

The greatest good for the greatest number

Clive Bonny — business advisor, IP and ESG consultant, and health advocate — on a 36-year mission that hasn't moved, two health scares that changed how he sees the NHS, and turning ESG from box-ticking into an open door.

This conversation includes discussion of suicide loss. If you're struggling, Samaritans are free to call any time on 116 123.

Clive Bonny has been a management consultant and business advisor since 1990. Before that, English Literature teacher to students in what was then Rhodesia; before that, a childhood on Aesop's Fables and Greek myth. Thirty-six years later, the mission is unchanged, and Clive can point to exactly where it came from.

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We are our own baseline. Only we will know what is normal for us.

— Adam Walker, on Pharma Prescribed

A 36-year mission that hasn't moved

Clive describes his vision in explicitly utilitarian terms: the greatest good for the greatest number, judged on outcomes rather than intentions. He traces it back to his mother reading him Aesop's Fables and Greek myth as a child, and to a year spent teaching English literature to students in what was then Rhodesia. The lesson he took from that year has outlasted everything since: never assume what people from a different culture or background are capable of learning.

Two diagnoses, two decisions

Clive was diagnosed with Atrial Fibrillation after the loss of his younger brother to suicide, a connection he raises without being asked. His pulse was found to be 30 during a routine pre-operation check — low enough that his blood thickens and stroke risk climbs sharply. He spent two weeks in intensive care before a pacemaker and an ablation brought it under control. His advice is simple and repeatable: check your resting pulse, and if it's regularly under 50, get it looked at.

The second diagnosis was prostate cancer, caught through routine PSA monitoring after years of gradually rising readings. The operation, six hours instead of the planned two once surgeons found his prostate at four times normal size, was carried out by a da Vinci surgical robot. A year on, full recovery. Clive's own statistic, offered without softening: one in eight men in the UK will get prostate cancer, and one in four of those diagnosed too late will die of it.

Turning ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) from box-ticking into an open door

Clive trains small enterprises through a non-profit accreditation body, the Organisation for Responsible Businesses, to formalise the environmental and social value work they're often already doing informally. His own assessment took six hours spread over six weeks and cost £300. What it unlocked was access to public sector contracts, a market he estimates at around 40% of all UK business activity, much of it now legally requiring suppliers to demonstrate social value under the Public Procurement Act. Most small enterprises, he says, don't yet know the requirement exists.

QUICKFIRE ROUND

Advice to his younger self: Spend more time giving before getting, and spend time inside a small enterprise to understand it properly.

Top qualities for building a team: Diversity, a can-do attitude, and mutual support — "no one is an island."

Favourite thing outside work: Rescue dogs — three Jack Russells, the eldest 16 — alongside writing, photography and community volunteering.

Golden rule, in life and business: FOR — Fun, Openness, Respect. Built with his son around Stephen Covey's habit of starting with the end in mind: what do you want people to say about you?



Listen to the full episode

Clive Bonny on Pharma Prescribed — at pharmaprescribed.com and wherever you get your podcasts.

Clive Bonny is a business advisor specialising in IP protection, ESG accreditation and dispute resolution, and a trained suicide-prevention counsellor. He is a survivor of prostate cancer and lives with Atrial Fibrillation.