. He needs to change the culture. Productivity must no longer be a 'dirty word' associated with job losses. In fact, improving productivity is the one way to secure jobs and inward investment.

It's one thing to say what to do, its a different matter to provide a 'how' that delivers. Here are a couple of thoughts. How about a tax break for efforts to improve productivity - that are paid by results not by expenditure? In other words no gain no pay. Have a national award for public sector productivity improvement. Not a big spend, but it would allow government to showcase its productivity improvement successes. The third idea is simple - communicate. How many people really understand the link between productivity gains and increase in personal wealth - not many?

Two things he should NOT do:

- Set up a productivity quango
- Employ a productivity Tzar from industry.

Neither will deliver. Changing productivity has to happen at the coal face not in some Whitehall office.

Failure to address this issue will leave the UK in the group of also ran economies of the 21st century, stumbling from crisis to crisis and seeing our standard and quality of life falling steadily behind.

The role of Interim Managers

Using Interims to help improve productivity is a classic role for them.

There are all sorts of reasons:

- Independence of the main board and current management, they are able to bring in new ideas free from historical baggage and internal politics
- Interims are temporary. Do the job and then move on
- Interims have a breadth of experience they can bring to bear. They can do what many others can't.
- Borrowing ideas from other industries is one (like SouthWest Airlines studied Formula 1 to improve their aircraft turnround times!)
- Interims are more likely to be listened to when it comes to radical change. Familiarity does breed contempt.

Entry No: 5

An experienced and proven consultant, coach and line manager, expert in managing performance and change.

It is accepted that the private sector needs to grow to haul the UK out of recession.

Therefore, I think we need a fundamental culture shift, whereby our younger generations see setting up businesses and creating jobs as a viable proposition, rather than assuming it is always best to stay in education as long as possible.

We need those with business acumen to have an ambition to create jobs rather than take them.

We need to spot business talent early and divert some of these kids from the academic conveyor belt, and coach and support them into developing their entrepreneurial skills.

For some kids, the time from age 16 to 21, could be better spent working (even in low level jobs with their learning eyes open; Simon Cowell started as Post Boy for EMI !), doing an apprenticeship / day release or even trying out a business idea, rather than sitting in a classroom in full time study. The simple reason is that there are not enough jobs to go round for the number of graduates we have been turning out. We have, over a number of years, been creating unrealistic expectations of high paid jobs for all degree holders.

To achieve this culture shift, we need to educate teenagers about setting up businesses while they are still at school. They need to see that it can be done. Some budding entrepreneurs are already setting up primitive small businesses in their early teens.

Then we need to spend some money incentivising young people to take a risk and go into business when they leave school. It is a time in their life when their financial commitments are low and therefore the risk in trying a business idea out is low. The support should include grants, loans, training and mentoring. Businesses should be incentivised to provide interim and temporary placements for these people to learn, hands on, the fundamentals of marketing, finance etc.

As part of the funding for this culture shift, we should place a levy on University courses that do not fulfil a specific skills need within the economy. Conversely, tuition fees should be subsidised (by this levy if possible or perhaps by sponsorship from the employers who need the skills) for business degrees and for those courses that fill the recognised skills gaps, such as medicine, teaching etc, or where work is more likely to be available such

as IT, engineering and technology. We should certainly subsidise degrees that equip people for jobs where we are currently having to use skilled migrant workers, whilst we have UK graduates unemployed.

The tuition fee levy should be applied to "nice to have" self development degree courses. I won't give examples as everyone will have a reason why an individual course is important. Suffice to say that we cannot find jobs for infinite numbers of Sports Psychologists and Film Makers. Sadly this levy may have to include a lot of traditional courses that are purely academic and do not equip an individual for any particular role. In an employer's eyes, all these courses do is prove that the individual likes studying and can pass exams. There are exceptions to every rule but I am not convinced that these degrees will help the economy grow out of a recession?

We definitely need talented teenagers from working class families to be able to afford to go to University, but only if they want to study a course that will benefit the economy. We cannot afford to just say "everyone should be able to go to University". Education is a right for all, but there must be a sensible level of full time education that the economy can afford. Like professional qualifications, some types of further education for 18 to 21 year olds will inevitably have to be self funded.

We need those who are being supported through University to come out with a realistic chance of contributing to the economy. We can no longer afford to fund the 3 year "life experience" that a lot of teenagers have come to expect.

Entry No: 6

Successful Businessman with his own start-up company

A lot of business startups that appear on TV programmes like Dragon's Den spend £1000s on developing new products. They take a huge risk with their business money to develop a product that may bring wealth not only to themselves - but benefits to the UK in terms of jobs, tax income and GDP.

But a lot of these product developing companies don't realise that R&D can be offset against corporation tax <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/ct/forms-rates/claims/randd.htm> - so also reducing the risk.

If big or small companies understood that R&D can be offset against Corporation tax they may take bigger risks developing world-beating products.

Unfortunately I believe currently there is a threshold set of something like £10,000 - which means - companies like mine which have taken enormous risks with their business income developing web sites like www.binreminded.com for less than this amount - don't qualify for this relief.

Vince you need to:

- Promote R&D tax relief
- Change the threshold for offsetting the R&D relief against Corporation tax so that the UK can develop 'potentially' world-beating products - including web sites like my own - www.binreminded.com, www.contractjob.net.

Entry No: 7

Experienced Contractor (first 9 years) and Interim Executive for over 25 years in total. Here are my ideas for Vince Cable

1. Yes we have been there and done I most things but for the UK to become a strong economy again we will have to do it all over again because we gave it all away. The UK needs to have some things that it can do better than anyone else or because no one else can do it. We no longer manufacture the way we did because the government of the time decided to get rid of most of the manufacturing industries (coal, shipping, steel, chemicals) and turned the UK into a 'service' economy (lots of call centre work for skilled men from manufacturing). Unfortunately, we gave the service economy away to India because it was cheaper to outsource than to employ people in the UK. We gave technological development away at the same time by allowing BPO activities that took IT and technology away from the UK all so we could concentrate on being the best Financial Services country. Now financial services is a nightmare and we have nothing to fall back on because we have given it

all away. For Vince to get the UK back on top we need to develop home grown talent rather than import it from the countries we gave it away to. Unfortunately, immigration doesn't protect UK jobs it just makes us more reliant on countries we once taught to teach us what they now know. It will take years for us to catch up that way because everyone will always be at least one step ahead of the UK. We need to become a nation that creates, innovates and manufactures and that competes in marketplaces where we traditionally did compete. At the same time we need to compete in new marketplaces where the UK hasn't been a great competitor, micro electronics, embedded electronics, etc. We need to become a nation that researches and then utilises that research to our own good. However why would anyone want to be a student undertaking research in the UK when they will be saddled with tens of thousands of pounds worth of debt for their efforts. Vince along with the rest of the government needs to get to grips with the big picture we are facing rather than each government department doing its own thing, because that is only playing political games and not helping anyone. The best thing Vince can do to help the UK economy is stop the government from playing Political games and get them all to understand that we need to create jobs and that there needs to be incentives for companies to create jobs rather than David Cameron asking the private sector politely to do it.

2. Why would anyone want to be an Interim in the current climate? Half the market place has now disappeared unlikely ever to return - The Public Sector. There will be a massive skills gap when the number of Civil Servants that the government are considering getting rid of have gone. Civil Servants are great fonts of subject knowledge but many have poor skills to actually make things happen (strategic planning, project management, performance management, process improvement, lean, etc, etc) . This is due to a huge underinvestment in Public Sector training rather than the people not willing to learn. Good Interims will help to close this skills gap but unfortunately the government don't seem to be able to see that far. There are also far too many laws regarding self employment. I now have three different log-ins to the HMRC self service website, that isn't including the ones I also have to have for Companies House. It all taxes my patients and takes precious time away from undertaking client based work or even worse still my personal time. Vince needs to scrap the complex self-employment rules, including IR35. I can't agree with Jeremy Bennett about creating "a uniform taxation scheme, which is the same whether you are a single person limited company or on PAYE." Why be an Interim if you still pay the same tax as if you were on PAYE? One of the few benefits of being an Interim is that you are a limited company and that provides certain tax breaks which does make it more attractive for people to work as interims. Vince for god's sake realise that Interims have a huge role to play in knowledge and skills transfer in the UK and help them to do it, rather than tie their hands behind their backs and gagging them so they can't speak.

Entry No: 8

Long-standing interim manager and expert witness on engineering and manufacturing issues

Whilst I applaud his comments, the difficulty is surely one of persuading UK companies to invest, even very short-term investment.

I had an interim post tasked with improving efficiency in a blue-chip manufacturing plant, but had the contract terminated as part of a "cost-cutting" exercise following the credit crunch. Accountants (and senior management) could not equate efficiency improvements with increased profits. The longer term effect is that overseas markets (for whatever reasons) are able to produce products cheaper, and manufacturing either dies in the UK, or gets moved to low-wage economies (generally with even poorer results).

I would like the government to provide incentives to manufacturing companies to improve their efficiencies (which is NOT the same as reducing staff, for staff means knowledge). So much of the decline in UK manufacturing has been due to a lack of understanding about the importance of what is now termed lean manufacturing. The incentives should not be aimed at the offerings of the large consultancies, but at the dirt-on-hands interim managers.

It is a pity that professional engineers are so poorly regarded in the UK, of course, so it is hardly surprising that we need to fill this supply from overseas. I agree with Jeremy about the immigration cap.

Entry No: 9

A battle-hardened & honed Chief Executive of over 15 years standing in the profession, running quoted & privately owned organisations.

Promoting a healthier economy through the use of interims:

1. Agree with independent bodies, a working definition of an interim manager and the methodology used to go to market. Then, remove from ir35, s660 and any other potential complication in law that confuses the interim professional with an employee. Confirm all treatment should be under the commercial body of law going forward and not employment law. NB: the definition must ensure there is clear water between an interim and the low paid temporary worker as a minimum, to avoid Agency Worker Directive problems.
2. Remove all the confusion within the public sector over what constitutes an interim, especially compared with consultancy. Both service tools are valid but provide different solutions for different needs.
3. Enable the individual interim to go to market in the public sector as is the case in the private sector. Currently there is very clear 'size-ist' discrimination.
4. Immediately set up, with the banks and other funders (venture capital), a number of funds that are designed to be immediately available for SMEs to invest in growth. This could also be in conjunction with the business angel community. Interims would provide independent validation services, relevant gray hair support in 'young' companies and specific skills in older concerns.
5. Interims can generate income into the UK if their services are used abroad. Set up incentives to companies to use these skills that are tax efficient. Every little helps in improving the balance of payments.
6. Work with our European partners to avoid any further legislation that muddles the difference between interims (seen as a form of 'parasubordinate') and employees.
7. If not started already, have some operational people have a look at the interaction of banking, the rise in credit, government borrowing, etc, to provide a solution that will avoid the current problems happening again. Please do not select from the usual suspects that include economists, 'senior industrialists' and 'senior' bankers/ Bank of England. DO give the people doing the work, access to who ever they need to talk to.

Entry No: 10

An experienced engineering manager with a proven ability to identify the cause of complex problems and implement creative solutions

The biggest challenge is re-align the 'motivation and rewards' available to individual bankers with the needs of the economy - so that they contribute to the process of wealth creation.

To start the process, I propose that:-

- All bonuses paid to UK bank employees should be paid in the form of non-negotiable shares in the ANGLO-IRISH Loan Fund, which will be redeemable when, and only when, all the money lent to the Irish government has been repaid in FULL.
- That the pension funds of all employees, and directors of banks and deposit taking institutions must be held exclusively in ordinary shares of the financial institution that granted them the pension, and that those shares must be held in a restricted trust fund until their death.

We also need to ensure that banks and deposit taking institutions act with integrity in their dealings with individual savers, and the wide spread practice of 'confusion marketing' in which long-term clients are penalised with the lowest possible interest rates, and highest possible charges is stopped.

But so far Vince is scoring 9/10 - and I wish him well!

Entry No: 11

A former successful Managing Director, Author of several publications, research reports, guides, business and educational models on CD-ROM's/Software and over 400 articles published on business and educational subjects worldwide and an International Speaker

We need to sow seeds for our future success

To emerge from the recession in a strong position, we need to identify opportunities that develop our education systems in schools, universities and business - and implement strategies that distinguish us from your competition. It is a continuous 20 year loop in planning our future around our requirements that makes us a global successful story.

We need our schools to teach all the requirements to fit the UK demands. That means we do not require `all` students to enter university. We need to stream our requirements into students who suit university, apprenticeships and training programmes to fit the needs of the UK and globally. This was the programme of events in the UK previously (up to 1973) and it was very successful. This course of action will allow us in creating new products and services to expanding into new markets, this is the time to strengthen our business model, so we are ready to grasp new growth opportunities as they start to arise.

