

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

JUNE 2017



USING TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT

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

issue 24



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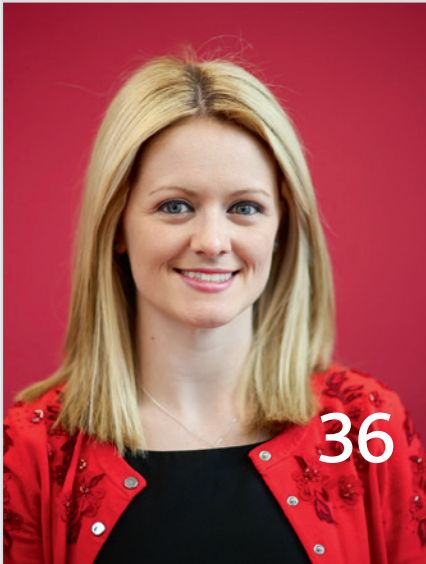
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FOREWORD

Welcome to the June edition of Northern Insight

With Summer now firmly here we are delighted to bring you another bumper edition bursting with life and giving a great overview of the North East business and leisure scene.

Our cover star is the fantastic ITPS who are renowned for their expertise and longevity in the challenging technology sector.

The latest subject of our Staying Power feature is Stephen McNicol from Muckle LLP who looks at his career in Law.

For business lunch we visit Bonbar, set within the iconic Assembly Rooms, which proved to be the ideal spot for client entertaining.

Look out also for some terrific social coverage including the visit of ex-British Lion Will Greenwood to the annual South Northumberland Dinner.

One to be proud of for sure and we hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Thank you for your continued support. Till next month...

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher

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SME BUSINESS HUB TO BECOME ANCHOR TENANT AT PENDOWER HALL



The owners of Pendower Hall have reached an agreement with the SME Centre of Excellence to become an anchor tenant in the Newcastle regeneration scheme.

The centre, which aims to act as a business support hub, has been created by North-East businessman Ammar Mirza CBE and is backed by his company AmmarM (UK) Limited, which has supported hundreds of UK start-up enterprises.

From its new base in Pendower Hall, the SME Centre for Excellence will provide a comprehensive suite of services for start-up and growing firms, employing a team of 12 business support professionals.

The Centre will work closely with the North East

Growth Hub to deliver education and skills and enable the creation of a strong support network with input from the private sector, training providers and other key institutions.

The regeneration of the 19th Century Hall in Benwell will also enable the SME Centre of Excellence to host a calendar of local, regional and national networking events.

Joint managing directors of Newcastle-based Tier One Capital, Stephen Black and Ian McElroy, have acquired the property with the ambition of transforming it into a prominent business hub and conference and events centre whilst bringing the Grade-II listed building back into active use.

Ammar Mirza CBE said: "I am very excited about the prospect of establishing the SME Centre of Excellence at Pendower Hall. It will be a fantastic base for our activities, which will actively support the growth and development of local and national SME businesses.

Ian McElroy, joint Managing Director at Tier One Capital, said: "The SME Centre of Excellence reflects our ambitions for Pendower Hall to become a location that creates jobs and generates opportunities for local people and others across the region."

NORTH EAST ACCOUNTANCY AWARDS FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

The North East Accountancy Awards, supported by long-time partner Nigel Wright Recruitment, have received more than 50 nominations from firms and organisations looking to celebrate the achievements of their teams and individuals over the last year.

Winners will be announced at the awards evening taking place on Thursday, June 29 2017 at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead which will be hosted by award-winning journalist, author and TV presenter Nadine Dereza. Nadine said: "It's such a huge honour to be hosting this prestigious event. I'm delighted to be involved in supporting the North East finance sector, and it's probably the closest I'm going to get to

actually winning one of the awards!"

Project Manager Claire Westgate said: "Nadine is an experienced presenter and journalist who has worked for CNN, BBC, Sky TV, Simply Money and Associated Press. We're absolutely delighted to have her involved in the awards and to welcome her back to the North East."

The awards showcase the wealth of talent and expertise in the accountancy, finance and tax sectors from across the region. Now in its eleventh year, the event continues to grow, attracting over 400 professionals on the evening and gaining support from industry associations and local and national businesses.



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SADLER BROWN GROUP HAS 'DESIGNS' ON EXPANSION FOLLOWING ACQUISITION

Fast-growing Newcastle based Sadler Brown Architects has continued its expansion plans with the acquisition of Gosforth based Anthony Keith Architects (AKA) for an undisclosed fee.

Part of the Sadler Brown Group, the award winning architects have recently won a number of major new design contracts, including new rail stations, infrastructure work for Nexus and Network Rail and other high profile commercial and residential design projects.

The timely acquisition of AKA is seen as a perfect fit for the groups growing team and expansion plans.

Sadler Brown were advised by the Corporate Team at Newcastle based Mincoffs Solicitors, led by Partner John Nicholson and assisted by solicitor Chris Hughes. John said "Chris and I have no doubt this is an excellent move for Sadler Brown and we look forward to working more closely with them on their future expansion projects and acquisitions."



THE MUSSEL CLUB EXPANDS

A North East networking organisation has expanded in office space as well as adding to its team.

The Mussel Club welcomes Arthur Hodgson as Commercial Director and Rachel Cotton as Account Manager. The company has also taken office space in the award-winning Jupiter Centre at the North East Business and Innovation Centre (BIC).

The company has gone from two to five employees in just four months, with the launch of Mussel Media, an online solution to help businesses grow their network through digital marketing. Arthur commented:

"I'm delighted to be joining at this very exciting time. I see the company as an integral part of the North East business community.

"The Mussel Club has grown so much over the last few years and I look forward to helping it flourish and grow further. I'm really excited in what the future holds."



'BETTER' BRANDING FOR TOP TEESIDE LEGAL FIRM

Middlesbrough-based brand agency, Better, has completed a major project for Endeavour Partnership, one of the North East's leading legal firms.

The two companies joined forces to work on the re-development of Endeavour's brand to assist with its continued growth.

Endeavour Partnership, which now has a growing team of 50, has a reputation spanning over 15 years and has continued to grow at its base at Teesdale in Stockton.

Better used its 'BetterBrandBuilder' to develop Endeavour's new brand which includes a new brand identity, key company messages and supporting marketing tools such as a new website which will be used to increase digital marketing activity.

The BetterBrandBuilder is a business tool developed in-house at Better and used by dozens of companies around the North East to improve their brand communications. Demand for the service has grown by around 50% in the last year and Better is now working on brand development for high profile businesses including Active Financial, Baltic Training, Red House School and MyFirmsApp.

NORTH EAST FIRE FIGHTERS MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE

Two North East fire fighters are making dreams come true when they take on the world's toughest rowing race across the Atlantic.

Paul Hopkins (51) and Paul Towers (44) will be testing their physical and mental strength when they take part in the Atlantic Dream 17 rowing race to raise money for two North East Charities Tiny Lives and The Firefighters Charity.

On November 28th, the men will set off on a world challenge to row 3000 nautical miles across

the Atlantic Ocean. The two-man rowing boat will carry them, their food, medical kit and safety equipment for the entire crossing.

Paul Towers said "We chose Tiny Lives as three men from other stations have had premature babies, so it's something that as a local charity was close to our hearts."

"And, the Firefighters Charity always support us in our daily lives and as firefighters, we wanted to give something back."



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USING TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT

A lot can happen in a few years in the business world, and nowhere is the change faster than in the IT sector. One name stands out in the region for its expertise and longevity in this challenging market. We speak to Garry Sheriff, Managing Director of IT specialists ITPS, to find out more about how the company became the region's IT partner of choice.

"There cannot be anyone in business who has not heard the term 'cloud computing', even if they might find it hard to sum up its meaning in just a few words, but I really dislike the term," says Garry.

"While it is true that cloud services have transformed the way we live and work, it leads to confusion about what cloud is, and what its benefits are. Cloud simply means using internet-based computing to get anytime, anywhere access to systems and data, using an infrastructure with both physical and virtual components, which may sit in a number of locations owned and managed by others.

Cloud can deliver benefits including improved resilience, capacity, scalability and performance, and better ROI. It puts startups and large corporates on a level playing field in terms of capability, giving them access to the latest technologies on a utility model basis. The downside is it offers so much choice it can be difficult to work out the best path to take. Adopting cloud is not an 'all or nothing' decision, but you do need expert help to decide which cloud models suit your needs, and how to either replace or complement an existing system.

The IT market has been through a massive shift in the last few years and we continually align our own business model to take advantage of areas where we foresee opportunities for growth. For instance in 2014, spotting an emerging demand for IT delivered as a service, particularly among companies concerned about exactly where and how their data is housed, managed and protected, we created our own £4m high security, high specification data centre here

in the region. We added in extra benefits such as build and project space, plus fully equipped workspace recovery seats and the take up rate of clients buying into our data centre services has more than validated our investment, and we are about to start work on expanding the existing footprint."

Cloud computing was in its infancy when ITPS was formed in 2000, and as times have changed, so has the role that it plays in supporting the success of its clients. The business now employs over 120 staff, delivering a range of managed, hosted and data centre services, communications and support to regional and national clients.

Garry highlights one of the factors behind the company's success: "We believe it's not about the technology itself, it is about using it intelligently to deliver business improvement solutions.

IT specialists have gradually gone from system fault fixers to strategic partners making sure the client's IT drives business innovation and growth. Business owners are less interested in the technology and more focussed on what it can do for their business, needing their IT smoothly delivered and supported, scaleable and secure, and available 24/7, 365 days a year.

"It's a big ask in a world of rapid and continuous technology advances, but we built our reputation on meeting that requirement, regardless of the client's size and sector.

Much of our success is down to the right partnerships, for instance we are part of an elite global network of premium data centre specialists authorised to deliver Microsoft's new Azure Stack solution. This

is based on Microsoft's cloud offering Azure, but instead of being delivered via one of Microsoft's data centres anywhere in the world, Azure Stack is delivered via the data centre of a trusted third party such as ITPS.

While Azure has suited some businesses, others - particularly those operating within strict regulatory frameworks - have cited concerns around their business-critical functions being in a shared, multi-tenanted environment over which they have little control.

Microsoft's response was to develop Azure Stack, which gives clients all the benefits of Microsoft's tools and technology in a customisable format, but in a service delivered from a local, premium data centre partner who can provide a granular level of expertise and on the spot support."

ITPS recently attended the invitation-only Airlift 2017 event in Seattle, where worldwide data centre specialists gathered to hear Microsoft's technical architects share the secrets of this new technology.

"We are delighted to have Microsoft's seal of approval on our level of expertise and we believe that our accreditation as an advanced Cisco Cloud partner has gone some way to underlining our credentials in this field," adds Garry.

"The world of IT moves fast and businesses need to keep up with developments. The most efficient route is to work with a truly expert IT partner. Organisations leveraging cloud technology have a significant advantage over their competitors, and that is something we all want for our businesses."

To find out more about how ITPS can help you achieve a better return on your investment, visit www.itps.co.uk, email contact@itps.co.uk or tel: (0191) 442 8300



**£5,000 RAISED
AT LEATHERS LLP
CHARITY DINNER**

Over 120 guests attended Leathers Charity Fund-Raising Dinner in aid of the William Wates Memorial Trust. They were joined by Dame Sarah Storey the multi-gold medal winning Paralympian who entertained guests with stories from her career in swimming and cycling.

Over £5,000 was raised from the Dinner which will go towards the Leathers Tour de Force target. Managing Partner Michael Leather will once again cycle the entire Tour de France course this year with two colleagues Barry James and Neil Matthews joining him for certain stages.

You can donate to this very worthy cause at www.leatherstourdeforce.co.uk







From left to right: Jill Lax of the Autumncare Group, Maxine Pott and Matthew Flinders of RMT Accountants, Christopher Welch and Alok Loomba of Sintons, Parkside Care's Andrew Kerr and Darrell Francoisy of NatWest

NEW INVESTMENT PLANNED AS PARKSIDE CARE ACQUIRES MORPETH CARE HOME

New investment is being planned for a Northumberland care home after a family-owned North East firm acquired it from its long-term owner.

Parkside Care has added the Northlands Care Home in Morpeth to its portfolio of properties, which also includes facilities in Sunderland, Gateshead and North Shields.

The 35-bed home has been bought from owner Jill Lax, who had run it since 1995 as part of the Autumncare Group Ltd, who had added an extension to the original building shortly after its purchase to almost treble its capacity from the original 13-bed size.

Over the next 18 months, Parkside Care will be carrying out an extensive refurbishment project throughout the building to ensure everything is in line with its corporate standards, with a new nurse call system, new lighting and new flooring all due to be installed.

All of the 40 full and part time staff that work at Northlands are remaining in place, and the Parkside management team is open to making further regional acquisitions as and when the right opportunities come along.

Matthew Flinders of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors and Debra Swinburn of Evans & Co advised Jill Lax on the disposal of the Northlands Care Home, while Darrell Francoisy of NatWest Bank and Christopher Welch of Sintons Law Firm worked with Parkside Care on the acquisition.

Jill Lax says: "After running it for more than two decades, Northlands has become far more than just a business to us, and we have made significant financial and emotional investments in creating the kind of supportive environment that residents deserve.

"We had to be certain that we were going to be passing it on to the right sort of operator which would look after the residents and staff as we would wish and keep developing the quality of services that Northlands could offer.

"RMT Accountants quickly identified and engaged with a number of interested parties for us, including several other firms in our sector, and their and Sintons' expert advice ensured that the sale negotiations went extremely smoothly.

"We felt that Parkside was the best fit in terms of their approach to care provision and plans for the future, and I'm confident that Northlands will have a bright future with its new owners."

The Kerr family which owns Parkside Care has been operating care homes since 1988. The business currently employs around 140 people across its four properties, which together have a capacity of 120 beds.

Andrew Kerr, Director at Parkside Care, adds: "We pride ourselves on the family-oriented approach that we take to care provision, and on the degree of detailed knowledge that our whole team has about our residents, their personal needs and their families.

"The setting, size and character of Northlands seemed to fit extremely well with our existing strengths and ways of working, and we're planning to make investments in the property wherever we think they are required.

"Parkside has predominantly grown organically over the last nine years, but we always keep an eye out for opportunities to add suitable new properties

to the group and will continue to do so as we bed Northlands into our wider operation."

Matthew Flinders, head of marketing and business development at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, says: "Selling a long-held care home of this type is more than a simple property transaction. We're very pleased to have been able to bring together these two parties and to help secure an agreement which suits everyone involved.

"RMT's expertise and broad contact base in the care home sector allows us to add significant value when brokering transactions of this nature."

Darrell Francoisy, Relationship Director at NatWest Bank, adds: "Parkside Care are a long established operation that have a excellent care ethos, we are delighted to support this acquisition which has aided there portfolio and we are confident of the success of the business moving forward. We wish Andrew and the team all the best and look forward to our continued relationship"

Christopher Welch, Partner in the Company and Commercial team at Sintons, said: "This is the first time that we have worked with Parkside Care and I know that our sector expertise was able to add real value to Parkside in terms of this acquisition.

"Parkside Care remains a true family business and will complement well the business at Northlands. We are delighted to have been able to assist Parkside on this next stage of its development, and we wish Andrew and his team every success with this new venture."

RAISING MONEY AND SAVING TAX!

Tim Mallon from Leathers LLP reflects on the wide variety of problems referred to the firm by clients and the ingenious ways in which these are solved.



Last month we held our charity fund-raising dinner in aid of the William Wates Memorial Trust and you should be able to see photographs from this elsewhere in this magazine.

Of course, we earn our collective living by providing accounting and tax advice to clients and in my short period with the business I have been extremely impressed by the range of detailed advice that we provide. That advice often deals with highly complex areas of company and tax law but we seek to explain potential outcomes for our clients and our recommendations for action in a clear, straightforward manner.

We have an extremely varied client base both in terms of the sectors and the geographies in which they operate. To give you a flavour of the work that we have been doing, I have picked out three examples showing the complexity and varied nature of our work.

We have been recently engaged by a group of companies to finalise their accounting and taxation affairs prior to the holding company being wound up and capital distributions being paid to the shareholders. That sounds simple enough doesn't it? It becomes a little more complex when two of the subsidiary companies in the group are not-resident in the UK and when one of the intermediate holding companies was incorporated under the law of an overseas jurisdiction but is resident here for tax purposes. We have liaised with professionals across the world to understand

the accounting and tax filing requirements and then assisted our clients in bringing together the necessary information to satisfy these. Throughout this exercise we have had to be mindful of the eventual outcome for the shareholders and the impact of this upon their tax profiles.

Much of our consultancy work is driven by bespoke tax planning for our clients. As a result of recent investment decisions we advised a client that he really need to reconsider his exposure to Inheritance Tax and the provisions of his Will. There is nothing unusual in that for us, but on this occasion, we knew that it would not only involve consideration of our client's domicile but also the estate taxes position in both Germany and Portugal given this client's particular circumstances.

Unlike income taxes which have a reasonable consistent basis of taxation in that it seeks to tax income, governments tax capital and wealth in many different ways. Some tax on the basis of capital value on death, others on the basis of annual lifetime wealth to name only two. This means that when dealing with cross-border capital tax planning, the type of planning that might be highly effective in the UK can be much less so abroad. We appear to have negotiated a plan to mitigate our client's global wealth tax exposure but it has been challenging! Three-dimensional chess is probably easier!

Finally, we were delighted to hear recently that a client of ours had, with our assistance, managed

to dispose of his investment in a company located in Latvia. Our client had invested in a company based in another European jurisdiction which itself held shares in companies located in a number of different European companies. We had developed a plan for a client to enable him with withdraw in stages from the group but retain his entitlement to Entrepreneurs' Relief. This required us to understand the mechanism of a company reorganisation under the law of several European countries and then relate this back to UK tax law. At the last moment a change in Latvia company law changed the transactions entirely but we managed to satisfy ourselves that our client should be unaffected by this!

Obviously not all of our clients have affairs which are as complex as this and we look after our clients' affairs with the same level of diligence no matter how complicated those affairs may be but these stories illustrate not only the broad nature of our advice but also the trust that our clients place in us to help them. We seek to gain a deep understanding of our clients' financial affairs and their wishes and then bring our expertise, experience and innovative thinking to bear upon them. This approach has proved to be successful in both retaining clients and winning new opportunities and we look to do even more of both in the future!

Our business continues to grow and the stories above illustrate the interesting work in which we get involved. If you would like to talk about joining our business as a client or a team member please do get in touch on 0191 224 6760.



VIP DAY AT COMMERCE HOUSE

Commerce House, a Grade II listed building in Middlesbrough, which is being renovated to offer luxurious office space, hot desks, meeting rooms and virtual office services, finished works on phase one this month and to celebrate the team held a VIP day. The first raft of office space and the impressive boardroom (The Chairman's Room), which can be hired by both tenants and other businesses were showcased. Office space is now available to reserve.

For more information please visit www.commerce-house.co.uk



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WILL GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING PROVE EFFECTIVE?



New rules on gender pay gap reporting which came into force from 6th April aim to encourage equal pay in the workplace, but there are still question marks over how effective they will be.

In broad terms, the legislation will require employers with 250 or more members of staff to publish online the pay and bonus gaps between men and women within their organisation.

The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women as a proportion of average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men's earnings. The new rules aim to address the imbalance in pay between men and women in the workplace.

The Office for National Statistics has reported that although the national median gender pay gap for full time employees has narrowed over the past two decades from 27.5 per cent to 9.4 per cent, men still have a pay advantage over women. In April 2016 the gender pay gap (for median earnings) for full-time employees decreased to 9.4%, from 9.6% in 2015. This is the lowest since the survey began in 1997, although the gender pay gap has changed relatively little in recent years.

Private and voluntary sector organisations in

scope will have to publish their gender pay gap reports on their own websites as well as on a government website no later than 4 April 2018.

Focusing on the North East, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggests an estimated gender pay gap of 18% when split by parliamentary constituency, although the gap sways within the region from 33.2% in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland to -0.7% in Berwick-upon-Tweed (a minus figure showing a pay gap in favour of women).

With figures showing a gap of 18% in the North East and 16.2% in London, it is clear that there is still a long way to go; the UK figure is 18.1% and for England 18.9%.*

This suggests, as we would expect, that the variance in gender pay gap is largely based on industry rather than region, although activity within that region will have an obvious impact. For example, in areas of the North East with a greater concentration of construction activity, we would expect to see a greater pay gap as construction remains a male dominated industry.

Any initiative which draws focus on fair pay can

only be a good thing. As well as reporting the figures companies will need to focus on their Gender Pay Action Plan, once their figures are in the spotlight. I expect that the real value of this process will be linked to the activity that will be undertaken as a result of the Action Plan. Communication of key messages will be crucial both internally and externally as there will be potential impacts on employee engagement, attracting and retaining talent and organisation reputation. As a result, we are likely to see a greater focus on areas such as inclusive recruitment practices, increased levels of flexible working, accessible training, mentoring and encouraged career progression.



For more information on gender pay gap reporting or other HR-related issues, please contact Judy Pearson, Senior HR Consultant, on 07894 569220 or email judy.pearson@rsmuk.com

LOCAL LAW FIRM HEADS FOR NEW HEIGHTS



PG Legal has appointed a new Marketing Manager as part of their re-brand and office move.

Aimee Lindsay has been appointed as Marketing Manager, a first for PG Legal. Aimee is responsible for managing all internal and external marketing for the Team Valley based law firm and will be heading up the company's re-brand and office move. Aimee previously managed the marketing for a local food service company and successfully ran her own business as a commercial photographer before joining the PG Legal team.

Aimee commented "Working with Phil and the team in my previous life as a commercial photographer, I was delighted to accept his offer to join the PG Legal family. My experience enables me to run and manage the marketing for the company and take on the re-brand as part of their expansion strategy."



APPRENTICE CLAUDIA CAPTURES COMPLIANCE CAREER

Despite Claudia's favourite football team being relegated, this 18-year-old Sunderland girl now knows her future is bright, as she climbs into the premier league of jobs thanks to training employer JB Skills Training.

Having started a qualification on leaving school to follow a career in fashion, Claudia Bradford soon realised her prospects were going to be limited. And so, Claudia applied to undertake an apprenticeship at JB Skills Training in Business Administration Level 3.

Over the last 12 months Claudia has worked as part of the administration team at JB Skills HQ in the Software Centre, and has been fully supported through studying for her qualification. She has now been taken on in a full time role as compliance officer. Claudia, however, wants to climb the ladder at the award winning training company that supplies bespoke training packages for employers and individuals, function skills courses and apprenticeships.

NEW HEAD OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS FOR SUNDERLAND BID

An award-winning North East businesswoman has been appointed to head up Sunderland BID and help drive the organisation forward.

Sharon Appleby, 47, has taken up the new role as Head of Business Operations from 1st May working to ensure the BID is not only at the forefront of developing the city centre but is also the voice of business in the area.

Before taking up the new position, Sharon spent 14 years as the Head of Marketing and Communications at Gentoo Group, having steered the organisation through a period of growth and diversification.

Sharon commented "I am absolutely delighted to be joining the BID team at this point in its development."

Sunderland BID was set up in 2014 with a remit to ensure that the city centre was a vibrant place to live, work, set up business and spend leisure time.



SQUARE ONE LAW ANNOUNCES SEVEN PROMOTIONS

Square One Law, the UK's fastest growing commercial law firm based in Newcastle, has announced seven promotions.

Five Associates have been promoted to the position of Senior Associate. They include, from the litigation team, Hayley Anderson and Rachael Cooper; Ashraf Ali from the corporate team, Sarah Parish from the property team and Susie Das from the employment team.

In addition, Marketing Executive Maria Brooks has been promoted to Process Development Manager and Charlotte Branch has been promoted from Business Development Executive to Marketing Manager.

Jean-Pierre van Zyl, Equity Partner at Square One Law, said: "Our brand continues to attract smart lawyers and excellent quality support teams and it is great to see the talent within our firm, flourishing and developing their careers with us. Everyone being promoted has made a real difference to our business by embracing our culture and putting clients first and at the heart of what they do."





PLENTY OF REASONS TO SMILE FOR CHILDREN'S CHARITY

A North East charity is celebrating after a hugely successful corporate partnership was extended for a second year.

For the past twelve months, accountancy and business advisory firm UNW has supported Gosforth-based children's charity Smile For Life, raising thousands of pounds in the process.

Smile for Life, which was founded in 2007, is dedicated to enhancing and enriching the lives of disadvantaged and disabled children across the region. They provide specialist equipment, short breaks and experiences along with invaluable work experience at their Café Beam in Gosforth.

A total of £8,400 has now been raised since UNW staff voted Smile For Life as their charity of the year for 2016/17.

Michael Morris, Audit Partner at UNW, said: 'UNW has always had a strong commitment to supporting local community and voluntary organisations, and in previous years we have raised funds exclusively for Newcastle Women's Aid, Charlie Bear for Cancer

Care and Caring Hands. This commitment not only benefits those we support, but the personal development of our colleagues too.

'After witnessing first-hand the impact our fundraising activities have had in the last 12 months, and great work Smile For Life do to help the children of this region, the decision to support them for another year was an extremely easy one for us to make.

'Our staff-run Communities and Charity Support Group is currently putting plans into place to raise even more money in the coming year, including a 26-mile sponsored walk around Kielder reservoir in September.'

The majority of the money raised by UNW staff was generated through an 80-mile charity cycle ride in July 2016, with the remainder made up from other regular initiatives throughout the year such

as silent auctions, social events, raffles and cake sales.

Paula Gascoigne, Chief Executive of Smile For Life, said: 'UNW have raised an outstanding amount of money for us over the past year, and the funds have allowed us to continue to help children in the North-East lead more comfortable and happier lives.

'The support from UNW, however, stretches far beyond just fundraising. From kindly hosting pop-up cafes and social events in their offices, through to staff volunteering on Smile For Life projects and initiatives, UNW has made a huge difference across the board.

'We're looking forward to continuing to work closely with everyone at UNW and are extremely excited to see what the next 12 months will bring.'

UNW is a leading independent firm of chartered accountants that delivers a wide range of accountancy and business advisory services to its clients. For more information, please visit www.unw.co.uk

IT WILL NEVER CATCH ON

On 1 June CS Accounting celebrates 25 years in business, where has the time gone? So I feel the need for a little bit of reminiscing. How much has business changed in that time? Well, rather a lot.

Accounts are accounts and apart from legislative changes the basic principles date back to Luca Pacioli's theories of 1494. The changes in the industry are mostly technology driven. In 1992, if you were lucky enough to own a mobile phone, it was the size of a brick, you had to pull up an aerial to answer it and you were lucky if you could find a signal. And it was literally just a 'mobile' phone, you could call someone and they could call you back.

Computers were becoming much more common place and those beautifully scripted leather bound ledgers I remember from my training were being replaced by the likes of Sage and Pegasus. Some years previously Pegasus was my first ever 'computerised' accounting system. Someone turned up and set up a couple of PCs, even networked them together! Then I was given a box containing several 5.1/4" floppy discs (yes I am that old!) and told to sort it out. So after reading the accompanying instruction manuals from cover to cover – about 8" to 9" thick in total – my first accounts package was up and running. I think that's where I started this fascination with having to know exactly how these systems work, how to manipulate them to suit whatever you want and ultimately how to break them!

You could use your Microsoft Office software to type letters and create spreadsheets but mostly



Cyd Smith, Owner, CS Accounting

your letter then got popped in the post box and you waited for the reply to turn up some time later. It wasn't really until around 1997 when the dot com boom took off that there was a huge surge in email and websites and the use of that new fangled internet thing for business.

From then the technology has really pushed ahead. That glossy printed brochure that once advertised your business is now a website or a Facebook page that can be changed instantly to reflect a new special offer or inform everyone of the latest industry news. Smartphones and tablets give you everything you need at your fingertips – you can pay people, check the latest football results and order your tea just by pressing a few buttons.

That 'computerised' accounting software that was once installed on a huge beige box with a monitor that took up half your desk is now all in the cloud and can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection. Amazing software like Sage Live connects the whole of your business across the globe 24/7 and everything is there in real time. And it gives you awesome reporting at the click of a button.

So where are we going next? Well it has to be AI. You can already open your eyes on a morning and ask 'Alexa' what the weather is like and how your drive to work will be. Sage's newest AI, Pegg, will soon also be able to tell you what your business bank balance is and who owes you money, it can already do it by messaging and voice recognition is coming soon.

There has been much made of the threat that AI will take over our jobs. I'm not convinced it will. People buy from people and there will always be the need for some sort of human intervention. Technology has only changed the way we work not completely replaced it and will undoubtedly continue to do so.

A long time ago as a mere articled clerk I saved up to buy the 'latest invention'. It was a Texas Instruments Datamath, an electronic calculator and the ultimate in latest technology. I proudly took it in to the office and my boss took one look at it and said 'it will never catch on'. How wrong could he be! Don't ignore the technology, it's here to stay and you can't afford to be left behind.

If you would like to know more about how these fancy accounting programmes can help your business then just get in touch with us at cyd.smith@csaccounting.co.uk or on 0191 4879870.



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YOUR EYE ON THE REGION...

SHAWN BONE

Cavu Corporate Finance

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

Yes I am a native. After school I attended University in the North West and returned to start my career with Price Waterhouse. It was either that or join KPMG in Manchester but the pull of family and the region drew me back to the North East.

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

We need to shout loud. We need to work hard to generate business. But there are some great businesses up here and over 25 years I feel privileged to have acted for many of them - some really great people running great businesses.

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

I think we are a social lot. Personally I love working with clients at Cavu during the week and then enjoying the best the region has to offer at the weekend - last weekend you would have found myself, Fiona and Max (the retriever) walking from Beadnell to the Ship Inn at Low Newton-by-the-Sea. That would sum up for me a perfect day in the North East. Incidentally I had also been cycling early that morning (training for a charity ride) and Northumberland really is a beautiful place whether you are walking or cycling. I never regret coming back here to work and I am now delighted to be leading the team at Cavu.

Do you have a favourite hotspot for a business meeting?

It depends on what kind of meeting of course. You will see me in Cafe 21 or equally I love Cafe Panis on High Bridge. Closer to home the Angel of Corbridge is great for a catch up. If it's serious I will be at our office in Newcastle of course but we are in a people business so yes I have a few favourite places outside of the office.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

Terry has the bases covered - Cafe 21, Broad Chare...but I do love the pasta dishes in Cafe Panis (plus the coffee and they also do some cracking cakes!) and the Sunday lunches at the Angel of Corbridge.

Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

The beach at Tynemouth or anywhere along the Northumberland coastline for that matter, there's nothing better than fresh air and exercise to clear the mind after a busy week. I am equally at home walking by the Tyne between Corbridge and Hexham.

Are the people really friendlier?

Without a doubt although being a native I might be biased!

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

Walking onto the beach anywhere around Embleton or Low Newton . Closer to home, the view across the Tyne from Anick, is hard to beat on a balmy evening. Maybe even a pint at the Rat Inn to take in the views.

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

To be honest I think people here do work harder to find or create opportunities - that is just the way I feel. It is probably due to the size of the local economy and our remoteness from other parts of the UK but I think hard work is in the DNA of our region and its people.

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

Career wise I've always been based in the North East. I decided many years ago that settling down here was my preferred life choice.



INSPIRING CONFIDENCE IN TURBULENT TIMES

Eighteen months ago, Brewin Dolphin began offering no-obligation reviews of personal finances and investments to help people have greater confidence in those 'times of uncertainty'. A lot can happen in 18 months. Since then, we've had the Brexit referendum, the Trump Presidency and now a snap General Election.



William Baker Baker

So, the uncertainty has gone up a notch or two – but Brewin Dolphin's long history has helped them develop a long-term outlook that has served clients well through over two centuries of financial crises. The company, and Head of Office, William Baker Baker has a composure that remains ever relevant and contributes to a sense of continuity that clients profit from and enjoy.

William, 62, is a fixture in the North East finance industry, and has been with Brewin Dolphin for over three decades. Even with that length of experience, he concedes that these are extraordinary times, "There are nervous people out there, of course. The markets are pushed and pulled in all directions all the time, but with a change in Government in the USA and France, the potential longer term ramifications for Europe, and global political instability. It can be a lot to process, and quite worrying.

"This is why the way we do it - our personal approach to investment - has stood the test of time. Managing the wealth of so many clients requires the kind of expertise you only get through experience and in-depth knowledge. We are here to help with finances in the long term and so we speak to our clients all the time, and whenever there's a major shift or a pressing issue, we tell them our understanding of it, and how it might affect them. It's honest, it's useful, and our clients really appreciate it."

However, it is not only the world that is changing, it is Brewin Dolphin too. They have cast off an (unfair) perception that they were a firm for only the 'super rich' and involved themselves more in the local business community. They support cultural events across the region, and have an award winning research division looking at the issues facing those looking to take care of their money, no matter what age.

William added, "There was a view that Brewin Dolphin clients needed to be very wealthy. That simply isn't true at all, and I think we're now communicating that well.

"We have a burgeoning financial planning team that look at pensions, inheritance tax and other issues, we offer ISAs, and deal with modest investments through our Portfolio Service. Then there is the core of our business, the managed investments for those who can invest around £150,000 or so.

"We're not a complete financial one-stop-shop, we value our expertise and know where our strengths lie, but we do have a service for almost anyone."

The financial planners and investment managers at Brewin Dolphin are very visible in the region, the firm runs seminars and supports other high-profile events in the region whilst strengthening links with professional services such as accountancy and law firms.

Brewin Dolphin is also a member of two of the region's most successful membership organisations, the Entrepreneur's Forum and the North East England Chamber of Commerce, where it seeks to engage with executives and business owners, advising them on the issues they face currently, and discussing how best to invest for a secure future.

In April, Brewin Dolphin concluded a huge research project with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) identifying the problems faced by people at particular stages of their lives, and William sees this as being crucial to cementing the way Brewin Dolphin works now, and in the future, "We deal with money, but we work with people. That's paramount – engaging, talking, explaining and advising is how we've built a reputation over the years as being a trusted firm. This research has

provided us a great insight into how to help build the kind of relationships that matter. It allows us to pinpoint and help with issues before they become problems."

The three-part report is comprehensive: The first, "Mind the Generation Gap" deals with how the current generation of over-55s can use their wealth in an efficient way to improve the future life chances of their loved ones; The second, "The Big Squeeze" focuses on the need for those in their 40's to be aware of the potential financial cost of caring for their parents in addition to funding university fees for their children; The final part, "A Helping Hand" focuses on the Millennial generation, getting onto the housing ladder while still building a pension and savings.

William sums up, "The world changes, and our individual circumstances change. It's unavoidable. Where we help is that we get a full understanding of someone's financial position, what their options are, and give them a plan to help them get to where they want to be.

"We give clients confidence, we give them peace of mind, and the freedom to devote more time to what they enjoy doing or hope to achieve. They want to make the most of their money. We help them do that."





Arthur J. Gallagher

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* UK businesses reported losses of £1,079,447,765 according to figures released by Get Safe Online and the UK's national fraud and cyber-crime reporting center Action Fraud relating in a 22% increase. Figures obtained in 2015.

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COMMON SENSE ADVICE

Four old friends are golfing together. All have done well in their various businesses over the years and each has taken advice on their pensions and investments but from differing sources.



As they are past discussing sex, drugs and rock and roll, the conversation drifts towards finance. This is between sniggers and giggles as one of the "gladiators" scuttles another ball at worm height and in the wrong direction.

"I'm with a major Wealth Manager" announces Mr. Brash. "I love their glossy brochures and the fact I deal with a partner of the business."

"Yes, their brochures are high quality, but who do you think ultimately pays for that? As for 'partner,' that's what that Company calls all its' sales people." The voice was that of Mr. Common.

Mr. Brash, looking rather red faced, takes a wild swing at his ball and misses.

More giggling and some muttered curses.

"My adviser uses a third party Fund Manager for my money. He seems to have done ok?" chirped Mr. Loud.

"How do you know?" asked Sense. "Have you been able to compare the performance with other portfolios and do you know what they have in your portfolio? What is it benchmarked against?"

"Err, I don't know. They have never told me and I have not really asked but my adviser said to trust them" said Loud.

Common added, "Is your adviser charging you for ongoing investment advice too?"

"Err, yes" Loud mumbled.

"Why? What value is he adding if he has outsourced the investment decisions?"

"Err, well he talks to me every year and I have a coffee with him. He is very polite and friendly."

The others sniggered as Loud took four attempts to hole his ball from little more than six feet. His mind seemed to be elsewhere.

Brash then brayed "Well what do you two smarty pants do with your money?"

Common and Sense looked at each other. Sense asked Common, "Do you use Rutherford Hughes?"

"Yes, my accountant recommended them," responded Common.

"Hang on," stammers Loud. "What makes Rutherford Hughes so good?"

Sense explains "They have a system which breaks down the markets into peer groups and their software then looks at the performance of all the funds in the group. It means that it can then see which are consistently the best performing funds in the group and it is not influenced by which fund

manager bought lunch or laid on a golf day." He goes on "They do this for all the major markets, UK, Europe, USA and have exposure to the Far East and Emerging Markets. They then add in assets like Gilts and Corporate Bonds to act as a balance to the stock market investments for those who want a little less excitement."

Mr. Common adds, "The portfolios are benchmarked against Investment Association sectors and they have performed very well to date. No guarantees about the future of course but at least they have a logical system." He rolls in a putt to win the hole then continues, "The software also manages any changes to reduce human error."

Sense interjected, "And they give full advice covering every aspect of investment and pension planning. When I retired they worked with my accountant to minimise the tax and to give me great flexibility with my pensions and investments. We also looked at IHT planning."

At the next hole, Sense taps the ball in for another win. The result of the match was Common and Sense beat Loud and Brash 7&6, which in golf parlance is known as "a dog licence." Who remembers those?

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

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COULD YOUR BUSINESS HOLD THE KEY TO YEAR ROUND SUNSHINE?

As we finally arrive in British summertime, many of you might be starting to look forward to your summer holiday.

After a long and miserable winter, a few weeks in the sun is exactly what you need to recharge the batteries, but wouldn't it be nice if you could escape to the sun more often?

For many people, owning a holiday home abroad is no more than a pipe dream, but if you're a limited company owner, with a significant cash sum in your company sitting in an account earning a paltry rate of interest, then there are a number of ways you could actually achieve this.

The most obvious option to pay for a holiday home would be to simply draw dividends from your company, however this would likely incur a high rate of income tax charges of up to 45% on the money withdrawn.

A smarter and more tax-efficient alternative would be to use your company to purchase and own a holiday home in the sun as an investment, which you could then use whenever you wanted.

Aside from helping you to avoid a sizeable personal tax bill, the company purchase option also has another advantage in that the running costs of the property can also be classed as a legitimate business expense.



Stephen Sumner

There are a few pre-requisites to taking full advantage of the holiday home tax concession. Rules dictate that this can only be applied to holiday homes owned outside of the UK and in order to benefit from this, you must also be seen

to be offering your employees the use of the property as well. You might also need to buy back the property from the business when you decide to eventually retire.

If you would like any further information, or for financial advice on planning for retirement call Stephen and his team today on 0191 285 1555 or visit www.explorewealth.co.uk

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LLOYDS BANK STRENGTHENS NORTH EAST REAL ESTATE TEAM



L-R: Paul Varley and Leigh Taylor

Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking has strengthened its support for the North East real estate sector with the appointment of a new head of property for the region.

Paul Varley will lead one of Lloyds Bank’s largest regional real estate teams and has considerable experience in the commercial banking sector, having been with the group for nearly 30 years.

He will lead a team of Relationship Directors, who are based across the region, in developing fresh opportunities to support clients in buying, refinancing and developing commercial and residential investment properties.

Paul said: “The real estate sector is integral to the North East economy and Lloyds Bank has a dedicated team of experienced relationship directors who are committed to supporting firms with the kind of specialised expertise and tailored finance they need to grow.

“We invest time in understanding our clients’ business and commit to building strong relationships that are focused on helping them achieve their ambitions.

“I’m confident that my experience will enable me to lead the team to build on its success and continue supporting new and existing clients in making the most of the opportunities they face.”

To further support the real estate sector, Lloyds Banking Group and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) have recently launched a professional training and assessment programme.

The bank is the first organisation to put 120 employees through the RICS certification where trainees will develop their understanding of the real estate market as well as support the nation’s housebuilders, developers and housing associations to navigate often complex issues.

On Paul’s appointment, Leigh Taylor, Regional Director, SME banking in the North East, said: “This latest appointment will serve to strengthen our North East team and add depth to our real estate expertise.

“With the real estate sector being a significant contributor to the North East economy, Paul and his team will play a pivotal role in supporting our real estate clients across the region, providing the kind of specialist expertise they need to achieve their long-term growth plans.”

As part of Lloyds Bank’s Helping Britain Prosper plan, the government has matched a £50 million investment from the bank to create the £100 million Housing Growth Partnership.

The Housing Growth Partnership scheme is a dedicated joint venture between the Government and Lloyds Banking Group which invests between £500,000 and £5 million in housing developments alongside smaller builders.

The scheme was put in place to help address housing affordability by providing support to the regional residential development community to increase the number of new homes built in the UK.

CASCADE MD NAMED IN UK'S TOP 30 UNDER 30

Dr Emma Black, Fund Manager at Tier One Capital and Managing Director of Newcastle based Cascade Cash Management, has been named as one of the Top 30 wealth managers in the UK, aged 30 and under.

The announcement came on Citywire as Wealth Manager released the much-awaited list.

The Top 30 Under 30 identifies the young stars starting to make their mark on the UK's private client investment management industry. Dr Emma is listed for her excellent service running £78 million for 115 clients.

Having begun her career in M&A consultancy, Dr Emma joined Tier One Capital in 2012 and completed a doctorate in behavioural finance and M&A a year later. In addition to client fund management she helped originate its segregated structured product portfolio proposition, designing the company's first three-stock defensive autocall with Societe Generale, and its cash saving service which she now leads at Cascade Cash Management.

Cascade Cash Management (Cascade) is an independent and transparent service created to generate enhanced cash returns and increase protection on deposits through professional cash management. Under Dr Emma, the company has recently launched a new groundbreaking service and portal.



Photo courtesy of Citywire Financial Publishers

The portal is the only one of its kind in the UK allowing independent and unbiased cash solutions using the company's proprietary algorithm that means clients don't have to choose only one bank.

With the online portal and Cascade's client support team all banks can be accessed quickly and easily, on a daily basis.

The service is suitable in particular for high net worth individuals tracking their own savings as well as companies and charities that are cash rich and should be getting returns on their 'savings'.

It is also ideal for independent financial advisors (IFA's) complementing their existing propositions for a range of client types benefitting from the economies of scale afforded by the central administration team. IFA's can even brand their own portal and client reporting as their own.

On the accolade Dr Emma said: "It is very gratifying to be recognised for all the hard work and effort to be named in the Top 30 Under 30, when the competition is so stiff this year.

"I aim for the highest standards and quality service in everything we do, both as an organisation and myself as an individual. The ultimate aim is to be always demonstrating value creating long term, sustainable relationships. I am delighted that my ethos and the support of an amazing team around me has led to this."

More information on Dr Emma and her Cascade team can be found at www.cascade.co.uk

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN TO FLEE THE NEST



Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans

There has been huge publicity recently regarding the age our offspring are managing to buy their first homes and/or returning to the nest later in life.

Options in which parents can help their children are plentiful, but not all will work for everyone, some of the main routes are:

- **Guarantor mortgage** – this is where the property and the mortgage are in the name of the son or daughter, but affordability is based on the income of the parents. A key advantage of this is that the property will be the owner's only residence which can lead to tax benefits including the payment of standard stamp duty. A possible downside is that the guarantor has no legal right over the property, but does have an obligation to pay the mortgage should the borrower (son or daughter) not pay!
- **Joint mortgage** – this option would mean that both the property and mortgage are a joint responsibility between child and parent and gives some element of control, however extra stamp duty could apply on the purchase (there may also be other tax implications to consider). Affordability, the amount that can be borrowed, can be based on up to 3 incomes.
- **Joint mortgage/sole ownership** – this route is a

blend of the first two options, with very few lenders allowing the property to be owned in names other than those named on the mortgage. However, this can be a useful option in some circumstances.

- **Gifted deposit** – often referred to as the "Bank of Mum and Dad" – for once no jargon, the deposit is provided as a gift, with both the property and the mortgage being in the name of son / daughter, whose income must meet the lenders affordability requirements on a standalone basis. Some lenders will allow the deposit to be protected by a second mortgage in favour of the parents, which can be useful where the owners of the property are unmarried partners.

All of the options can help to smooth the path to either get onto the property ladder or make the transition more affordable.

This is a complex and potentially emotive area where the wrong choice can be both costly and divisive for families. Given the size of the decision, it is always best to take expert whole of market mortgage advice at an early stage and potentially involve both generations!

Local, face to face, independent mortgage advice can smooth the whole process and we would be delighted to help.

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@innovateml.co.uk or tony@innovateml.co.uk or call 0191 223 3514.

*Think carefully before securing other debts against your home. Your home or property is at risk of repossession if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it.
Innovate Mortgages and Loans is a trading style of Innovation Financial Management Ltd.*

TOGETHER WE CAN TAKE ON THE WORLD:

Advice on Scaling-up

More than 300 of the leading North East entrepreneurs met recently at the Crowne Plaza Newcastle for the Entrepreneurs' Forum 'Together We Can Take on the World' conference.

An annual event, the conference sees inspirational speakers from across the UK and beyond come together to share their experience and offer advice to the region's most aspirational business people, to help them scale-up their companies.

It's estimated that the scale-up gap in the UK is so big, that if only 1% of the companies with the potential to scale-up did so, it could add £100m to the economy.

Addressing the conference, Sherry Coutu CBE, founder and chair of the ScaleUp Institute and Founders4Schools, told attendees that a small change in their business could unlock huge growth.

Sherry, originally a Canadian national, said: "We've seen that the UK has become the best in the world at starting businesses, even better than the USA; the problem is that we aren't good at scaling them up. The good news is that some minor adjustments to the pieces of the puzzle will allow tremendous growth.

"Every single one of us has a role to play and they're all very important, it's not just down to the entrepreneurs, the government, or the media. We all need to make changes and embed ourselves in the right networks, and if you do, they will care deeply about whatever problem you're trying to solve and support you."

While in the North East to attend the conference, the ScaleUp Institute's board members participated in a roundtable discussion with members of the Entrepreneurs' Forum's Scale-up Leaders' Academy, a programme designed to realise the growth ambitions of some of the region's fastest growing businesses.

YO! Sushi creator and original Dragons' Den investor Simon Woodroffe OBE shared his story with the audience. He said: "When I was a kid at school I thought if you told people your ideas they would nick them. I've never found this to actually be the case. What I have found is if you stand up and tell people about

your ideas it makes them real. To me the magic words are - this is so obvious, why hasn't someone done it before?"

In a captivating talk, Norwegian entrepreneur and LOVEFiLM co-founder Thomas Høegh complimented the UK's business environment, saying: "I've lived here for 20 years and I prefer to grow businesses here. I see the balance between being a country made up of lots of different people, and being one where people look after each other. It's clear that it's possible to do this and have a successful business culture. I spent many years in the United States and it was unbalanced, where a vast underbelly of society was ignored."

Olympic Swimmer and World Championship gold medallist Karen Pickering OBE shared her inspirational story and drew a comparison between the determination of professional athletes and entrepreneurs, saying: "If you work hard at something you will overcome the people that have had the head start, who are naturally good at something."

Sarah Wood OBE, the CEO and co-founder of viral video tech company Unruly, who grew up in Seaton Sluice, was interviewed by BBC Newcastle presenter Alfie Joey, who also hosted the conference.

Answering Alfie Joey's questions about leading the growth of her now global business, Sarah said: "Communication is one of the most important things to master as you are scaling-up. We practice extreme communications; we'd rather overshare than under-share. Repetition is really important as although it seems like you're repeating yourself, on the other side that's rarely the case. You never want your team to feel they're being left behind, keep them in the loop."

The Entrepreneurs' Forum conference is part of an annual calendar of over 40 events that bring entrepreneurs together to share knowledge, make valuable new connections and inspire business owners to grow their businesses quicker.

The Entrepreneurs' Forum support more than 300 aspirational North East business owners in all sectors, helping to expand their networks, improve leadership skills, share experience, create new opportunities and grow their business.

For more information call 0191 500 7780 or visit www.entrepreneursforum.net







BRIAN PALMER

THARSUS

Tell me a little about your background

I grew up in Chapel House, Newcastle, and went to the Walbottle Campus School. For as long as I can remember I'd always wanted to be an engineer. Our work at Tharsus encompasses a number of engineering disciplines; mechanical, electrical, electronic and systems, but it was mechanical engineering that sparked my interest. To me, forces and materials make sense. There was a time when I thought about Naval Architecture as a career, but my parents dissuaded me against it.

After leaving school, I won a place at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, which has now merged with the University of Manchester. Its mechanical engineering course was one of the top five in the country. I graduated with a 2:1 in mechanical engineering and an unconditional offer to join Nissan.

Industry is in a constant state of change and this was more the case than ever in the UK's automotive sector in the 1980s. When I joined Nissan in 1988 the site was a giant, Greenfield car plant. While British car manufacturers were struggling to enter the modern age Nissan brought with it Japanese quality and manufacturing that were years ahead of most UK manufacturers. At this time the site was being used to assemble Nissan Bluebirds, which were imported as kits.

In 1993 I'd been at Nissan for five years when I decided to go skiing. I had been thinking about it for a while. The time seemed right for a break and a complete change in direction, so I spent two winters at Meribel in the French Alps. It was while skiing I met my wife Trish, who later moved to the UK from America to work at the Northern Counties School for the Deaf in Newcastle.

When the time came to get a proper job once more, I wanted to return to mechanical engineering but in a different sector. I had enjoyed the work at Nissan and appreciated the value of the knowledge I gained, but working in such a large organisation wasn't for me. I had no difficulty finding work in the automotive industry but it wasn't so easy elsewhere. Making the change would have to wait. I got a job as an Engine Program Manager working for Ford, managing the Puma diesel engine design in Essex before eventually moving back to Newcastle.

What were your first business premises?

The story of Tharsus started a long time before I arrived, the company was formed by three sheet metal workers who had won the football pools and decided to set up on their own. When my then business partner and I bought the company in 1997 it was a small back street factory in Hebburn, and could not have been more different to Tharsus today. Back then it was a very traditional metal bashing business, with only one computer.

In 2007 the company expanded and moved to Blyth when we acquired a firm call Direct Message, which became Tharsus Vision. By the time we needed to move into larger premises we knew staying in Blyth would give us access to many of the skills we needed and so we bought a property just along the road. We're expanding again; expect to hear a lot more about our new factory in the coming months.

How has the business grown?

When I first acquired Tharsus its turnover was less than £1 million. Turning over more than £20 million in 2016 came after a few bumps in the road. In 1997 we had some really impressive clients, including

Marconi, but the tech crash of 2001-02 had a devastating impact on us, a lot of our customers got into trouble and the knock on effect meant our staff level was reduced from 37 to 22; it was a case of fighting for survival.

How did the recession impact on your approach to business?

The last financial crisis and the tech sector crash that preceded it in 2001 were difficult times for our company, as they were for many engineering concerns. After the first tech crunch my business partner left and I took sole ownership of the business. By the time of the recession we were mainly working for clients in telecoms, defence and outdoor advertising. All of these sectors were badly hit and it became evident that we needed a new outlet for our people and their skills. This led to us becoming specialists in Original Equipment Design and Manufacture (OEDM), which led to us producing some highly-specialised, usually electromechanical, products for companies including 3M, SafetyKleen and Rapiscan.

How are you adapting to changing markets?

Increasingly robotics will change the way we work and live. We wanted Tharsus to be at the forefront of developing and manufacturing robotics for commercial use. Robots built at our factory in Northumberland are now in use in Ocado's robotic warehouse. We're exploring the possibility of working with companies on robotics projects in a number of sectors, perhaps one of the most exciting of these is agri-tech, where advances in technology and economic factors such as proposed limits on immigration and rising wages are making automation a much more viable option. We still have an active fabrication business; they too have evolved over time to focus increasingly more on complex metal fabrications.

What would you say is your unique selling point?

I would say the combination of our design expertise, production capability and trusted supply chain partnerships make us unique. It allows us to guide our customers along the whole product development journey, from initial concept to volume manufacture. For example, when Ocado – the world's largest dedicated online grocery retailer approached us to help them co-design and manufacture the robotic vehicle that now forms the foundation of the Ocado Smart Platform, we worked with them to fully understand the commercial and technical needs and constraints of the project. We explored a wide range of solution options for them – what should work and what would work. We tested in pre-production and then we started manufacture. We made the entire journey as simple as we could for them and we're now repeating the process with the next generation of robot.

How do you handle motivation within the company?

I'm a firm believer that you should always play to your strengths; my strength when it comes to motivating people is creating teams that work. Finding people who fit together well is the foundation of good team work and productivity. I'm also very open with employees about what's happening with the business. Our company is growing rapidly so it's important that everyone knows the direction we are heading in and the role they play in getting us there. We're on a journey together – it's an exciting time!

Brian Palmer is a member of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, a unique group of like-minded people who come together through peer-to-peer mentoring and a series of inspirational events to share best practice, create valuable connections and grow their business. For more information, visit www.entrepreneursforum.net



A TOP SHELF BUSINESS LUNCH

Michael Grahamslaw shares the joy at Bonbar

Having a deal on the table with a prospective business client,
I thought some wining & dining was in order.

I really wanted to pull out all the stops and knew that only one of the city's premier leisure outlets would suffice. Housed within Newcastle's iconic Assembly Rooms, Bonbar is a popular cocktail bar and late night disco (no Showwaddywaddy jackets) which also doubles up as a restaurant serving a selection of exquisite dishes. The venue does a fine late lunch from 4pm on a Wednesday which proved to be just the job for my high-profile tete-a-tete.

Behind the imposing, Georgian façade lies a stylish, modern interior. Grand ceiling pillars, rich leather seating and purple spot lighting fuse to create a sophisticated ambience whilst the welcome is always a warm and friendly one. Much thought has clearly gone into the floor plan too with a good deal of space in between neighbouring tables which allow conversations to unravel in a privy manner. Intimate booths are tailor-made for cosy-dining and really exude that "deal-clinching" feel.

Perhaps most impressive though is the centrepiece "island" bar which comes complete with a bountiful supply of world beers, fine wines and spirits. At the helm are a crew of award-winning mixologists who spin up cocktails and creations with flair and enthusiasm. We were certainly in the mood for an eye-opener and were almost spoilt for choice, settling in the end on an excellent bottle of Chianti. Well, it is the elixir of life!

The team at Bonbar have recently updated their food offering and have devised a creative new menu centred around the ever-popular sharing board concept. This enables diners to indulge in as much or as little as they fancy with a parade of different tastes and textures to choose from. The menu is divided into "Small Plates" and more substantial "Large Plates" and guests are encouraged to explore freely from different sections of the menu. Guests can also order together and for each other which really enhances the overall social experience.

There really is no right or wrong way to go about things then which can make ordering a challenge! After much deliberation, we settled on a 6-fold winning combo of;

Sticky chicken wings in BBQ sauce, Onion bhaji with mango chutney, Pork belly squares with apple sauce, Home cured salmon with blinis, Mini Cumberland sausages in a honey mustard glaze and finally Parma ham, Mortadella and other Italian cold cuts. This was a truly outstanding way to begin. Bonbar's food is all homemade and the ingredients are locally-sourced which really shows. Indeed, the food was characterised by a distinct freshness and a telling depth of flavour. For two gents rather fond of their food, we got along surprisingly harmoniously with the portion sizes also being very generous. (It could have been Game Over if he'd fancied that last onion bhaji!)

To follow this up, we decided on a pairing of large plates which included a choice of sauce and a side dish. My business associate went for the 8oz sirloin with peppercorn sauce and a side of wilted spinach whilst yours truly tackled the half roast chicken with chargrilled vegetables and a piquant chilli mushroom sauce. Much like the smaller plates, there was a real sense of quality and the steak, in particular, was cooked masterfully.

There's also the option of a sharing portion here as diners can look forward to 16oz sharing steaks or a full roast chicken between two alongside a host of other mouth-watering alternatives. Think pan-fried prime salmon fillets, chargrilled freshwater tiger prawns and halloumi and fresh vegetable stacks. All in all, the experience is exciting and varied and suits the venue perfectly.

In addition to the new sharing menu, Bonbar is also renowned for a superb afternoon tea as well as a Sunday lunch of which I've personally heard many great reports. Having just celebrated its 3rd birthday, it's clear that this is a venue not content to rest on its laurels. They continue to regularly update their social events calendar and have also recently launched a new Moretti terrace bar where one can enjoy alfresco dining.

This is a great spot for client entertainment which deserves to enjoy continued success. Deal clinched!



HOW TO SPOT UNHAPPY STAFF BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



Bryony Gibson, Managing Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares her thoughts on how you can identify unhappy workers before it's too late to turn them around.

A company is only as good as the people it keeps. Irrespective of industry, the success of any business relies on the passion, commitment and productivity of its staff; so if you have unhappy workers you simply can't afford to ignore them.

Regardless of the level of expertise, it's people who are on the same page as their employer that are destined to succeed, rather than those who don't align with the values, aims and beliefs.

When people are disconnected, you need to act quickly. The consequences could be a drop in productivity or a negative influence on your reputation. It could be a loss in revenue or that they start to spread dissatisfaction to colleagues, friends or even on social media. Whatever happens, you need to remove the problem quickly if you want to keep a positive culture in your workplace.

To try and help I've picked a few of the most common warning signs to look out for. They should help you to spot where you can intervene and nip problems in the bud.

Look out for people who are repeatedly calling in sick. This can be a sign of someone who is already searching for a new job, or even attending interviews.

Constant lateness shows a reluctance to go to work, with clocking out on the dot every day indicating someone who is desperate to get away from the office.

If people are permanently tired, fidget in meetings or complain constantly, you need to find out why. A shift in attitude or reduction in professionalism and productivity can also mean things aren't right. People who suddenly stop going 'over and above' and only do what needs to be done need support quickly.

Be aware of those who vocally nitpick at company rules and standards. Likewise, keep an eye on anyone who is unsociable and won't attend work nights out or spend time with their colleagues.

A lack of ambition can be a sign of unhappiness. If you have employees who want to keep the status quo rather than help the business grow, or develop themselves, then you need to address this to make sure it doesn't become a bigger issue.

These are just a few cautionary flags, but it's important to remember that job satisfaction and motivation are not directly linked to job dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

If you only rectify the reasons behind someone's unhappiness – whether that is their relationship with managers, working conditions, salary, status or company policies - this doesn't mean they will automatically become satisfied, they'll just no longer be unhappy.

To boost performance you need to motivate people by recognising achievement, supporting personal

development and allowing a level of responsibility or autonomy.

You can't build a healthy working culture without trust, support and shared goals, so make sure your door is always open and no one feels like they will get into trouble for sharing honest feedback.

Character comes from within, but if you can't motivate and keep your employees happy, how can you expect them to keep your customers happy?

Excellence is an attitude to hire for, rather than a skill to train, but no matter how good your recruitment, from time to time you'll come across unhappy members of staff and when you do, compassion is key.

Everybody deserves to be treated with the same level of respect, regardless of role, length of service, or any other factor. If something is making someone unhappy, we all have a duty to find out what it is and to help them if we can. It's the least we can do, as the problem may not even be related to the work place.

There's no doubt that unhappy employees can drain energy and slow down productivity, but people are the most valuable asset of any company and keeping them happy, motivated, engaged and committed should be top of your 'to-do' list every day.

Contact Bryony for career advice and for help finding the right tax & accountancy role or recruits on (0191) 375 9983.

Alternatively, visit www.bryonygibson.com, connect on LinkedIn or follow @bryonygibson.

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PROTECT YOUR CRITICAL BUSINESS INFORMATION WHEN TRAVELLING



It has been estimated that within today's espionage era of obtaining critical company data, it costs the UK business community between £20 and £30bn per year.

What is staggering is that in most cases those organisations who have been breached do not realise they are victims of data theft. For those that do identify a violation in many cases reluctant to make their encroachment public as the potential of damaging reputation and relationships with stakeholders or even shareholders brings unwanted challenges.

It is therefore critical that employers & employees understand how to mitigate potential risks to data theft.

In most cases, we control access to information with guidance through company policies and procedures, thus ensuring data is distributed, stored, disseminated or destroyed in the appropriate manner. Within the global business world however, are guidelines enough to protect critical data? We all live in a fast-growing information society, and with that comes the ever-increasing risk of theft. It is widely acknowledged that those who seek to relieve us of our information are fully conversant with increased vulnerability to our data when conducting business travel. We must therefore understand how to reduce this risk to company critical data during this time.

Firstly, think about what information needs to be

stored on your devices, and how to reduce the amount of information required for that trip! Do you need to have the whole content of your secure cloud on your device? Take what is needed and no more. Consider the use of encrypted data storage devices that can be kept on you always, never leave critical data unattended. Iron keys are a perfect mobile encrypted storage device.

Other than devices such as laptops, mobile phones, cloud space and mass storage platforms, we must consider the oldest storage device known to man! Our brains, we must consider what potential information you may divulge and to whom. In most cases, some company information you believe you have disclosed is none critical. However, when collated together with other information obtained, it could lead to the discovery of important or sensitive information that is vital to competitors and damaging to your company.

It is not just where our company information is stored but also how we access it. Certain environments are more vulnerable to data theft, which is mainly due to a high concentration of potential victims and the routines business travellers tend to exert there. Hotel lobbies, departure lounges/bars and coffee shops are the places we mostly conduct meetings or decided

to catch up on some uninterrupted work time. Always be mindful of who has visual access to your device screens and passwords. It sounds basic and common sense, yet we see business travellers continually compromise data in this way.

Verbal data leakage is another common way in which we compromise the integrity of commercial critical data and this can be achieved by having what you believe is a simple phone call back to the office. When we talk on the phone we lose visual perception and detection. This means we become less aware of our surroundings and those who could be taking an interest in what we are discussing. Furthermore, our volume pitch increases naturally when we talk on the phone and if you use both headphones on hands free this generally increases the volume.

In all, it's in everyone's interest to maintain the critical information within their control for the organisation they represent when travelling. This can be policy and process driven but should also be applied practically. That means ensuring us as individuals know how we can negatively impact the information security of our companies and just as important, how we can conduct business when travelling to ensure its access or theft is not accessible.

CHARITY THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE FOR FINANCIAL EXPERTS

A team of eleven North East financial experts has come together to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support by climbing three mountains in just 24 hours.

Lead by Ian Morl of Inveniam, the team is made up of colleagues from four companies including Tier One Capital, Muckle LLP and Cascade Cash Management.

Ranging in age from 24 to 58, the team has been in training for a few weeks, and so far has attempted one peak – they now just have a matter of weeks before they will be attempting all three.

The big event is being held on June 18th and between them the group has pledged to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Ian said: "We will be climbing Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in just 24 hours with much of the activity happening in the dark. It is a real physical challenge but it will also test our emotions and strength of characters too. We thought it fitting to push our boundaries, to raise funds for an important charity that has such positive impact for so many, in such trying times."

The team is made up of Ian Morl, Lee Humble, Nav Mattu, Michelle Talbot, Jess Swindells, Scott Lawson, Stephen Black, Ian McElroy, Stewart Watson, David Redhead and Neil Marshall.

Stephen Black of Tier One Capital, said: "Of the eleven of us climbing plus the two drivers and two guides, most of us have been affected by cancer either personally, or through family and friends. Macmillan Cancer Support has played a huge part in many of those life-changing events and comes to the aid of so many people, so it is a real privilege to challenge ourselves to show them support.

"Ian has set up a Just Giving page and we would love it if everyone that either knows us or wishes to thank Macmillan Cancer Support could give generously... it would make all the pain involved in climbing three mountains worth it!"



To donate, visit Ian's Just Giving page at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Ian-Morl2

WHERE BIG BUSINESS AND SMALL CHARITIES CAN COME TOGETHER

Designed to be the most sustainable paint plant of its kind, AkzoNobel's new £100 million flagship facility in Ashington utilises all of the latest state-of-the-art technologies to ensure that it sets new standards for manufacturing. Like all other AkzoNobel facilities the site is also committed to bringing colour into people's lives through its support for communities, charities and local partners.

"We want to play a positive and leading role in creating a brighter, more sustainable future for our planet and our communities," said Jeff Hope, Head of Manufacturing Unit at Ashington. "At AkzoNobel, we work hard to build and maintain a reputation for delivering on our commitments. As an extended part of this commitment, we're dedicated to supporting local charities and organisations where we can help inspire change and raise awareness when needed.

"Every year, we nominate one local charity to support which then receives all of the proceeds raised by our annual fundraising activities," explained Alex Wardle, Site Support Coordinator at AkzoNobel Ashington. "This year the site voted to support the Nicole Rich Foundation which supports



Sustainable development at AkzoNobel is creating a brighter future for our local communities.

families affected by Batten Disease, an extremely rare genetic disorder which causes a progressive deterioration of the brain and nervous system."

The foundation was created by the family of Nicole Rich, the little daughter of one of the employees at Ashington. Both Nicole, and her younger sister Jessica, have been diagnosed with the cruel disease which affects their nervous system.

"As our charity of the year we have so far managed to raise almost half of the £5,000 target for the foundation which has helped to support Nicole and her family while she undergoes treatment at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital," said Alex.

The nearby AkzoNobel Felling site has also joined in the fundraising action for the foundation and has raised over £2,700 in recent events.

To find out more about AkzoNobel, visit www.akzonobel.com or to find out more about the Nicole Rich Foundation, visit www.thenicolerichfoundation.org.uk

MADE WITH MARK... I MEAN MANI

By Mark Bewick

Working as a web designer has seen me working on a huge range of projects, with various themes and various budgets. I've found my inner fashionista, designed around my passion for football, and even created an online presence for a television personality. Each project has been unique, and each customer has very specific ideas but they've all got one thing in common – they want to look good and stand out.

I now work within NIMA, which is a marketing agency based in York. I liaise with clients who need to improve or establish their web presence, before handing them over to my partner who deals with their branding and marketing strategy. During this role, I have met with a huge number of start ups and small businesses, who needed a good website, but didn't have the budget to match.

The NIMA ethos is heavily based around exceptional customer service, which means we hate saying no to a client. Early days, this meant seeing me either agree to small budgets, or offering my assistance on a consultancy basis, so they could build their own website using one of the many great tools out there.

But it didn't feel like the solution that we wanted. Why should a start up who might not have the budget in place, have to compromise and even attempt to design or build their own website? So one night, after a particularly long slog on a low budget project, I came up with Made With Mani.

Made With Mani is a selection of high end, template websites for businesses to choose from. A business simply picks the template that they prefer, fills in a form, and I can populate the content to create their professional web presence. This way of doing things would basically mean that we could offer people the sort of price that is already out there in the DIY website market, but without the hassle and stress of actually doing it yourself.

To deliver this the way I wanted though, took a lot of research and development. We needed to get the price point where I wanted it (it needs to be cheap) and



get the quality where I wanted it (it needs to look expensive). But we're finally there, and Made With Mani is now live.

Visit the site and you can buy your website for only £99.00, followed by a subscription fee of £9.99 per month. We'll support you in the creation of your site, purchasing your domains, getting online and the hosting of your new site. Plus, you'll enjoy ongoing technical support if and when you need it.

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BECOME A YOUNG ENTERPRISE BUSINESS MENTOR

Young Enterprise makes the vital connection between the world of work and education; our network of over 7,000 business volunteers work with students across the country to develop their key employability skills and fulfil their full potential.



Becoming a Young Enterprise mentor will challenge and reward you. As well as boosting self-confidence, communication, interpersonal and team working skills, volunteers also have the opportunity to meet other similarly committed local business people.

Young Enterprise mentors help young people develop the skills demanded by businesses; in their annual skills survey the CBI found that nearly half of businesses are not satisfied with the resilience and self-management of young people and over one third are unhappy with young people's attitudes to work. Young Enterprise programmes are designed to transform the attitudes and aspirations of young people, helping them develop eight key employability skills: communication, confidence, financial capability, initiative, organisation, problem-solving, teamwork and resilience.

Engaging with business volunteers has a real impact on young people's outcomes: research from Education and Employers shows that young people who have four or more encounters with the world of work are 86% less likely to be NEET (not in education employment or training). Our own



research found 95% of our Company Programme alumni are in education, employment and training compared to the National Average of 88%.

Young Enterprise has secured investment from the government-backed The Careers & Enterprise Company's fund which works with students who are about to start their GCSEs, but are at risk of disengaging and dropping out of school. The investment will help Young Enterprise scale up its tried and tested employer mentoring programme and will enable us to work with eight schools within the North East and five schools in Tees Valley.

Mentors will deliver the Learner Development Journey – a day-long programme. Following this students will have the opportunity to complete the Young Enterprise Company Programme – which empowers young people to set up and run a real business over an academic year and develops their key employability skills, aspirations, self-esteem and work readiness. Mentors will work with small groups of Company Programme students for one hour every week sharing their skills, experience and insights into the world of work.

Discussing the mentoring opportunities Michael Mercieca, Young Enterprise Chief Executive, said: "Our mentoring initiatives have a lasting impact on young people's futures and we're delighted to expand our reach to inspire and give confidence to even more disadvantaged young people.

"Young Enterprise has a nationally proven track record of engaging young people through mentoring led enterprise challenges. Mentors will support young people to develop their key employability skills and fulfil their full potential."

If you are interested in helping to develop our region's young people, please contact Young Enterprise, North East Area manager Kerry Tipple: Kerry.tipple@y-e.org.uk 07867 001850 for more information.



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PASSION WITH A PURPOSE

Judith Doyle, Gateshead College Principal and CEO, discusses the importance of strong and effective leadership in North East businesses...



Judith Doyle knows a thing or two about leadership. As principal and CEO of Gateshead College, one of only a few in the country to be rated "outstanding" by Ofsted, she has guided the organisation through a period of great change with the aim of helping students to become the most highly prized in the jobs market.

The fact that the college is widely viewed as a top vocational training provider is proof of Judith's strong leadership, with companies across a range of sectors now benefiting from talented students with the skills, attitude and attributes to make a positive difference to their business from day one of their employment.

Typically, however, she is quick to heap praise on her capable team of staff who share the values and ethos that she has instilled at the college since stepping into her current role in 2013.

She says: "A good leader will make his or her staff feel involved and able to play a part in shaping the organisation's future success. At Gateshead College, our management team ensures that everyone knows what their role is and how it fits with the wider goals of the business.

"We want staff at all levels within the business to demonstrate our core values – which include excellence, positivity and respect for others – as we

all work towards the goal of ensuring our students have that all-important 'employment edge'.

"In many respects, the CEO role is quite a generic one in that you need to demonstrate the same key attributes, regardless of the sector in which you operate. It's vitally important to carry out the job with passion and purpose, whether you're leading a growing engineering firm or a successful further education college. The people who work for you want to see that enthusiasm and absorb it, but they also want to buy into a clearly defined vision with achievable end goals.

Several other attributes make for a good MD or CEO, including a willingness to embrace innovative ideas, empathetic listening skills and the tenacity to see a complex job through to its conclusion. A cheerful disposition and a good sense of humour are also a must.

Judith says: "On my office wall there's a quote from the American writer Mark Twain. It says: 'Humour

is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all of our irritations and resentments slip away and a sunny spirit takes their place.'

"I try to remember this on the most challenging days – and I've encountered a few of those in my current role."

Judith has become a high-profile figure in the business community, helping companies understand the implications of the new Apprenticeship Levy and sitting on boards and committees in high-profile organisations such as the North East England Chamber of Commerce, North East Local Enterprise Partnership and NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI).

Essentially, her willingness to be outward-facing and engage with the local community, businesses and policymakers has helped to boost the reputation of Gateshead College and transform it into the outstanding organisation it is today.

To find out more about Gateshead College and the courses on offer, visit www.gateshead.ac.uk

PUTTING NEWCASTLE BACK ON THE HISTORIC MAP

Restoration and conservation of Newcastle's architectural heritage, providing a legacy for the city's future, have been key to unlocking millions of pounds of Heritage Lottery Funding for the city over the past few years. Making this heritage investment sustainable in a thriving, ever-changing city centre, is the long term goal. NE1's ability to involve and galvanise neighbouring businesses is an integral part of successful delivery.

The latest announcement that St Nicholas' Cathedral has been successful in its bid for Heritage Lottery Funding is great news for Newcastle and for the historic quarter of the city in which it resides.

The original Newcastle Castle that gave the city its name was the first to start the ball rolling transforming the Castle Keep and Blackgate into a popular visitor attraction and event space. This was closely followed by NE1's Bigg Market rejuvenation project where NE1 is working with Newcastle City Council and local property owners to restore the area to its former glory and improve its economic viability for the future; and last but not least the Cathedral. Together these three projects create a heritage trail based on the three traditional pillars of a medieval city, Church, State and Market - the city's beating commercial heart.

All this work and investment combines to restore the historic significance of the city centre as well as securing the area and its heritage for years to come. The HLF grant, NE1's own investment, with match funding from landlords, the City Council together with its heritage planning expertise provides the means to rejuvenate buildings and public realm, in the Bigg Market which together will fully restore the historic brand of Newcastle.

With events like next year's Great Exhibition of the North, this heritage restoration will reinforce the historic brand of Newcastle, attract a raft of new visitors and help put Newcastle on the same historic footing as other UK cities like Durham, Bath and York that are synonymous with history and heritage.

For NE1, when the physical restoration of the Bigg Market is complete, the heritage and legacy work will begin, arguably the most exciting part of the project. The restoration runs a lot deeper than the bricks and mortar rejuvenation, a programme of events and activities are planned to revive and animate the space, keeping it active and creating a welcome space for the public to use. Markets, local history tours, arts programmes and work with the city's Universities, schools and colleges will all bring the space to life and ensure it attracts new visitors and groups who currently are not using it. We want people to reconnect with the Bigg Market and the surrounding area.

All the exciting new commercial development happening across Newcastle is great news. The city's global success depends on combining the old with the new and restoring and reinvigorating the city's historic core and brand identity. It is the city's history and its past that give it its distinct identity, playing a vital role in helping shape its future.



STAYING POWER...

Longevity in business is something to be admired. In a new series of features, we are celebrating some of the most accomplished professionals from across the North East business community. Aimed at major players with 20+ years' experience in their respective sectors, we provide a fascinating insight into what makes them tick and what we can learn from them.

This month we chat to...

STEPHEN McNICOL

Client and Strategic Development Partner, Muckle LLP

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

I always wanted to play sport professionally but sadly I was your archetypal "jack of all and master of none" athlete. I closely followed the careers of my contemporaries who "made it" and I guess that's why I'm fascinated by the principles that top sportsmen and women adopt to give themselves the best possible chance of success. For me they translate very neatly into the business world.

What is your favourite aspect of the job?

The autonomy to create opportunities. I have the rare privilege (certainly in our profession) of not being on the clock. My role allows me to think laterally, take time to develop relationships and get to know people, their businesses and what they are trying to achieve. With this time and knowledge, I can help create opportunities for them, particularly through introductions to others with similar or complimentary ideas. Of course it's not entirely altruistic. More often than not, over time, those opportunities generate work for Muckle and that's a fantastic natural by-product.

What has been your career defining moment?

In 1999 I went on secondment to Deloitte in London for 9 months, providing trading support to turn around distressed or insolvent businesses. We were parachuted into companies as diverse as caravan manufacturers and car dealerships; huge electrical generator manufacturers and marketing businesses. The learning curve was almost vertical and was different (and fascinating) on every job. I absolutely loved the range of issues we faced and the decisions we needed to take. Clearly I was a very junior team member but it really grabbed me. I'm pretty sure it was those experiences that started me thinking in the way that ultimately resulted in being asked to become managing partner at Muckle, aged 34.

How do you measure success?

It really depends on what I am doing. I'm pretty competitive so I always have a picture of what success might look like, in business or personal life.

However I have never been a "win at all costs" type. Success manifests itself in different ways and I like to think I'm pretty adaptive and realistic. There's a right time and place for pushing boundaries and being highly demanding. Equally there are many occasions where success can't be accurately quantified and becomes very subjective – the trick, I think, is to get the balance right if you can.

What have been the biggest changes in the industry since you started?

Competition. And that's both good and challenging.

How has your skillset developed accordingly?

Increased competition creates the opportunity for change and change is one of the things I really enjoy.

Over the years we have embraced the opportunity to adapt in a way that has enabled Muckle to be really successful. That success hasn't just been measured in hard numbers (turnover, growth or profitability). We've built a great brand, respected across the North East business community; we've changed our culture, helping to attract and retain great people because they believe in what we're trying to achieve.

So I've developed from being a technical lawyer to someone who identifies, plans and delivers change as part of his role. As the managing partner for 11 years I focussed on the business and the way it operated. As client and strategic development partner I have a narrower remit – improving the client experience; attracting new clients and supporting our managing partner, Jason Wainwright, in setting and delivering our strategy.

Are you a risk taker by nature or more conservative?

I don't think you can enjoy change without being excited by taking risks, but I'm by no means an "act now" think later risk taker.

I'm excited by opportunity and the unknown but have an inner need to get things right (I suspect that's the lawyer in me). So the risks I take are calculated. I also tend to surround myself with people who have a natural pre-disposition for

detail and I think that's where the checks and balances come in.

To what would you attribute your success?

I'd love to say it was planned all along...but I've had a large slice of luck.

A conversation at a dinner party ultimately led to me returning to Muckle in 2000. Working in an innovative and forward thinking business when they were looking for a new managing partner just 4 years later gave me my first business leadership opportunity. Some of the sector and economic challenges we've seen since 2004 allowed me to lead, innovate and change in a way that has played to my strengths. Essentially it's all been about being in the right place at the right time.

It sounds clichéd but I have also had a fantastic leadership team around me and a family that are incredibly supportive, understanding and patient.

What's your biggest weakness and how have you managed this?

Wanting to get everything perfectly right. It's a good quality to have as long as you can manage it. Not making decisions decisively can be as damaging to a business as getting something wrong.

How do you remain motivated?

Every day is different in my present role and that helps enormously. However I think it's that little voice inside me, constantly demanding improvement, which is probably the real motivator.

Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

The "professional me" has to answer respected. Balancing that with the "personal me"...the one that has the innate desire to be liked and enjoys a good laugh with everyone...is not at all easy!

Even if you operate with the utmost integrity and best interests of the business at heart, not everyone will agree with your decisions.

The idealist in me likes to think you can be respected in a professional capacity and be liked as a good human being with strong values and a sense of humour.



*I'll retire when...
It all stops being enjoyable!*

THE PITFALLS OF TRANSFERRING THE FAMILY HOME

It is quite common these days for couples to consider transferring ownership of their home into the name of their children, even if it is the couple themselves who will be living there.



Often the reason why couples decide to transfer their home is because they think that it will preserve the family inheritance by avoiding the need to pay for the likes of residential care and inheritance tax.

However, this can be a very risky strategy, and the supposed benefits are outweighed by a number of potential pitfalls. Below are some points for you to consider when contemplating such a decision:

Financing Residential Care

While the ownership of your home may have been transferred, with regard to financing care in a residential care facility, the value of the house may still be taken into account, as the local authority could deem you have transferred your house to escape charges, in what is known as a 'deprivation of capital'.

Additionally, if fees for a residential or nursing care facility need to be paid and a home cannot be sold to cover such costs then money will have to be found from elsewhere to pay for the level of care

you want. The local authority may only finance a basic level of care, which can often mean you being given a place in a home of their, rather than your, choice.

Loss of Ownership

Transferring the property to your children while you are still living in it does carry risk, as it then becomes part of your children's estate. If they fall on hard times and are declared bankrupt or if they divorce, your home will form part of their total assets and a sale could be forced.

If your child dies prematurely without making proper provision for the transfer of your home through a will, it may pass to their spouse and could be lost to your family if they re-marry or bequeath the property to someone else in their own will.

If your children ever needed to rely on means-tested benefit, for example through unemployment, they will not be able to make a claim as their interest in the property cannot be disregarded.

Furthermore, you are completely reliant on your children 'doing the right thing' and letting you live in the property rent-free for as long as you wish.

Tax

If you continue to live in the property after it has been given away and you do not pay rent to your children for the privilege then your home will be treated as part of your estate for inheritance tax purposes and there will be no tax saving.

With regard to Capital Gains Tax, when the property is eventually sold your children would be liable to pay CGT on any increase in its value between the time it is acquired to the time it is sold.

While transferring ownership of a home is often viewed as a way to potentially limit or bypass financial obligations, in practice, this should not be done without seeking expert advice. There are a number of options which may be available as an alternative, such as putting a property into a trust, but similarly this should only be done having taken advice.

Jessica Morton is a solicitor and Wills and Probate specialist at Newcastle law firm Sintons. To speak to her about this or any other matter, contact Jessica on Jessica.morton@sintons.co.uk or 0191 226 7801.

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Jonathan Flower

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY – DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU STAND?

Do you have Parental Responsibility for your child? What does the term mean and how does it affect family life? Jonathan Flower, Head of Family Law at Ward Hadaway, looks at issue.

Parental Responsibility is defined under the Children Act 1989 as: "All the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property".

The term and what lies behind it are important in family life, particularly since many families these days do not necessarily conform to the 'nuclear family' set-up of a married mother and father with their direct offspring. For example, what rights do you have as a step-parent when it comes to your partner's children?

If you have Parental Responsibility, you can make important decisions concerning the child. Some examples include specifying the child's religion, deciding which school the child should attend, consenting to medical treatment and naming the child or changing the child's name.

A child's mother has automatic Parental Responsibility. If you are the child's father, you have Parental Responsibility if you were married to the child's mother at the time the child was born.

If you are an unmarried father, you can acquire parental responsibility in a number of ways. These include obtaining a Parental Responsibility Order,

signing a Parental Responsibility Agreement, by being named on the child's birth certificate as the father of the child (after the 1st December 2003), by adopting the child, by marrying the child's mother or by being named in a Child Arrangements Order as the person with whom the child is living.

A step parent can also acquire parental responsibility for a child if he is married to their parent (and their parent has parental responsibility) by obtaining a Parental Responsibility Order, by entering into a Parental Responsibility Agreement or by being named in a Child Arrangements Order as the person with whom the child is living with or spending time with.

At Ward Hadaway, we can advise you in relation to making an application to the Court for a Child Arrangements Order, a Parental Responsibility Order or in relation to adoption. We can also assist with the preparation of an Agreement.

Other people can acquire Parental Responsibility. For example, if you are the parent of a child you can appoint a Guardian who will acquire Parental Responsibility in the event of your death.

When making a Parental Responsibility Order, the child's welfare is paramount and the Court has to

consider the "no Order principle" i.e. whether the making of an order would be better than no order being made.

Case law has also been helpful. In the case of *D v Hereford & Worcester County Council* [1991] Fam 14 the court's view was that the question to ask was: "Can this [father] show that he is the father to the child, not in the biological sense but in the sense that he has established or is likely to establish such real family tie with the [child] that he should now be accorded the corresponding legal tie... has he behaved, or will he behave with parental responsibility for the child".

In another case, *Re: H (Minors) (Local Authority: Parental Rights)* (No.3) [1991] Fam 151, the Court of Appeal held that a number of factors should be taken into account including the degree of commitment which the Applicant had shown towards the child, the degree of attachment which existed between them and the reasons for applying for the order.

Parental Responsibility can come to an end automatically in certain circumstances. The Court can also make an order to terminate an unmarried father's Parental Responsibility but only in exceptional circumstances.

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TO LINKEDIN OR NOT TO LINKEDIN?



Alexandra Besnard, Associate Solicitor at Collingwood Legal, considers business protection in a social media world.

As I speak to employers or deliver training to HR professionals it remains clear that social media in the workplace remains a thorny but compelling subject. Whilst Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn provide employers with a platform to promote their business, it not only creates a headache when it comes to controlling their employees' personal use but also when the employment relationship ends and the employer wants to retain control of the business contacts made by the employees through these forums.

Nowadays, over 225 million people use LinkedIn as a business tool. I am only starting to get my head around LinkedIn, but as a business, we have a Collingwood Legal page, where we publish our weekly legal update and each of us has their own LinkedIn account where we connect with current clients, old work connections and new contacts we make along the way, and I am sure this is the model used by many employers.

The key issue is however, what happens when the employees leave? Do they own the data in the LinkedIn account? Can they or should they be able to retain all of this potentially valuable business information? These are questions all employers who actively encourage or allow their employees

to build a strong LinkedIn profile, using company information, should ask themselves to ensure they are fully protected following the departure of an employee, especially if the move is to a competitor. As you may have anticipated, this is however not a straightforward issue.

Most employees will see their LinkedIn account as personal, as they control it. The LinkedIn User agreement also suggests that the contractual relationship is between the individual and LinkedIn. But maybe more importantly, their account is a way to promote themselves as much as the business. To manage the risks, employers should consider implementing or reviewing existing contracts and policies.

Suggested steps could confirm:

- LinkedIn accounts should be set up and maintained using your company IT systems and the company logo should appear on their profile;
- Guidance on the use of employee LinkedIn accounts;
- Their LinkedIn profile and all professional contacts added to employee accounts during the course of their employment belong to the employer;

Employees should:

- Only use their company email address;
- Give you the usernames and passwords to their accounts;
- Copy all contacts onto your own database;
- Use LinkedIn for the company's benefit
- Delete from their account all business contact made during their employment on termination of their employment.
- Post termination restrictions, such as non-compete, non-dealing and non-solicitation clauses;
- Gardening leave provisions ensuring the employees cannot use or update their LinkedIn profile during that period; and
- Misuse of a LinkedIn account (such as extracting client details for competitive activities post-employment) is a disciplinary offence which may be treated as gross misconduct.

The law in this area is fast moving and consistently developing, so if social media is an integral part of your business, you should take a proactive steps to protect your business interests and avoid potential future litigation by putting in place the safeguards highlighted above.

If you need assistance with that, do call me or one of my colleagues on 01912822886, or send me a message on LinkedIn!

BANK HOLIDAYS - EXISTING ENTITLEMENT AND THE POTENTIAL FOR EXTRA?

By Claire Rolston, Solicitor, Director, CLR Law

Bank holidays

Labour has said it would like to create more bank holidays to add to the 8 bank holidays we currently have. Occasionally, extra (one-off) bank holidays are announced for special occasions.

But are workers entitled to take off bank holidays?

Entitlement

The Working Time Regulations 1998 originally gave all workers entitlement to 4 weeks' paid annual leave; the equivalent to 20 days holiday a year for a full-time worker.

Since 2009, the entitlement has been 5.6 weeks. This additional entitlement recognised the 8 bank holidays we have each year, increasing full-time workers' entitlement to 28 days holiday.

However, it did not actually create an entitlement to take off the specific bank holidays.

Who decides?

Ultimately, it is for you to decide when your employees or workers take their holidays and this is best set out in their contract.

This can provide for more than the statutory 5.6

weeks' leave but not less. It can also provide for the leave entitlement to include or exclude bank holidays, or provide some flexibility entitling you to ask employees to work on a bank holiday if required.

Some employers prefer to specify the particular bank holidays which are allowed. This then gives the employer the option as to whether their employees are allowed to take off any extra bank holidays which are announced; where as a general entitlement to take off bank holidays will usually include additional days.

What about pay?

Again, this is for the employer to decide. There is no statutory entitlement to be paid at an enhanced rate for working on a bank holiday. Any special arrangements in relation to pay should be reflected in the contract.

Key points:

- Consider your business needs when determining holiday entitlement;
- Ensure part-time entitlement is accurately calculated and that appropriate provisions are in place; and
- Ensure the arrangements are reflected in the contract.



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AKZONOBEL 'SUPER BAND' HELPS RAISE THOUSANDS FOR LOCAL CHARITY



(L to R): Alex Wardle from AkzoNobel, Matthew, Nicole, