

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

APRIL-MAY 2020



SWEENEY MILLER LAW - AMBITION REWARDED

business | property | media | technology | education | motors | fashion | arts | leisure

issue 58

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the April/May edition of Northern Insight.

I write this during an extraordinary moment in time and hope that all readers, clients, suppliers and their loved ones are keeping well in light of Coronavirus.

The impact has been felt on all sections of society, not least the North East business community with many regular columnists exploring the unfolding crisis in their articles.

Amongst this gloom and uncertainty, we are proud to showcase some regional success stories. Our cover stars this month are Sweeney Miller Law who talk us through their growth ambitions and achievements.

Surging Tyneside accessories brand, Torro, also tell us about their newly-launched business consultancy venture, PICOM, founded to support the next generation of e-commerce entrepreneurs.

With social distancing measures in place, we've been unable to bring any new leisure reviews but instead feature an interview with Tyneside restaurateur, Bob Arora of enormous Sachins Restaurant renown.

Writing on the eve of the 8pm Clap for our NHS, I am tremendously moved by the spirit we have seen in our region and I'm sure we can channel it into our professional lives as we emerge from this stronger and more unified.

Stay safe!

Thank you to all concerned for your fantastic support. Till next month.

M.J. Grahamslaw
Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher
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LANDMARK RESIDENTIAL SCHEME MOVES IN FIRST BUYERS

The first phase of new homes as part of the redevelopment of Lambton Park has reached a major milestone as the first buyers move in. This comes hot on the heels of the recent show home launch at Miller Homes at Lambton Park, located within the iconic Lambton Estate near Chester-le-Street.

Once complete the development will comprise 106 high-quality three, four and five-bedroom homes along with one, two and three-bedroom apartments, which have been sympathetically designed by renowned architect and interior

designer, Ben Pentreath.

The homes are entirely bespoke to be in keeping with the heritage of the Estate which stretches back to the 11th century. Design features include red brick detailing, sash windows and decorative ridge tiles.

Homebuyers can enjoy life on the Estate and will benefit from the wider redevelopment plans. The overall project was granted planning consent for new homes, offices, retail and community space, as well as conservation works which includes the restoration of Lambton Castle and Lamb Bridge.

Andrew Somerville, Sales Director at Miller Homes North East, said: "It's truly special being able to give people the chance to move into the incredible setting that is Lambton Park."

NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEUR LAUNCHES WELLNESS VENTURE



A North East entrepreneur has launched a new wellness company.

Ian Craggs, from Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham, has set up the DIRECT2U Group which sells products direct to the consumer and

on subscription. The company's first brand is CBDDIRECT2U, an ecommerce website selling a range of premium CBD oils.

The products have been developed by Ian together with business partner Dr Peter Naylor, the company's Medical Director.

Flavours include Pure Chocolate, Mixed Berry, Peppermint, Lemon & Lime and Orange, plus a Natural CBD oil and a Lavender Night Oil.

All the CBD oils are made in the UK, come with a guaranteed CBD concentration and are independently tested and THC free, which means that they are completely legal to consume as a food supplement.

Ian said: "People are becoming ever more conscious of their health and wellbeing. By launching a series of direct to consumer ecommerce websites we are making it easy for customers to buy products when they want them. We also offer a subscription service allowing people to have their favourite products delivered to them on a regular monthly basis."

Other ranges of wellness products will also be launched in the coming months.

FIRST NORTH EAST AMBASSADOR FOR PRINCE'S TRUST

A former winner of the North East Woman Entrepreneur of the Year has become the first ambassador for The Prince's Trust's new initiative, Women Supporting Women in the North East.

Kari Owers, founder of creative communications agency O Communications, has announced a three-year partnership with The Prince's Trust. As part of the agency's 15th year celebrations, it has become the first company to support the initiative in the region.

To mark the beginning of the partnership, O has launched a year-long series of events and staff initiatives to help spread awareness of Women Supporting Women and encourage other companies to get involved.

Made up of leading female professionals who believe that all young women deserve the chance to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances, Women Supporting Women is a new group that will enable The Prince's Trust to support more young women.

The group is aiming to change the lives of 6,500 young women by raising £10 million over the next five years.

Kari commented: "We are looking forward to raising vital funds to help women right here in the region get the support they need to achieve their dreams."



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GENERATOR APPOINTS NEW CEO

Generator, the leading music development agency in the UK and support organisation for the wider creative and digital industries in the North East, has announced the appointment of Hannah Matterson as its new CEO.

Hannah brings a wealth of experience in the music, digital and creative economy including roles at Sage Gateshead and MAC Trust, where she has focused on partnership development across all of the creative industries to fuel the economic development of the North East.

Hannah will relocate back to her native north east from Manchester, where she has recently held the role of Innovation Partnership Bids developer at Manchester University Knowledge Transfer Partnership.

Hannah said: "I'm delighted to have been appointed as Generator's new CEO. I'm passionate about the local and regional development of our creative industries, with an emphasis on putting our region on the map for our immense digital and music talent."



LLOYD NEWCASTLE RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE UK'S LEADING BMW RETAILERS

Lloyd Newcastle BMW had a sensational evening at the annual BMW Retailer of the Year Awards, being named BMW Financial Services Retailer of the Year and BMW Regional Group Retailer of the Year.

The annual awards recognise excellence in the BMW UK network and are presented to retailers that perform exceptionally across a number of customer service and business measures. The event, which brings together 140 approved BMW retailers from across the UK, was hosted by Strictly Come Dancing Presenter Claudia Winkleman.

Lloyd Newcastle BMW was nominated for five Retailer of the Year awards on the night, taking home two prizes to add to its success in recent years.

David Lewins, Head of Business at Lloyd Newcastle BMW, said: "To be nominated in five categories is wonderful recognition. We would like to say a huge thank you to all of our customers for their continued support."



MANUFACTURER ANNOUNCES YEAR OF RAPID MAJOR GROWTH

A County Durham manufacturer is going from strength to strength following a 20% increase in turnover last year.

BTS Facades and Fabrications, which is based in Newton Aycliffe and manufactures metal rainscreen and fabrications for the construction industry, will end the financial year with a turnover of £8.5 million, representing a rise of £1.6 million.

The financial results mark a period of major growth for the firm, with the appointment of a new technical manager, investment in a range of new equipment and a £50,000 grant.

New technical manager Mark Wiper commented: "It's exciting to be working with a new team, and BTS is a dynamic business with significant scope for growth in a competitive market. The team are investing heavily in the future in terms of assets, hardware and personnel, which clearly demonstrates it's a company with a long-term future."

HELPING BUSINESSES TURN PROSPECTS INTO CLIENTS

As part of business growth plans for 2020, North East based training and coaching organisation New Results is launching its new online course offering.

New Results' tailored training programme offers a unique blend of independent online learning coupled with a flexible offline support package, completed at a pace that suits each individual. Trainees can also access the team of experienced coaches over the phone, via email or face-to-face.

New Results is a business focused on helping

individuals, teams and companies identify, win and retain more clients and customers. The firm offers a mix of strategy support, speaking, consultancy, workshops, coaching and face-to-face training.

Director Nevil Tynemouth commented: "Our range of online training courses are perfect for individuals looking to improve their knowledge base. We want to give our customers an enjoyable and expert experience and we offer emails of support and tips to help them on their journey."



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SWEENEY MILLER LAW – AMBITION REWARDED

Paul Miller and Surbhi Vedhara, Partners at Sweeney Miller Law talk through their growth ambitions and achievements.

Tell us about Sweeney Miller Law

Sweeney Miller Law was established in Sunderland by Managing Partner, Paul, and Peter Sweeney in 2002. Surbhi joined the firm in 2007, becoming a partner in 2013, having bought Peter's stake in the business. Following an increasing demand for our services, we opened a second office in Newcastle in 2014. Just four years later and in response to our growing client base we made the strategic decision to scale the business. The partnership now includes Jessica Fenwick, Damien Todd, Michael Storey and David Smith. The firm's key areas of practice supporting both businesses and individuals are conveyancing, commercial property, company and commercial, family law, dispute resolution, private client and landlord and tenant.

As well as working with clients in the North East, we receive instructions from across the UK, including London and are benefitting from the developing opportunities of "North-shoring".

What makes you different?

We provide specialist commercial legal services to the small to mid-range sector. SMEs have limited options - they can instruct large national firms with higher charges or they use their local high street firm that may not have the necessary expertise. We fill a vital gap providing affordable, quality and pragmatic legal services. Through years of working with businesses, we know that those behind SMEs are individuals. Busy with their "day job", our business clients appreciate our partner-led approach. We provide solutions from a single point and lead, helping build a tailored strategy, avoiding the cumbersome processes of some of our larger counterparts.

For our conveyancing and private clients, we are commended for our service levels and speed. In addition, we take time to explain and demystify complicated processes and procedures.

How do you respond to clients' changing needs?

Aiming for complete price transparency, be it for individuals or businesses, with no "nasty surprises", we have developed staged, fixed fee pricing models and manageable payment terms.

In response to the daunting process of moving house, we have developed an App giving clients real-time updates, in-app messaging and the ability to upload documents. We plan to build on the platform, making our client's journey as seamless as possible.

What have you found most rewarding?

We are proud of the rapid growth that we have worked so tirelessly for. Our head count is nearly 75, providing opportunities for staff ranging from apprentices, trainee solicitors to partners. We enjoy being able to offer people who share our vision and buy into the ethos of the firm the chance to develop their career. We have also been humbled by the quality of clients and work we've attracted.

We work with many residential landlords and through our ongoing relationship with them and contributing to networks such as North East Landlords, we have helped several transition into the more challenging commercial property rental market. Guiding them through this process and seeing the success these clients have achieved has been very rewarding.

Recognising that our team are the firm's biggest asset, we are proud of our commitment to wellbeing in the workplace. We regularly organise wellbeing initiatives and 8 members of the firm, all senior lawyers or partners, are mental health first aiders. As we continue to grow, we aim to attract and keep the best talent and foster the best working environment.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Whilst still very much an unravelling situation, by far the biggest challenge we have ever faced is managing the impact of the Coronavirus both internally and in relation to maintaining the continuity of service for our clients. Given our size and versatility we have been able to quickly reconfigure our working practices to securely and seamlessly maintain our service levels. It's in times of crisis that the true strength of your team comes through.

What does the future look like for Sweeney Miller Law?

With our mapped-out commitment to grow, we have been busy deploying a strategic approach to succession planning, increasing headcount, building a robust IT infrastructure, maintaining our Lexcel accreditation, rebranding and new website, all against a backdrop of increasing client wins. Achieving so much highlights the hard work and ambition of everyone in the firm and it's exciting to think of what we can go on to accomplish. We aim to be a recognised brand across the North East and beyond, associated with astute and superior legal advice, helping clients meet their goals and aspirations.





L-R: William Johnson, Naomi Johnson and Michael Farnsworth

BULLY FOR YOU

Steve Russell talks to the directors of surging Tyneside accessories brand, TORRO, about their newly launched business consultancy venture, PICOM, founded to support the next generation of e-commerce entrepreneurs.

The TORRO management team, William Johnson, Naomi Johnson and Michael Farnsworth know a thing or two about the challenges involved in getting a business off the ground. William and Michael were serving police officers in 2014, when they risked their livelihoods by committing full-time to what was then their side-hustle of selling smartphone cases online. It proved a shrewd decision, and along with fellow director Naomi - who took the reins on the operational side of the business - they now preside over a thriving international enterprise, which has grown exponentially in recent years.

Harnessing the loyalty of their customer base, they've steadily expanded their product range to include a stunning collection of tech and lifestyle accessories, establishing a major UK market-share in the process. TORRO's core business is built around luxury leather products, which combine sleek aesthetics with everyday functionality, delivered at an accessible price point. Their iconic bull's head logo is now globally recognised, and having specifically targeted the market, the brand is particularly strong in Germany. Advancing their presence in the US is their next priority and while they acknowledge it's not an easy market to penetrate, they feel they now have the foundations in place to succeed anywhere, as William explains:

"There are loads of factors to consider when targeting a new market, not least cultural differences, but we've built a fantastic team of experts over the past few years, so we can now control our own narrative and pivot to respond quickly to demand from particular markets when we need to".

TORRO now boasts a highly-skilled team of fifteen staff based at their HQ in North Tyneside, and the business has seen a sharp rise in revenue since they moved away from outsourcing and brought specialist skills - such as marketing, web design and photography - in house. This was a key factor in their decision to launch PICOM, which has been set up so that other businesses can benefit from the knowledge, skills and infrastructure they've established. Michael, who is actively engaging with potential clients on PICOM, expands on the rationale behind their new venture:

"Two years ago, launching something like this wouldn't have been possible for us, but the team we've built has allowed our own business to grow so much, and we now have the

infrastructure in place to be able to help other online businesses realise their potential".

Having utilised Amazon's business network since TORRO's inception, they have expert knowledge of the platform and their HQ in New York industrial park features 6000sqft of warehouse space, some of which will be made available to new partners. It's an attractive proposition, and Naomi elaborates on the benefits PICOM can offer to businesses who choose to come onboard:

"We've gone through a lot of pain and a lot of learning in getting TORRO to where it is now, but we've now got so much experience that we can draw upon to help new and small brands upscale their businesses in the way we have".

The skills of the leadership team dovetail perfectly, with Michael's focus on finance, William's flair for branding and marketing and Naomi's background in HR, operations and people management, all offering a priceless resource to any budding e-commerce mogul. So then, three successful entrepreneurs looking to invest time and resources into smaller businesses for mutually beneficial partnerships? Do the team see any similarities to a certain BBC TV show featuring large, mythical reptiles disguised as business gurus? Michael responds:

"Ha ha. I suppose you could say that, but what we've learned over the past few years is that there is a definitely a gap in the market for a business to come in and provide assistance for young, dynamic online companies, to help them to grow. That's the vision for PICOM".

One fundamental difference to most of the deals brokered on Dragon's Den, is the flexibility and freedom their partners will enjoy, as Naomi explains:

"This is about allowing other businesses access to our resources and expertise without the need to burden themselves with the overheads associated with recruitment, people management and logistics etc. Whether it be warehousing, digital creation or PPC, for a manageable fee, our team will deliver services with the same dedication and professionalism as they do for TORRO. The team are excited to lend their skills and experience to new and emerging brands, and that in turn will help our partners to scale their businesses, so it's a win/win situation as far as we're concerned".

For any business which fits the profile, it sounds like a no brainer!



EXCLUSIVE BUSINESS & NORTHERN INSIGHT LUNCH CLUB



We had an excellent lunch at Wynyard Hall in March with guest speaker Graham Robb of Recognition PR.

Graham delivered a very open and honest presentation about his life in business and personal challenges. Thank you Graham for a great talk and thank you to everyone who attended.



EXCLUSIVE BUSINESS

A message from Linda Hitman and Michael Grahamslaw...

We have taken the decision, due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, to postpone our business lunch events until further notice.

The great list of speakers we have lined up will be reallocated events later in the year or into 2021.

When we meet again there will certainly be plenty of business issues to discuss.

*For now our good wishes are with
you all, stay well!
Linda & Mike*

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VENTURI LTD FOUNDER COMPLETES MBO TO DRIVE FURTHER GROWTH

International specialist technology staffing company Venturi Ltd is targeting further growth and scale-up of its operations following the completion of a vendor-initiated management buyout.

The North West-based business, which also has a well-established office in New York and a presence in Germany, was founded in 2009 by Brad Lamb with investment from respected staffing industry entrepreneur Keith Jones. Joining the founding shareholders within six months of the launch was director James Doyle.

As a result of the management buyout, Brad and the existing management team have acquired the two other directors' shareholding enabling James and Keith to pursue their other interests.

Successfully placing high quality talent into key areas of the IT and technology sectors, Venturi Ltd has delivered significant growth over the past decade.

Advising Brad and the management team on the MBO was Newcastle-based RG Corporate Finance.



FURTHER ACQUISITIONS AND DIVERSIFICATION ANNOUNCED FOR FABRICATIONS FIRM

Agricultural and industrial fabrications experts the P&K Construction Group has furthered its diversification and growth strategy following a number of acquisitions with the help of Mincoffs Solicitors LLP and MHA Tait Walker.

P&K have acquired the business and assets of both Next Level Mezzanines Limited and Ash Construction Limited. This has offered the Group the cost efficiencies of bringing additional small works fabrications facilities in house, as well as the opportunity to widen its market reach into new areas such as the construction and erection of mezzanine floors and exhibition stands.

Simon Pelly, Managing Director of P&K Construction Group, commented: "We are experiencing a really exciting period in the growth of P&K which is only boosted by these new acquisitions. We are very grateful to Mincoffs and MHA Tait Walker for their ongoing support as we continue to grow the company."



HERITAGE BUILDING SPECIALISTS ACQUIRED BY ARTELIA GROUP

RG Corporate Finance has advised the owners of specialist property business Austin Newport Group in its sale to global project management, engineering and consultancy organisation Artelia Group.

Specialising in the recovery of damaged historic country houses, Austin Newport Group is based in Birmingham and comprises of three core divisions, offering chartered quantity surveying, management contracting and insurance recovery services.

Austen Newport Group has grown to deliver large-scale restoration, refurbishment and development projects at some of the UK's most famous buildings. In the past 30 years it has worked on more than 1,000 complex heritage building projects, ranging in value from £250,000 to £20 million.

Advising the owners of Austin Newport Group was Nick Johnson and Alex Simpson at Newcastle-based RG Corporate Finance. Tax advice was provided by RG's Business Tax Partner Simon Whiteside and Director of Taxation Services Simon Hopwood.

VICTORIAN SCHOOLHOUSE SAVED WITH FW CAPITAL INVESTMENT

A derelict Victorian school will be transformed into luxury homes thanks to a £525,000 investment by FW Capital, which manages the North East Property Fund.

Camfero Homes Ltd secured the loan for the redevelopment of the 8,000 sq ft Marley Hill Primary School house on the A692 outside Sunniside.

The historic school has been vacant for almost a decade. Now thanks to the FW Capital investment, two new homes have been created, with many of the building's original features preserved.

The scheme is part of the wider multi-million-pound regeneration of the entire site including the former playground area by Bede Homes.

The North East Property Fund was established with the aim of supporting the development of small-scale property schemes. It offers loans from £250,000 up to £1m for residential and non-speculative commercial developments in Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and County Durham.



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EXPLAINING THE MORTGAGE MAZE

If you are currently looking into purchasing a new home, you will probably have come across the terms Decision in Principle, Mortgage Certificate and Approval in Principle. But what exactly are they?

Well, they are one and the same thing – they are often abbreviated to DIP, MC or AIP and it will be one of the first questions asked of you by many estate agents. For the purposes of this article, we will stick with DIP!

So what exactly do they do? When you are looking to buy a house, the estate agent has a responsibility to the seller to check whether you are able to proceed with the purchase, ie to prove that you are a credible buyer. If you are buying with a mortgage, this is usually best done by you producing a DIP from a mortgage provider and providing proof of deposit funds for the remaining balance. On receipt of these, the estate agent will then fully consider your offer and take the property off the market and you can press on with buying your new dream home!

We would generally recommend meeting with a mortgage broker at the earliest possible opportunity and certainly prior to commencing your property search. They can initially determine how much you can borrow so that you know exactly what price range you can consider, source the best mortgage product for you and then submit a DIP to that lender. The DIP is a reduced version of a full mortgage application and involves a bank/building society credit checking you to see whether

they consider you to be credit worthy and able to afford the mortgage (sometimes called credit scoring). Although it is as it says and is "in Principle" it is a pretty strong indication that you will be able to obtain a mortgage for that amount and is a key element of the overall mortgage process.

One note of caution – multiple credit searches can affect your credit score so we would generally recommend you only proceed to a DIP when you know you are definitely looking to buy. Again, seeking appropriate advice will ensure that you are advised when is the best time is to apply.

Finding the best solution for your circumstances needs an experienced eye to ensure that you find the right balance between interest rate, fees, term and type of product and penalties. Local, face-to-face, independent mortgage advice can smooth the process – we are ready to take your call and offer assistance! If you would like to see what our clients have to say about us we have in excess of one hundred and twenty five Google 5* reviews on-line and on our website from satisfied clients (www.innovatempl.co.uk)!

Paul Hardingham and Tony Ibson are Mortgage and Protection Advisers at Innovate Mortgages and Loans. Both have over 20 years of experience advising individuals and businesses across the North East of England. They can be contacted for bespoke advice at paul@innovatempl.co.uk or tony@innovatempl.co.uk or call 0191 284 3723.

Your home is at risk if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it.



Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans



CASHFLOW MODELLING – A LOOK INTO YOUR FUTURE

“How much should my pension be worth at retirement?” – a very common question us as advisers are asked, and it is a question that is impossible to answer without an in-depth review of a client’s circumstances.

The answer will revolve around when the client wants to retire, how much they need to spend in retirement, what other assets they have and ultimately how long they expect to live!

Even with that information, it is very difficult to translate this into quantitative information in a way that is simple to understand for clients. Through the use of cashflow modelling we are able to visualise how a client’s financial future may look as well as analyse the actions that are required, if any, for them to meet their goals and objectives.

The basic premise of cashflow modelling involves inputting client data into the system, such as age, planned retirement age, current level of savings/investments, guaranteed income (e.g. State Pensions) and planned expenditure. We then project this through to age 100, to essentially stress test the level of income and liquid assets against the planned expenditure. Projecting to age 100 may seem a little optimistic for most, however figures from the Office for National

Statistics suggest that a 55-year-old male has a 3.8% chance of living this long¹.

The system applies a number of customisable measures in the background, taking into account things like taxes, investment/savings growth and perhaps most importantly, inflation. The output is very visual, and it can become very clear almost straight away whether the level of savings/income is sustainable against the necessary expenditure. Perhaps more importantly, the software is interactive and allows us to make changes such as retiring a year earlier than planned or spending an additional £3,000 per year on holidays, for example, to see the impact of such changes.

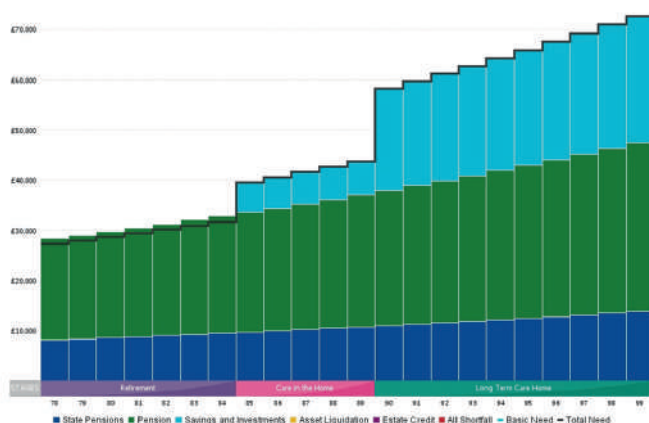
Not only will the use of cashflow provide a review of a client’s current position, it can also suggest solutions to meet their objectives if these are currently appearing to be unachievable. The system will calculate how much extra would need to be saved each year until retirement, or the required level of annual investment growth to have sufficient liquid assets to meet the desired

outgoings. We also run loss scenarios, in order to demonstrate the impact a market fall would have on a client’s future assets and subsequent retirement plans, which is an important factor when deciding on a suitable investment strategy.

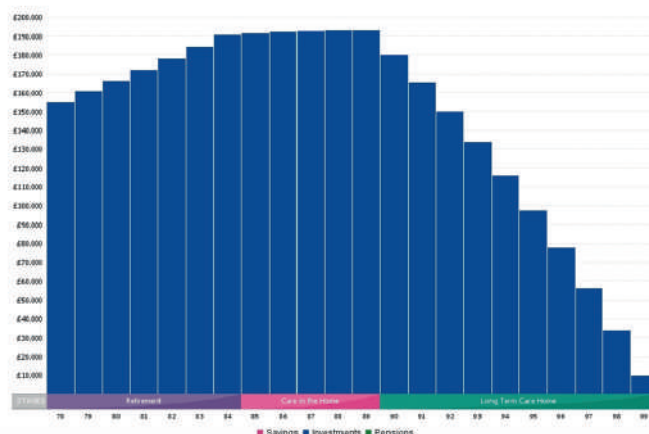
Whilst there are some limitations of cashflow planning, notably the use of currently unknown future inflation and investment growth rates. Furthermore, in many cases, we are projecting forward 50 years or more and clearly many things will change over this period. However, all of our ongoing clients benefit from regular appraisals of their cashflow at annual review meetings to ensure they remain on the right path to maintain their desired standard of living in the future.

Cashflow modelling is not the ‘be-all and end-all’ of financial planning, however it represents a very useful tool in an adviser’s arsenal to help clients meet their financial objectives and produces an output that is generally client-friendly and easy to understand.

Cash Flow Details



Liquid Assets (Simple)



¹www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/articles/lifeexpectancycalculator/2019-06-07



Angie Smith

ANGIE JOINS TO WELCOME COMMERCE TENANTS AND GUESTS

A new team member who is dedicated to helping the tenants and guests to the building has joined the Commerce House team in Middlesbrough.

Angie Smith has been appointed to the receptionist's role, where she handles incoming queries on the phone. She is the first point of contact for guests and tenants arriving, sorts tenants post and handles all booking enquiries for the events space, board room and hot desking service. She also looks after the virtual tenants needs, and sets up the meetings space for when clients arrive.

From Trimdon Grange, Angie who is a mum to two sons, joins the Commerce House team bringing a host of experience in administration and office work.

Angie, whose previous role was at the Magistrates Court in Middlesbrough where she was a tribunal

clerk, said: "I spotted the job advertised on Facebook. I wasn't actually looking for a new role, but something about it seemed right. I called down to Commerce House one lunch time and as soon as I stepped in the building, I knew I was home. When I met the rest of the team, and realized how calm I felt when in the building, I knew it was my calling."

Commerce House is a Grade II listed building, in the heart of Middlesbrough that opened its newly renovated doors last year and has grown month on month as a thriving business community. With tenants ranging in size from one man bands up to 16 desk office space, the building is nearly at capacity with just a few opportunities left.

Running the hot desking, virtual tenancy and event space offerings keeps the team busy with new faces everyday.

Christine Huntington, facilities manager of the building, has been there since the renovations began. She said: "It is very satisfying to see the building so busy and with so many tenants and visitors coming and going, I knew we were going to have to expand the team and Angie fits the bill perfectly."

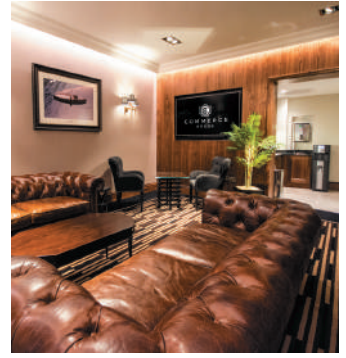
"We are delighted to welcome her to the team. The tenants have taken to her straight away!"

In her spare time Angie enjoys creative activities such as beading and hand stitching, and spending time with her family.

More information on the building and on job opportunities is available at www.commerce-house.co.uk

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filling fast!



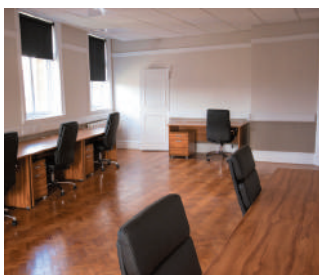
Commerce House, the outstanding, iconic, grade II listed building in the heart of Middlesbrough is now fully refurbished and has released the last of its stunning office space. With rooms available for two to fourteen people.

With enviable facilities, Commerce House is the perfect opportunity for a head office, satellite office or to expand operations within the prestigious TS1 area of Middlesbrough in the heart of the newest regenerated location in the region. And now we have some great deals available for a limited time only!

**To find out more and to take advantage of this offer, you'd better get moving!
Contact Christine Huntington on 01642 917 116 or Christine@commercechambers.co.uk**

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CASH RESERVES AS MPC CUTS INTEREST RATES



Dr Emma Black, leading financial expert in cash management and MD of Cascade Cash Management (Cascade), rounds up the financial impact of the Covid-19 outbreak and the chancellor's budget on the savings market, with recommendations on where your cash is safest during these turbulent times.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has cut interest rates to 0.25% to help UK businesses and households manage the economic implications of the Covid-19 outbreak following an emergency meeting held on 10th March 2020. The MPC voted unanimously to reduce the base rate alongside accompanying monetary measures to provide additional support, particularly to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with the announced TFSME scheme to improve the availability of finance. These measures follow a marked spread in the transmission of Covid-19 around the world which, coupled with an oil price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia, has seen markets drop substantially over a short time frame.

Mid-February 2020 the FTSE 100 traded at 7,547 points but less than one month later, the UK's leading market index had fallen by over 20% to 5,993 amid fears that the escalating health crisis could evolve into a credit crisis as global firms face a significant impact in both the sale and production of goods and services worldwide. The outbreak of Covid-19 in China has impacted international supply chains dependent on exports from the factory of the world, while travel bans and preventative measures have begun to impact international travel too. More than £200bn has been wiped off the UK's global FTSE 100 index as a result and it is expected that governments worldwide will seek to invoke fiscal stimulus too in order to counter a potential global recession.

Goldman Sachs has warned that the virus could push the UK towards recession and the incoming Bank of

England Governor, Andrew Bailey, affirmed the need to act swiftly to limit the impact. Adjusting interest rates is simple and effective and thus markets correctly anticipated the action taken by the MPC at yesterday's meeting.

Accompanying this expected monetary support, fiscal flexibility was announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak in his budget. Sunak has stressed the importance of fiscal responsibility to fight the effects of Covid-19, particularly on SMEs who may face temporary cash flow issues as a result of the emerging outbreak. Measures such as permitting a "time to pay" forbearance on tax bills along with significant public spending help forge a pathway for businesses that may experience temporary difficulty.

While a fall in the base rate is positive for borrowers, savings rates are unfortunately once again heading downwards. Since the start of the year, many providers have already priced in a reduction of 0.25% as many expected, following the signed withdrawal of the UK from the EU on 31st January 2020, that the base rate would reduce from 0.75% to 0.50%. For example, Cambridge & Counties Bank reduced the rate on their 120 Day Business Notice account from 1.75% to 1.50% effective 31st March 2020 while the NS&I announced a reduction in their Income Bond rate from 1.16% to 0.70%, effective from 1st May 2020. The accompanying Covid-19 outbreak has unexpectedly increased market volatility and therefore it is expected that rates will drop further over the coming weeks.

At the time of writing, the best instant access rate for a Personal saver is 1.35% available from Chelsea

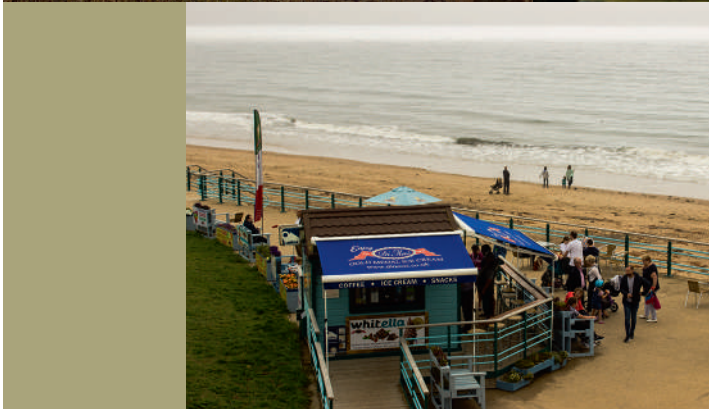
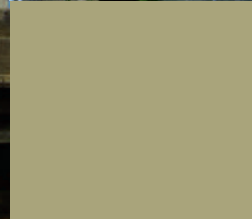
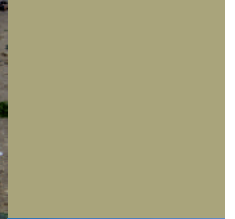
Building Society, while for Business and Charity savers, Saffron Building Society leads the market paying 1.06% for deposits between £10,000 and £500,000. In the fixed term market, challenger bank Masthaven Bank is paying 1.71% for a 1 Year Fixed Term while Redwood Bank for the same term is paying 1.62%, both available for business deposits. In the Personal savings market, the Ikea family's Ikano Bank is paying 1.56% while Habib Bank Zurich, Investec Bank and Shawbrook Bank are all offering 1.55% for a 1 year Fixed Term.

Dr Emma summed up: "In times of increased market volatility, investors look for cash as a safe haven to weather the storm. Fixed Rate Bonds offer stability fixing the rate of interest, at a time when instant access and notice accounts will see fluctuations in their variable rates.

"For those able to lock into fixed term periods, there are still some competitive rates available in the challenger bank market. Many of these can be accessed through the Cascade portal which helps clients to simultaneously spread capital across banking licences to increase depositor protection. Our technology is Cyber Essential Plus accredited, meaning it's security is approved by the National Cyber Centre."

The team at Cascade will be paying close attention to how rates move over the course of the next few weeks and months. Ensuring safety of cash at these times becomes paramount and spreading capital across different banking licences helps to obtain depositor protection cover under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

For those who would like to know more, please give us a call on 0191 4813777 or submit an enquiry via our website on www.cascade.co.uk



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RYECROFT GLENTON AWAY DAY

The RG Corporate Finance team were joined by clients and professional contacts for their quarterly away day to the beautiful Winton Castle & Estate in East Lothian.

The party enjoyed a spot of clay pigeon shooting under the instruction of 24 time Scottish champion, Billy Gordon, using a range of guns and targets whilst engaging in some light hearted competition. A whisky tasting with Winton's resident expert followed lunch and provided the party the opportunity to enjoy some of Scotland's finest single malts.



WHERE ARE YOU ON THE FINANCIAL JOURNEY OF LIFE?

With current life expectancy in the UK predicting most of us will live into our late 70's/early 80's, do you know how much money you will need to get you through retirement? Let's look at the financial journey of life and how we can help predict and protect the funds required to retire comfortably.