Achieving the above will allow UK businesses to be successful and this requires a sustained focus on operational effectiveness, making strategic acquisitions and gaining share in the right markets. With the `right` multi-disciplinary teams this will provide UK organisations with integrated, objective advice to help control costs, increase efficiency, evaluate opportunities and improve transaction outcomes. This will allow UK PLC to become more agile organisations, that's better equipped to respond to change, enter new markets and sustain successful businesses in the future.

Are we ready for recovery?

Global trends revolutionise business

The current economic climate may tempt us to focus on immediate events, but we cannot ignore longer-term trends. The way businesses plan and respond to events over the next decade will help determine our future. Change has always been a constant in the business world. Yet in recent years it has hit us with an unprecedented speed and intensity. The forces shaping our world today are immense, complex, surprising and challenging. More than ever, our prosperity - as organisations, societies and individuals - depends on the extent to which we can adapt to these forces and deploy them to our advantage.

Our workforce is a strategic asset

Mature Workers with skills and experience will fill the `Skills Gap`. By keeping mature (skilled and experienced) people and attracting others from retirement is a better way of solving our skills shortage than importing in migrants.

Some top executives in Europe, America and Asia have admitted for the first time that older (mature) workers are the key to fixing the skills gap globally. These people can fill the positions as permanent or interim workers and help train others over the coming years.

Why do not these top executives persuade employees to stay on beyond retirement or to recruit other skilled and experienced people? This is the answer to the issue!

We are reaching a tipping point and we are seeing a fundamental movement in thinking across business. There is such an enormous white-collar, professional skills and trades shortage that attitudes are having to change now, rapidly. Businesses are realising that they have to hold on to older (mature) skilled and experienced workers.

Due to the number of young adults not being available due to the drop in birth rate over the last 30 years and continuing to drop in the West and lifespan increase, the limitations of today's strategy of importing foreign

workers are showing. Persuading the older (mature) workers to stay on and tempting others back from retirement is now imperative. We need all businesses to see the `light` otherwise costs of employment will rise rapidly.

It is three years now after the introduction of laws `banning` discrimination on the grounds of age, this prejudice is poised to overtake sex discrimination as the greatest workplace grievance. There is probably about a fifth of UK workers feel they had been discriminated against on the grounds of age. At this present rate it will increase rapidly due to the increase in foreign workers being transported to the UK in the tens of thousands!

Research from the Employers Forum on Age suggested that ageism remained deep-rooted in the workplace. Six out of ten people were said to have witnessed ageism at work in the last 12 months. The Employers Forum on Age has said that 200 claims a month were now being lodged with the Tribunals Service and increasing rapidly.

Therefore, is business torn between realising that older (mature) workers are the answer and an emotional rejection of the inevitable? What do recruitment and HR executives think? Well, I believe that the prospect of legions of older (mature) workers fills them with horror! Why, because of income streams that will slow down, as older (mature) workers do no move from job to job. Older (mature) staff is more loyal and reliable than younger workers (despite all the worries about failing health, older employees take less sick leave than younger ones and most cases older (mature) people are fitter and have a positive attitude to life. They have excellent work ethics and understand team work.

Some companies believe they are already ahead of the curve on the age issue. They have turned to retired staff to meet customer demand. Customers seem to find mature staff particularly reassuring. Look at many of these companies and for example `We have more than a dozen retired technicians who still have the skills and attitudes we want and of course a lot of experience and who still want to work. They have the `right` attitude.

UK schools and hospitals are already showing the strain of catering for an influx of younger workers from Eastern Europe. There is an issue with the language and illnesses that our hospitals cannot cater for!

The pioneering business is now in the retention and recruitment of older (mature) workers. Many companies have raised the retirement from 60 to 70 and some cases to 75.

Changing demographics means there is a clear business case for change. Customers are more satisfied with the services they receive from older (mature) staff; older workers stayed longer and recruiting and retaining older workers met the company's fairness and diversity policies. Also, people are working on because they want to and not just because they need the money.

However, the reality is that there are only a few businesses going all out to attract older people. It is time the majority woke up to the pending crisis. In fact, the recruitment of older (mature) workers is now so critical that it merits the introduction of positive discrimination. There is so much prejudice that I would argue for positive discrimination - for example, giving older workers more rights on part-time working. It has to be understood that these days older workers may also be caring for even older relatives has there are no care homes to take them on board.

Positive discrimination is controversial, but we have to consider the major talent shortage facing us over the next 20 years plus. Time, is not on our side, so we all need to take action on the older (mature) workers and also train the few younger people into jobs that are `needed` for us all to survive.

The future is a mix of young and mature workers that complement each other for our long term strategy to be self efficient on home born workers. So we become more agile with our organisations, that's better equipped to respond to change, enter new markets and sustain a successful business in the future. Transferring knowledge across generations is the answer.

Entry No: 12

An experienced and pragmatic Interim Business Transformation Leader, Programme Director and General Manager with a 'can-do' attitude

Vince Cable would best serve the nation by helping organisations and companies to bring humanity back into the workplace and a spirit of optimism to the country.

As the leader and CEO of an organisation totally committed to delivering constructive change, transformation and performance improvements for our clients across all sectors of industry, today sadly, we see too many companies and organisations that have for far too long focused on; cost cutting, re-engineering, re-sizing and re-structuring to drive efficiencies, some to the point that they become 'sick' organisations, so lean that they have or will become part of the national problem, should the situation remain as is.

This 'cut, cut, cut' strategy has over time eroded the energy, spirit and levels of creativity of the very people relied on in these organisations to deliver the performance and results required. Results that industry leaders know how to achieve without the level of financial and human 'pruning' and intervention that this government, and the last, have falsely advocated as the right 'medicine' - if it smells and tastes bad, it is bad, no matter how much Sugar (Your Fired!), or political spin you add to the mix!

A healthy functioning society needs people to be productive, part of which means having meaningful and gainful employment. For most of us, this brings a sense of well being that results in a more constructive outlook on life. With this we are less stressed, get sick less and are therefore less of a strain on critical services such as the NHS. Gainfully employed people are less likely to get involved in crime and are more likely to positively engage in the small, simple things, that make a huge difference such as providing a helping hand to support a neighbour or colleague when asked to do so, or offer a warm smile instead of a down trodden shrug or grimace.

They also spend money, which stimulates the economy and keeps things moving. The notion that there is less cash in the world today than there was three years ago is ludicrous, there is just as much money in the global system as there ever was, the speed at which money moves and changes hands has slowed drastically resulting in the current economic slowdown and crisis - get things moving again and the green shoots of recovery will appear in abundance.

Vince Cable, and indeed all our political leaders, need to step up to the plate and communicate a clear message of hope. They need to inspire by being the change the country needs to see, to communicate a vision of the future that will lift the spirits of the nation and its work force, to stop the promotion of savage cost cutting, create jobs (not slash them) for it is the determined and focused energy of the people across the nation, and not the politicians, that will bring this country back to prosperity and its rightful place as a leader in the world economy - It is us (the people) that will find the creative solutions and the right answers. After all history shows we are a resourceful and proud nation, capable of overcoming monstrous challenges, not just on our home turf, but on the global stage.

The best Vince Cable, and his parliamentary colleagues can do from their positions of influence, is to assist in the mending process through more constructive, growth focused actions, and positive commentary - he, and indeed all organisations, must put a swift end to the negativity and depression that the reductionist cuts, thinking and strategies deliver. He, and we, should quickly turn our attention and focus back to positive growth and the building of a healthy, prosperous and safe future that our children so richly deserve.

After all, their destiny is in OUR hands!

Entry No: 13

Experienced senior b2b marketing specialist and consultant with an extensive background in demanding, technology-intensive industries.

It is well-known that the UK has many innovative organisations in academic, public and private sectors, and Vince Cable mentions this fact in his speech. The UK punches well above its weight as measured by, for example, patent output and Nobel prizes. However, for decades the UK has not been able to convert enough of this in-

novation into new businesses. Indeed, many UK inventions are commercialised overseas, or displaced by faster-moving competitors abroad.

In my view, the root cause of this issue is the disconnect between technology-intensive companies and the commercial expertise needed to exploit their inventiveness.

Simplifying the situation somewhat, scientists, engineers and technologists distrust marketing experts, dismissing them as largely unnecessary, and assuming that if the developed product or service is good enough, customers will buy it. Marketing and business development experts have, in general not served technology-intensive industries well: they have emphasised business-to-consumer (b2c) marketing techniques at the expense of reputedly less exciting business-to-business (b2b) marketing.

As a consequence, insufficient expertise and attention has been directed towards bringing technology-based products and services to market in the most rapid, cost-effective and powerful manner.

The cultural divide is so well-entrenched that it may take a third party (academic, local or national government) initiative to address the issue, encouraging technology-based industries to adopt the same high standards in their commercial activities as they do in their technology and its development.

Interim managers could have a very significant role to play in this field. In the development phase, many organisations cannot afford permanent and/or full-time staff to drive forward the commercial activities. Experienced interim marketing professionals, confident in technology fields, can play a highly significant role in the generation of wealth by our world-class, innovative companies.

Entry No: 14

An Executive with a significant track record in driving Strategic Change and Transformation helping organisations select, design and deliver the right options for change aligned to their business goals and objectives.

Whilst Mr Cable and the government are overseeing essential cuts to clear the debt left by the previous government it is the management of growth which will test whether the government has been successful and our economy has recovered. The key will be its ability to EXECUTE policy but more importantly to get the right skills and resources to make a real impact in the following areas:

1. Remove the Shackles from SME businesses - Use every available lever from tax through to commercial advice to make small businesses thrive. The current set of initiatives just isn't having an impact just look at current utilisation figures. Allow and support innovation and the entrepreneur, what's the next big growth sector or product? We need to adapt our culture to encourage SPEED of action if we are to compete on the world stage..... Take the ball and run with it!
2. Public and Private Sector Handshake - The government has tried management in the private sector or public and private partnerships. Its the scale of the initiatives that causes them to fail. Are we just hoping that public redundancies will be picked by the private sector? Clear but SIMPLE structures need to be put in place which allow private sector freedom but with public sector accountability. Clear handshake with reward for performance on a manageable scale!
3. Links with Emerging Markets - Become the chosen partner for new market growth. Bring both help and advice from our professionals as well as cashing in on our well established Western brands to form new revenue streams. Provide education and introductions to make it happen. Building RELATIONSHIPS is key put our ROYALS and CELEBRATIES to work in prompting Britain's capability and greatness!!

Entry No: 15

A sales and marketing oriented interim CEO and management consultant helping companies to grow faster by sharpening their corporate strategy and competitive differentiation with a long and successful track record.

1. Government backed loans. The reason this has not worked is that the banks take the view that if a proposition is not risk free why would they risk 30% even if the government guarantees 70%. I suggest the government guarantee 90%, possibly for smaller amounts i.e. up to £500k. They should add a special tax benefit by

way of compensating banks in case they lose the 10%.

2. Incentives to use IMs. Why not offer a special tax break to any company which has never used interims, say up to the first £10k or £20k per contract? Remove admin irritations e.g. IR 35.
3. Employment incentives for the over 60s or over 65s. The government tells us that we will all have to work till we are 67 - 70. What work? Where? Apart from B&Q employing older DIY experts which other company employs older people regularly for any job other than pushing trolleys in car parks?

Entry No: 16

Seasoned Operations Director having completed a total of 10 Operations director roles in FMCG companies over an 8 year Interim career.

In the UK, we are best at the small things; focus on them.

This should be approached by examining what we are good at and what we are not good at. Look at the fundamentals; don't reflect on the past.

We are good at law, arbitration, teaching (some of the best Universities in the world), science (Nobel prize in physics 2010. Historically we have had more laureates than the major European countries and Japan put together), bioscience, architecture, design (a Brit designs the BMW range), fashion, formula one engine design and manufacture, medicine, cinematic special effects, insurance, playwriting, theatrical production, pop songs, music in general. writing, niche retailing, large scale retailing, auditing, consulting, specialist pharmaceutical manufacturing. We are good at finance up to a point! Brits like to be part of small enterprises. This is reflected in, and precisely mirrors our performance in sports. We are very good at sailing, shooting, boxing, rowing, gymnastics, diving, cycling, swimming, darts, snooker, athletics. These are individual or small team sports.

What we are not good at is anything on a big scale. Running large scale Industrial enterprises and projects doesn't work for us, large scale projects always overrun and are massively overspent. Turning research into technology and into mass production isn't something we do at all. That's why we don't make on a mass scale. Put 1000 Brits into a complex factory making things and its chaos. Brits don't like to be herded together in large groups and being told what to do; they like to be part of 'small'. The NHS and the Post office don't work for this very reason. BA isn't world class because it's too big-it's actually run by the baggage handlers, cabin crew, pilots, engineers-all smaller groups -they won't be herded into a large group, i.e. BA but feel more comfortable to identify and pursue the agendas of the roles they occupy i.e. activities in small groups-flying planes, serving customers. Brits have taken to 'working from home' in a big way. This is all about being in ones own space and doing ones own thing. Not being part of a large herd. We are of course no good at team sports; football, rugby, cricket-again reflecting our predilections in the world of work.

