People

A new chapter in IBL's People leadership

After nearly 13 years shaping the People function at IBL, Hubert Gaspard, IBL's Group Chief People Officer, is moving closer to operations as Cluster Head - People and Business Transformation for FMCG & Healthcare Distribution across Mauritius, East Africa and the Indian Ocean. Steena Kistnen, formerly Head of Group People Transformation, took on the role of Acting Group Chief People Officer as of 1 September 2026.

Hubert, what was your role when you first joined IBL? How did it evolve?

Hubert: I joined in 2013 to build the People function from the ground up. The first few years were about bringing international best practice and key performance indicators to the function. We launched our first engagement survey in 2014, introduced tools for remuneration and job evaluation, and put into place more systematic processes around people development.

Then came the 2016 amalgamation, bringing together two distinct organisations and cultures: Ireland Blyth Ltd's operational mindset and GML's investment-holding approach. Culture and integration became central priorities. We worked to create a common way of working while keeping people engaged. We invested in workshops and targeted initiatives to bring teams together and build a shared culture. Where roles overlapped, we looked at how responsibilities could be redistributed, and how people could move into new roles.

As we grew, we felt the need for a development approach more tailored to the realities of our operations, while nurturing a culture of Togetherness. The IBL Management Development Programme was launched in partnership with Stellenbosch University.

Later, the need for an Academy took shape, and that's where Steena joined us in 2022. From that point, a culture of excellence, combining leadership quality, people processes and informed people decisions, became the centre of gravity for the function.

What does moving closer to the operations mean for you?

Hubert: At the Head Office, I spent the last decade setting the direction and supporting our businesses as they implemented it. Now I get to take that experience back into the business and drive the change directly.

I was in operations before the amalgamation, so in many ways I'm coming full circle, but this time with thirteen years of Group-level experience behind me. I have a better understanding of how the different parts of IBL fit together, what strong People practices can do for a business, and how they translate on the ground. That is particularly relevant in healthcare distribution and the fast-moving consumer goods ecosystem, where people, capability and culture are closely linked to performance. My background in Occupational Psychology and Business Management also gives me a natural connection to this work. After 22 years in HR, this entrepreneurial and business-growth side of the story was genuinely attractive.

Steena, what made you join IBL?

Steena: I joined IBL with a transformation mandate, rather than in a traditional People role. My prior experience exposed me to strategy, performance and operational transformation, so what immediately resonated with me was that IBL viewed the People agenda as integral to business performance. There was a clear ambition to understand capabilities with greater rigour, invest deliberately in people, and connect those decisions to how the organisation creates value. That's what made the opportunity compelling to me.

I was also struck by the Group's honesty about its gaps. The focus was on what was missing, not what was already working. That kind of intellectual honesty was rare.

I was equally attracted by IBL's diversity. Across sectors, geographies, business models and levels of maturity, there can never be a one-size-fits-all approach. The challenge is to create a common ambition and strong Group foundations, while staying close to the realities of each business. That's what made me want to join.

As IBL continues to grow, what needs to stay, and where do you see new opportunities?

Steena: We need to preserve the entrepreneurial mindset: the ability to take ownership, to make decisions close to the business, and move with pace as IBL becomes larger and more complex. I'd also preserve the Group's champion mindset - the belief that whatever the ambition, we have the courage to pursue it, but not at any cost. And that it's not a question only of how fast we scale, but of scaling in a way that lasts. The idea of 'Winning Well' captures that important balance between ambition and performance. The opportunity now is to make sure the Group function keeps pace with the businesses. That means understanding clearly what will be needed to perform in new markets and business environments, identifying gaps early, and preparing for them ahead of the need. The objective is not greater centralisation; it is a stronger organisation.

Both of you have seen many people grow within IBL. What has this journey taught you about leadership?