Typically, after leaving university education, borrowers are faced with their first substantial amount of debt. Onto the world of work, the average full-time salary in the UK in 2019 was £35,058 (ONS, 2019). Once you have gained an education then secured your first job your next step is likely to be onto the property ladder. Securing a mortgage is one of the biggest financial commitments of your life. Plus, the average UK household debt, excluding mortgages, stands at a record £15,400 (Guardian, 2019). So far, the financial journey of life seems pretty costly.

In the last few years it has become law that employees between the ages of 22 and State Pension age, that earn above £10,000, must be enrolled into a pension by their employer. This is known as auto-enrolment. The minimum amounts payable through auto-enrolment are 3% employer and 5% employee contributions on earnings between £6,136 and £50,000 (Gov.uk, 2020).

For public sector workers, and a lucky few in the private sector, they can join a defined benefit pension. These schemes provide an income based on the member's salary and length of service, which tend to be much more generous than the pensions available through auto-enrolment.



As our career journey progresses our pension pot should grow, we start thinking about retirement and how and whether we can afford to sustain a standard of living and afford to enjoy a fulfilling retirement.

Most people will qualify for a State Pension which will currently provide up to £168.60 per week (Gov.uk, 2020). Most pensions are now flexible and can be accessed almost like a bank account, but with some tax consequences. Therefore, it's essential you have an idea of how much is needed to meet your expenses and how long your pension will last if you continue to make withdrawals at this level,

we use cashflow modelling to help our clients better understand this.

When it comes to pensions, we would suggest you consider the following-

- Get organised- Are your personal details up to date? Have you been divorced or moved house recently?
- When was the last time you reviewed your contribution?
- Have you considered your attitude to investment risk?
- Do you know where you're currently invested?

At Prismatic Wealth we have over 30 years' experience reviewing investments and pensions to ensure they are suitable for your needs. If you would like to speak to an adviser about your existing financial arrangements, contact us on 01642 661600 or enquiries@prismaticwealth.co.uk



PRISMATIC WEALTH

Providing private and corporate clients with bespoke, tailored financial solutions.

With over 30 years experience as financial planning specialists, Prismatic Wealth have the expertise to assist you with life planning, retirement planning and investments.



Retirement Planning:

- Pension Planning
- Defined Benefit Pensions
- Pension Consolidation and Transfers
- Pension Drawdown and Annuities
- Self Invested Personal Pensions (SIPP)



Life Planning:

- Estate Planning
- Protection Planning
- Reaching Retirement
- Pensions and Divorce



Investment Services:

- Investment Planning Advice
- Investment Review

To speak to us contact:

Tel: 01642 661600

Email: enquiries@prismaticwealth.co.uk

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26 Falcon Court,
Preston Farm Business Park,
Stockton-on-Tees,
TS18 3TX



www.prismaticwealth.co.uk



Paul Callaghan

PAUL CALLAGHAN

Chair of Sunderland MAC Trust, Trustee and Past Chair of Live Theatre,
Co-Founder and Chair of The Leighton Group

Paul Callaghan is co-founder and the Chair of The Leighton Group, the North East-based set of software, technology, communication and media companies. Alongside his corporate accomplishments, Paul has achieved success in a variety of public sector roles. He recently spoke to UNW about the work that he is doing with Sunderland MAC Trust and Live Theatre to help develop the region and its cultural offerings.

Could you please tell us a bit about your early life and career?

I was born and raised in Sunderland and then went to University at the London School of Economics. After graduating, I worked as an economist for Clark Chapman in Gateshead. I then moved into academia and lectured in Economics in Durham and what is now Northumbria University.

In the early 1980's, I established a publishing business with a colleague. We were traditional, print-based publishers, with a focus on educational textbooks. With the arrival of the internet in 1992, this evolved into a digital business and my brother and I set up the first of the Leighton Group companies and for the last 28 years we have run software companies.

You have been involved in a host of businesses, as well as economic and regional development organisations throughout your career. What motivated you to partake in these?

I believe we all have a responsibility to contribute towards building a better society. I think there are three main foundations of society: economic development, education and culture. One of the ways I have been able to contribute is through building Leighton Group businesses and creating jobs.

I've also worked closely with other businesses and public sector organisations to encourage economic growth – this included chairing Business Link and being a founding director of the Entrepreneurs' Forum. Most significantly, I was a board member of the regional development agency, One North East. I chaired the board until it closed, which was disappointing as we were doing some excellent work to improve the North East's economy.

How do you think education helps to aid development in a region?

I'm a great believer in education. There isn't any one single way to change society but I believe education is probably the most important factor and so I've tried to get involved wherever I can

to help – at all levels. I was Chair of the University of Sunderland for more than a decade, I've been visiting professor and Leighton was able to sponsor Red House Academy, a secondary school in Sunderland.

You mentioned that culture was one of the three main foundations of society. What is it about culture that benefits a region?

You can have a good job and a good education, but if the cultural life where you live is weak, then you're likely to move away and this is a challenge the North East has historically faced. Newcastle and Gateshead have made great strides in the last two decades, but other parts of the region were being left behind.

This is one of the reasons we established The Cultural Spring initiative for Sunderland and South Tyneside in 2014, which was funded by Arts Council England under its 'Creative People and Places Programme.' It has been designed to really get into the community and engage people; this could involve everything from re-engaging isolated older people, to getting young people to feel as if cultural activities aren't alien to them.

How else have you played a role in developing the culture of the region?

In 2012 I left One North East and so with some other like-minded people we set up the Sunderland Music, Arts, and Culture Trust. The objective was to achieve three things. The first was to encourage cultural activity through projects like The Cultural Spring and Sunderland's Bid to become UK City of Culture. The second was to change the way culture and arts are governed in the city, as well as how they can raise money and be organised. To accomplish this, the MAC Trust, in partnership with University of Sunderland and Sunderland City Council, set up Sunderland Culture.

Finally, we wanted to get investment into cultural infrastructure, which has been the Music, Arts and Culture Quarter Project for the last eight years.

continued over...

...continued from previous.

This has resulted in £20m investment into the old Edwardian centre of the city, which had fallen into decline. It is coming to fruition now and we'll have the new Fire Station auditorium open next year. It will bring an exciting programme of music, drama, dance and spoken word to the city and has attracted partners like Dance City and Live Theatre to open up studios in the Fire Station. What we're doing is using culture as the catalyst for urban regeneration.

You've been able to bring a lot of corporate experience into the not-for-profit arena, how has this been beneficial?

Many very good and generous people donate money and leave the actual operation of the charity to charity professionals; however, I've gone about it in a different way and directly involved myself. Having worked a lot in the public sector with One North East, I understand public funding and what is likely to attract it.

As someone who has also sat on commercial and non-commercial boards, I think I understand how to shape the direction of an organisation. I'm able to identify talented people who are going to make a difference and then work with them. As you get older there is a need to help the next generation take the reins to ensure the long-term sustainability of an organisation.

Sustainability has become increasingly important to not-for-profits in recent years. How have you worked to achieve this with MAC Trust and Live Theatre?

What we are trying to do is establish an asset base. Over the last decade Live Theatre has grown its asset base by purchasing buildings surrounding the theatre. It's now what we like to think of as 'the Live Quarter.' This provides commercial revenue for the Theatre, making it less reliant on charitable donations or public funding. For example, income from the Broad Chare, a pub run in partnership with the 21 Hospitality Group, is able to fund the production of our plays or our youth theatre provision. With the Sunderland MAC Trust, we have sought to achieve a similar asset base to ensure the sustainability of the cultural quarter.

Projects such as this help raise the profile of Sunderland and Newcastle nationally. People take notice – the funders, the DCMS, and the charitable trusts see the work being carried out in the North East as being very proactive. They trust what we're trying to do, which is to provide a cultural infrastructure for the people of this region in an innovative and entrepreneurial way.

How would you like to see the North East region develop in the future?

I think we need to shift the economic structure towards a more knowledge-industry base. We're doing that quite successfully in the North East and we are seeing fast growing clusters of high-tech businesses up here. However, if you're going to steer your economy towards the knowledge sector, then you need to improve educational standards. We must work with schools to help get more children from the North East into Further Education and University, to match the demands of the economy.

In terms of culture, we need to understand what the challenges



Paul Callaghan

are and where we should be making investment. The "Passionate People, Passionate Places" campaign, which was originally set up by One North East, has recently been relaunched. It was not just about selling the North East to people outside of the region but also about changing how people perceive our own region and to encourage them to be proud and passionate about this area and want to stay here.

What projects or initiatives that you've been involved in during your career are you most proud of?

I'm clearly very proud of the Leighton Group business. I'm getting to the end of my career now, and I'm very proud of not only the businesses we've created, but also the people that currently work for us as well as those that have worked for us and moved on to achieve great things elsewhere.

In terms of not-for-profit, I'm very proud of the two educational elements I've been involved in – Sunderland University and Red House Academy, the latter having just received the OFSTED 'Good' rating. I'm also very proud of what we're currently achieving with both Live Theatre and Sunderland MAC Trust and Sunderland Culture in relation to significantly enhancing the cultural life of the region.

What's the best advice you've received during your career?

Never underestimate what can be achieved. You should always aim high and even though sometimes you'll miss the mark, you've still set a high bar and might have achieved something you didn't think you could. If you're not ambitious, then you can't move things on.

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KP SIMPSON END OF TAX YEAR PENSIONS AND INVESTMENTS

It's April, which means only one thing for the financial savvy out there – the end of the tax year!

But it can be something of a minefield to get everything in order, especially if you have a pension or investments to consider.

So what's the best way to get the best possible return from your pension and investments? Where do you even start?

Never fear, as help is always at hand. Just remember, you're not alone! Every member of the KP Simpson team is an expert in the subject and is only too happy to help you along the way.

When it comes to investments, there are a number of ways to make them tax efficient.

ISAs are great. No tax relief is available on a subscription to an ISA but income and capital gains are free of tax.

This tax break can help give your savings a big boost in the long term as they are flexible and simple to understand as well.

Individuals aged 18 or over can invest up to £20,000 in a tax year, while for those under 18 the allowance is £4,368.

Elsewhere, it could make sense to invest for capital growth as opposed to income, bearing in mind the high rates of income tax compared to capital gains tax.

Pension-wise, despite recent cuts to the annual and lifetime allowances, the incentive in pension funding is still there thanks to generous tax benefits.



Tax relief against personal contributions, and equivalent benefits for employer contributions, are an exemption from income tax on the portion of earnings that are directed to retirement funds.

This is a significant benefit and you should utilise it fully within your financial means.

Remember, making extra pension contributions increases pension provision and for anyone who may be subject to a reduced personal income

tax allowance, a personal pension contribution could get back some of this allowance - giving an effective tax saving of about 60%.

All of this really is just the tip of the iceberg. But help is at hand! Here at KP Simpson we offer advice, support and guidance when you need it most.

If you have any questions about your pensions or investments, don't hesitate to contact us.

Visit www.kpsimpson.co.uk or call 0191 420 0550 to find out more.



INVESTING WITH A HEALTHY AND WEALTHY CONSCIENCE

I believe that anyone would be moved if they saw David Attenborough's "Blue Planet" where the turtle was entwined in plastic. It is one of the most shocking and emotive images of all time and it has sparked a genuine awakening in many, including investors and investment managers.

Some time ago the investment industry started to consider more aspects than potential returns when choosing companies to invest in. Originally, we had ethical or socially responsible investing which often led to a trade off in potential returns. Now, however, ESG is something many fund managers take into account.

So, what does ESG mean?

E stands for environment, S is for social and G is for governance.

Why is ESG important?

"It is better to invest in companies that are well run, look after their staff and consider society and the environment."

This is a simple message that companies that pollute are not good or sustainable business models. Companies that do not care for their staff, or do not take into account social issues within the firm and their supply chain, are not good or sustainable business models.

Is it not better to invest in companies that are well run, look after their staff and consider society and the environment? They are companies that will be around for the long term. They will produce profits for their shareholders for longer.



Rutherford Hughes Ltd; ahead of the game

"The compelling way forward for investors"

There are an increasing number of individual ESG funds in the market. However, we offer portfolio management services to provide an optimally diversified investment strategy making use of the ESG advantage. We believe it to be the compelling

way forward for investors who care how their money is invested and who would like to be rewarded for doing so.

We believe that we are one of the very first independent adviser company to offer its own ESG diversified strategies. Further, our testing indicates that you would have been rewarded for investing with a conscience. We would be happy to illustrate this to you.

In our view, ESG is a sea change in the investment process and is something that investors can utilise in their pensions, stocks and shares ISAs and other investments. The advantages to the individual, society and the planet will become clear and obvious as time moves on.

Please note that past performance is not a guide to future performance and the value of investments can fall as well as rise. Further, capital is at risk and you may not get back the full value of your investment.

If you or would like more information, or would like to discuss your own position, then please do not hesitate to contact me, David Hughes or Denise Graham.

Peter Rutherford is a director at Rutherford Hughes Ltd. He can be contacted on 0191 229 9600 peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com www.rutherfordhughes.com

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HEDGEHOG LAB PLOTS TO DOUBLE REVENUES AFTER £900,000 INVESTMENT BOOST FROM MAVEN CAPITAL PARTNERS

Digital product consultancy, hedgehog lab, has raised £900,000 from the North East Development Capital Fund, managed by existing investors Maven Capital Partners, as it plots to double its growth again over the next two years.

The investment, which brings total funding in the business to £2.2m, comes after a successful 2019 for the company which saw it reach global revenues of £5m for the first time and launch successful projects with household names including Kodak Moments and Deliciously Ella.

hedgehog lab's global footprint has also gone from strength-to-strength in the last 12 months with its US business now contributing nearly 25 percent of the group's revenue having grown revenues around 300 per cent in the past year.

For Maven, it marks further backing for the business which it invested in back in 2017 during which time hedgehog lab has doubled revenues and is now targeting to double them again within the next two years.

Underlining the tech firm's ambitions, hedgehog lab has also unveiled a new management team that will drive its ambition to double revenue to £10m by the end of 2021 by supplementing their current team with experienced professionals who have a track record of scaling rapidly growing businesses.

Experienced tech growth advisor, investor and former Sun Microsystems UK Sales Director, Charles Andrews, joins the business as hedgehog

lab's new Chairman. Charles will be drawing on the wealth of experience he's gained working across various roles at the likes of IBM and Globant to support the company with its future growth plans.

Martin Porton also joins as hedgehog lab's Finance Director from RTC North bringing over 20 years' experience working with high growth businesses. The fully qualified chartered accountant has a strong track record in the creative industries having previously held the position of Finance Director at marketing communications company Cravens and creative agency TH_NK.

hedgehog lab is also set to announce the appointment of a new Global Managing Director within the first quarter of 2020 to oversee the organisation's global operations alongside further internal hires as the company continues to grow.

Following the announcement of hedgehog lab's latest investment and new management team, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Sarat Pediredla, commented: "A few years ago, we decided to accelerate our scaleup journey by seeking an investor partner who shared our ambition of building a world-class technology consultancy in the North East.

"With the hard work of our team and support from our customers and Maven, we have made incredible progress but we knew we could do more. This latest round of investment allows us to invest in boosting our leadership team and go-to-market strategy to ensure we set the business up for the next stage of growth."

Michael Vassallo Investment Director of Maven Capital Partners added: "An innovative player in the technology market who we first backed in 2017, we're delighted to support hedgehog lab as it embarks on an exciting programme of growth. A dynamic and well managed business, hedgehog has already proven their ability to consistently design and build great software and we look forward to working with Sarat and the team to drive the business forward."

Charles Andrews, hedgehog lab's new Chairman, said: "hedgehog lab has already built an impressive fan base of clients through their ability to build compelling digital experiences. I am really excited to be joining them as they continue to deliver engaging digital products with more clients across various international markets and grow their digital expertise."

North East business looking for funding to grow? Speak to Maven's local team about your current and future needs, and our experienced investment professionals will be able to guide you on your funding requirements. Contact our team today on 0191 731 8590.

CREATING VALUE

Maven offers flexible debt and equity funding options to support dynamic SMEs across the UK, investing up to £15 million in a single transaction.

Maven funding can support a business at any stage of its growth cycle and cover a wide range of corporate activity including MBOs and buy-and-build strategies, as well as the provision of acquisition finance, development capital and replacement capital.



If your business is in need of finance to help unlock its growth potential, we may be able to help.
For more information please contact:

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Earl Grey House, 75/85 Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6EF. T: 0191 731 8590

Maven Capital Partners UK LLP is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, Firm Reference Number 495929



Steve Deutsch

UNLOCKING THE NORTH'S POTENTIAL

Smaller construction companies are the life-blood of the industry and key to job creation across the North of England.

According to industry analysts Barbour ABI, the value of all construction contracts awarded in 2019 was £59.9 billion. It represents an increase of 0.2% on 2018 but is 20.3% lower than the peak of £75.1 billion achieved in 2015.

The government has identified a lack of development finance as a barrier preventing smaller builders from delivering more and a new bank, GBB, is aiming to bridge the gap for SME property developers and construction companies.

Based in Newcastle, GBB will fill a gap in the market by targeting experienced regional developers and construction companies with loans of up to £5m. To help create opportunities for growth across the North, GBB was established to fund up to 25,000 homes over the next five years.

Steve Deutsch, GBB chief executive, believes the bank will be ideally placed to address the lack of traditional bank funding for smaller developers after obtaining a full banking licence next year. It aims to lend around £600m a year and build a £1bn-plus balance sheet.

He said: "Small housebuilders are essential to building the homes this country desperately needs but they often can't access affordable finance. Our ambition is to become an engine of economic growth for regional SME developers by providing bespoke secured finance underpinned by long-term

relationships that build trust and generate repeat business."

The bank plans to support residential property development projects of around 10 to 40 houses and commercial properties of between 1-3,000 square metres, across the Northern Powerhouse regions.

GBB aims to be the finance partner of choice for the property sector in the North and puts great service at the heart of the strategy.

Mr Deutsch said: "We are focused on supporting regional property development at good rates, with great service. To be able to support regional property developers and small construction companies will also bring new jobs and homes for people in the regions."

The property development fund is part of an overall lending plan of £2.9bn with around £2.6bn dedicated to supporting regional property developers and small construction companies. A total of £2bn will be lent across the North, Midlands and Scotland.

GBB is led by an experienced management team and has formally applied to the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) for a licence to trade as a bank. It intends to provide tailored lending to regional SME property developers for both

residential and commercial property development, and fixed-rate savings products to retail customers.

For savers, highly competitive fixed-rate deposit rates will ensure strong appeal and that customers achieve competitive returns.

Chief Lending Officer for GBB Stephen Henman, said: "Our key differentiator is our regional and property development focus combined with a relationship-centred approach, which is unlike anything else on the market. This, combined with our specialist underwriting capabilities, local knowledge and market-leading, cloud-based technology, puts clear water between other providers and us. We hope that this will lead to an increase in property development in our target regions.

Customers will benefit from locally based Relationship Managers who will be dedicated to understanding customers' finance requirements and supporting their ongoing needs. The team at GBB believe its success will be built on long-lasting relationships that are built on trust and understanding.

Mr Deutsch concluded: "The construction sector across the North is full of untapped potential and we are building a bank from the ground up to ensure it is the partner of choice for construction companies and developers."



NORTH EAST FINTECH COMPANY STRENGTHENS FOR CONTINUED GROWTH AFTER HITTING £35M INVESTMENT MILESTONE

A growing North East financial technology (fintech) company has hit a series of milestones as it celebrates its fifth anniversary.

Growth Capital Ventures is an FCA-authorised investment firm launched in 2014 to help investors build a diversified investment portfolio whilst helping entrepreneurs raise capital to launch and scale high growth businesses.

Co-founder and CEO, Norm Peterson said: "The past five years have seen the business evolve significantly. We started life as a technology-led investment firm developing and launching www.growthfunders.com, an online co-investment platform connecting investors to high-quality growth-focused investment opportunities. Initially, we focused on early-stage business with high growth potential but our investment activity has expanded over the past five years to include growth-focused property transactions too."

Five years after launching, the business has hit a number of key milestones and GCV now employs a team of 22 and has facilitated £35 million of investment into some of the North's most exciting high-growth businesses including challenger banks, Atom Bank and B-North, and technology businesses, Hive.HR and Intelligence Fusion. GCV's property team has created a pipeline of property-based transactions which will deliver more than 300 high-quality homes throughout the North East over the coming years.

Now, as it prepares for further expansion, GCV has restructured the business and its senior operations team.

Norm Peterson said: "The new structure means we have the right people in place to support our next phase of growth which will involve expanding the G-Ventures investor network and the formal launch of G-Labs, an in-house venture builder."

In preparation for future recruitment and growth, there has been a series of internal promotions. Tony Short has been promoted to programme director; James Drew becomes chief technical officer within G-Labs; Dave Forster becomes chief technical officer within the fintech division; and Sarah MacNeil has been promoted to creative director working across all brands. Elsewhere, Grace Matthews recently joined the business as marketing manager across all business divisions.

Norm added: "We're really excited about this next phase of growth; the Venture Builder model is a new concept in the UK. G-Labs has been created to help technology-focused start-ups to launch and scale fast. We have assembled an experienced team of software engineers and start-up specialists. Working alongside entrepreneurs and co-founders, we support our ventures from start-up to scale, to exit. We invest more than just funds; we invest our knowledge and experience, our ideas and our infrastructure."

James Drew, chief technical officer at G-Labs, said: "This is a key differentiator for GCV. For entrepreneurs and co-founders, we are a powerful partner that can

help them raise capital and take care of building and launching their core software product whilst they focus on engaging potential customers to build and shape the business."

The Venture Builder model will also provide high-quality deal flow for GCV's growing investor network.

Craig Peterson, co-Founder and chief operating officer, said: "We now have over 200 investors in the G-Ventures network and over 7,000 registered investors on www.growthfunders.com, our online investment platform.

"The businesses we support through G-Labs appeal to our investors as they gain confidence from the thorough due diligence and preparation process we take each and every G-Labs business through before raising capital. Combine this with growth-focused property transactions and we help our investors build a diversified investment portfolio that has the potential to deliver better returns than traditional mainstream investment products and, in many cases, take advantage of lucrative tax incentives."

The last five years have seen the team grow from just two to 22 people. GCV's portfolio companies and property transactions have created more than 300 high-quality jobs and the team is looking forward to the next stage of growth which will involve strengthening the team further over the coming months.

HOW TO RESPOND TO AN ACQUISITION APPROACH

Lee Humble is an Associate Partner at MHA Tait Walker Corporate Finance and has 15 years of professional services, banking sector and Corporate Finance experience, having spent time in London and the North West. Here he shares his expertise on how to respond to an acquisition approach.

What are the important questions to ask?

As a business owner you may find yourself in a position whereby an interested party has disclosed an interest in acquiring your business. In this scenario it is vital you ask yourself some key questions: who is the acquirer? Do they trade with your company or with your customers already? Do you know why they are interested in acquiring your company? What information do they have in relation to your company?

The questions to ask are plentiful and it can be very beneficial for you to engage professional advisers promptly who are well versed in dealing with such an approach. Given the potential disruption that can follow, it is key to address the interest swiftly and comprehensively. This should include an assessment as to your sale readiness, your valuation expectations and the capability and motives of the interested party.

Data Protection and Confidentiality are key

It is vital that arrangements with regards to data protection and confidentiality are put in



Lee Humble

place and that both parties understand what each other require for things to move forward. This often includes your latest detailed financial statements, management accounts and financial projections; and care should be taken as to the level of detail provided. At this stage no formal or thorough due diligence will commence but an appropriate level of information will be required so you can move towards a discussion in relation to outline valuation.

The Due Diligence Phase

Assuming suitable and appropriate responses are provided you can then enter a phase of due diligence in which you will need to assess who within your company will be made aware and how you will deal with a series of data requests.

Your advisers can assist with this and can often prepare you for such a period with a view to minimising business disruption and screening all acquirer and adviser questions.

Ask the Experts

Unsolicited approaches can often catch you off guard but may also present an attractive opportunity for you. Following and managing this process can be a difficult task and one where outside assistance may prove to be extremely useful. Appointing advisers as early as possible will be an important consideration and will allow you to keep on top of your daily duties within the company, whilst also providing a level of expertise which can assist and smooth any negotiations which may follow.

For more information please call 0191 285 0321 or email lee.humble@taitwalker.co.uk



L-R: Andrew Moorby,
Managing Partner and Chris Potter,
Partner outside the new building.

MHA TAIT WALKER HAS CONTINUED ITS EXPANSION PLANS BY INVESTING IN A NEW OFFICE AND JOBS ON TEESSIDE

The leading accountancy and advisory firm has recently signed a ten year lease on the new Stockton-on-Tees office, which will create around four new jobs initially with plans to double its workforce over the next three years.

MHA Tait Walker has been working with clients across Teesside for more than half a century. Plans to extend the firm's footprint in Teesside will complement its existing offices across Newcastle, Northumberland, Durham, Leeds and Carlisle.

The move from Medway House to more than 6,500 sq. ft of space in an adjacent building in Teesside Park, is the next phase in the firm's organic growth. It will allow the firm to fulfill its vision of doubling its Teesside workforce to 40. The new recruits will include experienced specialist accountants together with graduate and apprentice trainees.

Scheduled to open in late Spring 2020, the move is part of a long-term strategic investment plan aiming to spearhead additional growth and development over the coming years.

Andrew Moorby, managing partner at MHA Tait Walker, said: "The investment and expansion plan marks the latest milestone for our Teesside team. The new office base will allow us to continue to service existing clients, but also look to work with new businesses across the area.

"The move is part of a wider strategic plan to grow the business with a focus on winning clients who demand specialist accounting services.

"We now have six regional offices and a total workforce exceeding 170 across the region. The new office demonstrates our commitment to the Teesside business community. In fact, we have used only Teesside-based companies to refit our office space."

MHA Tait Walker worked alongside the Stockton office of property services firm, Sanderson Weatherall to provide architectural and cost consultancy and Leba Construction Services, a Teesside-based contractor responsible for the refurbishment and fit-out of the new office space.



ALISON NUMBERLAND

It was a fine sunny day just before Easter and Alison had taken the day off from her accounting practice and was wandering through the meadow. As she watched a little furry bunny hop across her path she was surprised when her foot fell into a hole and before she knew it she was hurtling down a rabbit hole – scary stuff!

Alison landed at the bottom surprisingly gently and was amazed to see that she was in a small village with a row of cottages on one side and a row of small shops and businesses on the other. She closed her eyes, gave them a good rub and thought, 'surely this can't be right'. Her thoughts were disturbed by a soft furry pat on her arm and she opened her eyes to see a white rabbit hopping from foot to foot and tapping his pocket watch. 'I'm late, I'm late' he said 'Hurry up or we'll miss the meeting'.

A bemused Alison followed him across the village green and before she knew it she was sitting in the cosy Dormouse Tea Rooms at a table set out with pots of tea and yummy looking tarts. 'Where have you been?' Doris Dormouse asked the White Rabbit, 'the tea is going cold'. As she started to pour the tea a big ginger cat grinning from ear to ear came out from the kitchen with a plate full of warm cheese scones. 'Made with my own Cheshire Cheese from the Cheshire Cheese Company' he said. 'Eat them while they're warm'. 'Leave room for my tarts though' said Lizzie, 'fresh from the Queen of Tarts Bakery'.

They had barely raised cup to lip when a small man with wild hair and a very extravagant hat jumped to his feet. 'Now he said – to the point of the meeting. If that Asbury's store gets permission to open we are going to lose a lot of business'. 'They'll sell cheese' said the Cheshire Cat. 'And cakes' said the Queen of tarts. 'They'll have a café' said Doris 'and they'll sell clothes' said the Tweedle twins who ran a tailoring, dressmaking and alterations business (and had

wandered in from another story by the same author). 'They'll have a greengrocery' said the caterpillar who had preferred a couple of lettuce leaves to the cheese scones and tarts. 'Bet they don't sell hats' grinned the Mad Hatter.

'What are we to do?' they all wailed.

Alison (who was half way through her second cheese scone) perked up. 'I can help' she said, excitedly. 'I love a challenge. Accountants are not just there to make the numbers add up. Their experience of many types of business leaves them well placed to advise with business planning and forecasting. Let's get started'.

The assembled anthropomorphic creatures were thrilled. 'Oooh yes please help us' they said, as they pulled notebooks and tablets from previously hidden furry pockets. Alison had a list of suggestions.

Firstly, keep your accounts as up to date as they can be and make sure they are telling you the information you need to know. Cloud accounting systems will allow you to easily analyse your sales and costs so you can spot trends and because it is cloud based you can access it anywhere you can get online. You can use apps to make entries much easier, things like bank feeds, uploads and automatic entries save time.

Make sure your HR and H&S are spot on and you have policies and procedures in place for how the business is run. Keep your staff involved, offer them relevant training and encourage them to submit ideas. Happy staff mean a happy business.

The customer may not always be right but they are always important. Smaller businesses need to make each visit an experience, something memorable, to encourage customers to come back and allow them to compete with online shopping and the choice and pricing from larger stores.

Make sure everyone knows you are there. Social media can be a very effective method of advertising but keep up the postings and make them visually appealing where possible. However there's nothing like a happy customer walking out the door and telling everyone of their superb experience. And think of all the opportunities for 'themed' offers and campaigns. Not just the usual annual events like Christmas, look for more unusual occasions and local connections.

Consider working together. Whether it's a co-ordinated media campaign along a certain theme or group buying to save costs.

'Gosh, that's an awful lot to consider' said the white rabbit, 'how will we find the time'. 'You don't need to do everything at once!' laughed Alison, 'just break it down into small steps and you've got a plan'. Doris Dormouse was already opening up a spreadsheet and the Dodo who had sat silently reading a book through the whole proceedings said 'I'll just get my Filofax and we can make a start'.

'Now', said Alison, 'that plate of tarts has eat me written all over it'.

And hopefully they all lived happily ever after....

For help to take your small business to a magical place contact CS Accounting 0191 4879870 info@csaccounting.co.uk

BUDGET 2020 - HIGH-IMPACT HEADLINES, LOW-IMPACT CHANGE?

Dubbed the 'biggest giveaway since 1992', new chancellor Rishi Sunak unveiled a Budget (first budget was on March 12th) filled with election promises, and set against one of the most uncertain economic backdrops in recent times.

While this package of measures has been largely well-received, the direct, and indirect, impact on tax and financial planning strategy has been relatively low-key.

The chancellor's plans sought to substantially increase infrastructure expenditure, bring economic prosperity to northern regions, and to ameliorate the negative impact of the coronavirus. These announcements were supported by a package of measures from the Bank of England, including a cut in the base rate by half a percent to 0.25%.

The increase in the National Insurance primary threshold and lower profits limit to £9,500 has undoubtedly been welcomed by both employees and the self-employed.

As rumoured in pre-Budget speculation, Entrepreneurs' Relief was reduced, over 90% to a lifetime limit of £1m; However the chancellor has given indications that this should not materially reduce the incentive to start and build businesses. Corporation Tax has also remained at the relatively low 19%.

The increase in both the annual limit for Junior ISA subscriptions to £9,000 (from £4,368), annual

Capital Gains Tax exemption to £12,300 for next year, and a dividend allowance remaining steady at £2,000 all increase the tax attractions of an investment in unit trusts, subject to appropriate limits.

The tapered annual allowance for pensions has been a hot topic for high earners, especially members of the NHS Pension Scheme. An unexpectedly high increase in the tapered allowance threshold, and adjusted income levels, means that no one with income under £200,000 will now be subject to the taper and will have a £40,000 annual allowance. However, it isn't all reasons to cheer: the minimum that the annual allowance can taper down to will now be £4,000 rather than £10,000. If you have previously ceased or reduced contributions to a pension scheme, this may mean there is now more scope to reconsider this decision.

Ahead of the Budget, there was considerable discussion about the possibility of change to Pensions Tax relief and Inheritance Tax, but nothing was forthcoming. However, it's worth remembering that this is the first of two Budgets this year and there are a number of factors that could come to impact autumn's spending review.

The raft of measures may have made headlines but, as always, the devil is in the detail and time will tell the long-term impact. In the meantime the safest plan remains to engage in financial planning with a trusted team of experts.



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For further advice and to set up a meeting, contact our Wynyard office.

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'DON'T BE AFRAID OF CHANGE', ENTREPRENEURS' FORUM EVENT IS TOLD

The North East's business leaders must not be afraid of tackling change head on, members of the Entrepreneurs' Forum were told at its Chairman's Dinner

Guest speaker David Soley, chairman of Cameron's Brewery, said that the region has faced and overcome many major economic challenges over the years which have resulted in the creation of new opportunities.

He said: "Problems are challenges and are there to be overcome by this region's rich vein of entrepreneurs.

"We've faced many major challenges in the North East, such as the decline of the steel industry. Such events, no matter how devastating, have nevertheless created fresh opportunity.

"Fortunately, this region is well-placed to respond as it has a proud tradition of entrepreneurial spirit, which continues to thrive to this day.

"We must never be frightened of change but meet it head on to create dynamic new opportunities."

David is one of the region's most successful entrepreneurs, establishing Davy Offshore Modules in 1983. In 1998, he moved from oil and gas into hospitality, buying Castle Eden Brewery and later purchasing Camerons Brewery, which under his leadership has become the North East's largest independent brewery.

He also serves as Deputy Chair of the Tees Valley Combined Authority and represents the LEP on various Northern Powerhouse initiatives.

David also told the event, held at Jesmond Dene House in Newcastle, that people remain the most important aspect of business.

"Business is people and we should make room for others to be able to contribute and grow our businesses."

Thanking David for his contribution, James Robson MBE, chairman of the Forum, added that the theme of change was an appropriate one and that "no business can expect to grow standing still".