We should promote, train and invest in those work activities that we are genuinely good at and in which we feel comfortable in performing. In industry and commerce which is high skill, high tech. We should further develop our service industries and the critical creative industries. Supporting SME businesses is core in achieving this strategy.

Entry No: 17

Director and Chartered Accountant in Practice - Self-reliant, Independent, Ambitious, Focused and Assertive

Recommendations to position UK for growth

1. Regional Small Business Incubators; with the assistance of Universities, blue chip companies and local government and experienced interim managers set up regional centres of excellence. Assist university students, inventors and innovators meet interim managers regularly to discuss new technologies and ideas.
2. Low cost business units, offices, workshops and laboratories; large companies and local government could open up part of their facilities to share with new businesses. In addition exempt small companies from rates (and reintroduce 100% capital allowances for investment). Interims to provide support could be financed by the

blue chips in return for a share in potential profits.

3. Position UK as the ideas capital of the world; publish online newsletters, videos and forums from the incubators and welcome contributions and visits from global participants. Interims could contribute their experience and connections to create content for the forms.

Entry No: 18

Decision-maker and entrepreneur with deep experience in start-ups, business development and the financial markets, specifically in alternative investments.

Dear Vince,

Firstly, may I congratulate you for stepping up to the plate in what is a mission critical role for the United Kingdom.

Secondly, as a British Citizen residing in Germany I have first-hand experience of an economic powerhouse at work. Germany's serious commitment to R&D is directly translated into 'Made in Germany' products on offer around the world, where 'Made in Germany' is synonymous with leading edge and high quality goods. The key to success has been in developing, securing and monetising intellectual property i.e. new ideas expressed in patents and industrial design rights. Further, recent studies indicate that intellectual property represents in excess of 66% of an exchange listed company's intrinsic value.

I spend a fair amount of my working life in London, and it is encouraging to know of the significant increase in the number of small businesses being registered in the UK. It is admirable, and necessary, that more individuals wish to embrace the future in their own arms. It would be folly to think though that they have the framework, resources and hands-on experience required to successfully develop and commercialise their ideas, especially so given that the UK is bleeding in excess of £20 billion a year in intellectual property to foreign entities.

That is why I believe the future rests with a UK intellectual property bank, in close collaboration with the UK Intellectual Property Office, and interim managers. In brief, the intellectual property bank would provide a secure central repository for ideas as well as facilitating access to resources, with interim managers bringing their flexible bridging skills and hands-on experience to bear in assisting viable ideas through the critical business start-up phase. Your brief would be to ensure the framework breathes with clear incentives for these entrepreneurs, to refresh and retain the talent pool. Our land, labour and capital are finite. The opportunities for securing and commercialising our intellectual property are boundless.

Finally, whereas I would agree with you that the UK has highly skilled and educated people, I strongly feel that keen political facilitation will be required to successfully mobilise and secure this fundamentally valuable asset going forward. This is where, I believe, you come in!

Entry No: 19

Commercially-aware IT Director with a proven track record within IT, B2B, B2C, outsourced, business services, logistics, distribution, automotive, engineering, corporate and commercial markets.

My view is that is vital and urgent that we ensure that our young people are educated and trained to be second to none in the global jobs market.

Our young people are not only literally the future of our country, their skills and capabilities are our nation's essential "stock-in-trade" if we are to compete internationally and enjoy the fruits of the labour of other countries without running-up trade deficits.

And we cannot continue to pillage the skilled resources that other countries, many poorer than ourselves, have invested in. This is not only immoral, it is highly insulting to our own young people to be over-looked, and this country is already over-crowded.

Blair said (and I voted for him those many years ago), that the three most important objectives were "Education,

education and education". If anything this is even more true today if we are to trade our way out of the financial mess he and Brown left us in.

How do we do this ?

1. We need to invest in our teachers to ensure they are effective - and fire the ones who are not.
2. We need to review our school curriculum to ensure ALL children are equipped with the "Three R's" when they leave secondary school. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-12000886>
3. We need to introduce graduated subsidies to university students based upon the demand that UK PLC has for the particular academic disciplines they wish to pursue. I am quite prepared to put my hand in my pocket to subsidise someone who wishes to study computer science or bio-chemistry. On the other hand if they wish to study Greek Architecture or Native American studies; sorry they can pay for this themselves.

Entry No: 20

An interim with a strong technical background across various disciplines, which helps to deliver success in difficult or struggling programmes of change

Based on the principle that the main differentiators between advanced and developing countries is the human capital infrastructure (sorry to use such corporate jargon but I hope you get the gist) around academia, re-search, hi tech manufacturing and service industries.

We should aim to position Britain - the brand - as a country that is mature, inventive and willing to support advancement in developing nations.... long intro but my three bits of guidance to Vince would be:

1. Establish a global advertising campaign in all developing countries with the above brand.
2. Link our finance industries, academia and the entrepreneurial SME leaders to support the establishment of boom type growth business in human capital infrastructure improvements.
3. Re-invigorate the commonwealth for win-win mutual benefits creation activities - with government/industry sponsored Joint Ventures with all the maturish commonwealth countries.

Entry No: 21

A leader with extensive business development experience and a talent for driving revenue growth and opening new markets.

Best thing to do would be to remove all employment rules, health and safety, minimum wage and non-financial regulation from any company employing less than 50 people.

Entry No: 22

A consultant for over 10 years with work covering a variety of areas and sectors

Waive University Fees to those students taking useful degrees in science, technology, mathematics who go into jobs which earn the country money

Treble the fees for legal degrees and tax lawyer's bonuses at 80%

Abolish the rights to appeal on all legal cases

Incentivise Human Rights. Allow people to earn Human Rights for good behaviour. Define lines over which people lose benefit of Human Rights ie if they break into other people's houses or commit crimes.

Cap mortgages for house purchase at 2.5 times the single or highest earner on joint purchasers

Introduce a statutory cap on the amount that business borrowing costs for new investment can exceed bank rate say 20 times.

Take the advice of John Timpson the shoe and key man on benefits and make them simple and /or tax winter fuel and bus pass benefits for higher rate tax payers as well as child benefit rather than removing child benefit completely this will be more graduated in effect as higher rate tax payers now face a cliff

Have some stops between London and Birmingham on new HS2 rail line

That should be enough for a start...

Entry No: 23

An Interim with a wealth of good practice procurement experience, knowledge and influencing buy-in from global stakeholders to sustainable suppliers

The three main points to advise or help business to grow as follows:-

- 1) Supplier enabled Innovation - helps growth, Business & Government need to allow time, budget and resource to concentrate on innovation to help business grow. i.e Winter tyres for all vehicles may help to grow and keep business moving in winter months...
- 2) In nature growth comes about by planting seeds, or pruning. Cutting back until something dies, does not help growth unless it is making room for something that is growing. With that as a back drop government and business need to look to ways of growing the economy, by planting new seeds of business, helping the little business man grow with cash flow.....
- 3) As Churchill once said if you meet hell, keep going.....

Entry No: 24

A professionally qualified CEO / CFO / MD with highly developed strategic, financial and people skills and almost 20 years Board level experience managing, developing and growing businesses.

I think that Vince Cable should take advantage of a real double whammy. He should launch a scheme for employers based in both the UK and abroad to increase their investment in and sponsorship of tertiary education. This would not only help to generate a higher level of skills and abilities in the students, develop more technologies for business to bring to market and improve the attractiveness of graduates to prospective employers but also help to reduce the protest against the tuition fees increase, an issue close to Vince's heart!

This scheme could include direct student sponsorship, scholarships for exceptionally gifted individuals, sponsorship of specific departments, research projects and technology developments. It should be designed to be tax efficient and simple to operate to allow local companies to develop links and make investment in local Universities as well as to encourage multinationals to invest in the 'premier' league of universities. It should also allow public sector organisations - MOD, HMRC, etc - to be able to participate in the scheme in partnership with private sector businesses.

Entry No: 25

A Senior Executive and accomplished Director / Technology Director / CIO with a successful track record spanning Global, European, National, SME, Start-up and Household Name businesses and brands.

Put career development loans on a par with university fees

i.e. Loan now, study now, pay back once earning above a certain amount.

The current JobCentre plus is woefully inadequate when it comes to putting skilled people back to work and those candidates willing to study and gain new skills / qualifications in order to show employers their dedication / commitment etc ought to be encouraged.

Also for people wishing to start up their own businesses, more help in the first year with recruiting staff, finding premises, cheaper deals for IT kit, telecoms etc help to take on and train new staff
- the 'Business Start-up' discount applicable to any new business or business looking to grow etc.

These two ideas support the need for skilled, educated people, IT and professional services, and also provides for job creation to get businesses off the ground and employing people.

Entry No: 26

Originally a Mechanical Engineer, now an Exporter with more than 30 years overseas business development experience.

Dear Vince, the top two issues for the majority of companies, the SMEs.

- 1) The average age in manufacturing and service sector companies is too high.
 - a) Set about educating the "educators", they are not up to date on what business requires of school and further education leavers.
 - b) Get us back to governmental, fully sponsored, apprenticeships.
- 2) Finance for business, you do know that the "High Street" banks are not fulfilling their target investment levels in British business, we cannot see you actively correcting this. Our banks are short termist and expensive when compared with our overseas competitors banks.

Entry No: 27

A highly skilled and innovative leader with Change, Information, Programme and Project Management specialities, and a proven track record of success

Business Links are delivering EU funded support to small businesses

We need INTERIM arrangements to make sure these programmes do not falter - just when small business needs most support

LEPs or whatever can come later

Just put in place a holding team out of the wreckage of the Business Links to keep EU funded work going until who or whatever comes next.

Entry No: 28

Mr Cable needs to spend more time talking to smaller / one man business who rely on contract work within the UK.

His dept. needs to work closely with Theresa May's dept to implement a fairer cap on immigration which is beneficial for the UK, instead of a blanket cap across all industries. There is no point in allowing more IT workers into the UK (mainly from India) when there is already a ready supply of unemployed IT workers. This economy requires immigrants who will do the jobs the British don't wish to do - such as in residential care and agricultural sectors to name a couple.

Mr Cable has campaigned tirelessly for the removal of the cap. He needs to appreciate that those people like me who have chosen the route of contracting will leave the UK for better prospects elsewhere. However we will return in time to collect our pensions - how is Mr Cable going to deal with this - oh, guess he may now be in politics after the next 30 years or so. So let's leave the pension problem for someone else.

There is a standard of living to be maintained in this country, which I know temporary Indian immigrants do not aspire to. This economy requires spending by private individuals now; not for money to be flowing back to a successful economy such as India.

This is detrimental to the long term survival of the UK.

We need to stop being the poodle of India and not believe that we need to give away all our intellectual property in order to win India over. The majority of Indians only speak English as a second language...they will struggle to do business elsewhere in Europe.

I appreciate that Britain needs to remain competitive however we are now in a situation where we only have the service industry to fall back on. The IT sector is largely being offshored, and it extends to the legal services and in the near future to government data processing as well as health - he needs to put a stop to his. Once these skills are lost they will never be regained.

We are not leaving an awful lot for kids of the future...what type of jobs apart from Banking will there be in 20 years time? Makes sense that we don't really need so many graduates when we can import them for a cheaper price.

It may sound like I am patriotic to the UK...I'm not...I'm able to see the longer term picture which Mr Cable and his colleagues may not be interested in as it will be someone else's problem in 20 years time.

Entry No: 29

An interim who has 35 years' experience in the IT & Business Services markets

I think that Vince Cable was very foolish in his comments to the Telegraph reporters but then the Liberals have not been practising to be in power in living memory!

Overall I think that unnecessary employment and health & safety legislation are the biggest handicaps to the growth of businesses, especially SMEs.

More specifically I think he could encourage small businesses to employ new staff with NI holidays (already a policy I think), and to give up to a specific sum with full corporation tax relief for 2-3 years, say £500Kpa.

Innovation is our best route to reinvigorating the economy and I think these measures would help.

Entry No: 30

A senior Sales professional with strong Engineering roots and wide international experience.

Just a few points for special attention:

Education is the key, New Labour stressed it, then went for quantity rather than quality. School should provide quality tools: tools to enter the economy and to access further knowledge. Literacy, numeracy, scientific method, history and geography and, a very sore point in the UK, at least one foreign language - all else is nonsense.

I am not sure that the NHS reforms being mooted are the right ones, I just hope that they address two problems typical of any state-run enterprise. One is a top-heavy management structure largely absorbed in internal power-play. The other is a work ethic increasingly focused on self-defence and away from customer service quality.

We cannot keep engaging our main trading partners in the EU like the awkward guest, perennially in the doorway threatening to leave in a huff. A UK government worth its salt should reaffirm its allegiance to Europe, robustly

defend its national interests within it, and have the guts to explain why to its constituency.

A similar pragmatic approach should apply to immigration: I believe that quotas are misguided and criteria based on the economy's needs more appropriate.

Entry No: 31

A Senior Consultant and Programme Director / Manager with who combines CXX level business understanding with programme management methods.