Steena: For me, it has reinforced that leadership is ultimately about creating the conditions for other people to grow. Strong leaders provide clarity, set high standards, and are accountable for results, but they must also build the capability and confidence of the people around them. Their role is not to become the answer to every problem, but to build teams that can make decisions with discernment and execute consistently. For a growing organisation, sustainable performance cannot depend on a few individuals alone; leadership must create depth.

One of the most meaningful measures of leadership is not what a leader delivers personally, but what the organisation becomes capable of delivering because of that leader.

Hubert: One of the biggest shifts has been moving away from a traditional command-and-control approach towards a leadership style that puts greater emphasis on helping others succeed.

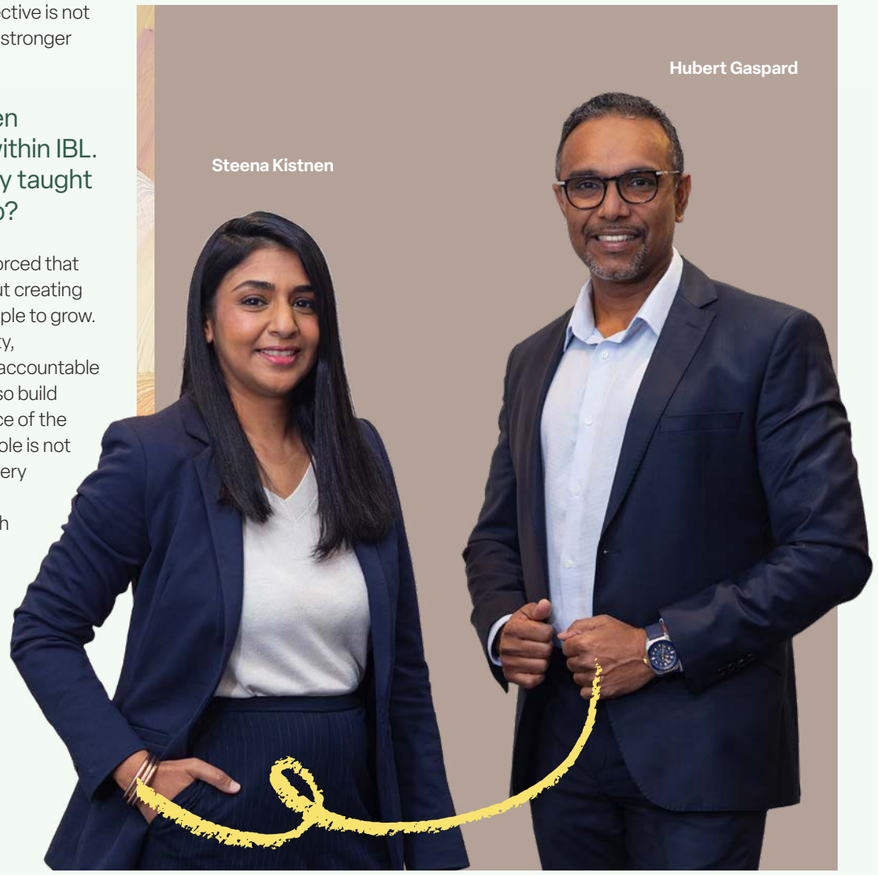
Culture starts with the leader: you cannot ask people to behave differently if leaders are not prepared to change how they lead. Today, our leaders are shifting more towards being at the service of their people. They are becoming accountable not just for their own results, but for the performance of their teams. We now evaluate each leader based on their capacity to develop and elevate their people, not only on the results they bring.

Steena, looking ahead, what will matter most?

Steena: Definitely organisational adaptability: how quickly we can build new capabilities, develop leadership, and redesign the way we work in an ever-changing environment.

Technology, and AI in particular, will accelerate that shift. But the challenge is not simply to adopt technology. It is to use it intelligently to improve productivity, decision-making and the quality of work, while recognising that human judgement, critical thinking, creativity and accountability will become even more important.

The real test will be our ability to evolve at pace without losing proximity to our businesses, our entrepreneurial spirit, or the culture that makes IBL unique.



