

**Presentation Title: Making a difference, Action not Words – Heart and Head**

**A Case Study of Discover Ltd UK  
Project at the Kasbah du Toubkal, Marrakech, Morocco**

**Presented By: Mike McHugo, Managing Director and Chris McHugo, Chairman**

**Presentation Abstract:**

**Back Ground:**

Discover Ltd is a small private UK company founded in 1978 by Mike McHugo and 3 friends aimed at delivering travel experiences to small groups and schools. It operated trips to the remote areas of Spain and Morocco overland from UK.

The company expanded in 1985 to acquire a permanent centre in a depopulated area of rural France. Mike's elder brother Chris (a consultant in the City) joined the Company as Chairman (unpaid) and other family and friends invested. They restored The Eagle's Nest and it is busy taking English students to study geography mainly at A level. The centre can accommodate 100 students.

Mike had met Omar Ait Barmed in 1978 in Imlil, the High Atlas trailhead village to Jbel Toubkal (4,167m) the highest mountain in North Africa, whilst researching trip opportunities for his school clients. They formed a brotherly relationship and Mike started running trips for schools with Omar. Chris also met Omar.

In 1989 whilst visiting Imlil with their mother, Chris noticed the derelict Kasbah on the hill top above Omar's house. He suggested to Mike and Omar that perhaps they could investigate who owned it. Discover was not looking for another overseas investment but the existence of trust made it worth looking into. Also the area was fragile and the locals deserved to be protected from the worst effects of global tourism.

The Kasbah is widely recognised for its work with and for the community. The initial restoration was directed and carried out locally with workers from the area. The Kasbah has help establish local associations, rubbish clearance on the back of a film on the Dalai Lama directed by Martin Scorsese, introduced an Ambulance Service and recently completed the building of a Community Hammam (bath house).

The Kasbah has won several awards for sustainable tourism (Green Globe, British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow and Responsible Tourism) and the London Independent has rated. The Kasbah du Toubkal as one of the top five mountain retreats globally.

The presentation will centre on this project and the benefits to all stakeholders, the challenges and how value beyond economics can work in the private sector. The presentation will be given by Chris and Mike McHugo.

**Presenters:**

Chris McHugo graduated in Management Sciences, trained with one of the worlds Big 5 consultancies and is now an independent management consultant specializing in Information Systems especially in financial institutions (Banks and Insurance Companies). He also works in the Tourism sector specialising in strategy at country and regional levels. He has travelled widely and worked or lived in more than 20 countries. He is Chairman of Discover Ltd the owners of The Kasbah du Toubkal and is passionate about the impact of tourism on destinations.

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Mike McHugo graduated in Business Studies and decide to follow a non traditional path. Having trained as a bus driver he set up Discover Limited to allow him to travel and show clients parts of the world he had discovered and fell in love with. Initially this was Morocco and Spain then Southern France. Mike is the Managing Director of Discover Limited and lives at the Eagle's Nest in Southern France with his wife and two daughters. He travels to Morocco most months to visit the Kasbah and promote it and guide the general direction the business is going in, in the local area.

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