One of the key areas will be green energy and recycling. Unlike wind and solar, where the economics are dubious unless subsidised heavily or you are blessed with massive amounts of sun and can support thousands of hectares of land being taken up by these technologies, the key areas are going to be waste and biomass conversion. This should not include energy from crops.

Rich countries produce around 1.65kgs per head per day of household waste. Of this around 60-65% is organic waste and around 16-20% is plastics.

This means that every 10 million of population produces around 6m tonnes of waste annually.

There is a range of UK technology being developed to exploit this - Refuse Derived Fuel, Chemical Hydrolysis, thermophilic conversion, Pyrolysis, thermo-chemical cracking to convert the waste to ethanol, diesel, jet-fuel or electricity, etc.

Roughly stated, for every 10 million of population UK technology could produce around 1.25 bn litres per year of clean fuel from Municipal Solid Waste. Allow that Commercial and industrial and horticultural waste would represent a multiple of at least 4 then, in an advanced economy, you are looking at the capability of producing around 6.3bn litres for a population of 10 million. You also recover ferrous and non-ferrous metals, plastics for recycling into bottles, pallets, manhole covers, railway sleepers etc. You can add to this the fuel derived from recycling tyres etc.

The market value of the investment for such a capability would be around £13bn with a pay back to the investors of around 4 years - typical IRR is around 30%. This is stated before taking into account ROCs or overseas equivalent carbon credits of tax credits, such as the US Cellulosic Fuel Credit. The export market is absolutely phenomenal - Mexico City could take the above investment on its own. Plants take 12-24 months to build, as opposed to 4 years for conventional incineration technology plants

To access this and establish the leadership position that the UK has potentially in its grasp would take small sums in terms of sponsoring pilot plants for these new technologies - less than £100m. What is needed is for the UK Government to underwrite the technology risk that a local government authority would assume if it were to move away from the much-hated incineration technology.

Entry No: 32

An interim whose work is driven by the results that the Client wants. Whether they need the organisation to change, or their people to develop, this interim will tailor programmes to suit the requirements.

May I seriously and constructively suggest that Vince moves to one side and allows someone else to champion British Business. I admired him when he was "consulting" outside government. In government, he is exposed as a poor leader/manager. There's no shame in this - we need to recognise who's good in what role if British Business is to prosper!

Entry No: 33

A highly commercial Board Director with considerable experience as FD or MD in SME's, plc's or in near Board Senior Line Management in multinationals.

The basic premise-

1. The SME sector will be the innovation & growth engine for economic and employment growth.
2. The UK can only recover its lost GDP by export growth.
3. Europe may not enter a double dip but general growth will be sluggish and home based SMEs in Europe will seek to satisfy their respective home markets. With a few exceptions therefore the rest of Europe does not, in the near term, offer significant market growth opportunities for UK SMEs.

The proposition:-

1. The Emerging Markets generally respect UK skills and brands and as wealth grows in those Countries their people are increasingly receptive to quality UK goods and services. However many SMEs lack the financial and marketing resources to develop and exploit these opportunities.
2. Trade attaches and their resources in all our embassies should become proactive.
3. A web based Business Dept clearing house could be developed to translate/assist UK businesses and potential emerging market clients to explore trade development opportunities.
4. Basic verified data on the UK business and potential client would allow both parties to appreciate the substance of the other party.
5. The UK Govt would offer a standard transaction process to support the UK SMEs, that if adopted would attract favourable trade insurance.
6. Local Chambers of Trade would offer 'custom & practice' advice and translation services utilising translation software mixed with advice upon acceptable phrases and meanings that may inadvertently offend or require interpretation of an underlying meaning that is not obvious. Additional support for Chambers of Trade would be available from overseas specialist in Dr Cable's Dept.
7. UK Banks should be encouraged to support SME business clients financially and commercially to develop new overseas trade and KPI measures introduced to reward them via Corporation Tax incentives
8. SMEs that develop a trade with one or more emerging markets would be expected to resource an increasing amount of ongoing trade communication and process internally - freeing up the Embassy Trade Attaches, Chambers of Trade and Overseas Specialist to assist other SMEs in a 'pump priming' manner.

Whilst much of the foregoing may be in place to varying degrees it is not 'joined up', and not readily accessible without wading through bureaucracy. Promotion of such a facility and the affordability in terms of cost, ease of use, proactive support etc is necessary (TV, Press, mailouts etc). Our Embassies in various emerging markets must demonstrate their commercial value and be set measured KPI targets to focus attention upon the need to develop trade.

Entry No: 34

Pragmatic and versatile General Manager with strong HR, transfer and business leadership skills in multiple industry/sectors, UK and EMEA.

Vince has already identified the essential building blocks: people and high potential industries. What we lack is an encouraging environment that will enable them.

He has the energy and inspiration (and is not held back by convention) to champion a spirit of growth, exemplified by a Government with radical ideas that will lead by example from the front:

- A tax regime that:

- Encourages people back to work (the immigrant problem shows we have no shortage of jobs). If it was to their advantage people will always work rather than claim benefits
- Enables entrepreneurs and companies to take risks
- Builds flexibility by supporting the self employed, not persecute them
- Doesn't penalise success - punitive CGT, inheritance tax, 50% income tax, loss of personal allowances for higher earners
- We have the best military in the world but a poor record of integrating these highly skilled people back into civvy street.
- Help them stay in the forces
- If they want to leave let's help them use their technical skills and make it happen attitude to get into rewarding jobs
- Remove the more extreme constraints on companies in health & safety, employment regulation and bureaucracy. There is too much emphasis on doing it right, not doing the right thing.
- Encourage the media to stop beating up Britain. I for one am fed up with a media who constantly looks for the downside when we are surrounded by achievement. Heathrow was not the only airport in Europe closed in the snow yet it took a week for the media to tell us that Belgium had ground to a halt because French lorry drivers had been told to stop driving because it was dangerous (I rest my H&S case). No-one mentioned the efforts people went to, to keep the wheels turning (literally sometimes).

Successful organisation cut out inefficiencies and drive their strengths. HMG has done the cuts, now let's drive our strengths.

Entry No: 35

An MBA Economics Graduate qualified Customer Experience and Marketing Director with PRINCE 2 and extensive and recent financial services, general insurance, retail banking and collective investments experience

The country needs a different prescription than anything that has been offered so far but may not get it because it is too radical.

My prescription is as follows:

- 1)Speed up the rate at which new entrants to banking can set up-This should include more banks from China,Brazil,India and the Far East outside of China.
- 2)Encourage them and others to expand the issuance of credit.
- 3)Encourage the growth of municipal banks on the lines of the Bank of Essex
- 4)Encourage Microsoft and Google to set up banks using generous tax breaks as necessary.
- 5)As per 4) above via Paypal(Peter Theil their founder has plans for a bank in America-Our Government should help him set up one here.
- 6)Quadruple the size of the export salesforce in key industries where we have leadership over 10 years and invest in language training using Rosetta Stone ,paid for by abolishing the Barnett Formula,stopping the subsidies to Scotland ,Wales and Northern Ireland and stopping translation of anything into Welsh.
- 7)Grant Scotland ,Wales and Northern Ireland full independence,leave the EU and make England a tax haven for

rich businessmen willing to create at least 1000 nett new jobs for people indigenous to these islands.

8)Reduce the number of MP,s to 250 and abolish the Monarchy.

9)Nationalise the 7 billion acres of land that the Queen owns and employ actors to operate the various palaces as museums and tourist attractions.

Pay off all palace officials and hangers on.

All money generated from this and the Wind farms off the coast should go to the Treasury.

10)Let the Queen live off her own money-She has considerable investments in the USA ,Australia and Canada.

11)Stop illegal military adventures and stop all overseas aid, particularly to corrupt African dictators.

12)Reduce police forces and county councils to 12 large unitary authorities,abolish districts and boroughs and subsume all core functions into the unitaries.

Then outsource everything else and remove unnecessary people and costs.

13)Restructure the NHS and the MOD and root out fraud in procurement and try ,convict and imprison the worst offenders.

14)Improve writing down allowances on leased equipment as per James Dyson,s suggestions.

15)Model our policing methods on those of Singapore and Japan(the most efficient in the world)then increase police numbers for London and major tourist attractions and operate a no tolerance policy to bear down on street crime and organised crime.

This creates a climate conducive to inward investment and to visitors feeling safe and spending money as is already the case in Singapore and New York where these methods were rigourously applied.

16)Engage with people more about self directed long term care,tax unhealthy foods more and healthy foods less and pre-empt obese people from becoming long term adult social care recipients by using the tax system to reorient them into healthier lifestyles.

Note: At present 45% of entire county council budgets go on long term adult social care leaving the remainder to cover all other council services.

17)Create more tax breaks for marriage and for family businesses that employ more than 11 people.

18)Do more to assist inventors patent their products and finance their development and manufacture here.

19)Make prisoners work to pay for the entire cost of their incarceration,restitution to their victims and survivors(as applicable),then use the money saved to lower taxes for the rest of us.

20)Introduce compulsory business training and qualifications for the leaders of Times 1000 companies.

Entry No: 36

A management consultant and interim manager with over twenty years experience of delivering programmes and critical projects in central government departments and private sector organisations.

Regarding advice I will state here what I have stated elsewhere. Government policy is hopelessly wrong as their approach to funding business recovery is to make funds available through the banking system. We know that the banks will look after their own interests, pay huge bonuses to retain staff and rebuild their balance sheets. If the Government wants to rebuild the economy it has to get it moving again, rebuild confidence and get people back into work. In the past this would have been done by providing tax incentives on capital investment but the UK is no longer a capital investment intensive country. What the Government must do is to relax the oppressive labour taxes in the country to encourage businesses to take staff on again. A reduction of 5% in national insurance

rates is required to fund businesses directly and not rely on the banking system.

Entry No: 37

A senior international executive with a track record of leading turnaround strategies, improving profit performance and managing change projects and M&A transactions across borders and cultures.

21st century growth in the UK will come from SMEs that are the backbone of the economy.

For the past 2 years SMEs have been starved of their lifeblood - capital and funding.

There are currently insufficient tax incentives for individuals and institutions to invest directly in start-up and growth companies.

More scandalously the UK banks are playing only lipservice to the demands for them to fund SMEs through schemes like the "Enterprise Finance Guarantee" that is 70% government backed. The banks point to increasing lending books but fail to detail that the majority growth in their loans relates to the medium and larger company sectors. At the same time funding through the regional development agencies is stymied while a number of these organisations are restructured or disbanded

Four of the companies, where I am an NED and Adviser, have been given the brush off on EFG applications by different banks on the basis of "we only look at applications for more than £300k", "we need to see 3 years profitability" and "we do not understand that sector".

This may not be anything new as anecdotally it is regularly mentioned in the press, but nobody is doing anything about it!

My recommendation to Vince is that in cooperation with the Chancellor he takes the following steps:

1. Double the tax benefits for new participants in EIS and VCT schemes for a 3-5 year period.
2. Simplify the rules around ISAs to create a new higher risk category of ISA which can be invested in qualifying VCTs and growth funds that will have a regulated focus on SMEs.
3. Incentivate banks to finance SMEs through EFG or other schemes by also providing favourable interbank discount lines through the Bank of England, allowing increased margin.
4. Apply a lower tax rate for income generated by the banks from the SME sector.
5. Plan to set up a "Direct Line Bank" to provide direct funding from the government to SMEs, thereby disintermediating the banks.

Entry No: 38

A successful Managing Director who is results orientated, customer and profit focused with significant business transformation/turnaround experience.

Since leaving the Corporate world last year I have been working in a range of businesses, SME mainly, and the single biggest impediment to growth is poor management .I mean by that managing a business is not just about lifestyle choice , it is also these days about social responsibility , employment creation the environment et al.I can cite examples where under my tutelage business owners are running more effectively and developing their businesses because they have a better understanding.I did not realise myself the importance of my experience till I arrived in these examples.

The point to all of this is that consultancy per se is made up in the main by people who have never run a business in their lives . Bankers ,accountants and someone supplying prescribed solutions without understanding the business abound. Businesslink offers help to start up a business but not how to actually deal with real live issues.I hate the terms business mentor or angel but that is actually what I do and there should be Government support to foster relations between experienced business people who can actually make a difference.

If Vince wants some practical advice, I am free any time to advise and give real examples of how business help in situ can and does help.

In terms of big ticket ideas, what I am proposing is real help that maximises the benefit of the existing customers in the diminishing markets referred to in the countless articles on the subject, but also how to maximise revenue retention through excellent people management skills which have sadly diminished in the UK over the years.

Entry No: 39

A senior technology manager with many years experience across a variety of industries and sectors, having seen first-hand the good, the bad and downright ugly companies, and having helped to transform these into centres of excellence.