People

10 YEARS OF IBL

"Ten years ago, People focused primarily on payroll, processes, policies and administration. Today, the People agenda is integral to how IBL develops capability and delivers sustainable performance. As our businesses grow, they are building stronger leadership teams and, increasingly, their own capabilities. That changes what leadership means at IBL. Leading and developing people is no longer HR's job alone; every team leader, every manager, at every level, is expected to take ownership of the development and performance of their people. Our ambition is to strengthen People leadership throughout the Group, while providing the standards, expertise and insight that create value across IBL."



Hubert Gaspard
Group Chief People Officer - IBL Group*

BUILDING CAPABILITY WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

As IBL expands across the region, the People function's role is evolving with its businesses. FY2026 marked a shift in how the function works within the Group, with Group Heads of Operations bringing greater focus to the performance and development of each cluster.

As businesses strengthen their capabilities in-house, the Group People function is sharpening its role as a strategic partner. This means focusing Group-level expertise where it can create the most value, integrating People priorities and metrics more systematically into leadership and Board-level decision-making, and strengthening accountability for how People practices contribute to business performance.

*In post until 30 June 2026

A YEAR OF DELIVERY

Strategic pillars:

- Empowering people at every level
- Process transformation
- Culture & wellbeing
- Talent growth & mobility

Pillar 1: Empowering people at every level

During FY2026, the focus was on equipping leaders with the tools, perspectives and confidence required to lead effectively in an increasingly international environment. The aim is to build leadership depth at every level of seniority.

Pillar 2: Process transformation

IBL's "Local, internationally" approach is shaping how People practices are developed. Common standards, processes and best practices connect businesses and markets, while allowing them to adapt to their own needs, leadership maturity and cultural context. New People tools and policies are increasingly being developed with the businesses that will use them, rather than created centrally.

During FY2026, People teams worked directly with clusters and businesses on their transformation priorities. This work included supporting organisational restructuring and recruitment at Life, accompanying a leadership transition at DTOS, helping Winners strengthen its operating model and People architecture, and advancing People Transformation priorities within FMCG & Healthcare Distribution.

This work also informed a broader review of the Group's central functions. The review examined how the Head Office should work with the businesses, where it can create efficiencies, and where common approaches and specialist knowledge can be leveraged across the Group rather than replicated across individual businesses.

Pillar 3: Culture & wellbeing

Understanding how people experience IBL remains a priority. In FY2026, IBL introduced iBelong, an engagement framework developed specifically for the Group to gather employee feedback and track workplace culture and engagement across its businesses.

This methodology gives the Group a shared, consistent way to listen to employees, while keeping the detail that matters to each business. Results are available at BU level, and consolidated at Group level, so that each business can act on its own findings, while allowing the Group to also identify common themes across businesses and geographies, understand where experiences differ, and share practices that are working well.

The first Group-wide results showed particularly strong levels of understanding of organisational goals, pride in being part of the Group, and confidence in its products and services. The findings also highlighted areas for improvement in leadership effectiveness, organisational culture, and employee wellbeing.

Winners, MBP/Cervonic, IBL Shipping and Eagle Insurance were the highest performers and were recognised in this year's iBelong awards.

iBELONG 2026 GROUP INSIGHTS

- 86% Sustainable Engagement Score
- 7,140 took part in the survey, an 83% participation rate among those invited

Alongside engagement, businesses continued to revisit their purpose, vision and values, guided by IBL's overarching philosophy of **Trust, Truth, Together.** This provides a common thread across the Group while allowing each business to express these principles in ways that are relevant to its own people and culture. The next step is to translate these principles more consistently into everyday behaviours and ways of working.

Pillar 4: Talent growth & mobility

Talent mobility is helping IBL build capability across the Group while creating opportunities for people to grow through exposure to different business environments. The value of this mobility extends beyond individual careers: over time, it is creating a deeper pool of people with experience across various sectors and markets, strengthening IBL's ability to fill new roles and develop talent from within.