He said: "Entrepreneurs remain the key drivers of change, they respond to and overcome the inevitable challenges that present themselves and deliver the jobs and economic fortune required to drive this region forward."

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An Entrepreneur Interview with...

SAMANTHA VASSALLO

Founder and managing director, Horizon Works

Tell me about your background in business?

Prior to setting up Horizon Works in 2010, I performed several marketing roles across the North East, including working for two years as marketing manager for Cels (The Centre of Excellence for Life Sciences Ltd), which was funded by One North East and was set up to drive the growth of the healthcare and life sciences economy in the North East. This was a fantastic opportunity which also meant working with NEPAF (North East Proteome Analysis Facility) and a number of other biotech start-ups as a marketing consultant.

All these roles helped to hone my marketing expertise and gave me a deep understanding of sectors such as life sciences, education and law, which has been invaluable as I've driven Horizon Works forward.

How was Horizon Works formed?

I realised that many businesses struggled with getting their products to market and promoting their services and solutions effectively. They were breaking new ground from a scientific perspective and had technical expertise in abundance but didn't have the marketing know-how or capabilities to drive their businesses to the next level and take their products to market.

It became evident that there was an opportunity to help these companies with specialist marketing support. So, after recognising this, I decided to take the plunge and go it alone!

In your own words, what is it that Horizon Works does?

Horizon Works is a B2B marketing company which supports innovators in complex industries. We offer a wide range of integrated marketing services across strategy, PR, design and digital.

We specialise in grasping complex technologies, products and services and translating this information into compelling messages and campaigns.

We have also developed Snapshot360, a free-to-use online marketing diagnostic tool. It is a quick and simple way for a company to test its marketing performance and provides the user with a valuable insight into their business.

What is your proudest moment with the company?

There are many things that I've been very proud of over the last ten years, from employing my first member of staff to winning our first US-based client.

However, 2019 was a momentous year for Horizon Works and for me personally. We opened the doors to our own two-storey headquarters in Northumberland Business Park which was a very proud moment. We'd worked from serviced offices up to that point, so to have a place we could call our own, completely shaped to the needs of our staff and clients, was thrilling. We also created a dedicated, fully equipped event space in the building, which is now being widely used by our network partners and clients.

It was also quite a year personally, as in addition to opening the new offices, I got married and gave birth to our first child, Rosalie!

Is there a particular mistake you have made while in business? And how did you overcome/learn from it?

When growing a business, you'll always make mistakes. But I don't regret any mistakes because I have learned from them. Although

they may have been unpleasant to deal with at the time, by learning from them I have been able to make improvements which have ultimately benefited the business.

The connections I've made through the Entrepreneurs' Forum have helped to guide me and having the right advisers in business - and working in close partnership with them - is crucial.

What is the USP of Horizon Works?

We understand, champion and support innovators in complex industries - this is why I set up Horizon Works in the first place.

We have developed an in-depth investigative process which quickly gets under the skin of our clients' complex products and services. Combined with our strategic approach, we feel that this creates the strongest possible framework for great work and great results.

We are an active member of several industry networks and trade bodies, which I feel sets us apart from many of our competitors. This keeps us close to the industry sectors we serve and is also of great benefit to our clients, who can tap into our experience of working with these organisations.

How has the firm grown and what do you attribute this to?

We're celebrating ten years in business in 2020. In the last decade, the business has grown from just me to a multi-disciplined team of marketing specialists.

Along the way we have worked with a number of multi-national clients, major global players in manufacturing, biopharma, research and tech, and some of the North East's most pioneering and innovative businesses. I'm proud that we have helped to make a difference to them all and it's always exciting to see a company reach the next level with our support.

What do I attribute this to? Attracting and retaining a great team and building a culture that puts honesty, integrity and quality at its heart.

Horizon Works has also focused entirely on the key industry sectors that we serve as a B2B marketing company and we've always stayed true to this. And we act as a true partner to our clients, rather than simply being a 'supplier'. This has helped us to develop long-standing relationships - many of our clients have been with us for five years or more. I'm very grateful to all the businesses we have worked with for their support.

Do you live by/do business by a certain motto?

When it comes to working with clients, I always ask, 'do they value what we do, and do we enjoy working with them?'. If the answer to those questions is 'yes' then that leads to a healthy relationship between us and our clients right from the start - a true partnership. It provides the foundation for great work and great results.

What are the future plans of Horizon Works?

To build our client base further and to extend our international reach too. I'd also like to expand the team as we grow.

We'll be developing our training and consultancy offer and engaging with more businesses with this, and I'd like to build on the success of our events space. It would be great to see even more companies using this resource and getting their morning coffee fix at our HQ!

Samantha Vassallo is a member of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, a group of like-minded people who come together at inspirational events to share best practice, create valuable connections and help each other to grow their businesses. For more information, visit www.entrepreneursforum.net



Samantha Vassallo

WORLDSKILLS UK AND NCFE ANNOUNCE PLANS FOR 'CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE'

Education and skills charity, NCFE has announced a new strategic partnership with WorldSkills UK to create a Centre of Excellence for the development of world-class educators.

David Gallagher, Chief Executive at NCFE shares his thoughts about the project and what it means for the technical and vocational education market.

At NCFE, we are committed to promoting and advancing learning for people of all ages. Through our range of qualifications and educational services, we aim to provide platforms at all levels to help our learners to get on in their lives and careers.

Over the last six months, we've been looking at what else we could do to help our learners on their educational journeys, to ensure that they have the best possible learning experiences and get the most from their time in further education. As a result of this, one of the key areas that we have decided to focus on is the work that we do to support educators themselves.

Having sat at the forefront of technical education for over 170 years, we understand the critical role that positive, driven, knowledgeable and inspiring educators play in a learner's success story.

Through the delivery of high-quality learning experiences which help to build confidence, self-esteem and understanding, educators can positively influence learner outcomes to help them reach their full potential and there is no better example of this than the training managers operating on behalf of WorldSkills.



David Gallagher, Chief Executive at NCFE.

WorldSkills UK is a partnership organisation which combines the worlds of business, education and government to accelerate the development of young people's skills from national to world-class standards through the organisation of a range of 'Olympics-style' skills competitions.

Shaped by over 65 years of global benchmarking, year after year, WorldSkills UK's highly experienced training managers produce competition-winning students and apprentices across multiple fields of technical and vocational education which not only showcases the calibre of students in the UK's education sector, but also helps to inspire future generations of technical and vocational learners.

Through the new WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence in partnership with NCFE, we are aiming to harness the experience and expertise of the WorldSkills UK training managers to create an innovative training programme which will seek to finesse the art of technical teaching with a view to mainstreaming the skills needed to become a truly world-class technical educator across the sector.

The Centre of Excellence will see us develop new

methodologies, new content, new resources and new approaches, based on taking the best of what's already out there in the sector, and lifting it up to help educators right across the UK's technical and vocational education system to deliver truly world class training experiences.

Throughout the project's three-year pilot phase, which commences in September 2020, NCFE will provide strategic advice, resources and funding to the project, which is something we're very excited about. It's anticipated that the initial phase of the project will directly impact more than 40,000 young people, nearly 1,000 educators and more than 120 educational institutions, with the intention that this will be the foundation to roll-out to hundreds more in the years to come.

NCFE is absolutely dedicated to improving life chances through learning. As two organisations with a common purpose for the promotion and advancement of learning and a shared vision for a world-class skills system, the partnership with WorldSkills UK is a perfect fit for us and we're excited to see where it leads us.

To find out more about the Centre of Excellence, visit www.ncfe.org.uk



WHY COMPANY VALUES ARE IMPORTANT

"You can't manage what you can't measure" is something that has been drummed into me since my early days studying to be a Psychologist.

As a scientist this makes total sense to me. How do you know what good looks like, if you've not defined "good"?!

It's so important to understand what good looks like in your company; what the values are, what behaviours people are expected to display, and recruit, manage and reward based on this.

Company values are the essence of your company's identity, their principles, beliefs and philosophies; they support the vision of and help shape its culture and drive decision-making processes.

A values-based approach to recruitment and organisational development has been consistently shown to:

- Increase customer satisfaction, loyalty and profit
- Increase the quality of hire
- Reduce the cost of hire
- Increase employee wellbeing and reduce absenteeism

But most companies have values already...

I'm sure we can all think of examples of organisational "values" consisting of words

splashed all over the walls – trust, integrity, honesty etc – shouldn't these be actual values taken as the minimum requirements of doing business, (and having any kind of relationship, as it happens!)?

I've actually sat next to a massive 'TRUST' poster in an organisation and witnessed the classic case of the "excellent" salesperson who is bringing in a boatload of money, but who openly displays disruptive, obnoxious and toxic behaviour. What did the organisation do about this person? You've guessed it...nothing at all. Why? Because, they bring in the cash and it's easier to turn a blind eye to their behaviour! In reality, they have an adverse effect on overall team performance. How much more could your team bring in without this negative influence?

If you were in an organisation that cares about how its people behave, this 'excellent' salesperson would have had their performance managed. This means that they'll have clear expectations of how they should behave and standards the organisation holds itself to. If they fail to change their approach (with help if necessary) then it needs to be made clear that this person is in the wrong position/organisation and should be invited to leave.

Isn't it hard to implement?

We've run many Values Workshops recently – both working with organisations to create their values from scratch and working with organisations who have values but have not operationalised these by defining the key behaviours that will be demonstrated against their values.

We work with organisations to design and define values that capture the culture of the business and highlight how the business leaders want themselves and everyone else to behave – the expectations of those around them. And you need these boundaries in any organisation with a strong culture, happy employees and healthy bottom line.

The clear downside is that when an organisation has a behavioural framework, the leaders have to clearly role-model the behaviours or expect challenge from their colleagues. You have to be able to walk the walk. Can you walk the walk?

About Insights Business Psychology

We help organisations select and develop the best people and support individuals with their careers through coaching and mentoring. We also implement values-based organisational development processes in organisations.



Michelle Rainbow

MAKING ADULT EDUCATION IN THE NORTH EAST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

As well as delivering benefits to mental health and wellbeing, adult education helps to equip people with the skills they need in the workplace.

As new technologies bring changes to job roles, North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Skills Director, Michelle Rainbow, takes a look at how adult education provision in our region can keep pace with the new skills that employers are looking for.

Having a skilled workforce is vital if the North East is to have a bright economic future. And it's not just about the skills that employers are looking for now. It's also vital that we're equipping people with skills that will stand them in good stead as our economy changes – we know that the skills employers looked for in the past are not what they'll be looking for in five or 10 years' time, and our adult education provision needs to keep pace with these changes.

Across all sectors of industry we're seeing jobs change as a result of digitalisation, automation and AI. From a business perspective, adopting new technologies is imperative, but for employees, it can be seen as a risk: do you have the skills employers will be looking for over the next few years? Will your job role change? Are your digital skills up to date?

These questions are relevant to people working in all areas of our economy. For example, in retail, we are likely to see a decrease in the number of people employed on the shop floor in physical retail outlets. However, online roles will increase. Some of the skills needed in these online roles will be the same – customer service and sales, for example – but employees will also need to be up to speed in terms of their digital skills.

Adult education can help people to future-proof their skillsets. It can help people move into new roles, help them to progress within their workplace, and it can also help make sure that they can still be in that role in five or 10 years' time.

Employer needs are constantly evolving so it's important that training providers really understand the direction of travel. We need to listen to employers and be responsive, making sure that employers and training providers are working together to shape adult education.

As well as future-proofing the workforce, skills development can drive up productivity – employees with new skills bring knowledge back

into businesses, share what they know with other staff, and help businesses to stay competitive.

There are clear benefits for the individual and their quality of life as well. Lifelong learning broadens horizons, it gives people opportunities to progress and it keeps us mentally alert and active.

From a personal perspective I've found that lifelong learning – not only through formal learning but also through continuing CPD, attending conferences, subscribing to literature and staying up to date with changes in the sector – keeps me motivated and makes me more confident about my role.

As we continue to create more and better jobs in the North East, the North East LEP will help to shape adult education provision, providing insight into future skills demand and helping training providers to understand what it is that both employers and employees are looking for.

Learning doesn't stop when we leave formal education. Lifelong learning is about acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout life and we must make sure that this is accessible to everyone.

Find out about the role skills play in the North East Strategic Economic Plan at northeastlep.co.uk



Lisa Vescio

LONELY AT THE TOP

Did you know loneliness can impact your mental health?

It can cause stress, anxiety and depression and is increasingly becoming an epidemic in the modern world. And there's that old saying, 'It can be lonely at the top.'

Entrepreneurship or being the big boss can be a lonely journey. It is however mostly ignored and rarely discussed. I know many business owners who shy away from networking, sometimes because they are too busy and 'can't find the time' and sometimes because the reality is they are becoming social recluses.

Long working hours impact the opportunity to attend social activities or often, the stress of setting up and running your own business can leave even the strongest of characters questioning themselves if they don't have others to bounce off. This can then lead to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity in their own ability to succeed.

Many entrepreneurs also report money worries as a reason for this increasing level of social isolation and anxiety, whilst other solopreneurs and freelancers work from home which can often

be remote and lonely, with no sense of workplace community.

Even successful business leaders of larger corporate companies can feel isolated in a room full of their employees, often ostracised from the social functions organised by a team that they created and not having anyone to talk to about their struggles because it will create anxiety among the team.

Dr Cacioppo, co – author of the bestselling book 'Loneliness: Human nature and the need for social connection' states that "loneliness changes our thoughts, which changes the chemistry of our brains". This in turn results in huge amount of unwanted side effects.

Signs of loneliness can vary but will predominantly include symptoms such as panic or anxiety, depression, overthinking and lack of motivation. From this, habits can form such as comfort eating or increased alcohol consumption at home.

However, you don't have to face this all alone!

To combat the overwhelming feeling that being at the top can often bring, you could go out and network, make some real-world human connections and find the right support network for you. You may also find it helpful to find an accountability buddy to help share ideas and gain support when you are struggling.

Join a club or a social media group to meet like-minded people with the same interests or hobbies or simply make sure you make time to get to see your old friends for some light relief, company and support.

It's easy to become a recluse and go into your 'igloo' or fall victim to the virtual world and bury your head in your work. Calendar something in even if it's once a month and go out there and be a social butterfly.

Life is short and it is so important to make the effort to stay connected and be happy. Remember why you started working for yourself in the first place and go grab that fulfilling work/life balance with both hands.

CHARITY DONATIONS HEAT UP THANKS TO DRY WOOD LOG SALES



A government ban on the most polluting fuel for household heating has seen local mental health charity, Blyth Star Enterprises, receive a surge of enquiries from people looking to buy sustainably-sourced dry logs from its Woodfuel Centre and, through their purchases, raise much needed funds for the charity.

As part of the UK's carbon reduction policy aimed at reaching net zero by 2050, the use of coal and wet wood in homes will no longer be allowed from February 2021. Households will have to switch to dry wood or alternative, environmentally-friendly sources.

The Woodfuel Centre in Bedlington has, as a result of the announcement, been contacted by many homeowners wanting to place orders or needing advice, concerned that they may have to get rid of their wood burning stoves because of the ban. This is not the case and staff are now hoping that more people will source their dry wood from the outreach facility given they are the only charity in Northumberland to offer 'Ready to Burn' certified logs.

All monies raised by the Centre will go back into Blyth Star and enable the charity to offer continued support and training for over 350 service users with mental health issues and learning disabilities, helping them to acquire life skills, vocational

qualifications and work towards independent living.

Neil Hedley, Manager of Blyth Star's Woodfuel Centre, explained, "The Government announcement has obviously made people a little concerned especially if they have wood burning stoves in their homes. However, the dry logs that we produce are certified by the 'Ready to Burn' and 'Woodsure' accreditation schemes, so customers are assured of much higher energy efficiency, cost savings due to a longer burn rate and reduced carbon emissions as they contain less than 20% moisture.

"Our timber is sourced from the Borders region and meets the strict sustainability criteria required throughout the supply chain. We deliver and supply over 400 tonnes of dry logs each year to customers from Berwick upon Tweed down to North Tyneside, and as one of only three organisations in Northumberland currently offering 'Ready to Burn' dry wood fuel, we're hoping that this could now help us to raise additional, much needed funds through increased customer orders. People can

make a valued contribution to a local charity just by buying dry logs from the Woodfuel Centre."

Blyth Star Enterprises is a not-for-profit charity dedicated to helping people who live with mental health conditions and learning disabilities. The Woodfuel Centre is one of two small enterprises operated by the charity to provide sheltered working environments for users to gain structured learning. Its woodwork department produces various wood craft products from garden sheds, furniture and log stores to planters and one-off bespoke items based on customer requirements.

Gordon Moore MBE, Chief Executive of Blyth Star Enterprises, added, "As with most charities, fundraising is essential to help support the services we provide, but this is a simple and straightforward way for people and companies to help us should they need wood produce. The Centre already supplies products to the likes of Blagdon Farm Shop and Pearsons of Duns so we're hopeful that others will contact us, buy from us and support our cause."

For more details call Blyth Star's Woodfuel Centre on 01670 857138, visit Unit 7, Ferguson Business Park, West Sleekburn, Northumberland (Monday-Friday from 8:45am – 4:15pm), or go to www.blythstar.org.uk



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Ammar Mirza CBE

BUSINESS AS UN-USUAL

If someone told me that the past week, I had spent at home was in fact a whole year, I wouldn't argue! Writing last month's column seems light years away. Time travel almost feels real.

As a child I used to wish time away, watching the clock at school or whilst doing homework, now how I wish I could turn back time.

Time is the most precious commodity, and should be cherished, valued and respected. It is the one thing we will never get back.

What we do now with our time in the current pandemic is even more important than ever, individually and collectively. **It is heart-warming to hear so many stories of our communities coming together and supporting one another.** Why can't we be like this in all time?

From a business support point of view, I have been working with a vast number of colleagues and partners connected with the SME Centre of Excellence. Trade bodies, collectives, enterprise agencies and regional governmental bodies, including the Institute of Directors, Food and Drink North East, North East Local Enterprise Partnership, Federation of Small Business, Asian Business Connexions and many more, all of whom are trying their utmost to do all they can to help. Individuals working selflessly and tirelessly to help already challenged SMEs overcome the most significant barriers ever experienced in a generation, if not century.

The biggest challenge is, we have never experienced anything like this ever before. 'Unprecedented' seems to be the new norm. Of course, we can look back in history to see plagues, depressions and so on, but that was a different time and distinctly different society.

Government has unleashed a financial support package that has never been done before! The problem is, as it has never been done before, no one knows how to do it and thousands of people and organisations are suffering. I know of over 700 SMEs in the North East that have closed just in the last 48 hours, so many more are on the verge of doing so, desperate for a lifeline.

So, what can we do as business owners, whilst we wait for the world to come back online? My advice is plan for the future, produce a cashflow forecast and personal budget too, then identify which of the following categories you fit in:

Innovate – do you have enough money to keep the lights on and could you use existing capacity to work on digital transformation. Or could you pivot your business and look at changing your business model – as we have seen restaurants becoming takeaways.

Hibernate – can you temporarily shut down

operations, use the governments support and then re-open in 3-6 months, certain there will be demand in the future.

Liquidate – the most difficult, yet the most important decision. If you don't have any business now and as a consequence will not survive in the future you should close down your business and mitigate any additional liabilities. Taking on further debt will simply delay the inevitable and create a further bubble.

To help SMEs properly understand their position and see if they can innovate, hibernate or liquidate we have launched the #SaveourSMEs campaign. Already 50+ SMEs that were closing have changed their business model and are looking to the future through Digital Transformation.

I am delighted to say that 100's of professional service providers volunteers have come together to support our North East community. **If you are struggling and need help or you can offer help please reach out.** One thing for certain business will never be usual again for a long time.

Please take care of yourself and those around you. Love and peace.

Ammar Mirza CBE is Chair & Founder of Asian Business Connexions, Chair of the NELEP Business Growth Board, Chair of the IoD North East (North) and holds various positions across the public and private sectors.

S.O.S. Save our SMEs

**Are you a local business that
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Get in touch to see how we can help you.

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PEOPLE POWER EVENT TO EMPOWER PEOPLE

Remember the date - June 17th - Northumbria University

Andrew Wilson and his team at the Projects Studio in Newcastle, are experts at organising and staging events. They have an amazing track record when it comes to managing international trade shows and missions, conferences, exhibitions, roadshows and award ceremonies.

Consequently, it's no surprise that the company took the next step which is to organise their own seminars and conferences. Put it this way, when you've arranged and staged as many events as the Projects Studio guys have done over the past few years, they're bound to know what works, and probably more importantly, what doesn't.

Three years ago they launched People Power. This is a one day conference and exhibition designed to help companies boost productivity across their organisation by placing a thriving, engaged workforce at the heart of business success. It doesn't matter what a company does, the people who work there are the key element. It's not a fluke that a successful company generally has a happy and motivated workforce.

The latest People Power event will be staged by event partner Northumbria University on June 17th 2020. It'll be the biggest yet with at least 300 organisations attending, and is supported by Westray Recruitment (Headline Sponsor), Hive HR (Gold Sponsor) and NESMA (theme sponsor).

"Keynote speakers and industry thought leaders will motivate and inspire with their stories of success, whilst seminars, panel discussions and 1-2-1 meetings will provide attendees with a suite of practical tools and techniques to take away," said Andrew Wilson.

As an example of what's on offer and when, here's a rough selection. There are six sessions, each lasting one hour with either a half hour or 15 minute break in-between.

The day gets underway at 9.00 with a presentation to everyone by Nigel Risner entitled, Zoo Keeper Rules for the Office...tame the beasts, build a team and thrive...develop effective leadership & communication skills for the zoo that is your office. It should be fascinating.

From then on, the programme follows a pattern which sees up to five rooms being used simultaneously. It's up to you to choose which speaker you would like to listen to.

For example, in session two from 10.30 - 11.30 you can find out how to attract and retain the best talent or discover what sort of skills your workforce will need in the future. You can also discover the finer points of employment law or how to improve your negotiating skills.

The next session is 12.00-13.00 where you'll have the chance to understand the huge costs of disengaged staff and the benefits of employee engagement. You can find out about the importance of the right employer branding and also get up to date with that latest computer technology and software for staff communications.

13.30-14.30 is the next session where you can discover how staff health and fitness translate into increased productivity (delivered by local fitness guru David Fairlamb). You can also learn how to manage flexible working practices or have a go at editing videos and improving your graphic design skills.

The penultimate session is between 14.45 and 15.45 where you can hear examples of how to build a more inclusive culture within your company and the sort of targets you should aim for to keep growing a more diverse workforce. There are some tips on Search Engine Optimisation as well as the best way to use Instagram.

The day winds-up between 16.00-17.00 with tips on how to increase your sales or ensure that your workforce is ready for the digital age. You can also find out how to deal with health issues...both mental and physical...within the workforce.

As you can tell, it's a packed and varied programme. If you would like to attend for the whole day, the price is just £65 + VAT, which also includes lunch. If you are representing a charity or public sector organisation, this drops to £35 + VAT

For those of you who can only attend for part of the day, there is a 4-hour pass priced at £35 + VAT. This does not include lunch.

Obviously there will be tremendous opportunities for networking and you will also be able to visit a selection of trade stands.

"The aim of the whole day is to let people hear examples of best practice within business, share knowledge and highlight case studies" added Andrew. "People, the workforce, will always be the best investment for any business. Get it right, be aware of their physical and mental wellbeing, communicate with them and help them develop skills, will generate a return in improved productivity and workforce satisfaction. When everyone heads off home, they'll be better equipped to move their business forward. Little things can mean a lot, and by attending this conference I'm sure there is a real opportunity for some firms to make big changes."

Oh, and such is the standing of the Projects Studio team in Newcastle, that the People Power event is fully accredited through the CPD Certification Service. Attendance will generate CPD points and all delegates receive a certificate as evidence for their records.

So, make a date. June 17th 2020 for the next People Power conference and exhibition.

For further details, go onto the website www.peoplepowerevents.co.uk where you'll find all of the latest news about who'll be speaking as well as the important timings.



NB: Andrew and his team are closely monitoring the ever-changing situation with COVID-19, and have agreed a contingency plan if the event can't proceed on 17th June. If this is the case, an alternative date of 18th September is on hold at the same venue (Northumbria University). All tickets would be automatically transferred if the June event needs to be postponed.

YOUR EYE ON THE REGION...

IAN AITCHISON

Commercial director at Park Electrical Distributors

Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I was born and bred in Gateshead and have subsequently lived the majority of my life in the North East.

What do you think it means to be a business person in the North East of England?

Put quite simply, being a business person in the North East of England means everything to me. I am fortunate to have a key role within Park Electrical Distributors which provides me with the opportunity to meet fellow key business people across the region and so gives me a good understanding of the bigger picture.

As the North East's leading independent electrical wholesaler, we not only offer a high class service to the industry, but we have an involvement with selected local charities, which we feel helps to benefit the local community.

What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

That's easy, wherever you happen to be based in the North East, there is an abundance of facilities available to you. All within an easy drive are beautiful sandy beaches, rolling countryside, we have the Metro Centre, one of the best retail developments and not forgetting the nightlife of Newcastle city centre and Quayside, which is simply unbeatable. All of this on our doorstep!

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

Although I do like to frequent some of the top notch city centre restaurants, to me, there's no better choice than a good old country pub. Top of my list currently would be The Ridley Arms in Stanington, Northumberland.

Are the people really friendlier?

Being a Geordie, you would expect a biased answer, but having travelled around the UK and having had the privilege of meeting with some warm friendly folk from other areas, I can definitely state, hand on heart, the people of the North East are the most welcoming, friendliest bunch of the lot!

What do you think is the best view in the North East?

Whilst the landmark of "The Angel of The North" is always welcoming when returning to the area, for me, it has to be the view from the Quayside looking up past the Millennium Bridge and towards the magnificent, world famous, Tyne Bridge.

Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?

Without a doubt. In recent years, the new developments springing up across the region offer brilliant opportunities to people from all walks of life. We are seeing massive investment in the local universities, which are attracting young students from far and wide. We have an active involvement in some exciting new projects such as Gateshead Quays, Strawberry Place and Science Central, all of which put our region firmly on the map.

Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

In the early 1990s I began my management career in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, a bustling industrial city where I met many colleagues over a two year period who I still keep in touch with today. That was a great experience and served me well as I developed my career. I can honestly say though, as soon as the opportunity arose, I embraced the move back to my native North East with open arms!



Ian Aitchison

KEEP CALM AND...

It's a funny thing mass hysteria,
it often takes on subtle and
multiple forms.

The onset of the Coronavirus has faced us with true pandemic management with millions being rendered on lockdown in various parts of the world in an attempt at containment.

At home, hand gel and toilet rolls are vanishing off the shelves as people who feel they must do something, employ measures that are more emotional than rational at such a time.

The easy conveyance of such a pathogen is the result of modern living. Indeed, the epidemiology of many "plague" type scenarios through history has typically involved some form of exploitation of the animal world and the transmission of cross species pathogens facilitated by improved transport and communications. When one can traverse the world in a couple of days, a virus with a 14-day incubation, has an opportunity to truly get a hold.

That said, we have to keep a level head on the numbers. We should neither be complacent about worst scenario figures, nor panicked. Hundreds of thousands of people die each year as a result of seasonal flu. Around 50,000 people a year die across Europe as a result of gastrointestinal bleeds from the use of aspirin calculated to thin the blood to reduce heart attack risk. Half a million potential deaths were anticipated from BSE yet under 200 occurred. Yes, homo-sapiens are mortal and ultimately must succumb to something at some point and the numbers, when writ large across all populations, instead of being considered in the small scale of our own modest lives, can invoke panic of apocalyptic proportions. It is this fear, (one can only surmise, giving rise to the concomitant need for toilet rolls) that makes people seek certainty, when governments can rarely give this in an evolving situation.

Anyone who has read Albert Camus' *The Plague*, will better understand the psychological adaptation that populations must undertake to accommodate unprecedented events that take their course and from which there are casualties and survivors, ultimately resulting in collective community action prevailing over individual concerns. With many shelves empty, we are far from there yet. Then we have those with religious zealotry who will see this as reflective of the end of the world and the virus itself in anthropomorphic form of one of the four horsemen! It's a fierce mix. Add in our modern speed of communication and tendency for media hype of the news agencies who currently work less on fact and more on emotion and we have a white-knuckle ride ahead.



Dr David Cliff

Whilst survival is assured for most, the social and economic effects may take years to assimilate. Our key substantive challenge remains that of capacity and overwhelm of key healthcare resources for the very sick during high demand periods. Something that will impact on all healthcare delivery, potentially producing a death rate that is not just from the virus.

One thing is clear, this virus has made humankind sign up for a refresher course in basic hygiene, wherein maintaining clean hands is the one key thing one can do to prevent viral transmission. It was ever thus. More E. Coli, Salmonella, Fecal Colophons and myriad other potentially disease-causing organisms are transmitted by poor hand hygiene than just about any other routine human practice. Equally, a key potential form of hand to face transmission is the modern mobile phone which can contain so much bacteria resident operating systems should perhaps give users periodic warnings!

Professionals, academics and others will document and learn from the Covid19 virus for years to come. A certain beer company may have record sales or possibly go bust simply from guilt by association. Markets will plummet and recover ultimately.

Whatever happens, the message of "keep calm and wash your hands" may be a truism but the learned lesson "keep calm and avoid complacency henceforth", is probably more than many are prepared to countenance.

Statistically, viruses take their toll every day and if you are a victim or someone close to you is, that is truly a tragedy. Relatively minor increases in virulence can bring nations and economies to a standstill. We live longer than previous generations and depend more on health care systems that are now easily overloaded. The vulnerable need protection and help, without doubt. To make it all work there is a real need for each and every one of us to keep our feet on the ground and take responsibility for being part of a global community. One that can move pathogens around the world within a day. We need to increasingly recognise the need to be sensible about our lifestyles and behaviour, not just for the period of this virus, but every day of our lives. We have to face the possibility that with a warmer, moister, changing climate, this is not going to be an isolated event. Hysteria, blame and knee jerk theories in the moment will never be as effective as responsible, sensible, basic measures for all.



L-R: Transformation Tribe founder Liam Britton with Head coach Ashley Paynton.

THE TRANSFORMATION TRIBE PROVES IT'S IN GOOD SHAPE

A fitness studio specialising in enhancing customers' mental, physical and emotional health is helping women with low confidence and self-esteem get fighting fit on all fronts.

The Transformation Tribe, founded by 33-year-old personal trainer Liam Britton, is already running close to full-capacity after attracting over 30 customers since moving to new premises in January.

The studio differentiates itself from most gyms and fitness groups by focusing strictly on metabolic conditioning for women who don't feel comfortable visiting gyms - and mindfulness and lifestyle coaching are seen as a fundamental part of every programme.

"We specialise in women's body transformations," Liam said. "We train women who potentially aren't training or have never trained, so it's not for everyone. It's about giving those who need it a place where they feel comfortable and giving them the right support needed to start a new routine.

"There are so many women nowadays who have body and mental health issues, they hate what they see in the mirror and have totally lost their confidence. They wear baggy clothes and won't go to gyms due to that lack of confidence, and that's where we come in.

"We have a lot of ladies who come to us suffering with depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. It's about getting them through the door and us pushing them through exercises, tailored for them, that build up their inner strength and allow them to handle life a lot better."

The Transformation Tribe, based at the North East BIC, opened its doors in January and is already coaching 31 women from around the region - and Liam is proud of the community that he and head coach Ashley Paynton have established.

Liam adds: "We're incredibly proud of the fact that we've been able to create a community, not just a company. We have a WhatsApp group of members all supporting one another, discussing how they're getting on and sharing experiences.

"It's a support network and it's great to see the camaraderie between everyone. You don't get anything like this at big chain or budget gyms, it's a game-changer. I've seen similar groups established further down the country, but as far as I'm aware there's nothing else like this in the North East."

SUNDERLAND COMPANY LAUNCHES IN UK AFTER PROVING A HIT OVERSEAS

A Sunderland-based company is preparing to launch its corporate wellbeing services business in the UK after huge success in India.

Designed to help organisations reduce sickness levels by building a happy, healthy and resilient workforce, Medintu allows employees to track their health and connect with specialists, GPs and coaches, directly from their smartphone.

The online platform is already used by 120,000 people in India, with clients including local authority services, pharmaceutical manufacturers and IT service businesses.

Now, after completing regulatory registration with Care Quality Commission, Medintu is ready to be rolled out across the UK from its base at the North East BIC.

Medintu is the brainchild of CEO Reddy Sanikommu, who also runs IT consulting business Sajva Services at the BIC, and who recognised the potential of digital technology to give patients more control over their health by providing insights into their wellbeing and easy access to specialists.

Reddy said: "The idea came from personal experience and discussions with a close friend who has a long-term health issue. It suddenly struck me that unlike all other areas of our lives, health management remains one of the only things we have very little access to online.

"We are used to tracking things like exercise and calorie consumption and even seeking support from groups. But there is a gap in the market for



Medintu CEO Reddy Sanikommu

an online platform that takes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing - emphasis on preventative care but with the power to connect them to the specialist services when action is needed."

Reddy has worked closely with the BIC as his businesses have grown and evolved over the past six years and advisers have helped to put in place the foundations to launch Medintu in the UK.

Reddy said: "The BIC have played a crucial role in helping us get to where we are today. They've built a whole community around us, introducing us to exactly the right contacts and creating effortless conversations with people who have been incredibly useful to us in developing the analytical side of the platform and joining up health services."

BIC PROVES A WELCOME LANDING SITE

A boutique web development agency, that specialises in supporting small businesses, has designs for further growth after relocating to the North East BIC.

Blueocto Ltd, which was launched by web developers Caroline Hagan and Matthew Bryson, recently moved to the BIC after securing a tranche of contract wins.

