

## Dr John Tedstrom

PhD Russian and East European Studies (1994)

CEO and President of the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria



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John became CEO and President of the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria (GBC) in January after joining the organisation as an executive director in 2006. Before joining the GBC, John was director for Russian, Ukrainian and Eurasian affairs for the US National Security Council, providing policy advice and strategic planning for President Bill Clinton.

As CEO, inspiring member companies to be strong corporate and global citizens is one of his priorities. 'I want to get global health out of the philanthropy closet and try to help people understand that investing in communities and the well being of employees and customers

His greatest hope is for malaria to be eliminated as a global health problem by 2012 - 2015 through a combination of bed nets and increasing patients' access to combination therapy.



### How did your time at Birmingham influence your career?

I had been living in Germany studying the Soviet Union and international economics. My time at Birmingham really helped to reinforce in a young boy from a small town in Kansas that the world didn't only revolve around the USA, especially at that time during the Cold War, there was so much out there that needed to be understood and explored.

In the Department of Commerce and Economics, the professors and students had a real commitment to excellence and that commitment was instilled in me and helped tremendously as I moved through my career at the White House and with the Global Business Coalition. I learned to appreciate the larger context of the experience that we're all having – it's one thing to have experts in particular subjects and another to share that experience in a useful way.

### Do you remember any particular members of staff?

Many members of staff had a huge impact on me. Their commitment not only to their subject but also to their students was tremendous and they also had to weave together their research with work to advise governments around the world on Soviet issues. My doctoral supervisor, Phil Hanson, was one of the top economists in the world on the Soviet Union but always had time for his students. He was well-regarded but humble and had a major influence on me as a professional.

### What are your priorities in your post as president and CEO of the coalition?

There are two priorities as CEO in an organisation like ours. The first is an internal priority, to help define and then advance the values of the organisation, to make sure that the folks who come into work every day in New York, Beijing, Nairobi, Moscow, Paris and Johannesburg deeply understand the value structure of the GBC and are able to thrive inside that value structure.

Secondly, we need to challenge and inspire our member companies at every level to do more and to do better to be strong corporate citizens and strong global citizens.

### Your doctorate was in Eastern European and Russian studies. How has that helped with expanding the coalition's reach in these countries?

Inside Russia in particular, there had never been a history of corporate social responsibility and the business environment is dynamic, evolving and constantly reacting to many pressures. Knowing these cultures and the histories of their societies from the inside out gave me the credibility to work at the highest levels of government.

### Please can you give an example of how the coalition uses the business capabilities of its members to fight killer diseases?

When we started out, we worked with individual countries to help them develop workplace and community-based programmes. We then adapted to bring groups of companies together to work on joint projects and to collaborate to achieve common goals. They pool their resources, expertise and core competencies for larger projects which have a bigger impact on people's lives.

In Kenya in April, we began a project to test two million people for HIV and TB, gave them bed nets to protect them from malaria-carrying mosquitoes and provided deworming medication for children. A total of 12 businesses were involved as well as the Kenya Ministry of Health and the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR).

### What's your strategy for the recession?

Firstly, a shift to collective action, so no one company feels as if it must shoulder the entire burden. We see power in partnership.

Secondly, we need to make it clear that if we back off from fighting Aids, TB and Malaria now, we will have a larger, more expensive, more complex problem in the future. Ultimately it's more cost effective to stay the course and even expand programmes through partnership. There is also an important bottom line issue about the health and productivity of employees.

### Of all the diseases the coalition fights, HIV/ AIDS is the biggest killer in the developing world and this is often linked to TB. What action are you taking?

Throughout Africa, Eastern Europe and China we can see a rising challenge with Multiple Drug Resistant (MDR) and Extreme Drug Resistant (XDR) TB. We can also see a rise in the spread of MDR and XTR TB very closely linked to HIV. We believe the most important thing anybody can do is have a strong HIV programme linked with TB programme.

We believe strongly in the World Health Organisations "three I's": Intensified case finding, infection control and INH preventative therapy for latent TB in HIV positive patients.

Dr. Jorge Sampaio, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Stop TB and the Coalition do a lot of work on a global advocacy level. We spoke to the annual conference of the International Stop TB Society in Brazil in March and we're also encouraging members in the pharmaceutical research sectors to push forward on developing treatment options.

## Do you think there will ever be a time when you feel like the coalition is winning the fight?

Yes. For HIV, rapidly scaling up access to Anti-Retro viral (ARV) drugs is the first step and sustaining that access with access to second line and third line ARVs. Today there are four times as many people infected with HIV every day as there are with access to these drugs and we need to reverse that ratio.

We also need to accelerate the development of TB drugs and vaccines but the big wins for us all come in the field of malaria.

I hope that some time between 2012 and 2015 we will have eliminated malaria as a global health problem. This is doable: it is inexpensive and simple. Bed nets are the front line. We know they prevent people getting bitten by mosquitoes and they're also impregnated with insecticide so they kill mosquitoes. We also need to scale up access to combination therapy for malaria patients to prevent them from dying and we need to do this rapidly to prevent people from developing a resistance to therapy because there is no other treatment in the pipeline.

## What do you think motivates business leaders to join the coalition?

I want to get HIV and global health out of the philanthropy closet and try to help people understand that investing in communities and the well-being of employees and customers is in the interest of the entire business community. Some companies, such as Standard Chartered Bank, SAB Miller or Anglo American and Coca-Cola, have very large footprints in developing countries and it's in their bottom line interest every day.

For other companies, such as a small private equity firm in London with 50 employees, their bottom line interest is less immediate and less pronounced but they do have a stake in the economic development of these regions and they certainly have a stake in the health and well-being of their own employees.

## What are the criteria to join the coalition? Can alumni business leaders join?

They can and they should. It is a great way to leverage limited resources through the power of the coalition and to connect companies together to partner on projects to invest their resources wisely in these areas.

## Your job is obviously busy and challenging, what do you do to relax?

I love to play tennis and I love the beach but I don't get to experience either one very often. I'm also renovating a Brooklyn town house in one of the historic districts which is 160 years old. It's great restoring that building and seeing it come back to life.

For further information about the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, visit [www.gbcimpact.org](http://www.gbcimpact.org) (<http://www.gbcimpact.org>).

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