My three (linked) suggestions are:

1. To encourage and reward UK companies for transforming their IT service such that it contributes more to the effectiveness of the business through a grant system, awarded through competitive submission by companies.
2. To make more of the Interim Management marketplace and change the thinking at a Government level about how it engages with the big 5 (and other) 3rd party service groups, introducing a body-shopping model where those whose incentive is to succeed, are those who run the show.
3. To change the rules underpinning the public sector procurement processes, i.e. OJEU (Official Journal of the European Community) to give more empowerment and authority to those carrying out procurement duties, allowing them to include prior performance in the Bid selection process.

1. The majority of companies still see IT (and their IT acts) as an adjunct to the business, rather than as a partner. I often hear individuals complaining about the service that their IT departments offer. Businesses often hold their IT service in low esteem. Yet few actually do anything about it other than complain.

Some of the reasons for doing nothing are the cost of conducting a health check, the ability of internal staff to do so and the (realistic) fear that a consultancy health check would result in a highly biased review, proposing significant outsourcing to that consultancy.

The first issue, the cost of conducting the health check is dealt with here. The second and third link to my second suggestion.

Vince Cable could offer Government sponsorship, in the form of competitive grant rewards, to companies who submit a proposal for their health check. Justification should be typically straight forward, based on the existing investment of IT and their business aims linked to an improved IT service. This could be for the company staying in business, or for plans for expansion, both requiring a step-change transformation in how IT contributes.

Of course, getting creative and preparing an innovative justification on their own is asking the blind to lead to blind, so they'd need help from Interim Managers to do so: strategists to facilitate the business in envisioning the potential that could be unlocked combined with an IT transformation specialism that brings the ability of "knowing what good looks like" and giving a short sharp review of their IT. This is a company investment.

The sponsorship, (a percentage of the whole based on the quality of the submission and size of the company), is then awarded by the Government to the company to supplement or even cover the cost of implementing the transformation strategy. Splitting the grant over a series of retrospective payments, reliant upon the company submitting evidence of having achieved pre-agreed milestones will ensure that the award is invested for the purposes intended.

2. The second and third issues are covered by my second suggestion: making more of the interim market and changing the way that the Government engages with the larger 3rd party service suppliers.

It all boils down to the drivers, the things that motivate. Consider the larger 3rd party suppliers. What are their drivers? At a company level it's simple: profit and increase in the shareholder dividend. At a personal consultant level, it's the huge performance bonus that is always linked to the revenue and profit gained through the commissioned project.

No-one who has dealt with a 3rd party would deny that when dealing with these companies the model is consistent: an initial bid is submitted, usually by the most talented staff in the company, then the less capable staff are engaged to deliver and every opportunity for milking even more revenue from the client through change control is exploited to the full. That's the way it works.

To repeat, the driver is always, always profit and rarely does reputation and a desire to deliver come into it. In fact, the longer the suppliers can drag out the project, usually a T&M contract, the more revenue is earned, so the incentive to even deliver on time is removed.

Evidence? Hands up if you've ever heard of an overrunning Government project or programme being delivered by these industry giants (some of whom actually have the odd consultant who has had a "real job"). No doubt a forest of hands can be seen across the country.

So, what motivates the interim? Well obviously it's not all altruism, because we work for a living and we wouldn't turn away a good daily rate, but reputation and positive references figure much higher in our personal drivers. We typically work for a flat day rate. We often carry the risk of a month's notice (compared to costly contract cancellation termination charges for the consultancies). We're a darn-sight cheaper, even on rates of £800-£1200 a day, than buying a consultancy partner at £2500-£3000+ a day. Also, we don't spend most of our day employed in Business Development by stealth, attempting to influence the client to grant our consultancies further business.

We are focussed, skilled, experienced in the delivery war-zone, driven by a desire to succeed and add to our CV's, and cheaper by 50-70% than most consultancies.

So, can we replace a 3rd party supplier offering a shared service? Well no, frankly, We tend to be individuals and we don't come with a pre-established infrastructure and organisation.

The new model for Vince Cable to promote then is this. By all means engage with the 3rd party service suppliers, but only in terms of buying in a pre-established infrastructure and body-shop of operational staff. The management, the programme delivery, the running of the operation should be bought in as interim managers. Not as third party supplier managers (that's often done now and yes, it helps but doesn't solve the problem at a grass roots level), but as the direct management itself. The interims work for the client (the Government). The 3rd party staff work for the interims. The interims have rights of hire and fire (or at list engagement and disengagement) of 3rd party staff. They could even conduct the appraisals. They are in control, not managing supplier relationships.

Will 3rd parties go for this? If that's all the Government offers then yes, I believe they will. It's that or nothing.

A cheaper, more success focused solution, with a limiting control over the supplier's desire to extract more revenue from the client.

3. As said up front, all three suggestions are linked. The third linkage relates to how the Government procures its service suppliers. The OJEU process as it stands today leaves very little room for the procurers applying previous experience in assessing the bids submitted. The clients may know that a specific supplier tendering has a reputation as black as the ace of spades when it comes to the working relationship and ability to deliver, but the OJEU process insists that it is the bid submission that is judged, not previous experience. (I'm told that it is possible to construct the SOR and ITT in such a way that references can be taken, but I've never seen this done).

I've worked on a programme where every member of the bid review team was dreading the outcome that ultimately resulted, because they'd had previous bad experience of the ultimately successful bidder and there were no surprises when they performed to type. I've mentioned this supplier's name to senior managers across a variety of Government bodies and they all shuddered because they have experienced the service offered first hand. Yet this supplier continues to win prime Government bids.

The root cause is simply that OJEU, in attempting to enforce a spirit of fair and equitable treatment between bidders, restricts the choice of the supplier to the one who submits the best bid, even if it is known that the excellence of the bid is never reflected in the excellence of the service it offered.

The Government needs to get OJEU changed, (or make a stand against the EU's mandate to follow it to the letter). Allow those reviewing bids to apply consideration of previous experience and / or references, without the fear that they may be exposed by a Freedom of Information request being lodged by the unsuccessful supplier, challenging their choice and potentially exposing them personally. (Yes, I've seen that happen, but thankfully we had solid business reasons for their rejection based on where they fell short, but even then they challenged and fought our decision).

Mr Cable, give more empowerment and authority to those carrying out procurement duties for the Government and stop lining the pockets of those who are known to be milking the public sector purse.

Entry No: 40

A professional Interim Executive, not a consultant, with a broad spectrum of experience at senior levels in both the public and private sectors

Be honest. Do not be economic with the truth. Demand honesty from all others in Parliament and the Civil Service. Challenge them directly if in doubt.

Vilify Political Correctness. Tell us how it is. Demand others do the same.

Test the use of the word "reasonable" in all matters concerning Health & Safety; the legislation, the interpretation, the economics, actions and compliance - eliminate the philosophy: "it is dangerous to cross the road - do not cross the road"!

Scrutinise and challenge the activities of the EU; especially the economics of their actions, their own overhead cost, and perceived partisanship.

Don't talk to strange women!

Entry No: 41

An objective and robust Change Management and Human Resources Director with a successful record of organisation and people development in Europe and the US

Use the money saved from investment through RDA's in 'big' projects that, in effect, shift businesses around the UK, into start-up or small business growth seed money. There has been significant and respected research into business generation around local business clusters in city/regions - design and music in Staffordshire, TV/radio production and facilities in Manchester etc. This research supports the premise that this creates better and more sustainable work and jobs than relocating distribution centres.

Entry No: 42

An experienced engineering manager with a proven ability to identify the cause of complex problems and implement creative solutions, enabling clients to achieve a sustainable improvement in business performance.

8/10 - Could Do Better!

We are delighted with your progress so far, and impressed by the way in which you have engaged with the real issues that face the country.

I agree that we need to change the culture in the banking and financial sector, and I now favour the following proposal:-

- Allow bankers to receive performance related pay and bonuses, providing the total paid in bonuses does not exceed 15% of the dividend payments made to share holders.
- Require any employee who receives more than £1m / year in pay, pension or bonuses to invest at least 50% of all payments in excess of £1m in ordinary shares of the bank, purchased on the open market at open market prices.
- Require all shares purchased under these rules to be held in 'trust' so that they can not sold, traded or assigned to a third party until the owner reaches the reaches the age of 70 or dies. After the age of 70 permit the owner to progressively liquidate their share holdings over a period of 20 years.

This proposal would align the banker's financial self interest with the long-term interests of the share holders and the wider community.

All government guarantees could then be removed from any organisation that does not abide by these provisions.

However it is also clear that we need a higher level of transparency throughout the financial sector and in the marketing of financial products. I therefore propose that:-

- The wide spread practice of penalising 'loyal customers' with lower rates of interest than new customers should be declared illegal, so that all existing savers receive the 'best rates' currently offered for 'comparable products'.
- Providers of all investment products ISA etc, should be forced to advertise their charges as a % of the return on investment, not the funds held

Entry No: 43

Senior Executive with 15+ years of experience and a history of delivering outstanding profit growth, increased international market penetration, enhanced efficiency, and substantially reduced costs, within FMCG and Food Processing industries.

Reduce corporation tax for companies under £500,000m to 10 % and Tax the Bankers up to 70% over £170,000 per annum.

Entry No: 44

An outstanding CEO and an inspirational leader with a consistent record of exceptional achievement.

Dear Vince,

You want some suggestions for improving business in the UK.

My advice would be to look hard at the successful to see what we can learn. Why do Germans make cars but we don't for example? Well, I suggest the reason lies in their corporate model. There, their bankers are in the board and involved long term in the business. Unlike the UK, where banks have become febrile purveyors of overpriced loans to retail borrowers. Sorting out our bankers is a prerequisite of economic success. So my recommendation would be to pander to their greed and self-regard.. Explain that no more bankers will get knighthoods or peerages until they start to lend in volume at low costs to productive industries.

I would also strongly recommend letting a couple of banks go bust-pour encourager les autres. Meryn King was right to warn of moral hazard in baling them out. He has been proved right.

It is pointless trying to compete with low cost economies, but this presents you with a major problem. The majority of the UK do not work and those that do are pretty poorly educated. We need as a matter of urgency to encourage apprenticeships and restore technical colleges. Students with second glass degrees in something

interesting will not be working. Plumbers and fitters will be. Forget trying to make things cheaper than China. Stick to making high end goods. No one can copy snobbishness as well as the English.

You need to persuade your cabinet colleagues to face up to some simple macro realities. The main reason the UK economy is a mess is that no gets the big picture coherently.

Given the current number of private sector workers how many people can they support ? Because those private sector workers have to pay for themselves and for the public sector workers, the public sector costs, the unemployed and the old etc. I don't know what the answer is but its probably about 50 million all up. Whichever way you cut it you are probably trying to feed and satisfy about 10 million too many.

One might disagree about the figures but the question is one to which you have to know the answer if you purport to be managing the country. If we have (say) 10 million too many then lets at least understand the problem we are trying to address before launching into detail.

Invoke a simple rule . Don't let the civil service capitalise public sector wages- it is going on all over the UK economy -and it will kill the economy. Stick to borrowing only for real capital investment in real infrastructure.

Learn to manage public sector contracts properly. Your civil service are rubbish at contract negotiation and even worse at contract management. Which is why your wards are filthy and your road and airports stop working in bad weather. Get tough with the private sector when it doesn't perform -the state has made a lot of people very rich in return for a very poor service. The tools are there- get some staff who know how to use them.

Scrap Income Tax and NHI and introduce a low flat tax. The one characteristic of all good economies is a low tax regime. Use Singapore as a model. It works.

There are no successful economies with high tax.

Entry No: 45

A senior, experienced Fundraiser with a proven creative approach to Fundraising, Marketing and Communications for large and small voluntary sector organisations.

My suggestion: freeze the planned increase in VAT

... increasing the rate of VAT to 17.5% in January 2010 as planned will:

- have an adverse impact on retail sales, which will further depress the high street
- adversely affect interim managers and other professionals who need to charge VAT on their services as assignments will be deemed "expensive"
- hit the inbound tourist economy as Britain will be increasingly expensive for the leisure and business visitor

Entry No: 46

An experienced CEO and Interim Manager, who has a track record of successful analysis, development of coherent and winning change strategies in both the UK and international markets with both large and small companies.

There is little he can really do to change anything in the short term. But he could start to re-balance the economy towards advanced manufacturing (look at Germany, Switzerland) by:

1. helping to change banking's relationship with business by encouraging lending and risk in 'high tech' manufacturing
2. create a German type business environment where manufacturing is actively encouraged and financed to rebuild its proportion of GDP, where the UK's inventiveness skill set is allowed to develop and prosper

3. start at the grass roots by educating children to think the skill sets required (science, advanced electronics, medical science, space and aeronautical, environmental and agricultural science, pharmaceutical etc) are worthier than say, media studies, as an acquired skill set for life. Reversing the increasing trend of unemployable 16 - 25 year olds.

4. seek excellence and a genuine meritocracy

The fact that most of our finest mathematical brains work for hedge funds, has to be wrong. The fact that our best engineers see the USA as the market to head for, has to be wrong. The fact that our children still see manufacturing as 'dirty, mindless, 1950's factory gate conditions' and therefore not a career of choice, has to be wrong.