Specialising in designing and creating websites, the pair launched the agency after identifying a gap in the market for the provision of dedicated web support to the region's sole traders and small businesses.

The company has since gone on to work with over 25 businesses and - following its move to the BIC - has further designs for growth as it looks to the future.

Like many start-ups, the pair initially worked from home however - as demand for their services started to rise - it wasn't long until they required a dedicated office space of their own in order to take the business to the next level.

Caroline said: "We looked at a few business centres but once we visited the BIC we knew we'd found the perfect spot. We've spoken about the idea of potentially taking on an apprentice or graduate, to help them get their start in the industry, and this



Blueocto founders, Caroline Hagan and Matthew Bryson

would give us the opportunity to do that should the opportunity arise.

"It's also very cost-effective and has superfast broadband, which for a small tech company like us, was a key motivator in our decision. The staff have been great too, Louise [Hardy] and Caitlin [Hind] have pointed us in the direction of various business support programmes and have really helped us settle - we can't thank them enough."

REARRANGING YOUR EVENT SUCCESSFULLY

SK Click Events Gives Top Tips

Many, many events have been cancelled in the last few weeks. An unavoidable tragedy, but decisions have sensibly been made that could save lives.

Moving forward, a lot of those events, especially personal celebrations such as weddings and corporate events such as award ceremonies, will be rearranged.

Here events expert, Kirsty Calvert of SK Click Events, gives tips on how to best resurrect your event for a future date.

1 – Firstly never use the word cancel when informing guests...Postpone is a much better vibe to give people who buy tickets to attend, those who block out time in their diary, or suppliers who you will be letting know their services aren't needed on the original date booked.

2 – Even if you can't set a date for the future yet, you can secure an anticipated date and pay a deposit – this will keep the economy moving and give you peace of mind. Choose a likely date in the future and make sure your supplier is happy to move that date if needs be. At the moment we are offering a date change policy as long as a deposit is paid for any future bookings, as we understand flexibility is going to be needed.



3 – Keep in touch with suppliers and attendees between the original date postponed and the new anticipated date. Businesses will survive this if everyone builds relationships. Small gestures and good communication will be the difference between some businesses surviving and not.

4 – If you have bookings with agreed costs, ask your supplier to honour those costs on the new date. Many prices will go up when things go back

to normal, as companies will need to recoup what they have lost. If you pay a deposit now, many companies, such as ourselves, will honour our current offers and price structure. We have no intention of putting our prices up, but many will. We do therefore expect our books to be busy so you still reserve your new date.

5 – Don't hold back on rearranging. Start it today. Once the UK returns to its normal day to day business, venues will be flooded, suppliers should be inundated. People who have been starved from social contact will be organising events to celebrate anything they can. Weddings will increase. Awards ceremonies will be caught up on. Corporates will need to be back out there making an impact with events and launches. Don't battle with the masses. Have yours organised and sorted, with deposits paid, even if it is for 2021! And start to market it now, people will be desperate to have social commitments in their diary to look forward to in the future!

SK Click Events specialise in photobooth and photo experiences. The 12 plus mirrors and handheld products boast leading edge technology, and collect GDPR compliant data. Prices start from £345 for 3 hours, with a £200 upgrade offer which the company has extended for the next 12 weeks.

Visit www.skclick.co.uk for more information and to view the stunning products. Bookings and deposits can be made via the website too.

THE SIX KEY EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATES YOU NEED TO KNOW



April 2020 comes with a number of important updates to employment legislation. Read on for the seven key changes you need to be aware of to ensure your business is compliant.

1. National Minimum Wage

From the 6th April, National Minimum Wage increases for workers of all ages. For those over 25, hourly rates will increase from £8.21 to £8.72.

2. Parental Bereavement Leave

Parents and primary carers now have the right to two weeks leave if they lose a child under the age of 18 or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy. Paid leave must be offered to those who have been employed for a continuous period of 26 weeks or more.

3. Written Statements of Employment Particulars

All employees and workers are entitled to a written statement of particulars on or before their first day of work, rather than within two months as was previously the case. The statement must now include hours and days of work, paid leave entitlement and details of probationary period.

4. Swedish Derogation

The 'pay between assignments' exception' is to be removed from the Agency Worker Regulations 2010. This loophole allowed for agency workers to be paid less than their permanent counterparts after 12 weeks of working on the same assignment.

5. Holiday Pay Calculations

The reference period for calculating a 'week's pay' for holiday pay is being changed from 12 weeks to 52 weeks. This applies to workers who have no normal working hours or for those where the amount of pay varies.

6. ICE Regulations

Prior to April, legislation stated that if at least 10% of employees request an agreement regarding the sharing of information and consultation within the workplace, the employer must comply with this right. This percentage has been reduced to just 2%.

The controversial updates to IR35 rules have now been postponed until April 2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

If you have any questions regarding the legislation changes mentioned here or any other HR issues you may be facing, please don't hesitate to get in touch on 0191 236 1459 or info@holgatehr.co.uk

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QUAYSIDE GATEWAY TO THE WORLD

By Adrian Waddell,
Chief Executive of NE1 Ltd

Newcastle Quayside is part of the region's crown jewels - so, no surprise it's always been a primary focus for NE1 and a priority for our attention and investment.

Recent consultation with businesses also shows that they too regard the Quayside as a major asset with plenty of scope for further improvement, one of the last pieces in the regeneration jigsaw of Newcastle and the North East.

The Quayside is home to some of the city's finest dining and leisure venues, combined with a high proportion of the city's professional services companies and now it is the focus for significant investment. With bookend developments of the 'Whey Eye' wheel in the east to housing developer Newby's plans for a £250m residential development in the west, and much more in between including the Gateshead Conference Centre; it is imperative that we get it right. We must make sure that the positive impact of all these developments is maximised. What's needed is a cohesive, shared vision, one that provides a framework for an area with a distinct personality, a Quayside Quarter - that works for both banks of the Tyne.

With a shared vision for the area, new investment will make more of a positive impact because it will be joined up.

We all know the history; during its industrial heyday the Quayside and the river Tyne were the gateway to the world for this world-leading city. A legacy of this global influence is in evidence today with marine insurers North P&I, still a huge international player, based on the Quayside over 150 years since it was established.

New businesses are also seeing value in the Quayside. The old Brett Oil Terminal is to be developed by the High Street Group. By the River Brew Co is receiving national and international acclaim and recently it has been announced that world renowned architects Bjark Ingels have submitted ambitious plans for Grade A office space at the currently dormant Stereo Bar site at Number1 Quayside. These investments represent a total investment of over £600m creating some 2,000 new homes over the next 5-10 years on a 1km stretch of river reflecting the Quayside's inherent strengths and the growing demand for this location.

Connecting all these developments through public realm improvements and making more of the river itself have unsurprisingly been the focus

of NE1's efforts over the past few years on the Quayside. NE1's early projects focused on delivering immediate improvements to existing Quayside assets, rejuvenating the Quayside Sunday Market and the creation of NE1's annual pop-up beach, the Quayside Seaside.

Other NE1 activations on the Quayside have been the creation of the Newcastle City Marina, which plays host to many river-based sailing and rowing events as well as providing berthing for hundreds of leisure boats and yachting visitors to the Quayside and city centre each year.

The marina has also provided an excellent platform for new river events and other river activity. The University Boat Race of the North is now a regular event facilitated by NE1 and sits well alongside a new Dragon Boat race. The inaugural event last year attracted 20 teams with over 200 participants. We also invited River Escapes, the Tyne leisure boat operators to run services out of the marina during the summer, joined by CBK Adventures offering kayaking on the Tyne in Summer and night-time kayaking adventures in the winter, both hugely popular attractions.

More NE1 projects in the area include creating the Quayside Relaxation Stations, providing much needed seating for visitors to soak up the iconic views and river-front atmosphere. We've also teamed up with Great Run Local to deliver weekly Quayside runs for office workers. These already attract over

100 participants and are expected to get even more popular with the summer approaching. In August, the Quayside will also play host to a weekend of Tri on the Tyne events – a series of competitions for beginners through to seasoned professionals – all set against the iconic backdrop of the Quayside, its bridges and architecture.

NE1 is committed to championing the ongoing evolution of the Quayside, working with stakeholders, investors and with local authorities to help deliver a vision for the Quayside Quarter that works for both sides of the Tyne – as well as continuing to explore what else can be done to attract further investment. A shared vision means just that - shared. The single most vital component for success is political alignment, with both Local Authorities on the same page regarding a Quayside Quarter. This will offer powerful and attractive encouragement for further investment and will be the best way to make the most of commercial opportunities that lie ahead.

With our international connections, including the Port of Tyne and Newcastle Airport we must exploit all our assets. But the region and its principle city are nothing if not resilient.

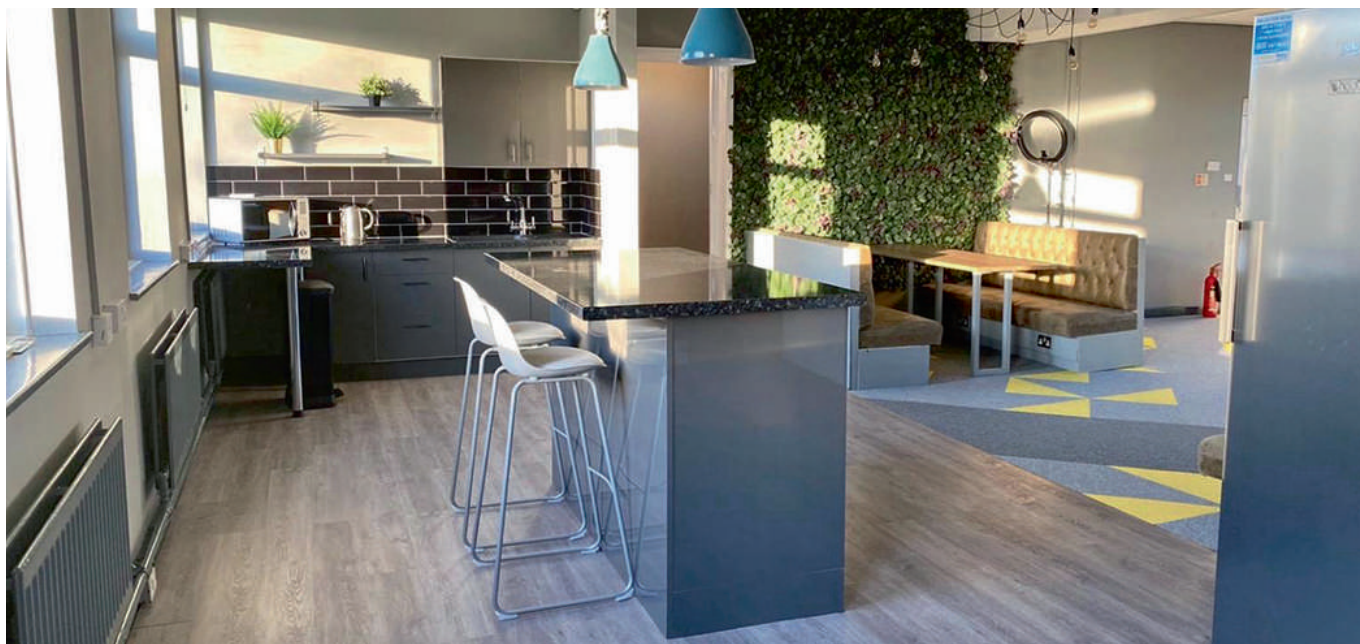
Newcastle remains a highly attractive proposition and is continuing to attract ambitious projects that will change the face of the city and the Quayside for generations.



Adrian Waddell

STATE OF THE ART OFFICE SPACE, NORTHUMBRIA HOUSE, KILLINGWORTH

By Ronald James



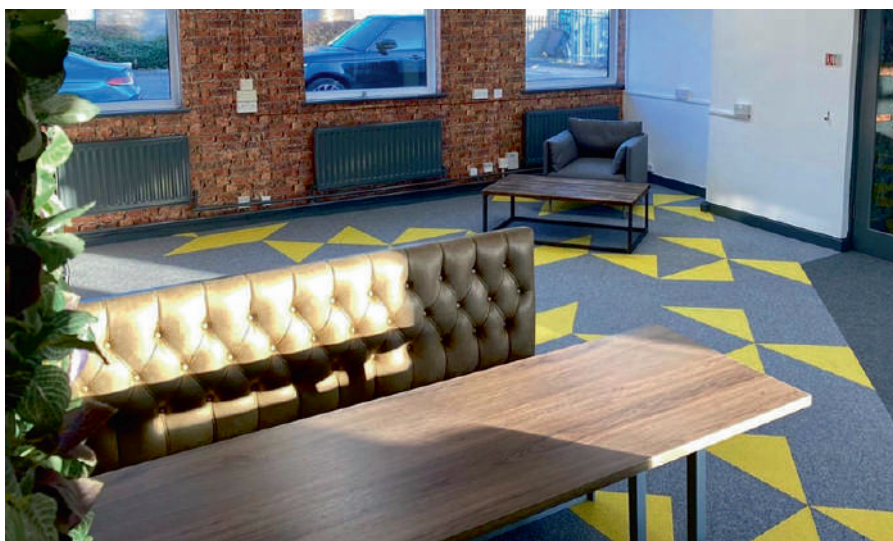
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In January 2020, Northumbria House launched its second phase of offices, opening its doors to a number of high-calibre tech companies for temporary and permanent tenancy! If you're looking for a state-of-the-art home for your up-and-coming business, then look no further.

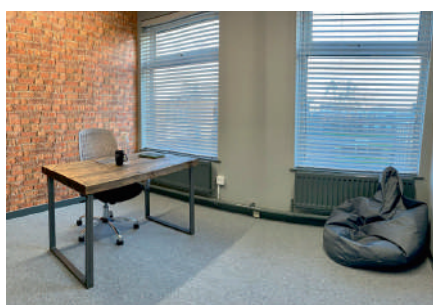
Northumbria House is home to the North's top tech talent agency, Ronald James, as well as the UK's only recruitment-marketing hybrid company.

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If you are interested in joining the big leagues, then give us a call on 0191 620 0123 or e-mail melissa@ronaldjamesgroup.com to enquire about Northumbria House's remaining serviced offices.



MAYOR SEES DISPLAY OF WORLDWIDE INNOVATION

The Elected Mayor of North Tyneside, Norma Redfearn CBE, has visited one of the region's most innovative businesses to see for herself why they won the 2019 North Tyneside Business Forum's Business of the Year Award.

New York based Clavis Integrated Display Systems (IDS) are recognised as the industry leader for designing and manufacturing belt tension measurement equipment and automotive handbrake setting equipment worldwide.

As well as winning the North Tyneside Business Forum's annual award for business of the year, the firm have secured six Queen's Award for Enterprise Awards.

Director Mark Errington was delighted to take the Elected Mayor on a tour of the facilities and introduce her to some of the firm's staff including their latest intake of apprentices.

The Elected Mayor enjoyed her tour of the premises and was impressed with the scale of their operation.



PENSIONER'S SPECIAL FOR SPECIAL PENSIONERS

The boss of an award-winning fish and chip restaurant recently opened his doors to a group of senior citizens as a special pre-Easter treat.

Waseem Mir, manager of The Harbour View Fish and Chip Restaurant in Seaton Sluice, contacted Age UK Northumberland in a bid to do his bit to help older people who are socially isolated. Around 30 people attended and were treated to free fish and chips, tea and mushy peas.

Waseem commented: "We get a lot of older people eating with us and most come with family and friends. I am very conscious though that some people are socially isolated and find it difficult to get out and about. I wanted to reach out and give those people a treat to let them know we are thinking about them."

Those attending were from the Ashington and Bedlington Social Friday Groups and the Knit and Knatter group from Ashington.



MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST WELCOMES OUTSTANDING SCHOOL

The Newcastle-based multi-academy trust Laidlaw Schools Trust (LST) has welcomed a new 'outstanding' school to its growing group of academies.

The highly regarded 11-16 secondary school Sedgefield Community College, which was rated outstanding by Ofsted in every category in March 2017, has joined LST's portfolio in a move which formalises an existing advisory relationship with the trust.

LST's chief executive, Jane Spence, said: "We are so delighted that Sedgefield Community College has decided to come on board. We can begin working together as a team with a collective vision for transforming the lives of children and communities."

The decision to become part of LST represents a superb opportunity for Sedgefield's staff to broaden their experience and to benefit from the advantages of joining an established multi-academy trust.

As part of the exciting development, LST will also be investing in a multi-million pound teaching and leadership centre on the Sedgefield site.



ELDERLY AND MOST AT RISK TO BENEFIT FROM NEW FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE

NU TO GO, a healthy fast-food restaurant in Gateshead, has expanded its meal preparation service to cater for the elderly and those most at risk who are being advised to self-isolate due to COVID-19.

The 'self-isolation meal preps' include a selection of breakfast, lunch and evening meals, with free delivery within a five mile radius of the Gateshead restaurant. Deliveries in a 5-10 mile radius incur a small charge.

At a time when it's difficult for key workers and vulnerable people to obtain certain groceries, an 'essentials' delivery service including items such as bread, milk and water is also available.

The new service provides the convenience of delivering meals and essentials to people without them having to leave their home, as well as providing wholesome nutritious food.

NU TO GO's meals come in reusable packaging and the business also offers a free waste collection service.

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YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

MATTHEW ORD

Company Ambassador
LV Shipping Ltd

Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I was born in Middlesbrough and lived there all my life, until about two years ago when I moved to Eaglescliffe. I do still find myself saying that I am from Middlesbrough and quite often I don't correct myself as I am extremely proud of my home town, not just now, but always, it's part of my DNA and makes me who I am today.

What do you think it means to be a business person in the North East of England?

Being a business person in the North East means you are surrounded by everything you will ever need in terms of support for your own business challenges, you can tap into advice and guidance from some of the greatest, most respected and well versed professionals in the country. We are so lucky in this respect and this gives us the confidence to achieve more and strive to make ambitions a reality.

What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

Easy, the people and the businesses.

Cliché, I know, but I have been really blessed to have had roles that have literally allowed me to meet everyone I have respect and admiration for within the business community in this part of the world.

I've worked with almost all of the region's exporters and they are a collective that really inspire me, with so many challenges and so many options as an exporter they really do stand out for me.



Where do you like to eat out in the region?

Well, I am a massive foodie. I don't have a favourite eatery but when I do go out for a nice meal I like to go to somewhere like Chadwicks Inn at Maltby or for a family Sunday dinner we love The Crathorne Arms. During the day, if I have a client visiting our Newcastle office, I love to visit a small coffee place called Hive Coffee Company based in Jarrow, amazing staff and even better fresh food with a really great atmosphere, go check it out.

Are the people really friendlier?

Yes, I have two brothers and a sister that have all left the area and live in France, London and Nottingham. They love being 'back home' and the topic of conversation is often about how they miss home and, more so, the people. I also get to travel a fair amount with my job and I am yet to find more approachable, considerate and helpful folk anywhere. I also think people in the North East are more resilient as a result of the historic challenges we have faced, from the steam engine days to ship building, industrial revolutions, steel making, oil & gas and now the diversification into offshore wind and other sustainable solutions. We have seen it all and we continue to face challenges but we do this collaboratively and with integrity.

What do you think is the best view in the North East?

Well, I'll be mocked for this, but I love being at the top of Ormesby bank, particularly as the light starts to fade and you see the flares burn and all the buildings lit up when looking over the old ICI site and across to the port and steel work site and even on a rare, clear day in Teesside, you can see Seal Sands and Port Clarence. You know you are looking at something that has fed world industries for decades and will continue to do so for many more.

Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?

No, I think the rest of the UK are really at a disadvantage. We are much better here and better looking. Joking aside it's fair to say we have had our challenges and we will continue to do so but the North East is a remarkable place and I wouldn't want to be from anywhere else.

Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

Yes, I have worked overseas and in different parts of the UK, not for very long though as I miss home too much. There really is no comparison for how a place makes you feel inside, the North East is home for me and I can't see that ever changing.



Nicola Cook

BUILDING A SALES ENGINE TO SIMPLY SURVIVE!

Those of us old enough and grey enough will have lived through more than one economic contraction, however it's fair to say that none of us have ever experienced a worldwide pandemic like the one we're all currently facing with the COVID-19 virus.

By the time this article is published, I guarantee things will have developed further, but I read in the Independent on Friday 13th March that more people will lose their homes and their livelihoods as a result of Coronavirus, than will die from it. Even without this stark prediction I already believed that we entrepreneurs have a responsibility to do our utmost to maintain the financial health of our businesses, thus contributing to the health of the economy overall.

So, putting aside the need to protect your workforce and to keep yourselves and your families safe – that's a given, below is the advice I'm currently dishing out to my clients.

1. Get clear on your numbers

Warren Buffett famously quoted, "If you can't see the scoreboard, you can't tell the winners from the losers." I like to adapt that slightly, as right now for the majority of businesses it's less about winning and more about survival, "If you can't see the scoreboard, you don't know how much time you have left in the game!"

I'm often amazed how many businesses don't really know their numbers. As Jim Collins famously says, "confront the brutal facts," as without absolute clarity on cash, cashflow, margin, breakeven, pipeline etc. you cannot make any sensible strategic decisions, you're flying blind. No one knows how long the impact of this virus will have on the economy, it's your responsibility to understand, based on the current facts available, how long you have left in the game – only then can you make sensible changes to lengthen that goal.

2. Protect your current client relationships

People are nervous and will want to delay making decisions or holding onto cash. How can you demonstrate that your product or service actually supports them in these changing and uncertain times? Be flexible where you can. Providing you can survive the short-term economic shock in your own cashflow, demonstrating loyalty and sensible trading terms with your core clients now, will pay back dividends over the long term.

3. Look for new opportunities

If your revenue is at risk, is now the time to switch your focus to open up new avenues of income? Dig out that online project you've had in the 'nice to do pile' for the last two years? Can you pivot your offering from a sector that is being hit particularly badly into a different sector that is faring better?

Is now the time to invest in new technologies that will give you a market edge or open up a new route to market?

In downturns, it's always the weakest and least competitive business that die, meaning that when boom times return and the market begins to expand once again, it's the strongest businesses and ones that offer the greatest value that are poised to ride that economic wave. Now is the time for disruption.

4. Protect cashflow

Although this is the final point on the list, one would argue that it is the most important. As the buying cycle is disrupted the impact on cashflow is always the first to be hit.

Thankfully all my businesses have spent the last few years planning against any potential fallout from Brexit, so I know they will be fine, but everyone's runway will be different.

I've preached for many years that your cashflow should always be the length of your New Business Lead Time plus one month. Sadly many business who have not heeded this advice will pay the price, however there are still some things you can do now to improve your cashflow position.

i. Extend credit terms now, wherever possible. Speak to your suppliers, speak to your creditors, speak to your bank. Painful experience has shown me it's always easier to extend credit terms, before you're in the shit. My personal experience, of particularly the highstreet banks, is that they slam their shutters down when your back is against the wall but are happy to extend credit when you don't really need it. Put it in place NOW!

ii. Trim the fat. Don't cut costs unnecessarily or withhold making investment decisions that were already planned but don't continue a moment longer carrying unnecessary bloat. Who's that person who's been 'average' for some time – maybe it's time for them to be 'average' elsewhere.

What about overhead? In my experience most businesses can reduce their cost base by at least 10% by actively reducing wastage and inefficiencies. The time is now to go line by line through your P&L and question every cost and if you do have to cut, as my dear friend Lara Morgan has said previously, "If you have to cut, cut like a surgeon. Cut once and cut deep."

iii. Access support. Personally, I think our government are doing a sterling job in managing and mitigating, where possible, against the impact of these unprecedented times so make sure you are aware of what's available. Check the daily updates on www.gov.uk

In times of economic crisis, there will always be winners and losers and the actions and decisions you make RIGHT NOW could determine which side of the coin you land.

Nicola Cook is the CEO of Company Shortcuts. The UK's leading Sales Acceleration agency helping Scale-ups build a profitable Sales Engine for Growth. Her waitlist is opening again in September and is currently taking new applications. If you're interested in finding out how she could help your business, for an application form contact helen@companyshortcuts.com

THE LOCAL VETERINARY CLINIC YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

There have been a number of exciting new developments at one of the North East's favourite Veterinary Clinics, Sore Paws.

Besides the vets recent expansion, opening a second clinic in Winlaton after the success of their Newton Aycliffe practice, more exciting developments are in the pipeline.

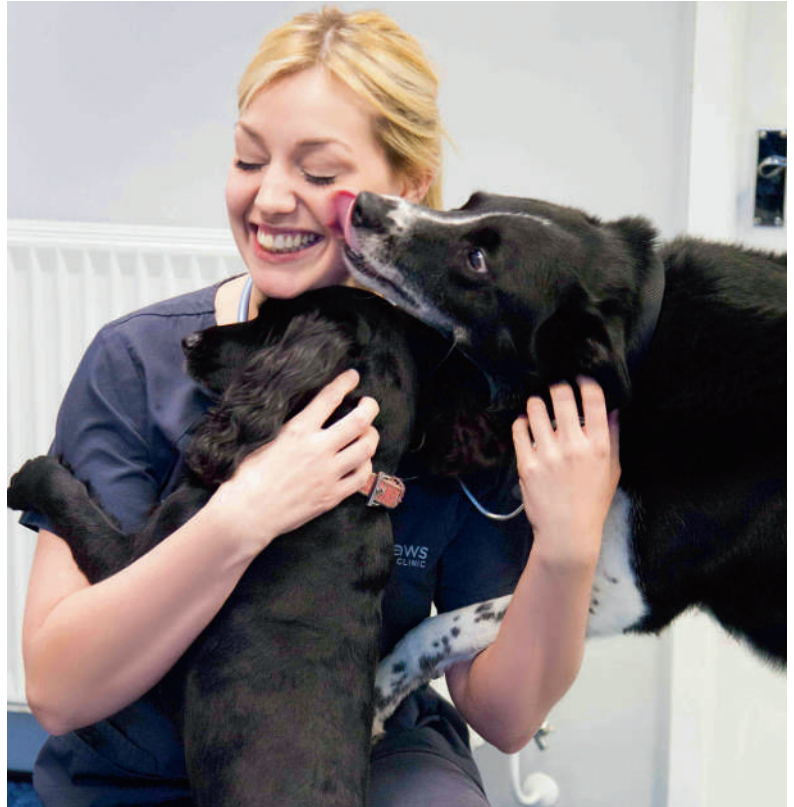
Their fantastic reputation has brought them an influx of patients to their new Winlaton branch, meaning the clinic has hired four new members of staff, including Veterinary Surgeons, Registered Veterinary Nurses and Veterinary Care Assistants.

As well as their new additions to the Sore Paws team, the practice has invested in brand new, top of the range equipment, including Digital Ultrasound and Digital Dental X-ray equipment. With all of these new additions to the practice, Sore Paws will be able to help more animals in a quicker time frame and carry out more procedures on site.

The team at Sore Paws put your pet's health first and they want to ensure that any vet visits can be prevented, so if your pet hasn't had their annual booster, it's highly recommended that they receive it as soon as possible.

Whilst it's an easy one to slip through the net, it's also easy to save your pet's life and prevent them from contracting a number of life-threatening diseases and ultimately, prevent a costly vet bill.

Because Sore Paws care for your four-legged family members just as much as you do, for just £30 Sore Paws will provide all cats and dogs over the age of 18 months a full re-start course if they're overdue with a vaccination, so don't take the risk of infection when it come to your pet, take advantage of Sore Paws full re-start course.



For more information about Sore Paws and their services, please visit: www.sorepawsveterinaryclinic.co.uk



Have you missed your pet's annual health care check and booster vaccination?

At Sore Paws Veterinary Clinic, we care about your pet's health just as much as you do. That's why we're offering all dogs and cats over the age of 18 months, with overdue vaccinations, a full restart course against all of the main diseases, for the price of a booster!..

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£30



Don't take the risk of infectious disease, take advantage of our full restart course now! Available for a limited time only.

For more information please visit:

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or give us a call on 0191 414 4233 (Winlaton) or 01325 308000 (Newton Aycliffe)



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MIND MATTERS

North P&I Club's Role in Supporting Wellbeing at Sea

By Belinda Ward, Director (Claims)

Life at sea can be stressful. The nature of the job demands prolonged periods away from family, long hours, with limited social time.

Add to that the sometimes-pressured work environment, unwelcome news from home or a traumatic incident on-board and it's easy to see why seafarers can become stressed, anxious or depressed.

Belinda Ward, Director of personal injury claims at Newcastle based marine insurance provider, North P&I Club, discusses North's role in supporting the wellbeing of seafarers both at sea and ashore.

Mental health issues can lead to low morale, poor concentration and increased susceptibility to illness and injury. It is now recognised that the mental welfare of seafarers is just as important as their physical wellbeing.

As a marine insurer North provides cover against risk and loss at sea, offering immediate technical, legal and professional support and we are fully aware of the impact mental health issues can have, not only for the crew member but for their family, friends and colleagues. The knock-on effects can lead to severely degraded job performance which may put colleagues or the vessel at risk. In extreme cases it can erupt in violence on board, sometimes fatal, or crew self-harm and even suicide.

For the last two years North has been running 'Mind Matters' a support campaign aimed at ship owners and operators, and their crew. The campaign was developed in response to the increasing number of claims North was receiving from mental health related incidents on board ships.

Overall, the campaign is helping to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing at sea, providing the crew aboard North's insured ships with resources and guidance materials to support their emotional wellbeing at sea and ashore. An important part of the campaign is the confidential crew helpline 'Mind Call' which was launched in partnership with the International Seafarer's Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN). The crew helpline is to crew on board the ships North insures 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Mind Call team speaks several languages, making the experience as comfortable as possible for seafarers.

It is estimated that one in four people will be affected by mental health problems at some point in their lives, therefore we are striving to ensure that the people who are integral to making maritime world trade happen have access to the help and resources they need.

For more information, please visit: www.nepia.com or www.mymindmatters.org



Belinda Ward

OVERCOMING A SHORTAGE OF TALENT

Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, discusses the biggest of all recruitment challenges, and how you can beat it.



Bryony Gibson

A shortage of skilled people is the biggest challenge in today's job market. Despite a regular flow of attractive roles, companies are finding it harder than ever to hire the right workers.

Regardless of sector, this has been the case for some time and, even with ongoing attempts to bring education and training institutions closer to businesses, it seems the problem is getting worse.

In a recent survey of 2,000 global recruitment professionals, almost half - 46% - said that they believe the scarcity of talent in the UK is currently unhealthy than it was five years ago.

Of course, there are many factors which contribute towards this, not least Brexit and the ensuing political and economic uncertainty which continues to cause a lot of concern and has diminished the risk-averse's appetite for change.

The UK's unemployment rate is also at the lowest level since 1975, meaning fewer people are actively looking for a new challenge, and this is before we mention the coronavirus pandemic, which has not only delayed decision-making but reduced global and local mobility immeasurably.

The good news is that there are several things you can do to help you tackle the talent shortage without having to race headlong into a salary bidding war with your competitors.

Re-skill existing employees

One of the greatest opportunities in recruitment is to retrain your existing workforce, especially if you have people in the business who possess a lot of the

softer skills required for a role and have the right attitude.

By identifying the competencies you need to bring into your team and up-skilling the right people, you will not only give someone the tools to help you grow the business, but you're also developing them as individuals and offering new opportunities, all of which will discourage them from looking for a new challenge elsewhere.

Develop your employer brand

Great people are never short of job offers, so the way your company is viewed as an employer and how a job opportunity is sold to a potential recruit is crucial to attracting the best people.

Start by thinking carefully about what it is that you do and don't want to be known for. Next, make sure that everyone involved in the recruitment process sees it as a two-way interview. They must always show your business in the best possible light at every touchpoint, demonstrating what it is that makes you stand out from your competitors.

Diversity matters

Diverse organisations are more effective and they appeal strongly to potential new employees. With

a limited talent pool at your disposal, this can be difficult, so you should remain on a constant lookout for great people.

It is the role of your recruiter to help you create a more diverse workforce and, even if you're not looking for a particular skill set right now, if you find someone you like, make a note to remind yourself of their strengths and start building a relationship straight away. This way, whenever the right time comes, they will be much easier to approach and more amenable to your proposal.

Act fast

Once they decide to move, talented people get job offers very quickly. If you unearth the perfect recruit, be prepared to act fast. If you don't and they are at the top of their game, it won't be long before one of your competitors tries to steal them from you.

Get help from an expert

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

STUART M^CGIVERN

Project Manager, NEAA

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I didn't really have many ambitions when I was younger because when I was growing up it was more about getting a job (mainly due to loss of my father at 17). I started work in a recession and it focusses the mind to be employable and get a job first, then think about the opportunities you can take advantage of to better yourself.

Tell us about your role at the North East Automotive Alliance

It's a very interesting and varied role. When I started, I realised that I was dealing with companies that must be exemplary to meet the world class standards of quality cost and delivery that Nissan demands. This means that you have to think long and hard and have the perseverance to find improvement opportunities. My role requires me to find areas of collaboration that can be nurtured and exploited. These areas have naturally born into focus groups namely Business Resilience (improving business as usual), Energy (energy procurement and use, plus legislation) and Safety (world class companies have exemplary safety records). We also look at specific areas where there is a natural conversance, for example injection moulding. These initiatives will change and develop depending on the current challenges our members face.

What services does the company provide?

The NEAA is an industry-led automotive cluster based in the North East of England. The NEAA was established in March 2015 to support the sustainable economic growth and competitiveness of the automotive sector. We operate through five key areas including Networking, Business Resilience, Skills, Innovation & Technology and Trade & Investment. Through these areas members can exploit route to market opportunities, capability improvement, knowledge transfer and sector engagement.

What's your proudest business achievement?

My best achievement to date would be setting up my own business and running this for three and a half years in what was a tough market. However, I would also consider involvement in the first joint



sourcing activity between Nissan and Renault as another of my most satisfying achievements.

What challenges have you encountered?

Throughout my career I have come across many challenges but one common area has been how people relate to change; whether that be reducing cost when you're working in procurement, changing and improving processes and procedures and ultimately challenging fixed mindsets when it comes to change.

How has the industry changed since you arrived at the company?

What I have seen in my time at the NEAA is the exponential change in technology on board cars and in manufacturing processes. Automation and digitalisation of information has taken off rapidly in the last five years. The political landscape has also considerably changed with regards to Brexit and the environmental concerns related to emissions legislation have also come to a head in recent years.

Who are your heroes in and out of business?

Outside of business, one of my heroes is Pope Francis because he's trying to live the gospel and focus on what people should be thinking and more importantly doing in their lives. Another is Eckhart Tolle who wrote "The Power of Now". In business, my heroes are all leaders or owners of businesses who are working for the benefit of their workforce and customers while behaving ethically and morally.

Is there a mantra you always aspire to do business by?

Always try to do the right thing. In doing the right thing, admit to your mistakes.

How do you like to unwind?

I love playing the drums and walking the latest dog that I have adopted and family time with my three daughters. Being outside amongst nature is enjoyable to me. My wife is a great support, I have learned to unwind from her.



NORTH EAST LAW FIRM RECOGNISED AT NATIONAL CHARITY AWARDS

A Newcastle based law firm has been shortlisted for a national award in recognition of its support for North East communities.

Muckle LLP has a long history of supporting charitable causes across the region. It makes grants, encourages volunteering by its people and provides free commercial legal advice to those in need.

The independent North East law firm for businesses has now been shortlisted for CSR Team of the Year at the Third Sector Business Charity Awards, alongside national organisations ITV and Aviva.

Each year Muckle donates 1% of its annual profits to its charitable fund at the Community Foundation Tyne and Wear. In 2019 the law firm celebrated the fact that over £500,000 had been awarded to local causes since its Muckle Fund began.

Each Muckle employee also receives two days' volunteering leave and its lawyers provide thousands of pounds of pro bono legal advice to charities each year.

SINTONS LAUNCHES REBRAND AS IT PUSHES ON WITH GROWTH PLANS

Law firm Sintons has unveiled a new brand identity as it continues to progress across all areas of the business through its Strategy for Growth.

The rebrand centres around the trust upon which Sintons has built its reputation since being founded in 1896 and focuses on many of the firm's key lawyers who are helping to lead the regional and national growth of the business.

The new branding has been unveiled at a time of strong development for Sintons and is hailed as paving the way for the future of the firm as it continues to win new clients across the UK.

Now more than half way through its five-year Strategy for Growth, Sintons is reaping the rewards of its ambitious drive to win new work and grow across all areas of the business with a recruitment drive to bring in new legal talent.



NORTH EAST SOLICITORS CONTINUES TO EXPAND

An award-winning North East solicitor is consolidating its position as one of the fastest growing law firms in the region, with a host of new appointments and internal promotions.

EMG Solicitors, which has its head office at Abbeywood Business Park, Durham, and a second office at Gosforth High Street, Newcastle, now employs more than 50 staff, thanks to eight new people joining the team.

This includes Claire French, who has

joined as an Associate in the Court of Protection team, making the decision to move to EMG because of its reputation for COP work.

Among the latest appointments is also Ian Burke, who has taken up the new role of People & Culture Manager. Ian will be looking at the development of the company's vision, mission and values.

A range of new support staff working in residential conveyancing and the COP team have also been recruited.

MUCKLE LLP WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR LEGAL INNOVATION

Newcastle-based law firm for businesses Muckle LLP has won a Legal Practice Management (LPM) Practice Excellence Award for Innovation, after teaming up with Sunderland University and Innovative UK to develop a new product that automates part of the firm's debt recovery process.

The technology, which was developed in-house at Muckle, rapidly speeds up a number of back-office elements behind debt recovery. The new system can set up a debt 15 times faster than it takes a human to perform the same task.



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MARRIAGES, CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS AND COHABITATION – WHAT IS THE LEGAL DIFFERENCE?

By Nicola Matthews, partner in the specialist family law team at Hay & Kilner Law Firm

The introduction last December of civil partnerships for couples of the opposite sex marked the latest landmark in the rapid recent evolution we've seen in the formalisation of our most important personal relationships.

Back in 2005, same sex couples who wanted their relationships legally recognised were given the right to enter into a Civil Partnership, an arrangement which gave the two parties roughly the same rights and responsibilities as a married couple without actually being called a 'marriage'

This option of "marriage" was eventually extended to same sex couples in 2014, with same sex civil partners being able to convert their legal status to marriage if they wished.

Same sex couples can still enter into a Civil Partnership if they prefer, although as noted above, the legal differences are minimal, and opposite sex couples now also have that option – so in summary, it is now possible to have opposite sex and same sex marriages and opposite sex and same sex Civil Partnership!

Cohabitation

Of course, many couples choose to cohabit without entering into any legally binding relationship – and as such, they do not have the same legal rights and responsibilities as people who have.

For example, there is no legal right for partners in a cohabiting couple to make any claim for financial provision, such as for cash, money for housing, pension or maintenance, if they split up, no matter how long they have lived together.

Property

If a cohabiting couple jointly owns a property, then property and trust law will dictate how the proceeds of its sale would be divided between them at the end of their relationship.

If it was purchased as joint tenants, both parties will have an identical interest in the property, so any sale proceeds will be divided equally between the parties.



However, if one party has made greater financial contributions to the deposit, mortgage repayments or renovations to the property, things are less clear-cut, and it would be wise to take legal advice about the individual details of the particular situation.

Family

It's obviously common for cohabiting couples to start a family, and for one party give up work or reduce their hours so they can become the primary carer for their children.

In this situation, the wage earner may accrue pension in their own name and may also be able to save some of their income into their own bank account, whereas the parent providing childcare has no or limited earnings in order to do either.

If the parties one day separate, the parent providing childcare does not have the right to a share of those savings or pension for themselves, whereas a person who was married or in a Civil Partnership would have.

In these circumstances, the parent providing childcare can only ask the wage earner to provide money to meet the children's needs.

Home

The wage earner may sometimes provide money for a property to be purchased to house the parent

providing childcare and the children.

However, this money will be subject to a Trust, so that it will be returned to the wage earner when the youngest child reaches 18.

If the parents had been married or in a registered Civil Partnership, their assets and income would be collectively taken into account. Fairness may then dictate that the economically weaker party should receive a share of the wage earner's savings and pension and money from the sale proceeds of the family home, even if they had made fewer contributions.

They are entitled to make these claims on their own behalf, whether or not they have children.

Rights and Responsibilities

As you can see, the rights and responsibilities of people in marriages and Civil Partnerships are very different from those of co-habiting couples.

While perhaps not terribly romantic, it makes sense to fully understand your legal position before co-habiting, marrying or entering into a Civil Partnership.

If one party has pre-owned assets they wish to protect in the event of a break-up, a pre-nuptial agreement should be seriously considered before the big day.



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PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS

Employees who are exiting a business are in possession of confidential information from their previous employer that they could use in a new role should they go to work for a competitor.

As a result, businesses will often require employees in senior or client facing roles to enter into restrictive covenants as part of their employment contracts which limit what they may do after their employment terminates. For example, an employee may be restricted from working for a competing business or contacting clients/customers for a period of 6 months post employment.

We strongly advise employers have such restrictions in place to protect its business however, in some instances post-termination restrictions can be difficult to get right. The position at common law is that all restrictions are unlawful, unless an employer can demonstrate that the restrictions are only as wide as necessary to protect their legitimate business interests. If post-termination restrictions are drafted too widely, they may be considered unreasonable and therefore unenforceable as an unlawful restraint of trade, i.e. they unlawfully interfere with an individual following their trade and using their skills freely.

Where an employee is subject to post-termination restrictions and they leave their employment to go and work for a competitor, the previous employer will be eager to ensure that the employee does not breach any of their restrictions as this may damage their business. Where the previous employer suspects the previous employee has or is likely to breach their restrictions, it may try to prevent the employee from working for a competitor by sending the employee concerned a clear reminder of their contractual obligations and the consequences of breaching them. However in situations where potential or actual damage to the business is a reality that could cause significant damage, an employer may need to consider taking more robust action by applying for an injunction from the High Court or by bringing tort claims to protect its legitimate business interests.

The recent case of *Allen t/a David Allen Chartered Accountants v Dodd & Co* is a good example of seeking to enforce post termination restrictions. In this case, Mr Pollock was employed by David Allen Chartered Accountants ("the Claimant") and was subject to post-termination restrictions which applied for 12 months after termination of



Jane Sinnamon

his employment. He resigned to join Dodd & Co ("the Respondent"), which was a competitor of the Claimant's. Before Mr Pollock had started his new role, the Respondent had sought legal advice on the strength of Mr Pollock's restrictions and whether they would be enforceable or not. This legal advice confirmed that the covenants were unlikely to be enforceable because they were too long in duration and were not supported by consideration, i.e. Mr Pollock received no benefit for having entered into them. The Claimant brought claims against Mr Pollock for breach of contract and the Respondent for inducing that breach.

The High Court found that, contrary to the legal advice received by the Respondent, the restrictions were enforceable, subject to some parts which could be 'severed'. However, the judge dismissed the claim against the Respondent on the basis that the Respondent was entitled to form the view that it was more likely than not that the restrictions

would be unenforceable and that it had honestly relied on the legal advice sought. The Claimant appealed to the Court of Appeal.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal, as it concluded that to be liable for inducing a breach of contract, a contract has to be binding and enforceable. The Respondent had known there might have been a contract in place, but it had been advised that the agreement was likely unenforceable. The Court confirmed that a person had to know that they were inducing a breach and that their actions would have the effect of breaching the employee's contract.

This will be a welcome decision for employers, as the Court of Appeal's judgment supports the view that where a business responsibly seeks legal advice, it should be entitled to act on that advice even where the court believes the advice provided was incorrect.

Should you require any advice or assistance in drafting or enforcing post termination restrictions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jane.sinnamon@collingwoodlegal.com or on 0191 282 2884.

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Anna McGill and John Morgan

GORDON BROWN LAW FIRM COMPLETES 150 DEALS IN 12 MONTHS EXCEEDING £75 MILLION

Gordon Brown Law Firm's Commercial: Corporate and Real Estate team has had a great start to the new year after completing 150 deals worth more than £75 million in 2019.

Last year saw the team bring in deals which included advising the management team at IOtech Systems on \$7.5m funding from investors, including global computing firm Dell.

The firm also worked on an MBO for Newcastle's Explain Market Research agency. Gordon Brown Law Firm's corporate partner, Anna McGill led both transactions.

Highlights include a £10m restructuring of a private company in the North East, advising on the merger of a GP practice, property finance, investment property acquisitions and disposals.

Other work included the acquisition of a prominent office block in Newcastle city centre and on Newcastle Business Park for syndicates of private investors, and ongoing SIPP work for new and existing clients.

An impressive year was capped off by the disposal of a large area of development land in Berwick for a private landowner to the Town Freemen and renegotiation of a national SIPP provider's template trust deed relating to high value premises in the North West of England for a large syndicate of beneficiaries.

Having already completed 20 deals in 2020 worth in excess of £10m, the Commercial: Corporate and Real Estate team, headed by John Morgan is predicting another strong year.

John said: "We are delighted with the success so far and are confident that 2020 will be another strong year for the firm and its continued growth in its new offices on Team Valley, Gateshead.

"It's been fantastic for me to reflect on my first full calendar year with the firm and see the broad

range of transactions we've worked on as a team.

"We've had some great client wins so far this year and I'm looking forward to strengthening the relationships we have built, and to see how we can assist our existing and new clients on the next step of their journey."

Kathryn Taylor, managing partner at Gordon Brown Law Firm, added: "The firm has always had a strong reputation for commercial property matters and business sales in the region. Now with John Morgan and Anna McGill having joined us, we can broaden our areas of expertise to enable us to advise on more complex restructuring work, share sales and purchases and SIPP property matters."

The team's sector expertise includes leisure and hospitality, technology, medical and real estate.

To find out more about how Gordon Brown Law Firm can help you, call into our offices, call us on 0191 388 1778 or visit www.gblf.co.uk

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COUNTY DURHAM LOOKS SET FOR AN ECONOMIC BOOM



The Partners of Swinburne Maddison LLP

Durham City's leading law firm, Swinburne Maddison LLP, believes that the many strategic initiatives - economic, cultural and educational - which are being driven by Durham County Council, are paving the way for a stronger economy in County Durham.

The firm's high service levels continue to assure its position as the legal partner of choice for a wide range of SMEs in the county and beyond because its award-winning team offers everything you would expect from a big city law firm, including a full spectrum of services spanning corporate and commercial, employment and commercial property to litigation, family and private client work.

Swinburne Maddison's partner and head of the corporate and commercial team, Martyn Tennant, believes that the recent launch of Durham County Council's 'County Durham Plan', with its ambitious growth targets including the creation of 30,000 new jobs as well as almost 25,000 new homes over the next 15 years, are a cause for celebration. He said: "Although some modifications to the plan have been requested, if you consider what is happening even just a short distance from our

Aykley Heads office, including the ongoing success of Atom Bank and the relocation of County Hall where 6,000 new jobs are to be created, it is very exciting.

"Swinburne Maddison is known as a trusted law firm, providing creative yet commercial solutions, with an overarching holistic approach to the advice delivered. We work across a wide range of businesses from PLCs to owner-managed SMEs, including start-ups, private individuals and third sector organisations - not only in the region, but nationally and internationally too.

"We also have ambitious growth plans of our own. We are well known for recruiting local talent whenever possible, and over the next year, we aim to recruit more enthusiastic lawyers and support staff, who share our drive and ambition to achieve the best possible outcome for every client.

"Following the redevelopment and refurbishment of our office building two years ago, we now have the capacity to be able to add significant breadth and depth to our team if business needs dictate.

"The regional workforce has a well-earned reputation for loyalty and hard work and the time is right to build on the strength of our tourism and education economies. As an established Durham law firm, with an excellent reputation and an impressive network, we are well placed to facilitate further success for the region - and eager to play our part."

Swinburne Maddison is currently working on some high-profile M&A transactions as well as ongoing projects with Maven Capital Partners. Recently concluded is its work on behalf of The Auckland Project as it sought to retain the heritage of County Durham with the acquisition of the Weardale Railway.



Susan Howe

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

SUSAN HOWE

The partner and head of dispute resolution at Newcastle law firm Muckle LLP talks about technology, value for money and why her team is a North East business's best friend in an argument.

Tell us about Muckle LLP's dispute resolution team

We are one of the North East's largest, dedicated commercial litigation teams and we handle every type of business dispute on a regional, national and international level.

What does commercial dispute resolution really mean?

No company wants to find itself involved in a dispute. It's stressful and time consuming and it can make or break a business.

Dispute resolution means getting the right commercial result for the client either by issuing proceedings or using some form of alternative dispute resolution. Your litigation lawyer really is your best friend in those urgent, contentious situations where commercial strategy and objectives might be difficult to focus on. A good litigator will be tough, creative and tell you the truth however hard it is to hear.

For me the commercial outcome is always key. My team has some of the best commercial litigation experience in the region and we can provide whatever process is necessary to pursue or defend a claim. However, there's no point ending up in court if the potential recovery doesn't stack up against the costs risk; the aim is always to deliver the right strategy and solution in the most cost-effective way.

What sets you apart from competitors?

I spent almost ten years at Slaughter and May in London, then returned to Newcastle and joined a national law firm and continued to do City-type work. So when I came to Muckle my aim was to establish a practice that could handle any commercial dispute, however specialised, complex or high value, so that businesses in this region didn't have to go to London law firms.

Now we have a team of experienced lawyers, mainly recruited from London and national firms, who are leaders in their field and who are helping to develop the excellent homegrown talent we have. Being North East based, we are also typically much better value for money than London firms.

We have a breadth of expertise which I believe is unique in the region. We cover everything from warranties and shareholder disputes to international trade disputes and emergency injunction applications. We also have specialisms in intellectual property, IT and media disputes, reputation management, procurement and contentious probate.

As well as local businesses we advise clients as diverse as the Caribbean Premier League (a global cricket tournament), musicians including a former member of Duran Duran, PLCs like Persimmon Homes and leading businesses like NG Bailey.

Proudest moment within the business?

I feel genuinely proud all the time at Muckle. I'm proud of our CSR programme, of donating over £500,000 to local charities through our

Muckle Fund at the Community Foundation. I'm proud of our commitment to equality, bringing trailblazing initiatives like solicitor apprenticeships to the North East.

I'm also particularly proud of our brand new agile office, which has freed us from the traditional image of the desk based lawyer. Now our people are empowered to work wherever and however they work best and this really sets us apart as a modern forward thinking law firm.

What is the best piece of business advice you've ever been given?

As a trainee I was told to 'be curious and always ask the next question'. It's the sort of advice that would appeal to anyone with an inquiring mind and a passion for what they do, but for a litigator it's essential to get to the bottom of a situation.

How have commercial disputes changed over the last decade?

Technology. Businesses not only need the best technical advice, they need the most efficient and best value legal advice.

We were one of the first practices outside London to adopt artificial intelligence technology to speed up the disclosure process on multi-million pound disputes. In a recent case, we used technology assisted review and predictive coding to reduce around one million documents by more than 95%, leaving only 35,000 which needed to be manually reviewed.

Technology is a real gamechanger for the legal profession but particularly in disputes, where clients just want the issues dealt with as quickly and cost effectively as possible.

What's next for your team?

Innovation, innovation, innovation! Watch this space...

Heroes in and out of business?

Two women who inspired me on personal level: firstly, Professor Valentine Korah, my contract law tutor at University College, London. She is simply one of the most intellectually gifted people I've ever met. Secondly, Ruth Fox, the first female partner at Slaughter and May. I was very lucky to have her as a role model.

Favourite aspect of the job?

I love the intellectual challenge and strategic thinking required to deliver successful results. Most of all, it's the people; I have a brilliant team made up of bright, funny, caring and lovely people to work with. They also just happen to be incredibly tenacious people who you would definitely want on your side in fight.



MAKING WAVES – COPYRIGHT UPDATE

Do you design, manufacture or sell a product? Muckle LLP litigation solicitor Ailsa Charlton shares some fresh insight on copyright law that has implications for many businesses.

Isn't it frustrating when your ideas are copied? It is often difficult to prove and, as well as being annoying, it can cost your business revenue or devalue your brand.

It is also why copyright law exists, but even with that real and present deterrent, it can be a grey area that makes it challenging to stop others from mimicking your creative work.

When does copyright apply?

For copyright law to apply in the UK, a piece of work must fall within one of the categories outlined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (Copyright Act). These are:

- Original literary, dramatic, musical or artistic works
- Sound recordings, films or broadcasts
- The typographical arrangement of published editions

An 'artistic work' is defined as:

- A graphic, photograph, sculpture or collage, irrespective of artistic quality
- A work of architecture being a building or a model for a building
- A work of artistic craftsmanship

Design and style ideas are copied in the fashion industry all the time. It is how fashion trends develop and drawing a line between inspiration and imitation, based on the above guidelines, is never easy.

Yet a recent case has legal implications for all businesses involved in creating, manufacturing or selling a product.



Ailsa Charlton

That looks familiar!

In the recent decision of *Response Clothing v The Edinburgh Woollen Mill*, the Intellectual Property Enterprise Court has found that a textile can be a work of artistic craftsmanship and protected by copyright.

Edinburgh Woollen Mill is a well known clothing retailer with stores throughout the UK. Response Clothing specialises in the design and marketing of clothing products.

Response Clothing provided Edinburgh Woollen Mill with ladies' tops made of a jacquard fabric with a design referred to in the case as a 'wave arrangement'. Response attempted to raise the price of the tops, but Edinburgh Woollen Mill rejected the price increase and sought alternative suppliers.

A number of other companies supplied Edinburgh Woollen Mill with clothing made from jacquard fabric and court proceedings followed.

Response Clothing claimed that copyright existed in the 'wave arrangement' and that the garments supplied by the new suppliers were infringing

copies which amounted to primary and secondary copyright infringement.

New developments in copyright law

The judge found that the "wave arrangement" was a "work of artistic craftsmanship" for the purposes of the Copyright Act. They also decided that it is possible for an author to make a work of artistic craftsmanship using a machine.

According to the judge, aesthetic appeal can cause the work to appeal to potential customers and a work was not precluded from being a work of artistic craftsmanship solely because multiple copies of it were subsequently made and marketed.

Ultimately, the judge deemed the fabric to be a work of artistic craftsmanship and therefore capable of copyright protection. They also ruled that the similarities between the fabric created by the new suppliers and Response Clothing's fabric were sufficient to infer that copying had taken place.

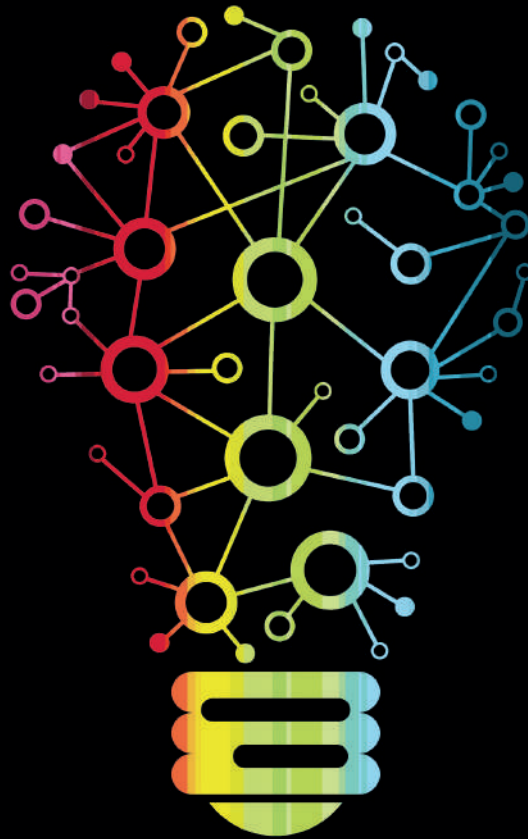
While the new suppliers' fabric was not identical to Response Clothing's, the judge found that a substantial part had been copied.

Lessons learned

This case is an interesting development in the law regarding what is required for a work to qualify as artistic craftsmanship.

Retailers will need to take extra care in sourcing their fabrics and in their design document records. It seems likely that there will be further disputes in this area as fashion designers are likely to look to seek to rely on this judgment in the protection of their rights in the future.

For more information or to discuss any issues your business is facing, please contact Ailsa at Muckle LLP on 0191 211 7735 or ailsa.charlton@muckle-llp.com



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THE CYBERSECURITY SUMMIT: NORTH EAST

Some of the world's leading technology and cybersecurity experts recently came to the region, with the likes of Advantex, Cisco, Zerto, Milestone, Veeam and Axis to name a few, all in attendance.

The Cybersecurity Summit: North East was hosted at the famous Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art on the banks of the River Tyne, where over a 100+ cybersecurity enthusiasts and professionals gathered to be inspired and educated by some of the brightest minds in the industry.



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Peter Swift

STACKS OF TALENT

Steve Russell meets Peter Swift, co-director at Dunwoodie Architects, and the creative force behind Newcastle's iconic shipping-container leisure project, STACK.

With a stellar, thirty-year career under his belt, Peter Swift is as synonymous with Newcastle's architecture as the majestic Georgian buildings of Grey Street, appropriately enough, the place he called home for much of his working life. Born and raised in the west end of the city, his entry into the profession was by no means pre-ordained, but a seed of ambition was planted during childhood adventures on building sites:

"My dad ran a joinery company and some of my earliest memories are of accompanying him when he went out to work. You'd never get away with it now, but looking back, I think that's probably what inspired me to become an architect".

The family moved to Ponteland in his adolescence, and helping his dad to build their new family home further fuelled his passion. Even so, it took time for his ambition to crystallise. A pupil at St. Cuthbert's Grammar School in Fenham, Peter's early academic interest was French, until he realised that Gallic literature didn't inspire much *joie de vivre*! He began to covet a career in architecture, and encouraged by his teachers, applied himself to his new-found ambition. He went on to secure a place at Dundee University, and after qualifying, started his career at The Alan J Smith Partnership followed by LJ Couves & Partners in Newcastle. Peter elaborates:

"Couves were a long-established firm in Newcastle, and I spent my formative years there, learning the trade. By 1998 I'd worked my way up to become an associate director, but unfortunately, the company folded in 1999. However, I was lucky enough to secure a senior position at Dewjoc soon afterwards".

Ostensibly, his relatively rapid rise to seniority was beneficial to his career, but being fast-tracked wasn't without its consequences:

"When AutoCAD came in the late 90s I missed out in some ways. Because I was earmarked for management roles quite early, I only had limited CAD training and I've just caught up on it in recent years".

CAD may not top his skills list, but his illustrious career suggests his résumé is anything but limited. How would he describe his strengths?

"People sometimes find this hard to understand, but the way I explain it is by saying that I am an architect, but then I'm not an architect! What I am is the director of an architectural practice, and there's a difference. I can, and I do design, but my real strength these days is going out, getting work, and delivering on it".

Deliver he certainly has, and his successes at Dewjoc - where he became a director - included the St. James' Gate complex and The Jury's Inn hotel, Quayside. Following Dewjoc's acquisition by an Irish project management company, Peter's role was diminished, and he departed, seeking more autonomy and fulfilment elsewhere. He established Swift Architects in 2011, which he initially operated from home. He continued to enjoy success, but being home based presented challenges within the industry. Thus, when he was approached by Dunwoodie Architects in 2013 to join as a consultant, he saw it as a good opportunity. Specialising

in healthcare projects, Dunwoodie emerged 30 years ago from the dissolution of the Northern Regional Health Authority. The company established a solid reputation, but Peter's experience facilitated a more ambitious agenda, while his consultant status allowed him to continue under his own banner simultaneously. The partnership had its ups and downs, including a brief split, but ultimately resulted in Peter taking over the business in 2017, along with his current co-director, Laura Ruxton. The business has flourished under their tenure, and Peter expands on their dynamic:

"Laura and I get on really well and our respective skillsets complement each other perfectly. Her background is in healthcare, and with my experience in large-scale commercial projects, we're able to build on Dunwoodie's excellent reputation within the healthcare sector, but also take on more expansive and innovative commercial work".

Now headquartered in Charlotte Square in Newcastle city centre, they've built an impressive body of work. On the healthcare side, they're currently delivering a new multi-storey car park for the RVI, and Laura recently provided consultancy to the Maltese government on a major healthcare project, drawing high praise for her input. That success has been mirrored by their commercial endeavours, not least by their most high-profile project to date, STACK. Peter explains how it came to fruition:

"I'd got to know the guys behind Danieli Holdings (whose portfolio includes Yolo, Yolo Townhouse & The Muddler) socially, and became friendly with their owner Neill Winch. We started discussing doing something together, and Neill was keen on a shipping-container project. We considered other locations, but settled on the old Odeon site and it went from there".

Financed by Danieli and delivered by Dunwoodies, STACK is now Newcastle's premier leisure destination. STACK's constantly evolving array of bars and retail outlets have connected with a generation of leisure-seekers looking for more than the traditional "four walls and a pump" venue. It may seem like a relatively simple concept, but appearances can be deceptive:

"It may just look like a load of shipping containers, but it actually had some very complex design considerations. It's essentially new technology, so we had to do a lot of research on things like thermal insulation and fire protection".

Peter is justifiably proud of STACK, and its success has inspired Peter and Neill to plan a series of sister projects across the region. STACK Seaburn opens its doors in the summer, which is a step on with lessons learned from Newcastle and will feature venues offering electronic versions of crazy golf and darts, in addition to bars and retail units. There are two further STACK projects in the planning phase, while Dunwoodie's healthcare portfolio continues to expand.

Peter Swift's ambition is matched only by his work ethic, and our region is all the better for it!

WHY THE RIGHT ADVICE MATTERS WHEN IT COMES TO MOVING PREMISES

By Ian Tew,
Partner at Knight Frank Newcastle.

Moving to a new commercial space is exciting but it's essential to get the right advice to ensure it doesn't turn sour.

If you are thinking of moving premises, getting experienced advice first can pay dividends. What can seem like insignificant side issues can, quietly, become bigger than anticipated. By taking correct and early advice, from an experienced building surveyor, tenants can stay properly protected against cost risk and business disruption. This is a big investment and you need to protect it.

There are a number of issues to consider and your building surveyor will be your personal guide.

Exit from your Existing Premises

It is likely that you will have liability on your existing premises. The landlord will probably serve you with a Schedule of Dilapidations at the end of your lease. You can get ahead of this by reviewing your financial liabilities well in advance of lease expiry.

A good building surveyor can review this and plot an exit strategy for you to mitigate your financial liabilities. You will also need to know these obligations when planning your move, as these are part of the financial jigsaw puzzle of calculating the costs of your new home. You may have various defence options open to you and writing a cheque may not be the best move.

Review of New Premises

Before you get carried away thinking about furniture and interior design, take a step back and look at some of the checks necessary. Nice receptions and pretty floors are all very well, but what about the building you are moving into? Here are some questions to ask:

- Does the air conditioning work properly?
- What power supply is there?
- Is the roof in good shape?
- What factors may hit the service charge (for which you will have to pay a proportion)?
- How old is the plant and machinery and will it survive the length of term of your lease?
- Has the equipment in the building been properly maintained and is it working to its designed efficiency?



Ian Tew

- Can the building operate properly when it is exceptionally hot or cold outside?
- Does it have sufficient ventilation/air changes?
- What is the air quality like?
- What type of cladding does it have?
- Is there smoke detection in the voids and are fire breaks in place?

Remember - the answers to these questions need to be considered before you commit to the building, not after you have moved in and spent a small fortune on fitting it out.

Workplace Design

As part of good design, you will need to review your space planning, make sure you have made good use of it, as you will be paying rent on every square foot of space.

Consider:

- **Environmental issues** - does the building meet your firm's environmental policy regarding energy efficiency, use of PV, solar heating, water etc
- **Social issues** - does it support cycling to work, gender, faith etc
- **Agile & flexible working** - Will it support ever evolving changes away from traditional practice
- **Technology and Infrastructure**

The landlord's letting agents may connect you with a fit-out contractor to help you plan and visualise your new premises, but there needs to be some due diligence and guidance to ensure that the contractor's proposals are robust and priced correctly. Ask yourself: 'is a design and build fit out the right approach, or would it be better to review a number of interior design options and retain control of the design and specification?'

Money

You need to consider how you will pay for the project. Many contractors like to be paid in advance when

dealing directly with end users. This offers you little protection and could put you at considerable risk. A properly drafted contract ensures that only works completed on site are paid for. Furniture is a little different due to its bespoke off-site manufacture. The contract is tailored to protect both parties in the event of a dispute. The contractor's proposal needs to be well detailed and not vague, this is essential for proper cost control.

Dealing with the New Lease

Is a Schedule of Condition necessary to restrict your repairing liabilities? You don't want to inherit liability for somebody else's damage. Is there a package of landlord works which are to be undertaken prior to moving in? Somebody needs to review the specification to ensure it is suitable and good enough. It is good to monitor the landlord's work to ensure this is undertaken properly. You will also need to deal with the landlord in securing landlord's consent for any alterations.

The Works

Finally, you will need someone to act as contract administrator. The contract has a list of mechanisms for processes such as proper cost control, valuations, and the issue of certification for payment and completion. The contract is there to provide the rights and obligations to you and your contractor. It needs to be properly administered, especially if a dispute arises further down the line.

Better Protection

Sometimes it is only the contract administration services that building surveyors are asked to help out with, and unfortunately all of the milestones before this have been missed, resulting in unnecessary cost risk, planning risk and increased liabilities which could have been avoided. Early engagement of a building surveyor is essential to stay properly protected in what can sometimes prove to be a very complicated process.

Ian Tew works in the Building Consultancy and Project Management team at Knight Frank in Newcastle. He can be contacted at ian.tew@knightfrank.com 0191 594 5012.



DIBCOTT HOUSE, FOXTON, NR ALNMOUTH, ALNWICK



PRICE GUIDE: £1.35 MILLION

Dibcott House provides a rare opportunity to purchase a superb detached home in this fabulous, much sought after location on Northumberland's Heritage Coastline. Individually designed and built by the current owner in 2018, this magnificent house is finished to an exceptional specification and has been thoughtfully designed to take full advantage of the stunning views of the coastline over open countryside to the front, and across the adjoining golf course to the beach and sea at the rear. The property currently offers beautifully proportioned accommodation with four double bedrooms, three bathrooms and three reception rooms including a stunning open plan living space across the rear elevation with bi-fold doors to a beautiful porcelain tiled terrace. Dibcott House has been designed and built with a second storey which offers the potential to add further accommodation if required.



Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 01665 600170 gillian.greaves@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk

MOVING

TO UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

The daily changing picture in respect of the Coronavirus has thrown the world into complete disarray, and so many companies are now having to implement emergency measures as to how they intend to proceed for the future.

As of the 16th March 2020, our company received 28% greater number of sales and enquiry levels than we had in the previous year. The market has been very confident, and buyers have been undoubtedly taking advantage of the historically low mortgage interest rates.

Bricks and mortar continue to provide a sound investment, especially during a period of turmoil for the stock market, which may continue for some time.

Property is capable of being sold during this period and we are working very closely with our partners on the conveyancing side to ensure that all aspects of a purchase or sale can take place. The staff at Sanderson Young may at some stage work from home, although telephone lines will still be redirected and answered on a daily basis. Greater use of emails will be encouraged and if you have any uncertainty who to contact, please use:

contact@sandersonyoung.co.uk

We remain primarily focused on the health of our colleagues at work, as well as all our clients, and everybody is very much aware of the need to keep to good housekeeping rules on spatial awareness and distancing. There are many people who want to

move, and are keen to move, and many of the houses we are selling are empty so can be viewed easily, at a safe distance. As long as the solicitors conveyancing a property work closely with the mortgage companies and banks, as well as the surveyors who are often self-employed, then we can see a clear way forward. We will need support from the searches department and local government and much of this information is available by computer and is an administrative task.

WE ARE VERY MUCH OPEN FOR BUSINESS AND WHILST SOME OF THAT BUSINESS WILL BE HANDLED AT A DISTANCE FOR SAFETY REASONS, WE LOOK FORWARD TO SPEAKING WITH YOU BY PHONE OR BY EMAIL IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

To all our clients, please stay safe.

With my very best wishes,
Duncan G Young
Chairman
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Penthouse Apartment,
Hadrian's Tower,
Newcastle £558,000



Snuff Mill Mitford, Morpeth

5 3 3 C

Snuff Mill is a stunning, period detached country house located in circa 2 acres of grounds. This stone built property, dating back to the early 1800's, has been sympathetically extended and stylishly refurbished with many features including an integrated sound system and underfloor heating.



Price Guide: Offers in excess of £1.5 Million

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Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

HELPING THE HARD PRESSED

Discrimination of any kind is a dreadful thing and while we have made great strides in recent decades, there is still a way to go.

Notting Hill today is highly des-res, the abode of Luvvies, hedge funders and people who buy Gwyneth Paltrow products. In my parents' day it was very different. A local slum landlord called Peter Rachman was so notorious that the work 'Rachmanism' is now in the Oxford English Dictionary as a synonym for the exploitation and intimidation of tenants.

Back then it was not unusual to see signs proclaiming "Rooms to rent. No foreigners. No dogs". Try that today and you will be invited for a meeting at your local police station and biscuits will not be provided. Today it is illegal to discriminate on grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender. Police can now record a hate crime where there is no hate crime. I have no intention of trying to get my head around that one. It seems if you call someone a nit on social media, that is a hate crime without hatred?

This latter is an example of our dilemma in

identifying discrimination. Where does genuine protection for minorities end and how do we define discrimination? A current hot topic in the lettings sector is discrimination against prospective tenants in receipt of Universal Credits. The 'No foreigners. No dogs' sign may be consigned to the dust bin of history, but "No DSS" has appeared in advertisements for properties to rent.

Cases of this discrimination have been brought and resulted in out of court settlements, which is a shame. If the matter had been brought before a Judge, we would have a clear legal ruling.

The Property Ombudsman will soon require lettings agents not to use a 'No DSS' clause. Yet, we have a duty to our landlords to assure them that the tenant can pay the rent.

Banks and mortgage providers frequently include a 'No DSS' clause in their terms and conditions. Freeholders can make No DSS a requirement when agreeing to a sub-letting contract for leaseholders.

This fuzziness in the regulations leaves the poor benefits claimant no further forward. Yes, the offensive 'No DSS' tag will be removed from advertisements. But it will still be buried in the terms and conditions of lenders, insurance underwriters and freeholders.

I will say again. Discrimination of any kind is a dreadful thing. But in most cases, discrimination has its roots in ignorance. Groups tend to be discriminated against because other groups simply do not understand them.

I leave the last word to Nelson Mandela who said "We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, gender and other discrimination". While Nelson had bigger issues to grapple, I for one will be quietly proud when my industry moves towards helping, rather than discriminating against, Universal Credit claimants and low-income families.

Heaton Property was setup in 2005 and specialises in providing rental property for professionals in Newcastle upon Tyne and the surrounding areas.

In June 2014 the company won gold in the Times/Sunday Times Letting Agency of the Year Awards.

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Neil Turner

HOW DO YOU MEASURE DESIGN QUALITY?

A simple question to ask all architects and designers, but not a simple question to answer - or is it?

The North East is blessed with some great designers from different disciplines including architects, industrial designers, furniture designers and jewellers through to web designers. The same principles and approaches apply to them all.

When I begin any commission, the challenge and excitement of the project is in the balance of achieving the brief, watching the costs but trying to create a unique piece of architecture.

The building design is a complex piece of thinking. I could write a book on the process but have simplified this to a few of the initial questions every designer should ask.

Every design should look at its setting or context. Do you want the design to match and slip into a street or should it contrast and be of its time or even deliberately provoke?

What does the client want to achieve from the building and how long should it last?

Are there specific materials, structure or functions that will influence the final design?

The budget is never an excuse for poor design but undoubtedly cost and quality of design are connected, in that greater opportunities for materials, features and clever structural solutions become available, the greater the budget.

If it was so easy then we would all be doing this, and the designs would all be the same. The wondrous thing about this profession is the ingenuity of different designers to come up with varied designs.

The hardest issue always is the discussion on what is good design and what is bad design. Everyone can have an opinion.

It would be too simple to say that only trained people should comment. Clearly, when applied to planning issues we consult with experts in the planning departments and with conservation officers who can comment based on the wider criteria of what is acceptable and what is not. Often the system struggles on design matters as many planning departments lack expertise in design.

We've recently used the North East Design Panel made up of architects, landscape architects and planners to assess a new house destined for the green belt in the region. After discussion and comment, in this instance, our great design was improved and developed further with their warmth and encouragement. The local authority can now assess the planning application in the knowledge that the subjective issues of design have been thoroughly tested through two panel meetings.

Even on normal applications, a planning officer will make recommendations and then go to a committee made up of councillors. The public is represented on the committee by the councillors, which is vital, but often the views of the public and the design matters can be lost in the politics of decision making.

In the end the only test to measure design, is to ask yourself: 'Do you like the building?' 'Does it make you smile?' If it does, then appreciate all the hard work that has gone into making that building look so simple.

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BERNICIA HOUSING OFFICER CELEBRATES EUROPEAN GOLF CALL UP

North East housing officer Jonathan Jones, is celebrating being called up to represent Europe in disabled golf's version of the Ryder Cup.

Jonathan's superb victory last summer in the British Open has secured him a spot in the Phoenix Cup match in September against a team from the USA.

He will line up alongside 11 of Europe's other top disabled players in the 25th anniversary Phoenix Cup clash staged over five days at some of Scotland's premier courses against the cream of US disabled golf.

Jonathan, of Whitley Bay, will play singles, fourballs and foursomes at Gleneagles PGA, Panmure, Blairgowrie Rosemount, Carnoustie and the Trump International Golf Links in Aberdeen.

He is also eligible to play in one of four 'Major' Scottish Disabled Golf and Curling events prior to the Phoenix Cup to get to know his European team mates.

Jonathan, 30, who works for North East housing association Bernicia, manages Arthrogryposis, a disability resulting from a fusing of wrist bones

in the womb which limits his wrist movement.

The condition means he can't fully rotate through his golf swing, but his shortened swing gives him exceptional accuracy off the tee and he regularly drives the ball 270 yards.

He held off the challenge of 60 top amateur players from across the UK and Europe to lift the Disabled British Open at Stratford Park Golf Club last summer.

The win was the realisation of a sporting dream for the four-handicap player who shot rounds of 77 and 78 to claim the coveted prize.

Jonathan said: "I'm absolutely delighted to get the call up to play, it really cements what a great win the British Open was last year for me.

"It's a fantastic opportunity to showcase the great talent we have in Europe once again and hopefully we can get the win!

"I've got the added bonus of defending the British Open this year which makes 2020 a year to really look forward to."



Whitley Bay's Jonathan Jones who has been called up to represent Europe in a major golf event.

www.bernicia.com



The Real Living Wage and Eothen Homes

Why do we pay the living wage?

The real living wage is set by an independent organisation which bases its hourly rate on the actual cost of living – in the North East this is currently £9.30 per hour.

As a registered charity, committing to the real living wage was a significant business decision but one we were keen to make so we could invest in our staff and give them the financial reward they deserve.

Care workers are often portrayed as low skilled, which determines the pay across the sector. We can't change this as it is set by the government. But we can ensure we show how much we value our staff's skills and commitment by paying them this real living wage.

Due to an ageing population, residents come to us later in life or stay with us for longer, and their health often deteriorates physically and mentally. This means our staff have to be fully trained and competent to deal with individual needs right through to end of life, and this brings with it a series of physical and emotional challenges.

Our amazing staff tackle these challenges head-on, and show an incredible amount of passion for their job. They care for our residents like they were their own family. Their work deserves to be rewarded with a decent rate of pay.

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Denise Hall
HR Manager

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SYCAMORE SQUARE: BRINGING LUXURY NEW HOMES TO FORMER SANDERSON HOSPITAL SITE

Empty for almost 20 years, the former hospital site will have its day once again as Lok Developments lays the ground for the stunning Sycamore Square housing development.

Lok Developments, part of Newcastle based Morton Group, is set to develop 37 luxury new homes on the former Sanderson Hospital site in Gosforth, following a unanimous vote from Newcastle City Council to approve the plans.

The residential scheme, named Sycamore Square, will create 23 new houses and 14 apartments centred around a large green central space, near Gosforth High Street.

The homes featured will consist of 13 detached four and five bedroom houses, which include two bungalows, as well as 14 two bedroom apartments and 10 four bedroom townhouses, all with access via North Avenue.

Designs for the development took inspiration from local architecture, and the historical hospital context. The new homes will feature

red brickwork, natural slate roofs and modern aluminium framed windows. Designed by award winning architects, Sadler Brown Architecture, the homes will be set around a central landscaped garden space created for residents.

The 1.33 hectare site was formally home to a Victorian children's hospital founded by Newcastle philanthropist, W J Sanderson, but has been empty for almost 20 years. It was bought by Lok Developments in June 2019.

Planning consultancy, Curtis PDC, submitted the planning application on behalf of the Morton Group.

Work on site is set to commence from April onwards, with completion of the development expected in summer 2021.

Gary Morton, Group CEO of Morton Group, said:

"The Former Sanderson Hospital site will bring forward new high quality homes in a sought after location in Gosforth.

"The site has a fascinating history but has remained unused for a long time. It's a pleasure for us to be able to overcome some of the site's challenges and bring development forward, following our purchase agreement with the previous owners."

Tony Harmieson, Managing Director at Sadler Brown Architects said: "Creating a quality, beautifully landscaped, green space for residents was the primary focus of our design for Sycamore Square. The homes are all centred around the communal heart of the development, which will create a welcoming sense of family life and community."

THE RULE OF THREE

Morton Group's development, construction and real estate companies celebrate three successful years of trading

The wholly-owned family business was formed by Gary Morton and his father Brian. Now, only three years later, they look to the future with £120m worth of development projects in the pipeline.

The Morton Group consists of LOK Developments, Kapex Construction and Regents Gate Homes, meaning that it can act as both developer and contractor on building projects.

LOK Developments, which specialises in acquiring land and buildings, has secured in excess of £50m of investment over the last 18 months. It currently has 206 residential units in for planning, due to start or on site, including Regents Plaza Apartments, Sycamore Square and Regent Manor in Newcastle. In total there's £93m worth of developments in the pipeline for LOK Developments.

Kapex Construction is the building delivery arm of the business. It saw a turnover of £1.45m in its first year which rose to £3.1m in 2018/19 and is expected to hit £12m by the end of this financial year (April 2019 – March 2020). Looking ahead, Kapex has a confirmed order book of £36m.

Morton Group was established in December 2016 by Group CEO Gary Morton and his father Brian, following Gary's return to the region after working on large-scale infrastructure projects in London.

Morton Group's Development Director, Chris Nunn, joined Gary, Brian and Operations Director Shaun Humphreys in 2018. Since then the company has grown to almost 90 employees.

In September 2019, Morton Group moved into a new office space at Regent Centre, Gosforth, with an option to double staff capacity in the near future.



Group CEO Gary Morton

Gary Morton, Group CEO of Morton Group, said: "The growth we've seen over the last three years has been brilliant, and we're just getting started.

"The expertise of our team and our unique business offer has been developed through many years working in the construction industry. Our difference is in providing a range of integrated services, from concept to construction and disposal, as well as operating a completely open book approach with our partners and investors.

"We have a very ambitious team seeking out previously unseen opportunities, securing large

sums of investment and managing the delivery of many significant projects.

"It's been a privilege to work on the fantastic projects that we've been involved with so far, and with such a strong team of talented individuals.

"With a confirmed forward order book of £36m for Kapex Construction and £93m worth of developments coming online for LOK Developments, we're looking forward to further growth and continued success with some interesting landmark projects lined up in 2020. It's a very exciting time for us."



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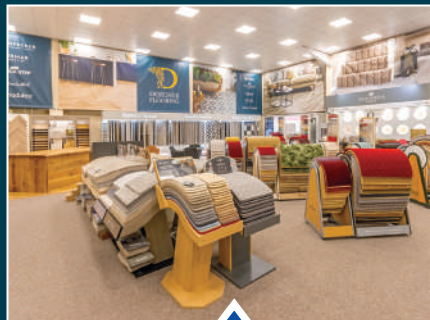
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O TEES OFF 2020 WITH CONTRACT WIN

Creative communications agency O Communications has landed the contract to spread the word about the Betfred British Masters tournament for the fourth consecutive year.

Returning to the North East, the Betfred British Masters will be held at Close House in Newcastle from 30 July to 2 August 2020. O will manage all regional PR, media partnerships and social media for the popular golfing event on the European Tour.

The Newcastle-based agency first worked on the tournament when it came to Close House in 2017, attracting almost 70,000 spectators to watch pros including winner Paul Dunne, alongside host Lee Westwood.

The O team followed the British Masters in 2018 and 2019 as it toured to Surrey and Merseyside.

Kari Owers, Managing Director at O, said: "We've built a great relationship with the European Tour team and can't wait to get on the course with our content crew and share all the behind-the-scenes action."



BRIGHT FUTURE FOR GROWING FIRM FOLLOWING OFFICE MOVE

A leading managed print services provider has its sights set on recruitment after moving to one of the region's coolest new office spaces.

Concept Group Ltd, part of Xerox, has taken occupancy at the revamped Neon building on Quorum Park, which offers resident businesses a barbecue area, ping pong and pool tables and a retro arcade game to encourage cross-collaboration.

Concept employs 185 people across its six UK offices. The 18-strong Newcastle office is now planning to increase its headcount by more than 20% in the next year.

Alex McKenna, Director of Concept Group Ltd, said: "After achieving growth and increasing staff numbers year on year, it was time to move to bigger premises that match our ambitions. It was also important to reward the hard work and loyalty of our current team with inspiring, sociable surroundings and great amenities."

MEDIAWORKS COLLABORATES WITH YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

York St John University has announced an innovative partnership with Mediaworks, the North-East based award-winning digital marketing agency.

The unique collaboration, which will see the University's Business School offer a cutting-edge MSc in Digital Marketing and Data Analytics, is designed to provide students with the real-life tools and insights required for a successful career in today's data driven and digitally focused marketing industry.

The master's qualification will integrate traditional marketing strategies, such as building customer loyalty, with more contemporary aspects, including



analysis of customer behaviour, customer journey mapping and social media marketing.

The programme is delivered online, allowing participants to learn independently while also accessing the support of expert tutors. Students will be able to network with their peers through online community forums and regular residential events across the country.

NEWCASTLE DIGITAL MARKETING AGENCY SECURES NEW INVESTMENT

New funding will help North East based Curtis Gabriel expand, take on more staff locally and scale up globally.

Following an initial investment from the North East Innovation Fund, Curtis Gabriel has grown rapidly. The company, whose headquarters are in Gosforth, Newcastle, now employs nearly 50 members of staff.

Specialising in Social Media and Digital Marketing management for clients

in the hospitality, transport and lifestyle sectors, Curtis Gabriel has secured a follow-on investment from venture capital firm Northstar Ventures.

The new investment of £200,000 will allow Curtis Gabriel to accelerate their global expansion and customer acquisition plans. The investment will also aid in securing additional UK office space, owing to the company's continued recruitment drive.

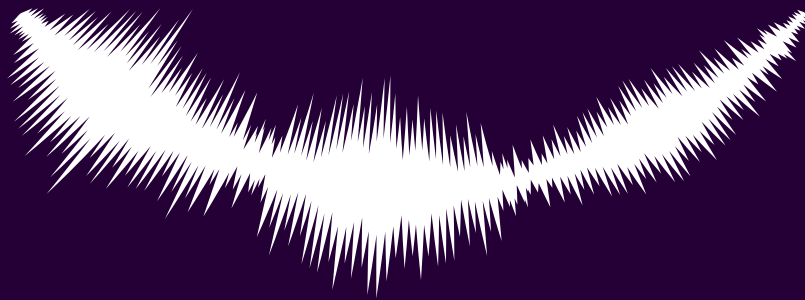
CEO, Martin Such, commented: "This new investment will really help us accelerate our global growth throughout 2020 and beyond. We anticipate employing a further 40 staff in 2020."

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HOW INNOVATION IS RESHAPING THE NORTH EAST LIFE SCIENCES LANDSCAPE

By Karen Winterhalter, Managing Director of Onyx Health



Karen Winterhalter

The North East has a world leading reputation in fields of life science and pharmaceuticals; however, the sector's focus has shifted away from its manufacturing roots towards more innovation focussed businesses.

The region's traditional strength has been in the field of pharmaceutical manufacturing and product development. We have an enviable cluster of world class pharmaceutical manufacturers on our doorstep including Glaxo Smith Kline, MSD and Piramal Healthcare.

The life science and pharmaceuticals sectors are one of our biggest success stories employing 38,000 people and contributing £10.5bn to the regional economy. The North East is an export driven region and pharmaceutical manufacturing plays an important role in our global exports story, with 86% of their products exported for global use. In recent years the sector has undergone a structural realignment, moving away from manufacturing to a greater emphasis on innovative product development. This trend is vitally important at a time when the region is considering its post Brexit economic future.

Our region has a great deal to boast about in the field of life science innovation. Newcastle is host to the International Centre for Life, a world leading centre for genetics and stem cell technology, and Newcastle University's renowned Institute for Ageing. We also have important business incubation facilities such as NET Park in County Durham and Newcastle's Helix that are crucial to driving future

growth through research and development activity. The North East has a wealth of businesses that are at the cutting edge of innovation in the pharmaceutical and life science sectors.

Newcastle based Newcells Biotech's are doing pioneering work that focusses on developing models of human tissues and organs using stem cell technology to assess the safety and effectiveness of drugs and disease modelling. This is increasingly important as the industry looks to improve their ability to predict which early stage drugs will be successful in human trials, minimising the use of animal testing.

Newcells have grown rapidly in recent years from a Newcastle University spinout company to a thriving business operating in global export markets. Their primary customers are in drug discovery and development teams in pharmaceutical and biotech companies worldwide. This provides a striking illustration of how the region's combination of scientific excellence and entrepreneurial talent can create truly innovative businesses.

The rise of technology-based innovations are also transforming the way medical information is communicated between patients and clinicians. An exciting example of this is the mi-SOS

personal digital identity band in development by Northumberland based Mavin Informatics. It uses QR code-based wearable technology to enable first responders and the emergency services to access vital personal information in time of crisis using a mobile phone device. mi-SOS is the brainchild of clinical pharmacist Dr Dawn Price and aims to benefit vulnerable people through an inspired use of digital technology.

This life saving innovation has the potential to revolutionise communication between patients and the emergency services, building on the North East's recognised strengths in the fields of digital health and personalised healthcare.

These examples are just a flavour of the dynamic businesses the region has to offer. Our excellence in life science and healthcare innovation is one of our core strengths as a region that we must continue to nurture to unlock future growth and job creation. In a post Brexit Britain where the UK's future trading relationship with the EU remains uncertain, adopting more innovative business practices will be crucial to keeping the sector globally competitive. We must ensure the North East's pharmaceutical and life sciences sectors remain at the heart of a new global Britain.



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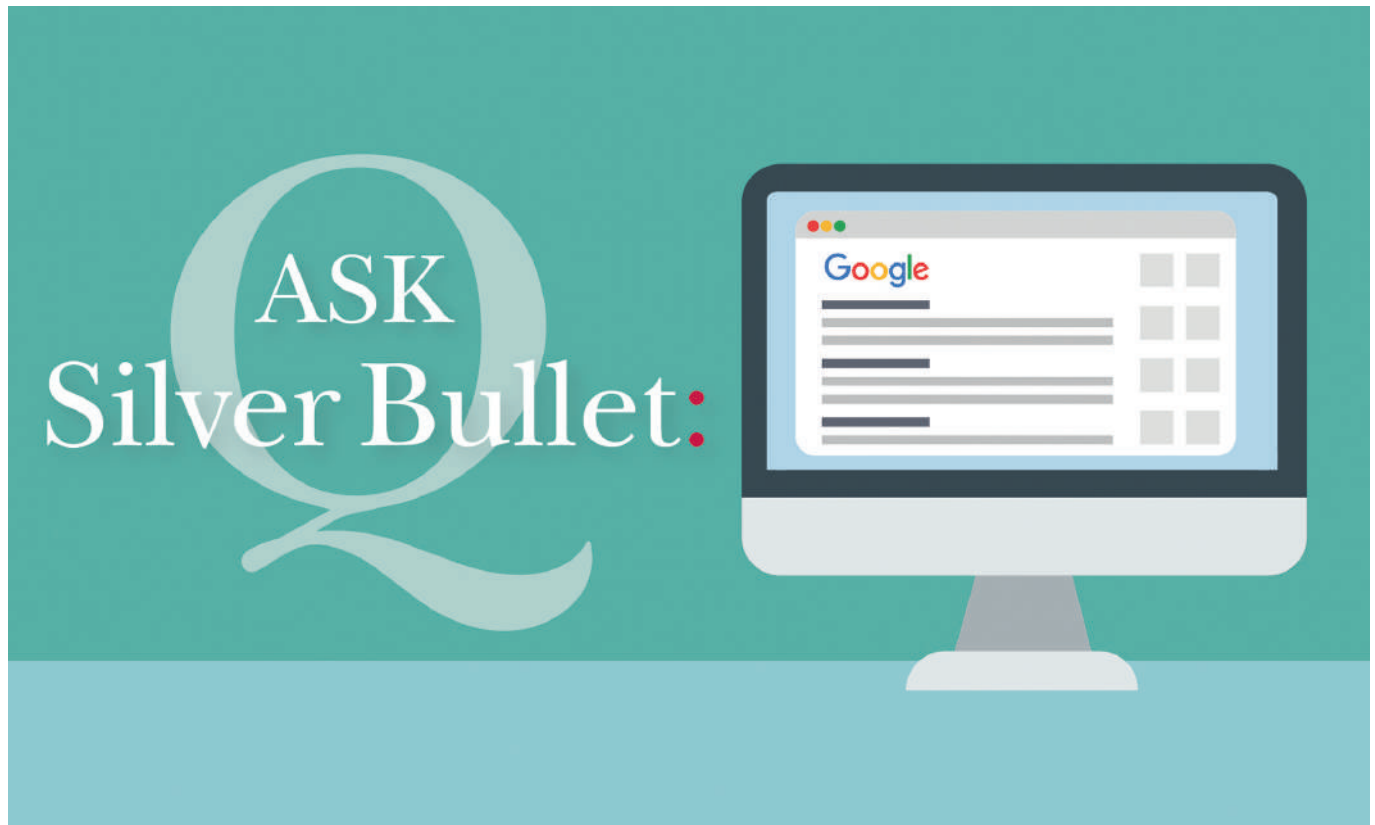
Companies should always hope for the best yet plan for the worst. Crisis communication plans ensure whatever happens, you know exactly what to do to get back on track.

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“WHAT IS NATIVE ADVERTISING & WOULD YOU RECOMMEND ITS USE?”

'Native Advertising', aka 'Sponsored Content', is in essence, simply paid content or advertorials. The phrase can be seen as another example of the marketing industry trying to mystify what the sector actually does with the increasing use of new words and semi-technical jargon in the hope that it makes practitioners look more clever and more professional than they actually are!

According to the Copenhagen-based Native Advertising Institute (NAI), native advertising is using "...paid advertising where the advert matches the form, feel and function of the content of the media on which it appears." Such adverts are called 'native' because they're designed to be natural or in keeping with their immediate environment.

In printed media, the skill for agencies like ourselves is in matching exactly not only the style of the written editorial – often referred to as the 'house style' – but also the exact form in terms of font and layout of whichever media in which we are purchasing space. The resulting artwork then exactly matches the media's other editorials. In pre-digital days, the cost of such advertorials was called 'colour separation' costs, a reference to the cost of production of the films required for printing, but is now usually just called 'production' costs. Generally and certainly in trade media, the cost of such space is less expensive than pure advertising so that not only do the advertisers get better

value, in that editorial is far more effective than advertising, but the media also gain by having a higher editorial to advertising ratio which hopefully produces more readers.

For publishers, however, it becomes a balancing act between revenue and content quality – filling the journal with paid-for advertorial brings in short term revenue, but may well do long term damage by reducing the quality of the editorial content and thereby the attraction for future advertisers to use the medium. So, if the advertorial can also be high quality and interesting, then everyone wins, including readers who get better content.

Roughly the same guidelines apply to online native advertising with the additional options of video content and click-throughs to the advertisers' own website. What is interesting is consumer reaction to such advertising and whether increasingly savvy consumers react to or ignore advertising in favour of more organic editorial content.

Possibly the most easily recognisable example of this are the paid adverts on SERPs or Search Engine Results Pages. Irrelevant of which search engine is used, SERPs contain two types of results – organic and paid for. Organic are listings of web pages that appear in order as a result of the search engine's algorithm, whilst the paid results are, in essence, adverts and there are dozens of different formats, including PPC text-based adverts, image-based Shopping adverts and user review advert

extensions. Recent research, however, is showing that consumers are increasingly ignoring these SERP adverts in favour of organic results, although given that advertising revenue brought in contributes by far the majority (\$134bn) of Google's \$160bn 2019 annual revenue, it's clearly still a very popular and effective marketing tool.

So, why is Native Advertising so effective? In essence it works, because it doesn't look like advertising and we are 'fooled' into thinking this is impartial content, which whilst promoting a product or service, doesn't oversell it and annoy readers who would normally dismiss traditional advertising. As such, would we recommend it? Absolutely yes! According to the afore-mentioned NAI, by 2021, native advertising will be responsible for driving 74 percent of all ad revenue, and the total spending on native ads clocked in at about \$21 billion by the end of 2018.

A slightly different question would be to ask whether it is entirely ethical? The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) stated in 2015, "...deception occurs when consumers acting reasonably under the circumstances are misled about its nature or source, and such misleading impression is likely to affect their decisions or conduct regarding the advertised product or the advertising." Personally, I think as long as such native advertising, advertorials or sponsored content is labeled as such, it's as ethical as any other advertising format.

Do you need some assistance with your marketing, PR or design? Do you need to review your strategy or do you want to know how we can help your business? Talk to us. Email your questions anonymously to us today hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR.



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PLANNING FOR A CRISIS WITH STRATEGY, IS BOUNCING BACK POSSIBLE?

Antonia Brindle, marketing strategist and digital content/PR expert, reflects on recent events for Northern Insight readers with a focus is on what we can do moving forward in the region and whether bouncing back in the business world is possible.

"No one could have predicted the events of the last month or so. We have all had a storm to ride, and amazingly, it looks like a lot of us have done that together. There is still a long way to go, and we need to keep that focus on the future.

"Markets crashing, empty offices, madness in bulk buying.... It's like something from a poor movie. However, if COVID-19 was a film, I suspect I'd have left the cinema at around the halfway through mark. Unfortunately, it is real life.

"The struggle many are having with their health, the impact emotionally and on the economy is heartbreaking. So many people's earnings and livelihoods have been hindered. But is there anything we should be doing whilst enduring the pain barrier as a business to survive?

"Unforeseen circumstances throw business disciplines into the spotlight. Those who have business continuity planning have been and still will be testing their effectiveness right now. Risk experts are already saying that a compromise as large as the 2020 pandemic, simply eradicates much of the hard work put into being ready for a disaster. The only resilience a business could have had was to be financially prepared, cash rich or be in a sector that experiences a boom due to immediate need.



Antonia Brindle

"The resounding agreement from experts worldwide, seems to be that the only solution is to turn to future planning. Many firms in Wuhan have survived, despite staff not being able to get into work. How did they do this? And what are they doing now?

"These firms survived thanks to robust communication and marketing planning. The businesses still standing distributed material, content, issued comments and reached out with information keeping customers and staff in the loop.

"Internal and external communications alongside developing a robust marketing strategy is key. Whilst main manpower was under lock down or poorly,

those who were well determinedly planned their businesses future. They didn't survive through luck.

"They invested time and money in better websites, built on video conferencing, focused on social media, looked for new digital adventures, and doggedly planned their comeback marketing attack.

"In essence, those still standing maintained an effective voice, put in place PR and marketing tools to bounce back as soon as they could trade again. They acknowledged it wasn't business as usual, but business in unusual circumstances.

"This is not a time to go quiet. This will not last a lifetime. In a nutshell, this isn't a time to baton down the hatches. This is a time to have your voice heard, clearly, reassuringly, and consistently. This is a time to plan, to strategise your target audiences, how to reach them, a time to build relationships through marketing to secure and build a pipeline for the future.

"If your company has a board, make sure you have a strong marketing strategist on it. Someone with crisis management experience and a clear approach to recovery. Pull that expertise together and manage what is happening today whilst they focus on how to steer you to the future. All businesses should do that consistently, and not just in a pandemic panic!"

Antonia Brindle is a marketing expert with over 25 years experience. She is a non exec director, vice chair of a charitable board of trustees and director of two companies in the region. She delivers PR, social media, creative digital, website build and design; and crisis management.

You can contact Antonia on 07702 214391 or on antonia@getbrindled.com

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Looking for a top rate diner at a good price? Our monthly Restaurant Nights offer a regularly updated and freshly prepared 4-course menu in a welcoming atmosphere, on special events even with live music, taking place on the last weekend of the month.

Want to start your Saturday morning right? Discover and enjoy our epic Brunch with yummy meals such as eggs benedict, delicious burgers, steak ciabatta and many more. The menu will blow you away!

Spring is just around the corner. Let the first rays of sun warm you up and have a seat on our patio furniture. You're welcome to join us for a platter and glass of wine in our outside seating area and enjoy the peace and quiet. Dogs welcome!

Is there a birthday coming up and you don't have a present yet? Simply buy a No.4 voucher to make the perfect gift for dedicated foodies or is it even you who has reason to celebrate? Our coffee shop is the perfect location for cosy birthday parties, throwing a baby shower and or a happy family gathering.

We are No.4 among the house numbers but we are without doubt the Number 1 when it comes to family owned bistros and restaurants in East Boldon.

Come in and enjoy our stunning and vegetarian friendly multi-cuisine, no matter the occasion.

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YOU'VE "HIGHLIGHTED" OUR BUSINESS – UNIQUE MAGAZINES

Highlights PR is a successful PR agency run by Keith Newman. Uniquely, their office is a boat based on the River Tyne. Here we look at how Highlights PR have helped one of their clients.

John Porrett established his own magazine distribution business; Unique Magazines in 2009, and it now delivers a choice of more than 3,500 magazines to thousands of readers in 160 countries all over the world from its base in Gateshead.

John contacted Highlights PR to promote his new Comic Club for kids after finding that fun, colourful and humorous stories and activities were the perfect antidote to addictive tech for his own young grandchildren. Aimed at seven to 11-year-olds – the affordable subscription service delivers high quality, hand-selected age-appropriate magazines and activity ideas direct to the door every month.

For a recurring monthly payment of £9.95, which can be cancelled at any time, they'll get a monthly delivery of two comics from a range including the likes of Horrible Histories, Eco Kids, Brilliant Brainz, Whiz Pop Bang and Anorak Magazine, all of which feature stunning photography and thought-provoking articles. The package will also include an activity sheet with every delivery, which relates to the content of the magazines in that month's delivery.

John said: "I'm passionate about getting young people to read more and this service helps parents to engage with their children with the added bonus of leaving the laptop, tablet or mobile phone behind. We've asked Highlights PR to promote the Comic Club so that we can reach a wider audience."

Although at the start of the campaign, Highlights PR has already placed John on BBC Newcastle, online business news services and social media.



To find out more about see www.comicclub.co.uk

To see how Highlights PR can help you, let's have a no obligation chat about your PR and a coffee on-board Highlights – the floating office, call Keith on 07814 397951 or email Keith@highlightspr.co.uk



Is your business on the media's RADAR?

Imagine being the go to person when the media needs an expert. Well, now you can with Highlights PR's new RADAR exclusive membership.

RADAR is a 12-month members subscription with a low monthly payment with many PR benefits.

So, what are these benefits? Well, apart from being on a list of experts sent to the media on a regular basis, we also include the following:

- * A dedicated private RADAR Facebook page.
- * Up to 2 hours per year crisis PR management advice.
- * A guaranteed business interview on Radio Northumberland's Business and Lifestyle show.
- * RADAR client feature in the Highlights PR newsletter (3500 circulation plus social media)
- * Exclusive RADAR club special offers on PR, media training, social activities and more.

What could this mean for you? Well, let's look at some examples of how RADAR has worked for my clients.

We've had a lot of BBC radio interviews including sales guru Victoria Fleming giving tips on how to beat the salesmen at their own game, James Palmer from New Thinking giving advice on how to cope with the pressures of Christmas and the UK's best blacksmith Stephen Lunn appearing on BBC TV's Country File after a RADAR meeting with a BBC Newcastle interviewer. Imperial Claims also featured in the May edition of Northern Insight Magazine. These are just a fraction of our successes and if you would like to be part of this exclusive group, please contact me for more details.

Keith@highlightspr.co.uk

07814 397951

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Keith Newman

HIGHLIGHTS PR – TAKING CARE OF YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS

The Corona Virus has presented huge challenges to us all in our business and personal lives.

Highlights PR has also been affected with the cancellation of many music festivals, theatre shows and business events. Although not on this scale, we've been through similar challenging times with two recessions during the company's 15-year lifespan.

In both cases, the businesses that came out of the other end were those that maintained contact with their clients – particularly through good marketing and PR. We believe that it is important to remain visible and let your customers and potential customers know just how good you are at what you do.

As well as advising on crisis management PR, we've been highlighting the good things that have come out of the situation so far. Businesses have been donating time and skills to help others, new services have emerged, volunteers putting others before themselves etc. Each of these are news worthy stories and are helping to maintain businesses in the public's eye.

HIGHLIGHTS PR – A CHANGE IS AS GOOD AS A REST

Sometimes a change in career can make a great PR story. We asked some of our clients what they would do if they had to change career.



"If I absolutely had to...shoe shop and cafe! Coffee and shoe shopping would be amazing."

Nicola Jayne Little, Founder and MD, MINT Business Club



"If my body allowed it, I'd rejoin the army. I experienced so many good times and travelled the world during my time in the forces, meeting so many people and seeing so many different things. The friends you make in the forces are friends for life. You enter a 'club' as soon as you sign on the dotted line and it's a 'contract' for life." **Tony Carter, Carter Smith Planning Consultants, Morpeth**

"I have already changed my career – I was a police inspector with Northumbria Police but retired after 30 years to become an inheritance planner. If I had to change again it wouldn't be to something 'employed' as I enjoy the freedom of choosing when I work. Hopefully a career change will only be through retirement so it would probably then be doing something voluntary."

Neil Fraser, Director, Northumberland Wills and Probate



"I'd become a birth hypnotherapist - I experienced natal hypnotherapy with my second child and rave about it all the time so it would be a joy to train and teach that. But don't get me wrong, I love what I do at the moment which is along similar lines - taking the fear out of selling much like natal hypnotherapy takes the fear out of birth!"

Moira Barnes, Moira Barnes Sales Consultancy



"I recently changed career, from an ROV pilot working around the world to setting up a digital estate agency. If I were to do anything differently and change career again, I would consider a move into photography and travel more."

Ross Parker, Managing Director, Seven Keys

For PR support contact Keith Newman keith@highlightspr.co.uk 07814 397951 highlightspr.co.uk



43RD SPORT NEWCASTLE ANNUAL DINNER

Over £10,000 raised to support grassroots sport in our region.

The evening celebrated the North East's top young sporting talent with the Rising Star Awards. While the main awards included recognition for Stephen Miller the region's most successful Olympian who took home The Wilkinson Sword for Lifetime Achievement. The Sporting Success of the year was awarded to the organising committee for the Newcastle 2019 European Rugby Finals.

Matthew Squires, Trustee of Sport Newcastle said "The dinner was a celebration of the very best of sport in our region and showcased the success of our ambitious Tokyo & Beyond fundraising appeal. Sport is a huge part of the North East culture and

without the generous support of local businesses and individuals we simply could not do our part in encouraging and supporting the region's rising stars."

2020 Sport Newcastle Partners include Newcastle based wealth management experts Tier One Capital, SOS Group with their range of high tech smart off solutions and Bar 52 the new home of live sport in the city.

The dinner was also supported by event sponsors Social, Digital and Design agency Curtis Gabriel, Graphic Packaging, JC Events and Reeves Independent – The Pension Specialists.

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THE IMPACT OF CANCEL CULTURE

We've seen the most high-profile victims of 'cancel culture' in the world of celebrity and royalty, but the phenomenon can impact anyone or anything in the public eye.

Cancel culture is the act of publicly boycotting something – or someone – often on the grounds of opposing moral, ethical, cultural or political reasons. It often results in the victim or target being exposed to a mass online public reaction to those perceived wrongdoings. In the past few months alone, we've seen the very tragic impact that the threat of cancel culture can pose.

The word "cancel" is loaded with a sense of finality. However, the reality is that most celebrities won't feel a lasting impact on their career, even when their wrongdoing is severe. For instance, in the wake of the #MeToo movement American comedian, Louise CK admitted sexual misconduct, yet he went on to sell out five shows not long afterwards. This suggests that the cancellation could only be temporary, or perhaps that such behaviours are only denounced in the woke bubble of Twitter, leading to frustration that powerful individuals seemingly may not actually feel real consequences in their working lives.

This isn't a new phenomenon. As far back as 2016, #TaylorSwiftIsCancelled trended on Twitter following a public quarrel with Kanye West over his song lyric about her. Though Swift spoke of how this was incredibly tough and damaging on a personal level, she remains one of the world's biggest recording artists. Should that success have to come at such a price?

The tragic passing of Love Island host, Caroline Flack not long after she was arrested and charged for an alleged domestic violence incident saw many members of the public, and large swathes of the popular press, turn against her. It reinforces Swift's point of how cruel messaging online can have such damaging effects. It also begs the question of whether women in the public eye are targeted more harshly for their perceived wrongdoing. Perhaps definitions of cancel culture should include



Hannah Whyte

more of a focus on the psychological impact rather than just the commercial repercussions.

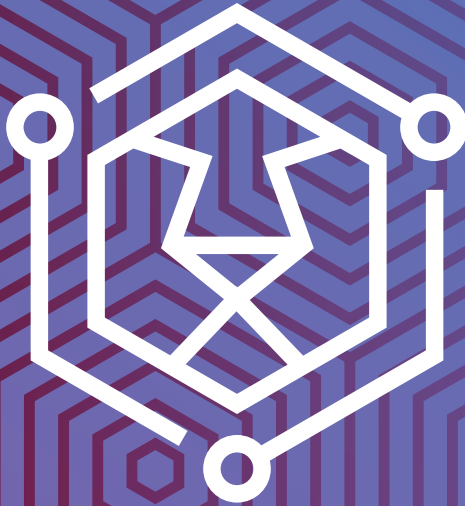
The attention inevitably switches to how brands and businesses themselves can find themselves embroiled in cancel culture. North Yorkshire sausage maker Heck faced a torrid time online just before December's General Election when they were viewed to be supporting Boris Johnson, simply by welcoming the Prime Minister to their factory on his visit to the region.

Others are wielding cancel culture for their own benefit. Greggs know full well Piers Morgan is going to wail into his cornflakes on Good Morning Britain and all over his Twitter feed, promising he'll never eat another sausage roll again because they have the temerity to pander to the vegan brigade. Ask Greggs how the sale of their vegan products rocket every time he calls for a boycott on them.

Just before last month's Budget, Twitter users attempted to "cancel" or boycott Yorkshire Tea because Chancellor, Rishi Sunak posted a photo about his hard work, which featured the brand in the background. Thousands furiously mistook this for a deliberate collaboration, but Yorkshire Tea responded by asking anyone who wants to vent their rage online to remember that there are human beings at the receiving end of those rants, calling out one user in the most meme-worthy tweet of the year so far: "Sue, you're shouting at tea".

Like Greggs, it's not difficult to see Yorkshire Tea's reaction as cashing in on cancel culture. Nevertheless, by humanising the brand it may help to emphasise the impact cancel culture has on an individual and how this needs to be valued.

Hannah Whyte is account executive at W North. [@WCommNorth](http://wcommunications.co.uk)



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CITYFIBRE SPEEDS UP NEWCASTLE'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Newcastle is celebrating a major milestone in its digital transformation with work now well underway to build a full fibre network to reach

almost every home and business in the city.

CityFibre is investing at least £50m in Newcastle to deliver this transformational project, as part of its nationwide plan to replace the country's ageing copper-based networks with gigabit-capable full fibre connectivity.

Full fibre is currently available to less than 11% of premises across the UK. It is revered as the best in connectivity for its speed, near unlimited bandwidth and reliability. By using fibre optic cables for every stage of the connection from the customer's home or business to the internet, users will be offered a significantly superior and more reliable broadband service.

Local contractor IQA Elecnor is delivering the construction programme on CityFibre's behalf and work is already in progress in the Kenton and Blakelaw areas.

The company is using modern build techniques to deploy the network quickly, while working closely with Newcastle City Council and local communities to manage disruption and ensure a fast, successful roll-out.



NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEUR LAUNCHES SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

North East based entrepreneur Charles Ogben has launched mystylequest, an innovative shopping experience that helps shoppers find items they love.

Using artificial intelligence and visual search technology, mystylequest allows users to share photos of items they love and the technology scours the web to find similar pieces. The technology also allows users to crowdsource, asking questions or sharing answers to help other users source items, or to follow and shop influencers' looks.

Originally from Ghana, Charles has an E-Business MSc from Newcastle University. He first came up with the concept during his time at university, securing endorsement and support from START UP – Newcastle University and a place on Natwest's Pre-accelerator Programme.

Using real-world images like screenshots and photos, visual search technology works in a similar way to text based search, returning similar looking results. The technology uses visual similarities like colour and composition to match images it believes show similarities.

mystylequest's algorithm is self-learning and with time will be able to pose questions, or 'style quests' as they've been dubbed by the brand, to people with the right expertise who can provide style and outfit recommendation instantly based on their previous use of the platform.



NORTH EAST COMMS COMPANIES SET TO SUPPORT SAM

A North East support organisation, set up to help manufacturers grow by embracing new technology, is set to reach out to more businesses after signing up two communications partners.

Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (SAM), a collaboration between European Regional Development Fund and University of Sunderland that was set up to support North East SME manufacturers to explore and introduce new technology to improve their products and processes, has commissioned Second Draft and Creo Communications to help spread the word about the help it can offer.

Ken Teears, Project Manager at SAM, said: "We provide a fantastic offer to SME manufacturing businesses in the North East, helping them harness technology to really grow their business. We are delighted to have extended the SAM team, with the addition of Second Draft and Creo, and we look forward to getting the word out further and wider about SAM."

Second Draft is a video production company based in the North East Business & Innovation Centre. It has worked with a range of clients, including the North East LEP, Invest North East England and Generator to develop high-quality video content.



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SUPPORTING YOUR WORKFORCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

It might sound obvious, but if there is one thing every organisation has learnt over recent weeks, it is that effective business continuity strategy starts with the human factor. If your people can't work, neither can your business.

At the time of writing this piece the world is in an unprecedented situation, with thousands of people suddenly joining the ranks of home workers, in an attempt to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Quite apart from the difficult decisions we have all faced around how we live and work, and look after our loved ones, the aim to maintain business as usual has proved to be a real headache for organisations that were unprepared for a huge change to traditional working practices.

While many of us now expect to be able to access systems and data fairly easily from wherever we are, there is a big difference between an organisation's IT team supporting a handful of home workers, and coping with the entire staff base working from home. Every organisation and situation is different, but there are some basic principles to consider.

SECURITY – this should be paramount. Your staff need access to systems and information just as if they were in the office, but they must be protected by the same level of security. Your

firewall may be perfectly adequate when you have 50 staff working remotely, but not be up to the job if you suddenly need to protect 150.

If your organisation already runs on a software as a service (SaaS) model such as Microsoft Office 365 you're ahead of the game. Your staff will already be familiar with multi factor authentication, which means being required to submit at least two pieces of information before being given access to the system, and using collaborative tools such as Teams, which comes included in Office 365 and allows workers to share files, make calls, run meetings and generally carry on working as a team with colleagues and partners.

UPSCALING COMPUTING - employers tell us their biggest concern is how to scale up their infrastructure as and when needed, without unnecessary or long term cost.

One answer is to use rapid deployment templates, which can be serviced on a pay as you go basis. By using a hybrid cloud model delivered via our Tier 3 27001-certified data centre, our team

can quickly and securely replicate your server to massively increase capacity. Once you have added in the required number of licences it would allow staff at home to log in via a virtual private network (VPN) for as long as needed. The replication element could then be deleted when things are back to normal, so you only pay for what you need, when you need it.

COMMUNICATIONS - connectivity is key but not everyone has the latest IT kit at home, and some staff may live in areas with limited broadband connections. Solutions such as Microsoft Remote Desktop Services can get around poor communications by essentially making your PC act like a dumb terminal connected to the server.

If you are concerned that some staff may have older PCs or ones that lack the latest antivirus software, there are a range of practical solutions that your IT partner can help you to apply.

Don't be caught out, talk to our experts here at ITPS, and make sure you have a solution to keep your business up and running, whatever life throws at us.

To find out more, contact ITPS on 0191 442 8300 or email us at contact@itps.co.uk

5 REASONS WHY YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT PROCESS MANAGEMENT

Process management is essential for understanding, automating and optimising your business processes. And having process excellence helps businesses thrive. So, if you're not already on board with process management, believe us, it's not as complicated as you might think.

Process management has become an increasingly important offering for our team at Synergi. Through the power of process mapping we help our customers manage their business processes by performing deep dive learning to understand how their organisation and their teams operate. We can then define the processes these businesses rely upon, and visually map them, creating simple process maps in a collaborative way with the process owners. During these stages we use our experience of refinement and streamlining to find ways to help clients work smarter, not harder.

If you want to unleash the power of process excellence, here are five reasons how you can benefit. Using a tool like Nintex Promapp not only simplifies the mapping of your business processes – be they operational, administrative, external, internal etc., but also encourages collaboration with process owners and users.

Gain full control of your enterprise processes:

By turning complex process maps, Visio charts and procedure document into simple, highly visual and accessible digital process maps you can improve visibility into processes and consequently the control that you have over these processes. Using leading process mapping technology, Nintex Promapp, you can easily create consistent and compliant process



Justin Short

maps with the availability to edit and improve individual processes as the need arises. On top of this, you can configure approvers, stakeholders and editors to be responsible for approving changes with a single click as well as establishing mandatory signoffs, escalations or notifications at certain points within your processes. You can even build an automated process map at the click of a 'magic' button!

Increase accountability

Improved visibility into your processes also means a better understanding of process ownership, and

with that an increased sense of accountability. When your processes have a defined owner, there is a sense of responsibility to maintain or even improve the efficiency of that process. The easy-to-use capabilities of Promapp allow users of varying technical abilities to edit and comment on process maps, giving all departments a sense of ownership over their own processes.

Works for everyone

The simple to use capabilities of Promapp remove any technical barrier that existed between users and the ability to edit and view process maps. With Nintex Promapp, you need no formal training and it can be easily personalised with your team bookmarking the processes and actions they feel are most relevant to them to create a personalised dashboard.

Real-time information

Your teams can leave real-time feedback, with automated change logs, RACI table updates and stakeholder email notifications available. This acts to improve process auditability and drive engagement within your organisation. Want to know how effective your changes are? Access real-time process health summaries with team engagement statistics and automatically track any existing processes.

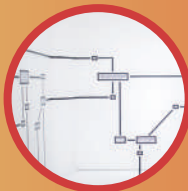
Promapp in action

Want to know more about Promapp and even interact with the software yourself? Synergi is running a series of hands on workshops focused on process mapping in the coming year.

To find out more about these or any of the other solutions we offer, get in touch on 0191 4770365 or send a message to enquiries@teamsynergi.co.uk

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EXERCISE SHOULD BE FUN, NOT A CHORE

That's the view of Naheed Akram, owner and founder of new Blaydon fitness centre and community hub MyRooh.

The centre, at Blaydon Works, Blaydon Bank, is not a gym, rather a space for classes, therapies and treatments with the emphasis on fun and inclusivity for the whole community and with the added bonus of a health café!

It's something new-mum Naheed has wanted to bring to the area for some time and she is now excited to see her dream become reality.

A project manager in the banking sector, she has always been interested in fitness and health and has a diploma in nutrition and weight management.

Currently on maternity leave, after giving birth to first child Layla ten months ago, she set her sights on opening MyRooh and, after raising the cash needed, is now enjoying seeing her vision become reality.

"What I've tried with MyRooh is implementing the classes I enjoy doing, which don't always feel like exercise," she explains.

"It's not like the gym, which can have that corporate feel to it where you go do your workout and leave without talking to anyone.

"Essentially, it's about everything I like doing in terms of more group-based classes, with the same people you can see every week and make friends with and hang out with in a nice, chilled-out environment.

"MyRooh has a personal touch and a community vibe - an alternative social healthy place for people to hang out."

Naheed says issues surrounding body confidence in today's society means many people don't feel comfortable working out in a space such as a gym. So that's where MyRooh comes in.

The company takes a holistic approach to fitness, concentrating on classes that are fun, which are complemented with relaxing therapies aimed at giving you a complete mind and body workout.

All ages are encouraged to get involved, regardless



Naheed Akram

of fitness levels, with the focus on inclusivity and being non-judgemental.

MyRooh fitness centre's goal is to give clients a feeling of long-term wellbeing and it does that by offering classes and therapies carefully selected by its trainers and focusing on the latest and most sought-after trends in fitness and wellness around the world.

But overall wellbeing is not just about exercise and getting fit, so MyRooh complements its classes with a large range of therapies, from sleep rituals to salt scrubs, facials and massages as well as reflexology treatments and nutrition consultations.

Now a mum herself, Naheed was keen to offer classes to mums-to-be and new mums, with sessions and therapies specifically geared towards them and including postnatal fitness and yoga and prenatal dance and pilates.

Rest-assured those leading the classes are all highly experienced in their different fields, with years of knowledge and expertise to make each session the best it can be.

"We've had an overwhelming response to our job advert and if anyone else is interested please do get in touch," says Naheed.

Plus, to provide the best possible service and to offer that community vibe, MyRooh wants to hear from you to learn about your fitness habits and goals and what you want from the centre.

At present, class types include dance, ballet, dance cardio, clubbing fit and music video routines - the latter really putting the fun into working out and de-stressing.

When it comes to fitness, the classes include high intensity interval training, butt and abs, kettlebells, boxfit and even back to the 80s! There is also a selection of pilates workouts and yoga classes to whet your fitness appetite.

Mind, body and soul treatments help you become the healthiest version of you, according to MyRooh, which is why it has an extensive range of therapies for clients, inspired from across the globe.

These include a renewal rose ritual, coffee sculpting treatment, digital detox facial, pregnancy massage, Himalayan salt scrub and deep relief CBD oil massage.

Pricing starts at £7.50 for drop-in classes, £32.50 for bundle packages and £38.99 for monthly subscriptions.

For more information, follow @MyRoohHealth on Facebook



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THE STRANGEST OF TIMES

By Kieran McLaughlin,
Headmaster at Durham School

I'm writing this column at the end of the strangest and most stressful week in my twenty-five years in education. I am always conscious that I write this column around three weeks before it is published and so try to anticipate what might be of interest to readers when they may see it.

This month though I am too afraid to think what may be facing all of us when this edition of Northern Insight hits the region.

As I write now, schools have closed today to all children except those of key workers or who may be vulnerable for some reason. I cannot quarrel with that policy; healthcare workers for example are putting themselves on the frontline in this particular war for all of our benefit. The death rates for those who are dealing face to face with coronavirus sufferers is much higher than the general population and they are putting their lives, and those of their families, on the line in a way which is scarcely imaginable for the rest of us.

The challenge those of us working in schools face is of course of a lesser magnitude but it is still the case that thousands of teachers will be involved in looking after pupils, some of whom will carry the virus. Yet I have not heard a whisper of complaint from the staff at my school or any others. Many colleagues have volunteered to help, suggesting ways in which those children can be looked after effectively at our schools. The word "hero" can be overused in education, but people who are prepared to put themselves at risk to aid what increasingly feels like a war effort can legitimately be described as such.

So, as far as it can, life goes on. A levels and GCSEs however do not, with a mix of teacher assessment and government jiggery pokery the mechanism by which the grades for both will be awarded this year. It's hard to overestimate how disappointed 16- and



Kieran McLaughlin

18-year olds are by this decision. Again, I offer no criticism of the decision, as it was unfathomable how a normal examination timetable could be run, but the feeling is that of a prize fighter who, after months of training, technique and motivational psychology, steps into the ring only to watch his opponent trip on his bootlace and knock himself out on one of the corner posts. Despite bravado to the contrary, the sense of anti-climax these youngsters feel is aching, and it is up to us as teachers and parents not to let this be a shattering experience. These kids potentially have the rest of their lives to resent the denial of the opportunity to earn their results the coronavirus has brought.

However, in the light of the crisis we all face, it's not important. What is most important now is to have one's health and the health of one's family. I daresay (well, actually I hope) that none of us faces a challenge like this again in our lives. The magic combination Mother Nature seems to have found – a virus that is infectious without symptoms, easily transmitted and with a significant death rate – presents a threat that will recalibrate our lives for years to come. What is important is getting thorough the next few weeks and months and, to use a phrase that is being used increasingly emphatically, see you on the other side.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 731 9270, email admissions@durhamschool.co.uk or visit www.durhamschool.co.uk



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APRIL IS THE COOLEST MONTH

By Simone Niblock, Headteacher, Durham High School for Girls

TS Eliot famously opens *The Waste Land* with his assertion that April is the 'cruellest month'.

Within the context of this poem, I understand what Eliot, ironically referencing Chaucer, is trying to say. However, I totally disagree with him: to me, April is a fabulous month that offers much.

In case you are not convinced, here are some reasons to love the month of April:

The very word April, is from the Latin, *Aperit*, which means to open and the Greeks named April *Aphros*, after the goddess of love, Aphrodite.

The birthstone is a diamond, and, even if the song "Diamonds are a girl's best friend" is antediluvian in its sentiments, it is still the best birthstone: my birthday is in October and Rihanna never sang 'Shine bright like an opal...'

April is National Pet Month, where owners of animal companions throughout the UK will celebrate their life with their pets, advocating responsible pet ownership and raising money for animal charities. Given the current, parlous state of world affairs, anything that offers such unalloyed joy is fine by me.

April is usually the month in which Easter is commemorated. This has always been my favourite religious festival and I have celebrated many of them in Spain, where despite being initially discombobulated by the religious apparel that the *nazarenos*, the penitents, wear during the Holy Week parades - look them up on YouTube if you have never seen them - I have been profoundly moved by *Semana Santa* festivals and would highly recommend them.

St George's Day is the twenty-third of the month and, if you are both patriotic and of literary disposition, it is a day of double celebration as this is the day when we commemorate Shakespeare's birthdate- and death date, according to popular legend. I am not particularly *au fait* with the life of St George, apart from the bit about the dragon but, in recent times, I have celebrated Shakespeare's alleged birthday by reading at least one of his sonnets and boring my long-suffering husband about how I miss teaching *Hamlet*.

Happy Eastertide!



Simone Niblock

Every day is an Open Day at Durham High School. Call 0191 384 3226 or email enquiries@dhsfg.org.uk to find out more or arrange a visit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL HYGIENE APPOINTMENTS

Dentist Gulshan Dhanoya (pictured) from Honour Health in Jesmond explains why you need to make dental hygiene visits a top priority.

Gulshan has been shortlisted for Young Dentist of the Year in The Dental Awards 2020.

Why do I need to see a dental hygienist?

It's important to see your dentist as often as they recommend, but you should definitely make time for dental hygiene appointments too. A dental hygienist is trained to professionally clean your teeth and gums and to show you to keep your mouth healthy.

A dental hygienist can spend longer with you to thoroughly remove plaque from your teeth and explain how to stop it from returning. Their role is to help you prevent gum disease and tooth decay.

Each patient requires different advice for their oral hygiene needs. Whether you need flossing tips, electric toothbrush recommendations, advice on which toothpaste or interdental brushes to buy, or a chat about how your diet affects your oral health, then your hygienist can help.

At Honour Health, our hygienist uses a state of the art EMS Airflow hygiene system for the best professional clean possible.



What is the EMS Airflow hygiene system?

The EMS Airflow hygiene system fires a powerful jet of water, compressed air and fine powder at the teeth to effectively remove plaque and soft deposits. It's much faster than a traditional scale and polish.

Nothing compares to Airflow for getting rid of plaque, as it's the only system that reaches underneath the gum line for a really thorough clean. This is a gentle, comfortable treatment and is ideal for those with sensitivity.

Airflow is also hugely effective for removing staining from tea, coffee and red wine, revealing a brighter smile.

How often should I visit?

I ask my patients to see our dental hygienist for Airflow at least every six months to maintain clean, healthy teeth and gums. No matter how angelic you are with your oral hygiene routine, there will always be some hard-to-reach areas that only a dental hygienist can tackle.

If you're thinking about having teeth whitening, then I recommend you book Airflow first, to lift staining and achieve better results.

For those undergoing orthodontic treatment such as Invisalign, it is important to have regular Airflow treatments to clean around attachments, brackets or wires.

Honour Health offers Airflow treatments in Jesmond, Stanley and Ponteland. Book online at www.honourhealth.co.uk

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THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

The Sunderland Empire Theatre is delighted to announce a raft of new shows as part of its 2020/21 line-up.

These include a production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Back by popular demand, the show will tour the UK and Ireland this Autumn, with a stint at Sunderland Empire from Tue 6 - Sat 10 Oct 2020.

Curious Incident has been seen by more than five million people worldwide and is the winner of seven Olivier Awards and five Tony Awards. Adapted by Simon Stephens from the novel by Mark Haddon, the show has become the longest-running play on Broadway in over a decade.

The play tells the story of Christopher John Francis Boone, who is fifteen years old. He stands besides Mrs Shears' dead dog; it is seven minutes after midnight and Christopher is under suspicion. He records each fact in a book he is writing to solve the mystery of who killed Wellington. But his detective work, forbidden by his father, takes him on a frightening journey that upturns his world.

2021 will also see a number of new shows at Sunderland Empire. Following two extremely

successful tours in 2015/16 and 2017/18, producers Mark Goucher and Matthew Gale will tour their smash hit production of *Hairspray*, which will come to Sunderland Empire from Mon 1 - Sat 6 Mar 2021.

Featuring the iconic music and lyrics by Academy Award, Tony and Emmy winning duo Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, this much-loved musical comedy is choreographed by Olivier Award-winning Drew McOnie with direction from Paul Kerryson.

It's Baltimore 1962 and Tracy Turnblad, a big girl with big hair and an even bigger heart, is on a mission to follow her dreams and dance her way onto national TV. Tracy's audition makes her a local star and soon she is using her new-found fame to fight for equality, bagging local heartthrob Link Larkin along the way.

Hairspray The Musical is based on the 1988 film of the same name by cult filmmaker John Waters. Following the musical's phenomenal success on stage, a remake of the film was released in 2007

which starred John Travolta, Michelle Pfeiffer and James Marsden.

School of Rock - The Musical will also go on a major UK Tour in 2021, coming to Sunderland Empire for one week only from Mon 29 Nov 2021.

Based on the hilarious hit movie, this new musical follows Dewey Finn, a failed, wannabe rock star who decides to earn a few extra bucks by posing as a substitute teacher at a prestigious prep school. There he turns a class of straight-A students into a guitar-shredding, bass-slapping, mind-blowing rock band. While teaching these pint-sized prodigies what it means to truly rock, Dewey falls for the school's beautiful, but uptight headmistress, helping her rediscover her wild child within.

Featuring 14 new songs from Andrew Lloyd Webber and all the original songs from the movie, the show delivers face-melting guitar riffs and touching romance in equally awesome doses.

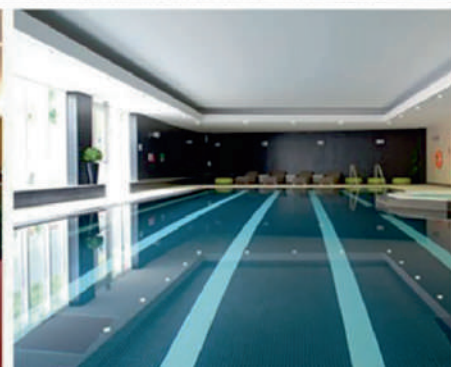
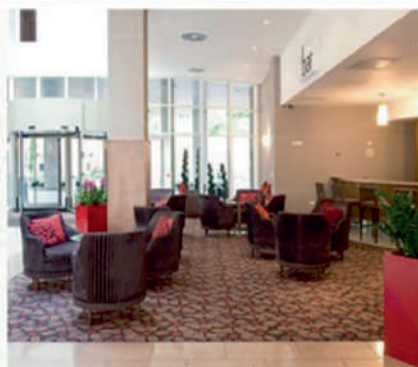


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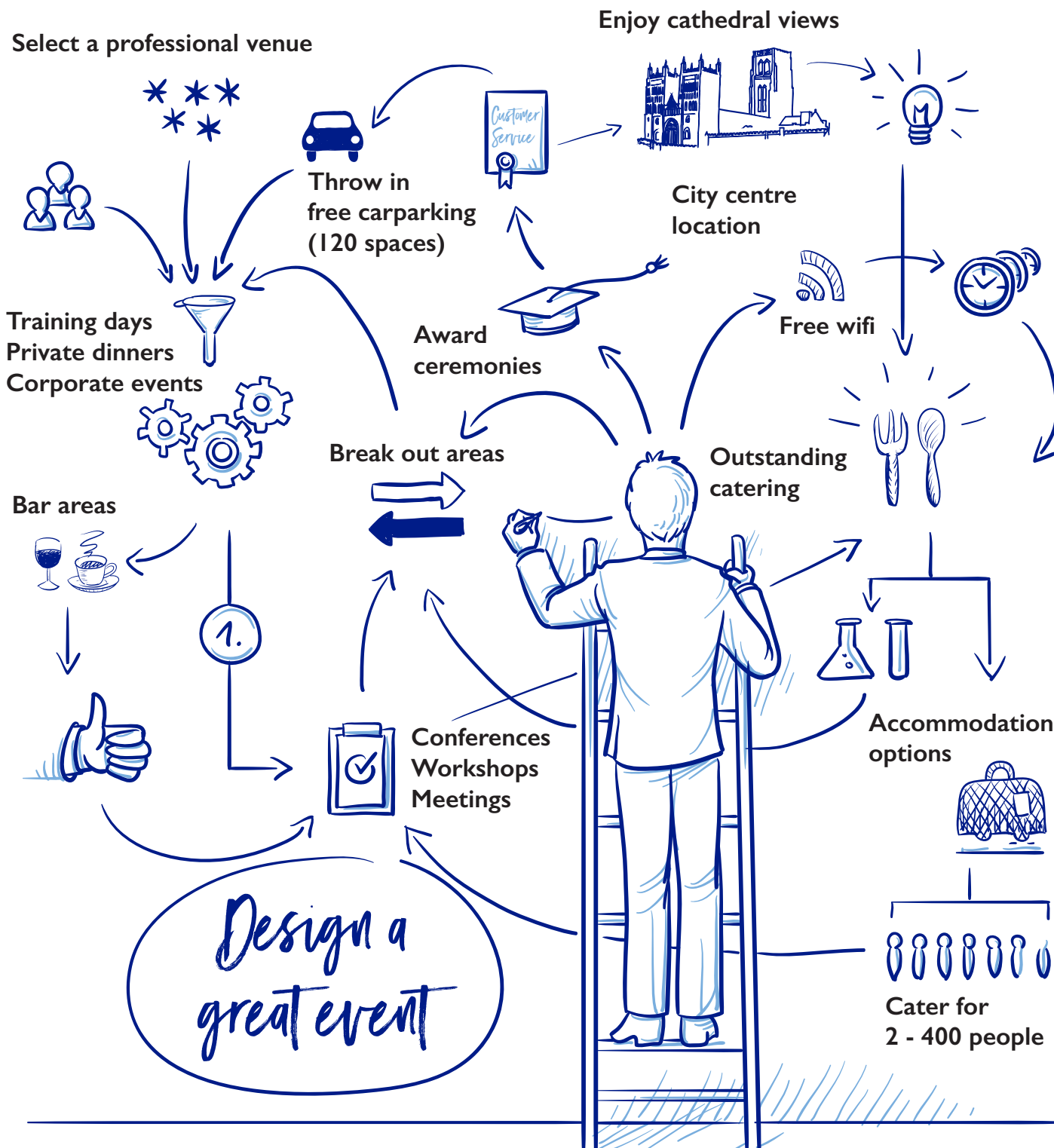
SUNDAY FOR SAMMY

More than 11,000 smiling faces were beaming at the Newcastle Utilita Arena when Sunday for Sammy celebrated its 20th anniversary with two sold out shows.

The show is a celebration of North Eastern culture, many of the region's most popular and successful performers took part in the extravaganza of comedy and music staged biennially to raise funds to support the next generation of promising regional performers with training, expenses and equipment.

The show was packed with familiar famous Geordie faces and a whole host of celebrity guests. The DVD of the show will be out in the spring.





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DIARY OF A RURAL ARTIST

By Mary Ann Rogers

This is possibly my favourite time of the year. It's a fairly quiet time, when I can get my head down and paint, while the countryside can't decide whether its nearly spring, or still winter.

Snowdrops and aconites surround the studio, and as I write, the first of the daffodils which have naturalised round here are opening, and I am swimming in the river Rede regularly, when its not flooded!

With coronavirus filling the news and social media, we are wondering whether our annual summer exhibition might not be such a great idea this year. So little is known at the time of writing, about how the virus will behave, and how it will affect the UK. Where we live, we hardly come into contact with people outside of our friends and family, and feel a bit isolated.

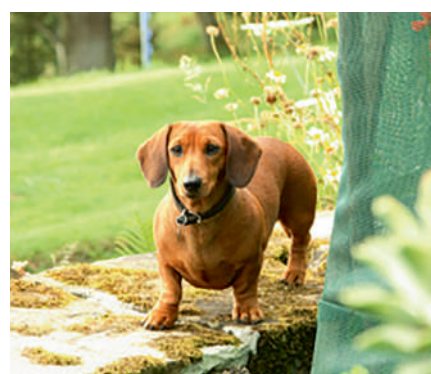
The first of the lambs are appearing in the fields round here, quite a lot later than farms further south of us, but it's a very different climate here to the Tyne Valley, just 20 miles south of us.

The physical gallery is, of course, closed for now, but the online gallery is open! WE are uploading new, unframed and unseen paintings, and offering a free gift wrapping and card writing service to customers. Social media is an absolute godsend during these times, both for keeping abreast of the news and funny videos, and for promoting the business across all the platforms.

The recent floods have been quite dramatic here. We became involved in assisting the police in rescuing a family of four who found themselves in waist high fast flowing river in their car, having been diverted from another flooded road. I saw a police helicopter struggling to land in very high winds just near to our house, and went down the track towards the road to investigate. Luckily, we live on the hillside, overlooking the River Rede, and get a great view of the entire valley resembling a lake when the river floods. The two police officers undertook quite a risky rescue, bringing each of the family members through a car window and across a field with deep flood water then into our pick-up, which we quickly brought to the scene with the heater on for them to sit in and try to warm up before bringing them home to hot tea and towels. It could have been so much worse.

Sadly we said goodbye to our 18 year old miniature dachshund, Teety. She has been the sweetest dog, but life became such a struggle for her, and we had to make the decision to take her to the vet to be put to sleep. A very sad day.

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WALTON ROBINSON DEVELOPS OPERATOR READY CAFÉ/RESTAURANT

Walton Robinson, the Newcastle-based property specialist, is expanding the city's vibrant hospitality offering with the transformation of part of a Grade II listed building into a new café/restaurant opportunity.

The result of a half a million-pound refurbishment project, the company has converted former retail space in the Bruce Building, Percy Street, into a fully fitted café/restaurant, which would only require cosmetic fit-out from new occupiers.

The project presents a viable opportunity for operators to establish a new venture in the heart of Newcastle without the challenge and cost of undertaking a full fit out.

The 2,253 sq. ft. unit features a street level café/restaurant, with a ready-installed bar area. The conversion has also included the installation of air-conditioning, a high quality till system, CCTV network, Wi-Fi and hard-wired charging points and an integrated music system, as well as a basement kitchen and food preparation area which has been fitted with high specification equipment.

Mark Walton, Managing Director of Walton Robinson, said: "Newcastle is renowned for its diverse and eclectic leisure and hospitality market and this venue will be a great addition to the city's vibrant café and restaurant community."



TOON FANS HELP TO DEVISE PLAN FOR NEWCASTLE-THEMED BAR

The High Street Group plans to create a Geordie-themed bar/restaurant within its Strawberry Place development, which will include ideas provided by Newcastle United fans.

The company aims to create a venue that celebrates the city and enhances the matchday experience for Toon fans, as well as visiting supporters, who will be able to experience top quality Geordie hospitality and sample locally produced food and drink.

The Newcastle-themed venue will be part of the £120m development in the heart of the city, which will create a new community hub with leisure and retail facilities, a new hotel, more than 300 luxury apartments at affordable rents and high-quality office space.

After it secured a controlling stake in the development, which is next to St James' Park and promises to bring many new jobs into the city, The High Street Group encouraged fans to contact the company with ideas for bars and restaurants that will be located at Strawberry Place.

Among the many ideas from fans was a passionate submission from 30-year-old Richard Healey from Consett who suggested a bar based around the iconic Newcastle Brown Ale filled with memorabilia and imagery celebrating the city's rich sporting and cultural heritage.

MALHOTRA GROUP SIGNS DEAL WITH NEW NEIGH-BOUR



A leading North East hospitality and leisure business has chosen a new running mate after signing a deal with a top UK sporting venue.

Malhotra Group plc, which owns some of Tyneside's most popular hotels, bars and restaurants, is to be Newcastle Racecourse's official hotel partner for 2020 in a move that will not only benefit businesses and their customers but also strengthen the firm's links within Newcastle's Gosforth community.

The announcement comes as work on the Malhotra Group's flagship £6.2m Three Mile Inn development, less than half a mile from Gosforth Racecourse, enters the final phase.

The site, which will be called Three Mile, will incorporate the 64-bedroom Great North Hotel, along with a family friendly restaurant, the Pizza Dough Co.

Following the partnership with Newcastle Racecourse, the group is now compiling a selection of 'race and stay' packages for guests wishing to combine dinner, bed and breakfast at the Great North Hotel with a trip to the races.

Group Business Development Manager, Fabian Pritchard, said: "We are delighted to be Newcastle Racecourse's official hotel partner for 2020. Many of the Malhotra family live in Gosforth so they have a natural fondness for the area."



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Bob Arora

YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

BOB ARORA

Owner and head chef at Sachins Punjabi restaurant in Newcastle.

Head chef and owner Bob prides himself on the deliciously creative and authentic food served up at Sachins. He took over the running of Sachins in 2000, having previously been a regular diner there.

Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I was born in London and moved up here with my family when I was about ten. I hated it at first, there weren't many Asian people up here at the time, and I was subjected to a horrific amount of racial abuse. When we moved up I couldn't get a place at school due to the term times etc so I went to a Jewish Private school and that was great and I learnt a lot in the short time I was there. Once a place became available I moved to my local school.

Looking back on the start I had in the North East it was character building and now it's great to see so many different communities all living together in harmony.

What do you think it means to be a businessperson in the North East of England?

I think it is great. We have so much local produce on our doorstep. You can drive 15 minutes up the road and you are in beautiful Northumberland. It's so beautiful and stunning. When you go down to London, it is such a rat race down there. People have no time for you, to help you out, even just to talk to you.

What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

Again, just the fact you are only 15 minutes or so from stunning Northumberland. You have that beautiful countryside and that tremendous coastline. I think we can take it for granted when we live here. You can see that by the number of people from the south who now have holiday homes here, who are not used to the clean air and the peacefulness which we take for granted.

Do you have a favourite hot spot for a business meeting?

I prefer meetings to be informal, so if I have to, it would be here at Sachins or Peace and Loaf. For a more formal meeting, it would be Jesmond Dene House.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

I really enjoy Peace and Loaf in Jesmond, and also The Potted Lobster in Bamburgh. My partner loves fish and shellfish, so we always go to The Potted Lobster, which she adores. I go there despite having a sea fish allergy as she loves it. I'll have a plate of chips and salad while she tucks into Lobster!

Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

There's nothing better than a picnic up in Warkworth or Bamburgh. That Northumberland coast and scenery again.

Are the people friendlier?

Well and truly! The friendliest!

What do you think is the best view in North East?

I love the view as you go into Alnmouth and pass the houses, restaurants and pubs and then you are met with this wonderful scenery and sea. I also love going for a walk by Newton-by-the-Sea, along the coast there.

Does living and working in Newcastle offer the same the opportunities as elsewhere in UK?

Definitely, I think there are more opportunities. Speaking from the restaurant perspective, you get more repeat customers here, as life is not so transient. Plus we don't have the rush hour jams like you get elsewhere, so when it comes to transport, etc, I think it is much better here. And people talk to you! They're not in a mad rush all the time.

Experience of working elsewhere?

I've never worked anywhere else. And I wouldn't want to.

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

SALLY MINNS

Head of Creative Content,
Master Debonair

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I wanted to be a marine biologist for years! But, as I got older, I realised that loving dolphins and being a good swimmer wasn't enough for me to just walk into the job. Can you believe that my teachers said I had to study biology A-level to do it? Because I couldn't. I was completely useless at it, so I had to change my mind.

It wasn't until I finished my A levels where I studied Textiles that I thought about going into fashion. I've been interested in fashion since forever; my Mam would take me shopping in London quite often and I came home with a new bag. My mam is very fashionable and she'd always have the latest edition of Vogue at home, which I would read from a young age.

Tell us about your current role?

Last year I was appointed Head of Creative Content at Master Debonair. I originally started as Head Stylist but had the opportunity to move up quite quickly.

I really enjoy my role; it gives me so much freedom, and I get the chance to work on a lot of exciting projects. I work extremely closely with our CEOs, Eve and Simon Whitaker. We travel a lot together for buying trips, design trips and we also attend Pitti Uomo together in Florence every year.

I see over everything creative: from campaigns to styling, eCommerce to social, digital marketing and visual merchandising, sponsorships, collaborations and much more.

It's a lot of responsibility, but I love it because no two days are ever the same and I'm lucky to work with my incredible team.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Definitely winning Draper's 'Rising Star Award in the Independent Sector'. This was the first time the award had ever been presented in the Independent Sector, so it was a real privilege to win it.

I'm also proud that I made it into the Draper's '30 under 30' class of 2020, which is a close second to winning the award.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

The biggest change, in my opinion, is how fashion bloggers and influencers now dominate the fashion scene. This, and how social media has revolutionised the way that design houses and their consumers interact.



Sally Minns

Another important change is how online shopping has taken over the highstreets, with more and more retailers sadly having to close their stores. I think the last 10 years have been a challenge for small independent shops, but thankfully we are starting to see a change as more people are supporting independents. I really think we are going to see even bigger changes this next decade; changes for the better.

What are you currently working on?

How long have you got?

What I'm most excited about at the moment is I'm currently planning our SS20 wedding campaign. We shoot two main wedding campaigns a year and they are always my favourite.

I'm also working on a couple of really great sponsorships deals, but I can't tell you about that just yet so you'll have to keep an eye on us.

Tell us about the team you work with?

I honestly couldn't do my job without them; they are all so dedicated and passionate about the company. My team have a great energy and keep each other going. Yes, sometimes our jobs can be quite stressful, someone will always crack a joke to lift the mood.

What is the best piece of business advice you have been given?

My dad's favourite saying was "Shy bairns get nowt".

It's a very well-known Geordie saying that I've always stood by. I've always known that if I want something, I have to go and get it. It's all about knowing your worth and believing in yourself.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Staying ahead of the game and making sure we are one step ahead of all our competitors.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

My placement students, I would be so lost without them. For the last two years, I've run a placement scheme with Northumbria University where students will come and work with me and the team for either six or 12 months to understand the industry more. I am so passionate about helping the younger generation gain experience within the industry and help build their confidence.

Outside of work, it has to be my Mam. It might sound a little cliché, but she really is an amazing woman.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I enjoy spinning. I love zoning out for an hour and find it a great stress reliever. I also enjoy socialising with friends and family, and especially trying new places to eat.

Another exciting project for me is that I have recently bought a new house which needs a lot of work. I cannot wait to have it finished. I recently started a home interior account called 54the_avenue, which I'm finding is a great way to document the progress.

One day my family and I can look back at the photos and see how far we've come.

Favourite Book/CD/DVD?

This is a really difficult one. My favourite film has got to be Stand by Me or Father of the Bride. I can watch them both over and over and never get bored.

MEET THE GM

JEFF HODGSON

GM of Macdonald Liden Hall Golf & Country Club

Did you always envisage a career in the Hotel Industry?

No, I didn't. When I left school, I initially took up an apprenticeship in joinery. My brother worked in the hotel industry though, and it was him who opened my eyes to all the possibilities. I found the industry really interesting and exciting and I moved down south to join the Burnham Beeches Hotel.

Describe your career path thus far?

My first job in the hotel sector was a porter and I have worked my way through the ranks to general manager.

Throughout my career, I've worked with various groups including Village Hotels, Hallmark Hotels and The Real Hotel Company, before joining Macdonald Hotels & Resorts.

What are the biggest challenges you have faced so far?

Although I have managed hotels for 25 years, Macdonald Linden Hall Hotel, Golf & Country Club is a new for experience for me. This is my first time managing a country club where I will be responsible for a number of facilities outside the hotel itself including the 18-hole golf course, leisure facilities, Linden Tree Pub and Restaurant.

It is a tall task but I'm very much up for the challenge.

What do you hope to bring to your new role?

I like to think that I've improved every hotel I've worked at in some way and hopefully Macdonald Linden Hall Hotel, Golf & Country Club will be no different.

For me, it's all about the team and the customers. Having a motivated team makes such a difference to the guest experience. The team already have a strong bond and my plan is to ensure that everyone is well-trained, confident and happy within their roles.



Tell us about your team?

I'm really proud of my team. We have 55 team members, 30 of them full-time, but this increases to 60 during the summer months to accommodate the increase in bookings. We're a very tight-knit group and everyone works really hard to make sure Macdonald Linden Hall Hotel, Golf & Country Club remains one of the best hotels in the North East. We are a boutique hotel with a vast offering, delivering everything from small conferences, to large weddings, golf tournaments and luxury spa weekends. There is a lot to keep on top of, but the team do it with a smile on their face.

What is Macdonald Linden Hall Hotel, Golf & Country Club's greatest asset?

Without a doubt, our greatest asset is our people. Each and every person works tremendously hard to ensure our customers have a memorable experience when they visit us. Aside from this, the hotel grounds are absolutely stunning. I drive to work every morning and the views are still as breath-taking as they were on my first day.

What are you currently working on?

We're giving our spa a mini refurbishment in the next coming months, with a fresh lick of paint and a new jacuzzi.

Is there a mantra you aspire to do business by?

I don't live by any one mantra, but I often find myself saying that I'm "living the dream". My team have caught onto this, and every morning they all say to me "Morning Jeff, are you living the dream today?"

Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

The first general manager I ever worked for, Mike Dewey, was a great mentor and taught me so much when I was first starting out in the sector.

How do you like to unwind?

My job is pretty full on, so I like to unwind by spending time with my family. I think having a work-life balance is really important, so I try to spend as much quality time with them as possible.

THE DREAM-CATCHER

'The witching hour, somebody had once whispered to Sophie, was a special moment in the middle of the night when every child and every grown-up was in deep deep sleep, and all the darks things came from hiding and had the world to themselves.'

I may not have a trumpet like the BFG but capturing nightmares and replacing them with dreams became my reality when the witching hour descended upon us all.

I spend my days creating happiness, helping love bloom and making magical memories for my clients and my greatest reward is, sharing in this joy.

This last week has been one of the most testing times of my career and extremely difficult for my business and industry. I invest heavily in my clients, I become their friend, I nurture their journey and wellbeing, I pride myself in taking great care of them and I want them to experience the most spectacular journey of their life. But as the whole world started to come-to-a-close and the nightmare unfolded, my days completely transformed.

On Wednesday 11th March I had the first 'what if' conversation by Monday 16th March, that 'what if' became a very harsh reality.

With my clients, I had one task, protect their wedding experience, with their best interests at heart. I also, opened my services up, on a voluntary basis, to other couple's and event suppliers to provide them with support and help at this very challenging time. My opening conversations with soon-to-be wedding couple's were filled with



tears and distress. Discussions with venue were fraught, with good working relationships being tested. Working through plans with suppliers was burdensome. The events industry was hit hard and fast. I set key principles to provide alternative solutions to protect everyone in the chain which quickly moved to one main principle, postpone but do not cancel.

As I sit writing this today, every single couple I have spoken to is now looking forward to their wedding in 2021 around the same date they had for this year. All venues and suppliers have retained their clients ensuring they have future business and cash flow within the business.

I am humbled to learn that kindness is one of the most valuable resources we have and although my industry will suffer significantly in 2020, it is rich in so many other ways.

I will be continuing to help as many people as I can over this uncertain period, my trumpet is

polished and ready to go. If you need help and support please do not hesitate to get in touch. I wish everyone love at this time, be safe, keep calm and keep smiling.

#FREEDAY

HELLO,

Michelle here.

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STACK GIN GARDEN

Remember when we first opened STACK in the summer of 2018 and one of the big attractions was the gin garden?

Well, fans of Mother's Ruin can rejoice – our gin garden is back, this time with a difference, and a world of discovery awaits you.

Think you know all there is to about gin? Think again. Sponsored by famed gin producers Whitley Neill, the Whitley Neill Gin Discovery Garden, which is at STACK until May, will take you on a journey around the world.

Let us be-gin! To coincide with Whitley Neill's branding, the new garden is all about going on a 'journey of discovery' exploring the botanicals from across the globe used in the company's gins.

Look out for branded Instagramable moments and gin-tasting sessions to get involved in.

We love our gin up here in the North East, which is why Whitley Neill Gin has chosen Stack as one of the first locations to do some real brand activation.

James Stocker, Marketing Director for Whitley Neill Gin added; "The Whitley Neill Gin Discovery Garden was chosen to be activated at STACK, due

to it being a unique social hub with an innovative offering of food, drink and entertainment in the heart of Newcastle.

"Whitley Neill Gin aims to continuously excite and provide new experiences to enjoy Gin. The Whitley Neill Gin Discovery Garden at STACK will allow guests to travel and explore an array of delicious gin flavours that have been inspired by tastes from around the world in a beautifully, exotic gin garden."

There will be nine Whitley Neill Gins available, including Whitley Neill Handcrafted Dry Gin, Rhubarb & Ginger, Raspberry, Blood Orange, Pink Grapefruit, Blackberry, Parma Violet and Quince. Guests will also get to try the new Limited Edition Whitley Neill Gooseberry Gin. This deliciously vibrant gin celebrates the flavoursome fruit of the British countryside, stemming from the delicate sweetness of English gooseberries balanced with plum and cassia alongside hints of pear.

There will also be a range of speciality crafted Gin cocktails to showcase the ideal pairing botanicals and tonics.

Whitley Neill handcrafted gin is the UK's number one premium selling brand.

Each gin is made from a 100% grain spirit that is steeped with botanicals prior to being distilled in an antique copper pot.

Only the purest water is used and each of the botanicals is carefully selected to ensure it is of the highest quality.

A container village social hub, the ever-changing STACK has proved a great success since opening in the summer of 2018 and we are over the moon Whitley Neill has chosen us as the base for its first major branding exercise in the region.

We are open until midnight every day of the week. Come check us out, and sample a few gins while here!

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THE GOLF CLUB THAT'S DRIVING A NEW FUTURE

Tyneside Golf Club opens a new Par 3, six-hole course and practice ground.

When we rolled-up at Tyneside Golf Club to meet General Manager Peter Smith, storms Ciara and Dennis were still very fresh in the memory. A lot of courses around the region suffered badly and many of them were either closed altogether or operating with temporary greens and tees.

Well, there was none of that at Tyneside Golf Club. It was open for business and there wasn't a temporary green or tee in sight. The groundsman has plainly done a cracking job and made full use of the fact that Tyneside is one of the best draining golf courses in the UK. It really can offer its members all year-round playability and value for money.

It's also one of the most picturesque, overlooking the River Tyne, with plenty of mature trees and a rolling topography. It's also one of the longest established. The club was formed in 1879 and the current course was designed and laid out by Harry S Colt in 1911. He also designed Wentworth and Sunningdale. The course has undergone a recent 5-year refurbishment programme undertaken by Frank Pont of Infinite Variety Golf Design, the renowned European Golf Architect who specialises in Colt restorations. The original Colt classic is simply getting better every year.

It measures just over 6000 yards, is a Par 70, and every hole has its own character. In other words, it's a great all-round course...not too long, beautifully presented all year round, but sufficiently varied to challenge a seasoned golfer as well as not demoralising those of us who're either new to the game or having not quite got the hang of it...yet.

And it is the latter group of golfers....new, young, inexperienced or simply not having sufficient time to devote to a full 18 holes...that now have another option at Tyneside Golf Club.

They've recently opened a 6-hole, Par 3 course next to the Colt designed main course. From there it will



operate an academy where players can learn the game in a safe, enjoyable environment and receive access to the all-important coaching clinics run by their PGA Professionals.

Situated on the outskirts of Ryton in the Tyne Valley...15 minutes' drive from the centre of Newcastle...rather than turning into the main golf club, keep going along a lane and you will arrive at the new facility. As well as the Par 3 course, there's a driving range where you hit off grass not mats. There is a distance control area where the fairway in front of you is marked out with 25 yard distance markers. Just along from there you'll find the short game area where you can practice your chipping and putting.

And then there's the 6 hole, Par 3 course which is maintained to the same high standards as the Colt course. There is everything that you would expect from a golfing academy.

"We want to provide as many different facilities as possible for our existing members, continue to be attractive for new members to join us, whilst also taking our responsibility seriously in helping to develop the adult and junior golfers of the future," said General Manager, Peter Smith.

"Gone are the days when a golf club such as ours can rely solely on an 18-hole course to generate sufficient revenue via membership, pay-as-you-play and clubhouse events and catering. It's the nature of the world in which we live that fewer people can devote several hours on a regular basis to play golf while also juggling their work and home life. However, they may be able to grab an hour to pop along to our 6-hole course to keep their swing in shape or brush-up on their putting or short game. We're also aware that young or new golfers can find playing on the main course alongside seasoned members a bit intimidating. They become nervous about their ability or holding-up the better players. Consequently, honing your game or learning how to play from scratch is much easier on a shorter course where you are likely to be surrounded by players of a similar ability."

Peter is looking to the future. He wants to attract more young players; he wants more women to get involved; he'd like to cater for those players who no longer want, or are able, to play a full 18 holes, and he wants to turn junior golfers into senior players.

It's a wonderful facility. It has all of the benefits of the main Tyneside Golf Club course whilst being relaxed, easier, shorter and with a greater range of options.

Peter has also made the pricing extremely attractive.

Academy membership which includes the practice ground and Par 3 course and access to weekly coaching clinics is Adults £100.00, Juniors (U16) £50.00.

To become a member of the Par 3 and practice ground only it is priced at £60.00 for adults and £25.00 Juniors (U16).

If you'd rather just use the range, practice facilities and have a round of the Par 3 course on a one-off basis, prices are Adults £7.50 and Juniors (U16) £5.00.

If you'd like further details, get in touch with Peter via email peter.smith@tynesidegolfclub.co.uk or give him a call on 0191 413 2742

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For more information, contact:

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MAJOR AWARD FOR NEWCASTLE 2019 EUROPEAN FINALS

Newcastle's widely-acclaimed hosting of the European club rugby finals has claimed another notable accolade after winning the Malcolm Dix Trophy for 'Sporting Success of the Year' at the Sport Newcastle Awards.

The two-day extravaganza saw European rugby's elite gathering on Tyneside in May for the finals of the Heineken Champions Cup and European Challenge Cup, with St James' Park and the city's fanzone areas providing a magical backdrop.

Previous winners of the Malcolm Dix Trophy have included Jonny Wilkinson, Steve Harmison, Alan Shearer and Jonathan Edwards to name just a few, with Newcastle 2019 event director Mick Hogan delighted to be among such illustrious company.

He said: "The finals weekend showcased everything that is best about our region, and was only possible because of the tremendously strong partnership between Newcastle City Council, NewcastleGateshead Initiative, Newcastle Falcons, Newcastle United FC and NE1 Ltd. The local partners worked with tournament organisers European Professional Club Rugby Ltd for two years in the build-up to and delivery of the finals.

"It was the fastest-selling Heineken Champions



Cup final in the tournament's history, the biggest UK crowd for a Challenge Cup final and more than 80,000 supporters attended the games.

"The city enjoyed an economic impact of more than £25 million, but more pleasing than that was the feedback received in our survey of more than 2,000 people who attended the weekend.

"The words most commonly used to describe the event were 'friendly' and 'welcoming', with 56% of those surveyed saying they considered Newcastle to be a 'rugby city'.

"We are committed to trying to bring more major rugby events to Newcastle, which has already proven to be a successful host for Rugby World Cup 2015, Super League's Magic Weekend, Newcastle Falcons' 'Big One', England's Quilter International and the European finals weekend.

"This award is fantastic acknowledgment of the really memorable few days last May which came off the back of many years' hard work, and I am extremely honoured to accept it on behalf of the many people who made it possible."

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OUT & ABOUT - GOOSTREY FOR JODRELL BANK



I finally managed to visit Jodrell Bank (JB) between Christmas and New Year. This was the trip postponed last July by the big party to celebrate the granting of UNESCO World Heritage Status.

The best fare was using the southern TransPennine route between Sheffield and Stockport – much more rural than the northern TP route taken by trains from the North East.

Daniel and I travelled from the North East via York and Doncaster, riding the TP to Stockport and the local train to Goostrey, arriving on time at 12.41. The little station has some interesting displays on the radio telescope and is a short walk from the village of the same name. The JB explainer's talk at Jodrell Bank takes place at 14.30 daily, and we debated whether to have lunch in the Red Lion pub before walking to the radio telescope or use the café there. I made a wrong judgement and chose the pub: not particularly good, fairly expensive, and took an age to arrive. So we might miss the talk.

Jodrell Bank is two and a half miles from the station, and after we had eaten I had to summon a local taxi to get us there in time using the only number I had. The driver had only returned from the Canaries the previous night, so I am rather glad we were not visiting the day before. Instructions for walking along the narrow country lanes on JB's website advise not to walk this route during hours of darkness as there are no street lights. It adds that at one point it will appear that you are walking away from the telescope, but to "hold your nerve as you are on the correct road".

The Lovell telescope, 76.2 metres in diameter, and now the third largest in the world, dominates the site. The guide who took us round had worked there for several years but admitted to me afterwards that he had never been up inside the contraption. The observatory was established by the University of Manchester in 1945 by Bernard Lovell, a radio astronomer, to investigate cosmic rays after his work on radar during the WW2. Subsequently, it has been involved in the research of meteors, quasars, and was heavily involved with the tracking of Space Age probes in the 1960s,

The work began in Manchester itself, but electrical interference from the trams on Oxford Road prevented effective research, and required a move out into the country. Electrical interference remains a problem on the rural site though, and visitors and staff are prohibited from using mobile phones. Jodrell Bank is primarily used for investigating radio waves from the planets and stars, effectively looking out for life on other planets, although none has yet been found, and perhaps never will be. A good reason for looking after our planet by travelling by train wherever possible. JB is also HQ for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), a collaboration of 20 countries to create the most powerful radio telescope ever built.

We saw the indoor orrery, a model of the solar system, but it was unfortunately too dark to explore the 35 acres arboretum, which houses the UK's national

collections of crab apple and mountain ash, as well as a small scale model of the solar system at a scale of approximately 1:5,000,000,000. From closing time at 17.00 to our train at 18.03 we had ample time to walk back along the unlit lanes facing oncoming traffic and retracing the route of the taxi on foot at zero cost, to board our homeward train.

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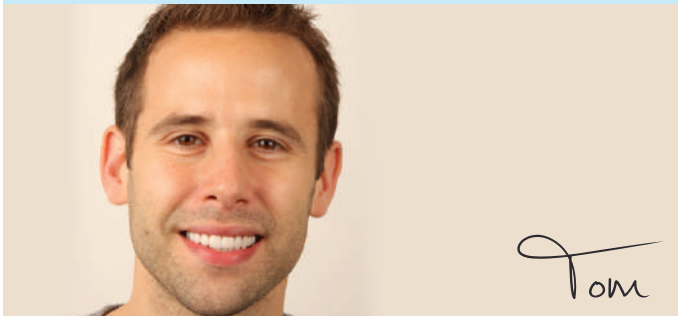
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GATESHEAD FOOTBALL CLUB EXTENDS PARTNERSHIP WITH NUFFIELD HEALTH NEWCASTLE HOSPITAL



L-R: Alisha Henry, Gateshead Football Club Operations Manager, Greg Olley, First-Team Player, Stacey Brunton, Sales & Services Manager at Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital with Matt Lamb, Hospital Director, Connor Oliver, First-Team Player and Chris Bell, Club Physiotherapist.

Nuffield Health, the largest healthcare charity in the UK, has increased its support for Gateshead Football Club to provide players with the very best medical care.

The collaboration will give Gateshead players access to a range of healthcare services at Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital in Jesmond, including post injury scans, treatment plans and surgery where necessary.

"We are thrilled to be strengthening our relationship with Nuffield Health," said club operations manager Alisha Henry.

"They have been a key supporter of the football club for a number of years, and we couldn't be happier to have them on board in an even bigger way than before."

Nuffield Health runs a network of award-winning hospitals, fitness and wellbeing clubs together with a host of other healthcare and diagnostic services across the country.

Matt Lamb, Hospital Director at Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital, said: "Our strong partnership with Gateshead hopefully signals our commitment to the club and the local community. We strive to play an active role in highlighting the importance of health and wellness and everyone at Gateshead Football Club shares this ethos."

www.nuffieldhealth.com



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SPRINTING TARGETS

Sprinting or short bursts of maximal effort are hugely beneficial for your health, strength and weight loss.

That feel good factor of striding out and pushing your body to work as fast as possible gives you a really positive energy especially if you are outside in the fresh air.

Sprints can also be performed on a bike, stationary bike or a treadmill, if you choose. Traditional sprints may not work for everyone due to things like equipment availability, space availability and injury issues.

Sprinting and burning calories

Sprint's target fast-twitch muscle fibers which are used for shorter, more explosive movements like sprinting. Fast-twitch movements burn significantly more calories than slow-twitch movements. This is not a surprise, as sprinting is much tougher than an activity like jogging. The good news is your metabolism rate continues to burn calories long after your workout has concluded and largely in the form of fat.

Research shows four 30 second sprints can ultimately produce the same number of calories burned as 30 minutes of non-stop moderate aerobic exercise.

Sprinting and fat around your major organs

Sprint intervals also burn visceral fat, the more dangerous fat stored around your major organs. A study from the University of New South Wales found that a 20 minute cycling sprint interval program performed three times a week for 12 weeks led participants to burn 17 percent of their visceral fat. Researchers estimated that it would take seven hours of jogging a week, for 14 straight weeks, to produce a similar result, which equates to over eight times as many total minutes spent exercising. These studies are just a small part of existing research which has found sprint intervals to be a more efficient method of burning calories and fat, than moderate aerobic exercise.



David Fairlamb

Sprinting and building muscle

Sprinting helps you build muscle. Slow-twitch muscle fibers do not get larger the more you exercise them, fast-twitch muscle fibers do. If you want to increase your muscle mass and improve your definition, train fast-twitch fibers via sprinting. There's a reason world class marathon runners look very different from Olympic sprinters.

Sprinting and mental health

Sprint intervals may also have a more positive impact on your mental health than traditional cardio. It's long been known that regular exercise improves brain function and combats anxiety and depression related symptoms, but new research is finding this effect may be even greater with sprint interval training.

DAVID'S SUMMING UP

If you are looking to burn more calories, target the visceral fat around your major organs and build muscle, add sprinting in to your weekly fitness routine.

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“
**...Is there
an end in
sight?...**
”



**Queen urges country to
be strong in face of crisis**



A great deal can change in only a month. From our attention being dominated by floods, Brexit negotiations, a bountiful budget, Democrat primaries, the Labour leadership and Meghan's master plan, the world has been turned upside down. There is but one issue on our minds. There is some reassurance in the unity of purpose which combines our resolve to overcome the terrible threat of Covid-19. The obsession of exposure to never ending news coverage in the media is the hope of hearing some good news.

Is there an end in sight? How soon is it likely that a vaccine can be produced? Is there a 'game-changing' Coronavirus antibody test to identify who has been infected and then developed immunity?

The Prime Minister has been wise to be constantly flanked by Sir Patrick Vallance, Chief Scientific Adviser and Professor Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer. We are urged to 'trust the science' and avoid politicising what is a national and global catastrophe. The additional £350 billion of government spending and aid guarantees will inevitably be increased by money to replace incomes of the many businesses at risk and the thousands of jobs threatened or lost.

Decisions to cancel sporting, cultural and other high profile events, advise against meeting in bars and restaurants and the closing of leisure facilities were followed by the closure of schools and universities and cancellation of exams. All of this has produced a scenario of increasing national shutdown, essential to try to stop the spread of the virus and reduce what we are told will be many thousands of deaths.

The inevitable panic buying in supermarkets is an unedifying spectacle. Against this is an emerging generosity of spirit showing communities and neighbourhoods caring for others; offering practical help for those infected or at risk and being in isolation or exclusion.

This is the largest challenge in the lifetime of (nearly) all of us. How will society have changed when the threat is overcome? What will be the ultimate impact on the economy, on society, on our values and our relationships. Don't keep asking the Government. How can they know? Some aspects will soon recover - the sporting programmes, theatres, recreation, socialising. What can not be overestimated is the impact upon the economy, public confidence, employment, business and investment. Her Majesty the Queen has urged us to 'remember our nation's history forged by people and communities coming together to work as one'. Dame Vera Lynn at 103 is one of the few old enough to remember the Dunkirk spirit of 1940 and she is encouraging us



to 'keep smiling through' as in the White Cliffs of Dover. That was before anyone had heard of supermarkets or packs of kitchen rolls.

Very proud of an initiative of my son Robert, activities coordinator at a care home in Edgware. As visitors are not allowed in and the booked entertainers cannot enter the home, he arranged for a singer to perform in the garden - to the obvious delight of the residents.

My passport confirms I am in the risk category. As Employment Judges we are now arranging all possible hearings to be by telephone or Skype which will limit unnecessary engagement. Criminal trials over three days in length are to be deferred until later in the year but not cancelled like Glastonbury, Durham Miners Gala, the Grand National or the Boat Race.

This is a great challenge but things are being brought into context and we are emphasising our priorities of health and the welfare of our families and friends, the need to care for each other and for society as a whole. As the Prime Minister says, we must do 'whatever it takes' to eradicate the virus, and support everyone who is affected by it. It is in the nature of our national character and values to ensure that all of our citizens are protected from harm and hardship.

As we use time in isolation to catch up on reading, stay in touch remotely with friends, learn a new language, avoid Game of Thrones we can make many future plan. I recommend the musical 'Come From Away' which I saw at the Phoenix Theatre before the crisis. It tells the story of the 35 planes flying to New York on 9/11 and forced to divert and land at the airport on Gander Island in Newfoundland. It tells of how the small population of the island rose to the challenge of the influx of thousands of strangers and fed, accommodated and maintained them resulting in lasting friendships and reinforcement of the spirit of selflessness and goodness. The current crisis can be the basis of a future production from Cameron McIntosh - if the same spirit deserves it.

Stay safe and well.

Coronavirus
Isolate your household
Stay at home

If you or anyone in your household has a high temperature or a new and continuous cough - even if it's mild

- Everyone in your household must stay at home for 14 days and keep away from others.
- DO NOT go to your GP or hospital.
- Go to [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) to check your symptoms and follow the specialist medical advice. Only call NHS 111 if you can't get online or your symptoms worsen.
- Protect older people and those with existing health conditions by avoiding contact.

Find out how to isolate your household at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)

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