We need a long term approach that works with the educators, our best companies and trade unions. It should be what the big society is all about: an aim that seeks to harness the wonderful skillsets that exist in great Britain with the aim by 2020 to double the worth of, and employment in, the high technological manufacturing sector; competing at the highest technological levels and once again leading the world in invention and high technology-led exporting, benefiting the whole world.

Entry No: 47

A commercially-focused credit card and retail financial services specialist with over 25 years experience.

1. Bank-bashing is popular, but we are very good at it in the UK. And during a world recession banks (who by definition lend/invest lots of money) are bound to take a big hit. But give it a year or two and they will bounce back stronger than ever creating a great deal of wealth and tax revenue. They are an easy target, but do not over-legislate as freedom is necessary for success and there is already sufficient regulatory control
2. Ease off on the students, otherwise we are going to have a big shortage of graduates in future. That means less doctors, teachers...in fact less new talent in all the top jobs and professions
3. Continue to invest in education and in vocational training - having a good stock of tradesmen, skilled and semi-skilled workers creates the basis for businesses of all kinds to flourish

But ensure that we continue to cut the deficit and reduce the size of the public sector...both for now and for the future.

Entry No: 48

Highly Motivated Business Developer, Previous Board level roles in Business Development, Commercial JV / Partnership Creation and Management.

It is the dictum of those who see 'the glass as half empty' that they decry the problem but do not want to contemplate the solution for that would imply an optimism that few pessimists would admit to. This is true of the UK economy, which is beset by problems but too few commentators willing to see the positives and apply those to other sectors.

I take as my example the global business that is Formula 1. The UK has maintained and grown its engineering excellence in motorsport and in both design, engineering and performance leads the world. What's that you say, we have no domestic motor industry; just a few assembly plants for foreign manufacturers to access the EU market with 'British' made goods. That is far from the truth.

Those companies actively engaged in the development of motor sports in the UK have taken advantage of existing knowledge base and position to move up the value chain. They have attracted highly skilled talent which in turn has been managed to develop and produce world beating products which in turn begats further investment. Yes, it takes a commitment to a long term vision. It also takes team work and a willingness to commit resources beyond the short term, even if this gives nothing but failure. The long run view brings just rewards as McLaren, Williams, Red Bull etc will acknowledge.

At the same time as leading the engineering challenge, these companies are looking to apply their knowledge of

high performance engineering and manufacturing to other sectors to offset costs and strengthen their customer base. The crossover between F1 technologies and those of mainstream automotive, aerospace and Computing industries is immense.

So it should be that UK plc should be promoting a similar model of business to primary, secondary and tertiary industries. To produce less goods but of a higher quality which showcases British ingenuity is a fundamental for growth. The government should be identifying best practice examples in each business sector and developing its own knowledge base of what makes those companies successful. In so doing it should then build capacity to support and sustain capital investment at all levels of the economy using a legislative framework that encourages long term commitment.

Enterprise Investment Trusts were a good example of what can be done to encourage funding but these lacked the focus needed to build solid long term foundations. The UK has a real opportunity to take a lead in global markets where it can identify strength in depth and where a sound base of skills and knowledge can sustain targeted investment. We need to stop seeing the recession and cuts to public sector funding as a negative but as an opportunity to make a step change in how UK PLC will do business in the future. Less taxation and regulation has been proven in economies like Hong Kong and elsewhere to drive growth. A stronger industrial base allied to a reduced public sector will result in a better GDP and positive trade balances.

It is true that the global economy has changed as a result of the financial crisis and continued pressure on environmental issues that will alter consumption. Britain can and should be leading the new order by investing in renewable energy technologies. Given the quality of our construction industry, we should be leading on developing intelligent building solutions for commercial and residential developments. Our automotive industries already lead in design and engineering. UK Agri businesses and the supporting research facilities should be leading on crop and plant development; finding those alternatives that will feed the world.

I would ask not why we aren't already doing these things but how do we make that step change from also rans to world leaders in the respective fields. This comes back fundamentally to management of performance; applying resources and knowledge to deliver a winning team that strives ever harder be better season after season. As I said at the start, F1 teams hold the key and we need look no further than their management practice to see what British business can achieve.

Entry No: 49

Public Sector Facilities Management and Support Services General Manager

As Secretary of State for Business Vince Cable has been put in an unenviable yet exciting position from which there must only be one way forward. However so was Winston Churchill in a similar role and he sorted it. The direction Mr Cable takes must produce the goods and with this he must be assisted by all. The previous regimes policies did not work and have by clear evidence left us all far worse off with debts that previously could never be imagined. In addition the few that are creating the violent demonstrations need to think more and ought to channel their energy more constructive rather than destructive arguments.

The United Kingdom has been virtually stripped of its experienced skill base with exceptionally high calibre experts leaving the country over the past 10 years or so to provide the technology and management expertise so much required by for example the likes of Saudi Arabia, Dubai and other developing countries. Many years ago this was called the "Brain Drain" but now it is the "Skill Fill". Why? Is it because Britain was seen a floundering ship in the seas of the Global Economy or was it greed by the individual. I for one do not believe it was the latter.

The past decade has seen our homeland being removed of its' titles "Great" Britain and "United" Kingdom. This must be reversed and Vince Cable and his teams are probably best placed and suited to be in the forefront of leadership. Perhaps we should look to how we as a nation returned to economic glory after the depressive post World War II years. Today though this task will be more difficult as we have a higher count of non-British as well as the "Government knockers" who will go out on a limb to ensure that the Government of the day will fail. That must be redressed by Vince's colleagues and quickly.

The former regimes of "Spending our way out of recession" were ill thought out and doomed for failure. The previous Government would not listen to those who were then best placed to provide the correct advice. If you were

offered free advice on how to turn your business around would you refuse it? I doubt it but the previous regime did and many times.

Our remaining manufacturing and other businesses that export goods, services or whatever (including some aspects of the entertainment industry) must be assisted to achieve greater success. These companies must be identified, nurtured and recognised for all they do. They must have the restrictions that are put in front of them eased as currently there is too much bureaucracy.

We have already sold off the family silver so we cannot generate income from that. Our former nationalised industries are now mainly in foreign ownership together with our most attractive and prime industrial concerns such as Rolls Royce, Bentley, Aston Martin, Jaguar, Rover, Cadbury and I could go on, all mean that money is removed from the British purse. Even the milk you buy from the corner shop can come from Poland or Belgium.

Does it make sense that our home grown businesses such as Wedgwood, Hornby, Marks & Spencer and now Dyson and others decide that it is far more economical to produce their goods in Malaysia, Korea, China or Japan etc. and then ship them back to UK to sell on? It does not make any sense until the figures are weighed up. How can it be cheaper to ship something half way around the world, build it and then put it back on a boat to bring back home to sell at a fraction of the cost had it been "Made in Britain"? Something is wrong somewhere.

The disastrous coal, oil and gas situation that has seen us producing our own fuels to now buying from the near monopoly of Russia again does not make sense. When you switch on your electric light, who are you paying for it? Do we have any more power generating companies that are completely British owned? We have all been conned into believing that the emerging World Market would benefit us in the long-term but we were not told how.

In Britain we do still have Bulldog Spirit and as such Vince Cable needs to tap into that. We are also blessed with having within the population a large number of over 60's managers and former executives, some now removed from successful business in order to pursue a more sedentary lifestyle but who are willing and very able to provide much valuable assistance. One must not forget that the British entertainment industry has also done its' fair share in generating cash into the British Economy (The Beatles, Rolling Stones etc,) and this too should be encouraged.

There are people who are genuinely interested in making Britain "Great" again and the Kingdom "United" and not all of them want to just line their own pockets in so doing. Britain still has amongst the greatest businessmen and women in the World and we also have some of the best managers and engineers.

The formation of another quango is not the best solution. Organisations and individuals already exist that would be of great service in pulling us out of the mess we are in, as would many of the Interim Managers and executives who are now like me in semi-retirement. Perhaps conscription of these should be a strong consideration.

So in short and to sum up:

1. Ease the strangling restriction on British owned businesses in all fields and get them generating a national income again. This would include easing the tax and bureaucratic constraints on them thus allowing these and other resources to be available to benefit the growth of all manner of British business especially those able to export.
2. Provide incentives to British based companies to grow. This may mean a return to Rate and Rent reductions. However here the Landlords must not be losers but there again they should not be winners either.
3. Encourage British business to germinate and grow by allowing them improved access into the public sector for assistance and advice centres. This may mean that mentoring and Interim Management is provided to such business that may be paid for from public funds and repaid as and when the growth occurs.
4. Listen to Lord Digby Jones, Lord Alan Sugar and others and co-opt/drag them in to help. And - Perhaps a new TV Show "We're in a mess - Get us out of it".

My very best regards and good wishes for a happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Entry No: 50

A Germany based Financial Services Director and Advisor since 2000. Ex Rothschild and KPMG

Dear Vince,

Firstly, may I congratulate you for stepping up to the plate in what is a mission critical role for the United Kingdom.

Secondly, as a British Citizen residing in Germany I have first hand experience of an economic powerhouse at work. Germany's serious commitment to R&D is directly translated into 'Made in Germany' products on offer around the world, where 'Made in Germany' is synonymous with leading edge and high quality goods. The key to success has been in developing, securing and monetising intellectual property i.e. new ideas expressed in patents and industrial design rights. Further, recent studies indicate that intellectual property represents in excess of 66% of an exchange listed company's intrinsic value.

I spend a fair amount of my working life in London, and it is encouraging to know of the significant increase in the number of small businesses being registered in the UK. It is admirable, and necessary, that more individuals wish to embrace the future in their own arms. It would be folly to think though that they have the framework, resources and hands-on experience required to successfully develop and commercialise their ideas, especially so given that the UK is bleeding in excess of £20 billion a year in intellectual property to foreign entities.

That is why I believe the future rests with a UK intellectual property bank, in close collaboration with the UK Intellectual Property Office, and interim managers. In brief, the intellectual property bank would provide a secure central repository for ideas as well as facilitating access to resources, with interim managers bringing their flexible bridging skills and hands-on experience to bear in assisting viable ideas through the critical business start-up phase. Your brief would be to ensure the framework breathes with clear incentives for these entrepreneurs, to refresh and retain the talent pool. Our land, labour and capital are finite. The opportunities for securing and commercialising our intellectual property are boundless.

Finally, whereas I would agree with you that the UK has highly skilled and educated people, I strongly feel that keen political facilitation will be required to successfully mobilise and secure this fundamentally valuable asset going forward. This is where, I believe, you come in!

Entry No: 51

Independent / Interim CEO / Operations Director / Turnaround Director / NED with strong operational, commercial and change management experience encompassing strategy development, sales and manufacturing, both in the UK and Europe.

In the UK we have many (Grey Haired) Interim Executives, a high number are not on assignment. The government should utilise this talent pool via agencies such as Russam GMS, etc and create a turnaround panel of experienced genuine interims (Up to 10 panel members). Teams would be seconded into private companies who desperately require help but lack the funds and expertise to achieve sustainable, rapid improvement. By saving the core base of UK SME's we can rebuild our manufacturing / traditional industry infrastructures.

This would be genuine interim assignments with executive authority, not a consultancy talking shop. Part of the cost could be offset by success bonuses.

Entry No: 52

An experienced global £50m P&L owning interim Chief Operating Officer with a proven track record within global B2B, B2C, offshore outsourcing, business, technology and consultancy services in corporate and commercial markets.

Introduce regional corporation tax free zones for specific industries that he wants to see expand in geographic

areas he wants to develop. This will encourage investment and development of industries that UK PLC will rely upon in the future and help employment in problem regions. The corporation tax break should apply for 5 years and then taper out over the next 5.

Entry No: 53

A dedicated and enthusiastic Senior Management Consultant with extensive experience gained in delivering high-profile assignments in the public sector.

Vince Cable needs to focus on achieving sustainable employment and, clearly, given the public sector cutbacks, this has to come from the private / independent sector.

The important word is sustainable. All too often entrepreneurs start up successful businesses and then sell them on to larger organisations, often based outside the UK with employment also moving overseas. This is also the case with public companies, the recent Cadbury Schweppes sale being a typical example where the capital gain to shareholders mattered more than the cost to the economy of lost employment.

I therefore believe that Vince Cable should focus his policies as much on keeping industries British owned as much as nurturing new developments. I believe that incentives would be more effective than penalties, for example the business relief on capital gains tax was an effective encouragement for entrepreneurs to retain ownership of a business over a long period. Equally there could be incentives through inheritance tax relief for family businesses to avoid having to sell up to pay the tax.

Vince Cable should also adopt policies that consider much more closely whether a potential sale of a UK-based company quoted on the Stock Exchange to an overseas buyer is in the national interest, not only in terms of security of supply and prices but also the cost to the UK economy of potential job losses resulting from the sale. Criteria could be developed that would need to be satisfied if, say one of the FT top 250 companies was subject to a sale or takeover by a non-UK organisation and be challenged if a certain level of compliance with the criteria was not met. This is not to say that blocking the sale is the only remedy in such a situation; for example it could result in a negotiated clause in the contract that would commit the buyer to continuing production / provision in the UK over an agreed period of, say ten years in order to ensure continued employment.

The above suggestions may sound xenophobic given the UK bias however my thoughts are based entirely on the need to achieve sustainable employment over the long term rather than some anti-European, pro-UK crusade. There is a need to change the current culture away from the need to achieving capital gains and towards investment and commitment over the long term to allow new industries to develop and provide high quality, sustainable jobs to the UK population.

Entry No: 54

A motivated project director, manager, senior lead and analyst consultant with successful implementation experience in many sectors

He should seriously look at a tax incentive scheme or rebate for companies that invest in new developments and innovative research. Up to now shareholders if they invest in such companies get a tax incentive but directors and owners who may be putting up a large part of the stake money do not get incentivised.

Entry No: 55

A senior executive with a proven ability to direct, implement and rescue high profile projects and programmes of complex change, with extensive commercial experience (15+ years).

The best ways to encourage business or drive it forward are:

1. Cut taxes such as VAT, Corporation Tax
2. Create a tax-free zone targeting the hi-tech manufacturing industries

Entry No: 56

An accomplished consultant and business manager

Given that most small businesses flounder within their first five years, most fail to achieve serious profitability, business support schemes have been confusing for clients and expensive for the country, early stage finance is time consuming and expensive to find and arrange and even basic compliance administration quite literally decimates available time (2 of 20 working days administering Government paperwork per month on average), I propose:

1. each new company formed be given automatically a VAT registration, unless they opt-out
2. exemption from PAYE & NI (employer & employee) and tax on dividends for Founder Director for 2 years after commencement of trading, providing the founder remains the majority shareholder
3. maximum 50% Government contribution to the cost of appointing a suitably qualified mentor/non-executive director, capped at, say, a Government contribution of £250/month for a maximum of 2 years. such a scheme to be managed under Government contract by an established expert intermediary, such as Russam GMS.

Checks, balances and controls should be light touch, working on the assumption that entrepreneurs seek success, but the penalties for fraud or abuse should be severe. Evidence of routine compliance could be provided by capturing accounting data in a simple "cloud-based" system; such systems already exist and are operated by a number of Accountancy practices.

The expected outcomes of such a scheme would be better focus of SME efforts on growing their business, increased economic activity, an alternative to unemployment or the grey economy, professional development for the founders and improved survivability. A number of otherwise unsupported business and product ideas will likely to be brought to fruition by such a scheme.

Entry No: 57

A high-energy, high-impact Interim Purchasing & Supply professional

EU law defined a Small Company as TO up-to £6.6m and less than 50 employees and created a new category of Micro Companies with TO of less than 1m Euro and less than 10 staff. See <http://www.accaglobal.com/documents/tech-tp-micro.pdf>. at least in the early years of the company formation.

As this size company is the very essence of start-ups he should embrace this new (accounting) category and encourage it by eliminating as many restrictive regulations as possible on these Micro companies on the basis that all stakeholders involved with them know they are at risk of failure, most of all the owners who in many cases risk their houses to start them up.

This could even extend to tax breaks on Corporation Tax and Employers NI as (rule of thumb suggests 50% of cost is salaries) the maximum risk total for NI is about £50,000 and this will be offset by the tax gain on income and employee NI not avoided by paying salaries instead of dividends. Profits would fall as a result of paying more in salary reducing the corporation tax take in this case.

These measures would give a better chance of success to start-ups with the resultant boost to the economy.

Entry No: 58

Successful Businessman with his own start-up company

One area of Banking that would help the entire Global population would be to change the way banks transact. Presently all banks process debits before credits. So that even though you may have transferred sufficient funds to your bank account for the day of payment - the bank will process all debits first - so that you can end up with a bank charge and also other charges from the intended recipient - e.g. mortgage or finance company. Within a millisecond you can face bank charges, finance company charges, threatening court action letters etc and a loss of credit rating.

By simply switching the Global banking transaction system so that credits are processed before debits - millions

of banking customers worldwide will have reduced banking charges and improved credit ratings. Obviously banks will lose out financially if they rely on this current system to make profits - but by switching the Global systems to banking credits before debits millions of people worldwide will have an improved life and not face threatening letters or court action. All because of a millisecond change!

This could be a huge vote winner for the current government.

Entry No: 59

A bilingual (English and Spanish) Cambridge University graduate, Chartered Accountant, Financial Director and Management Consultant

1. Reduce all taxes on individuals and businesses, move to a HK style environment which will promote enterprise and in the end produce much faster growth, a more entrepreneurial culture, more inward investment, less tax avoidance and much more tax revenue thus leading to better education health and social care for everybody.
2. Adopt the Swedish system whereby you have to pass a series of stringent requirements to qualify for benefits.
3. Scrap most of HMRC along with all the other taxes except VAT.
4. Legalise drugs, take any profits into the exchequer rather than fund drug cartels. You will also get a better handle on who needs help and be in a position to target that help.
5. Introduce similar health care insurance to that which operates in Germany. It works better.

Entry No: 60

A visionary and proactive Senior Manager with over 20 years management experience in highly competitive, fast moving, time critical logistics environments.

There is no one single or simple answer to what Vince should do.

Firstly we should recognise what we do have and make the most of that. Banking and the service industries within the UK are amongst the best run in the world and we should make the proposition around their services more attractive for overseas countries to utilise more and let's get the high flying confidence back within the City.

However, this has to be managed in such a way that there is trust and less scepticism about how they reward themselves, and the government, by whatever means, higher corporate taxation, capping or whatever it takes must implement prevent the fat cat possibility of re emerging. We must do this or run the risk of bust and boom. I do not for one think that reducing the real high earners capability to earn massive bonuses is a risk. There is a huge wealth of talent in this country, ready to take the places of those who may wish to leave the country for perceived better benefits, let them go. Like in football, no one is bigger than the club! The more sustainable rewards should be built in to pension plans to ensure employees stay for the long term and build stability around these financial institutions.

Secondly, we have to recognise the existing and emerging economies. We know that China and other far-east economies are doing well, but we need to understand where the next generation of developing economies is coming from, Brazil? African countries?. Huge government effort and bridge building is required so that they can together work out what can best help both the UK and those current and emerging and developed, and build sustainable growing platforms for business for 20-30 years to come.

Thirdly, we know the ratio of employees in the UK who are now employed by SMEs. We also know that here are many seeking opportunities to start their own businesses. 1 year ago, I was exactly in that position. More help and guidance should be provided to those wishing to start up. There is quite a lot of organisations providing that support but it is the early financing of a company that needs supporting, and that is where I feel there is a gap. Banks should be encouraged more to help and also to take a view around the associated risks. Somehow, it seems unfair that the banks capital reserves are so substantial when more help could be given to SMEs. The fact

that these reserves were reduced by bankers rewarding themselves, in essence reduced the capability to lend money. The government needs to re dress that imbalance. In addition first and second year trading could attract lower levels of corporation tax and or support with fixed costs, like rents and rates, or other concessions to help the business basically get off the ground.

Lastly the whole question around immigration and the numbers of people who are claiming benefits for being unemployed. A review of policy has been undertaken recently but should be up for scrutiny and review every 6 months so that we can react and respond to changing needs.

Most people do not want to be out of work. I would like to see people working on small community based projects and have at least an opportunity to earn more than they get on benefits. This brings some sense of belonging to the community and makes sure people do not get out of the habit of getting up and going to work each day. Making our town centres and city centres more attractive and a pleasure to visit, would get more people in and spending money, and making local economies work, be it retail, bars and restaurants and in some cases attracting tourism. Every little helps and we want to make sure that we have as many businesses as possible are profitable and providing employment locally.

Entry No: 61

Versatile General/Business Unit Manager with strong Commercial, Business Development, Project and Operational Management experience

Dear Mr Cable

There are a few things that could be done relatively quickly to generate jobs in the private sector the cost of which would be paid for by savings made by taking people out of the benefits system, companies looking at job creation as an investment rather than a cost, incremental revenue/profit earned by the new recruits coupled with the additional tax take that the additional employees would pay into the treasury:

- 1) Issue an invitation to each and every one of the CEO's/FD's of the 2000 odd companies trading on the London stock exchange to take on extra staff at all levels from apprentices to senior management for a defined minimum period within the first and at the very latest the second quarter of 2011. In return to offset the cost they could get say a two or three years or more reduction in corporation tax, reduced employer NI contributions, etc depending entirely on the extra numbers of people taken on. There would also be the incremental revenue/profit generated by implementing this proposal from the work carried out by the individuals benefiting from the scheme. One assumes that all the 2000 companies quoted on the LSE will have a 3 or 5 year strategic plan for growth in place so they need encouragement to bring forward their plans for organic growth particularly where the development and sales of innovative new products and an export driven company ethos are key strategies for these extra employees to be involved in.
- 2) A similar invitation to small businesses from shops to unquoted companies to take on extra staff tied in to reduced tax, sufficient bank loans and strategic and tactical assistance from the banks or people with the practical know how to run a business to help develop their businesses with a robust business plan. One of the reasons banks are not borrowing is because many small /medium sized businesses do not have a robust strategic plan which gives them the confidence to open the purse strings.
- 3) Government to discuss with relevant universities what pipeline innovative products or services they are developing and be the conduit in getting the private sector and the banks involved in funding new ideas particularly where significant exports can be achieved and fast track them to market both in the UK and overseas.
- 4) Government to employ a big hitter from business like Michael Heseltine to chair a department with a team of his or her choosing to cajole, bully, threaten or do whatever it takes to get UK companies to EXPORT British made products or services as a matter of considerable urgency. This is not about government ministers taking a contingent of CEO's to India or China, although that should continue, this is about getting an export team in place in each company, doing the relevant reconnaissance work in the UK and getting that team on planes to all four corners of the globe to sell UK made products and services. We have excellent commercial attaché's in most countries that can give considerable support and provide contacts which UK exporters should take advantage of.

- 5) Very few of the organisations quoted on the London Stock exchange have a Sales/Marketing Director on their Main Board which means no one is driving sales or the export effort that is so successful as say the USA where driving sales domestically and overseas via a client/customer focussed teams is key to any business large or small. A bit of encouragement from the government might help!
- 6) Persuade the clearing banks in particular to align their bonus structure for management and staff to how many extra people their customers are able to recruit that is a direct result of the banks financial support and help with business planning and funding (See 2 above)

The effect of implementing these proposals might mean that shareholder dividends and management and staff bonuses might be reduced over a couple of years to help fund these things however if we are really all in this together and want to drive the "Big Society " project it will be a small price to pay for a few years to get the UK economy back on its feet. There will undoubtedly be obstacles to these proposals however developing the above strategies should not prove too difficult and the benefits could be immense not least for the morale of the population of this country.

Many thousands would get back to paying taxes/NI and the companies concerned could perhaps split the extra staff between Permanent and Interim by a ratio of say 3:1 so the extra employees are not all a fixed cost liability in their overheads.

The above are only outline proposals and would need to have "the meat put on the bone" however a concrete plan of action detailing actions and outcomes shouldn't be that onerous with a can and will do attitude and some considerable flexibility by the CEO's/FD's/Banks/Government in particular thrown in for good measure.

Entry No: 62

A Marketing specialist but with a breadth of vision that works across a complete organisation.

The Government cannot pick the future saviour technology or market, but it can create a decent forward seeking and reactive business environment.

How?

Well it has to be a combination of things aimed at promoting speed and innovation.

- * Encourage Smaller Businesses (< 50 or so - not the SME definition which covers over 2/3rd of UK businesses) as they are fast moving
- remove barriers (intended or unintended) that stop small businesses from working with the public sector
- continue with tax and NI breaks for smaller businesses not part of a larger group
- review and enhance the financial support for technical innovation such that some can kick in earlier in the process and can be awarded more speedily.
- * Encourage Regional Oomph and competition.
- Legislate to allow for subsidies/levies based on 'component mile' - not discrimination against other countries but distance travelled, even within uk. (Keep it broad brush to avoid wasted admin time). The actual levy/subsidy to be decided by regional bodies, possibly not implemented at all by some.
- Reinstate Regional Selective Assistance.
- Oh and this might need some Regional assemblies or such like, even at the expense of national public bodies and silly small county/city/borough differentiation.
- * Real Tax incentives for investors in innovation -not property investments and service companies!

Entry No: 63

A confident and successful chief executive with the calm clarity of thought necessary to lead a turnaround.

Vince Cable should make available government-underwritten loans to business at relatively high rates of interest but with no security other than the requirement that an independent executive (or executive team) should conduct a review of the recipient business. Member(s) of that team should then be appointed to the board as independent executive(s).

The review should NOT be conducted by large accountancy firms and should be paid for by the government. The non-executive directors should also be paid for by the government. They should be members of the Institute for Turnaround.

The availability of such government finance would also be linked to strategic long term aims. These strategic aims would be widely interpreted and would be widely debated. For instance, "high tech" manufacturing would include tier 3 or 4 producers of fairly low tech products which might support a "lean" supply chain.

The benefits of such a scheme would be:

The avoidance of short term lending linked to massive returns realised upon sale of the company (3 to 5 year timescale).

Genuine long term money available to industry.

Independent verification and governance.

Entry No: 64

An experienced manager and management consultant, specialist in Manufacturing / Operations / Supply Chain Management.

There is only one solution to the problems facing the UK economy. As Mr Cable said, what is left is people - skilled, intelligent people. We need to use the skills of these peoples and, equally importantly, we need to provide an employment base for the country. Becoming the world's centre for information processing, insurance underwriting, investment banking and all these other things clearly doesn't generate sufficient employment. Even these highly-paid specialists have limited requirements for cleaners, cocktail waiters and waitresses, car valets and the like. We need to seek mass employment and there is only one area in which this can be achieved - manufacturing.

Yes, metal-bashing has mostly gone to Asia, and don't we know it - those of us who are trying to put together products from components sourced on, say, China? ASME-certified components from companies who haven't obtained ASME certification for their employees don't actually represent the savings we were all pushed into by corporate number-crunchers and we need to start turning the clock back.

Can we succeed? Yes, we can. There are some areas where labour costs represent too high a proportion of the total to give us a level playing ground but there is still demand for specialist, engineered products and in this area we can still lead the world. Where lead time to market may be critical and where the stock-holding costs required to compensate for the delays arising from sourcing components in the Far East we can succeed. I work in many specialist businesses (some metal bashing but others in electronics and optical areas) where the UK can lead the world. However, we would do better with a stronger manufacturing infrastructure. (This infrastructure would enable the providers of finished products to employ more people and would generate employees itself.)

So how do we go about this? Quite simply we have to invest the nation's resources - grant-funding assistance to businesses setting out to replace our base in primary manufacturing and a tax system that recognises these businesses for what they are. Banks paying massive bonuses for people shuffling abstract sums of money are not worthy of comparison with companies providing a foundation for an economy that generates true wealth and employment.

Entry No: 65

A professional engineer and general manager, for the last 15 years working as an interim manager delivering board level assignments into businesses underpinned by engineering and technology within Europe and more recently Asia.

So lets take stock of where we are:

Mature Industries: Have (luckily) been ignored by government (don't make good sound bites, difficult to understand, requires decades grinding hard work). Mature industries that are left today are good, profitable and well financed; in some areas world class (offshore, aero, defence, parts of fine chemicals, etc.) but in niches. They have got much more productive - 300% to 400% over 7 years is common and more will come. But their markets are increasingly somewhere else (look at a UK industrial plc and how much of its business is now in the UK and what proportion of the decision makers are the UK, compare and contrast with 10 years ago). We have mostly lost main contractor status, our businesses tend to be tier 1 or specialist.

New Industries: The UK's somewhat chaotic society with rules that bend, get arounds and multicultural environment somehow creates a completely disproportionate creative output. The UK is actually recognised as being creative. Within the UK much happens but it is also exported as IP, products, services and people. It's a sector that is generally talent intensive and not capital intensive. Technology has allowed the creative industries to achieve critical mass and global reach. Its only just starting.

Finances: As a nation, living way beyond our means - now the end of May before tax free day. Banks are really important for Mature and New industries to support creation and expansion of business, finance trade and manage risks. This has been forgotten. The adage "if its too good to be true then it probably is" comes to mind. Economic wealth continues to accumulate in the South East and to a lesser extent major conurbations.

Infrastructure and Mobility: Infrastructure is awful, getting worse and blighted by indecision, not coordinated and under invested (both financially and in service ethic). It damages business and suppresses mobility.

Education: Good for a few, not so good for the many, culturally its still not smart to be smart (lack of aspiration). Huge gap between school/FE and university. For a would be knowledge economy, its not fit for purpose.

Governance: Dubious, nanny state with spurious authority becoming increasing coercive. Complete lack of accountability of many services (public and private).

What to do?

Mature Industries: They know how to thrive, so government should support not help. Government should match underwrite (see Finances below) large continuing infrastructure projects (so transport, power, etc but not one offs like the Olympics) using existing technology (quicker) but insist licensing in of the deployed technology (if not UK already); substantial local content of supply equipment and labour (along with its training). This puts a heavy burden on the (probably foreign) main contractor but the incentive would have quick and certain government decision making (and these must happen). Start yesterday, just cut through the crap. Don't tolerate 10 year programmes, have big carrots for success and big sticks for failure. For SME's set up networks (run by sector company leaders) to aggressively support the internationalisation of the SME sector. Aggressively reduce spurious regulation and bureaucracy taking a zero budget approach (see Governance). Major national benefit 3 to 5 years. Cost zero, liability (for match underwriting) low so long as UK AAA rating retained. But note, Mature industries will never create employment en mass again.

New Industries: Recognise that government can't pick winners, but can facilitate. Support universities/companies to set up real incubators (with all the support services), then the step beyond these. Provide "micro" finance and accept failure with only modest penalty. Watch for hot spots of development and aggressively support these - ask them and test what they need to progress. Keep government staff in the back room, use business people at the interface and for decision making. Worry if: money not spent, too few failures, some big successes don't occur. Introduce substantial prizes for specific defined achievement (modern day equivalent of John Harrison's chronometer). Major benefit 2 to 3 years. Cost hundreds of millions.

Finances: Hold the coalition government to account, make sure the cuts and more are made until UK can balance its books on an operating basis (interest payments included). Change social security benefits/health/care spending as the means to help people though not the final fix. Banks held the economy to ransom, this cant happen twice. Licences only to industrial banks which finance but do not also gamble. Let other (now non financing) banks do what ever, but if they fail, they fail. Only allow them to be partnerships. Work with large industrial

groups/ groups of groups to develop more new industrial banks (these banks will really understand the risks they are financing). Industrial banks to finance mature industry projects (see above) underwritten by the government. Don't try and change the (almost) inevitable in terms of wealth going to the South East and major conurbations (see Infrastructure). Major benefit within a year, cost nil.

Infrastructure and Mobility: Underwrite major investment in infrastructure (see Mature industry and Finances), set aggressive programmes (accept an increase in cost for this), have proven players run them, don't interfere. Government provide hard driving enabling to make things happen, treat those affected fairly but not excessively. Quickly renegotiate contracts for failing existing infrastructure providers in particular with regard to value for money and service ethic. Directly invest in short term fixes that provide disproportionate benefit - just do it. Through other ministries create a national acceptance that people have to be where the work is (so use technology, travel or move), improved infrastructure to make this easier and cheaper. Acceptance of location to include the whole of Europe. Social security benefits etc to mirror the policy (must be a job for most people in an EU population of 500M). Provide real help to those making the transition (which some will find genuinely difficult). Major benefit 1 to 5 years. Cost hundreds of millions, liability (for underwriting) low so long as UK AAA rating retained.

Education: Move the importance of educational achievement for all to centre stage, keep it there year after year after year. Don't bother changing the names but recreate the polytechnic higher education groups, close to industry and business producing practical yet well educated people. Require the polytechnic groups get X % of their revenue from business keeping them close to business. Make them flexible on intake with foundation years (to improve numeracy, literacy, identification and help with individual problems) for those who missed out earlier (so intake not always points based). Have the FE colleges as part of the front end entry. Insist the UK professional institutions work with these groups ensuring a relevant and interesting curriculum and to provide a credible qualifying authority (could be worth more than a degree over time). Encourage local business (maybe through the SME groups, see New Industries) to be very demanding of these polytechnic groups. Major benefit 2 years to forever. Cost tens of millions.

Governance: The UK is slowly becoming a more coercive and pointlessly bureaucratic place to live/do business, too many have apparent authority without responsibility. This developing culture is not conducive to a creative society (and so New Industry development). The UK as an aggregate still has sufficient perspective to see what is fair, right and reasonable. Have that perspective captured then have the appropriate ministries unwind the unnecessary and counter productive. Have all monopoly suppliers of services (public or private) deliver against meaningful service level agreements (meaningful = obvious good service to the user). Replace those that don't (public or private). Major benefit 1 year to forever. Cost Nil.

And a few unknowns:

- The military have vast transferable skills, discipline and capability. Their experience (as a minimum) in terms of advice should be in the mix somewhere.
- Technology must mean that the Open University should be able to take on a unifying role in education and training. Its respected by all and carries no historical baggage.

And the role of interims:

Interim managers are not a homogeneous group - quite the reverse, some comments:

- Much of the above involves doing the same but differently. Interims are used to being told it cant be done, or only possible "this way". Interims just get the objective delivered.
- With the exception of specific knowledge consultants who add real value, government should stop using consultants en masse. They embed themselves and are frequently disempowering to government officials. Parliament and government officials should define policy. Interims are very effective on implementation. Interims by their very nature will not become embedded.
- Interims think in weeks and months (sometimes days) whereas career executives tend to work in months and years. Good for getting those infrastructure projects delivered on time.

- Interims are genuinely passionate about the sectors they work in, would make very good ambassadors for businesses into education - but only on an assignment basis.
- Interims tend to be travelled and used to quickly getting organised in new locations in new environments - what a lot of people are going to have to do, they would be good (but tough) mentors.
- Many interims have worked in both mature and new industries and are used to managing the consequences of developing technology, they would be very effective operating in new industry companies managing the maturing process.

Entry No: 66

An Interim who has run his own company for over 28 years and has organised numerous seminars and trade shows too.

Dear Vince,

We have 1st class people in this country in all sectors - especially the service sectors: finance, legal, medical, IT, design (product, fashion and engineering), however we have an attitude let's look for barriers - rather than solutions!!!

If Vince and / or others could encourage a "new" can do attitude - prevalent in the US and Asia - this would revolutionise British business and the UK economy too. We are (in the main) too modest about our abilities, capabilities, contacts and knowledge.

Vince could head up a "can do" group - including such figures as Alan Sugar, Richard Branson, Peter Jones, Stelios, and others to mentor and encourage this "new" can do attitude.

They could give talks - produce dvds - offer one to one and one to many guidance.

If / when we could produce this "new" attitude to spread throughout society - we would make a real / amazing difference.

"...we need more companies and more jobs in the companies we have." Vince Cable



6. Summing Up

What started off as a light-hearted and somewhat quirky end-of-year competition finished up as an amazing collection of authoritative views on the future of UK business - and from a hugely under-represented and generally unrecognised business community of skill and experience.

Ask not what this country can do for them; ask what they can do for UK business might be an appropriate mantra. And how do you link supply with demand and need?

This publication sets out so many ways in which these achievements can be made. These are the people who don't go home till the job is done.

Please email any comments, etc. to HelpingVince@russam-gms.co.uk

These are our core messages to Vince Cable and his Advisors:-

- Listen to what this Group has to say
- Set up channels to keep the advice coming.
- Create the mechanisms to link these senior independent business people to where their unmatched skills, their application and their commitment will have serious impact on the SME business sector.
- This is where experience means that they know how to do it because they've done it before - and successfully. If one of the major routes to the UK's greater prosperity is through SMEs, these people are the enablers, the background strength providing the knowhow, the experience and the stamina.



7. About Russam GMS Ltd

Russam GMS Ltd is the longest established mainstream Interim Management Provider in the UK and sits on top of the most comprehensive working database of senior executives operating as Independent Consultants and Interim Managers in the UK. Our mission is to be the outstanding Interim Management Provider in our target markets and to work closely with clients to make Interim Management truly effective - we are reliable, open and thorough.

“Interim Management is the engagement by an organisation of a senior independent executive for a limited contractual period in a line management, staff or project role.”

For the last thirty years, we have operated as one of the top UK Interim Management providers and our Principals all have in-depth market knowledge. Our database of over 11,000 senior executives is widely seen to be the most comprehensive working database of senior executives operating as Independent Consultants and Interim Managers in the UK.

Our approach to Interim Management is search-driven, which means that if we can't find the right candidates on our database we use the latest search techniques including cutting-edge technology, extensive business networks and contacts to find the right executives. We cover all disciplines including Finance, Programme/Project Management, IT, HR, Compliance, Purchasing, Sales & Marketing, Media and Telecoms, Turnaround, General Management, and Change Management.

Our business is made up of four distinct divisions - a Private Sector division, a Public Sector division, an Entrepreneur practice and a busy back office function.

Through our thriving Entrepreneur Practice, we view the Interim Management market more holistically and entrepreneurially than our competitors. Our vision is to establish Russam GMS as the pre-eminent source of entrepreneurial independent executives and Interim Managers to Private Equity, Banks and other similar stakeholders and intermediaries for Transformation, Restructuring and Turnaround assignments .

In particular, we have created and manage what we regard as the UK's largest resource of Business Mentors. More information about RGMS Business Mentors - and how these senior business people differ from the more conventionally defined Mentors - is available on our website - www.russam-gms.co.uk

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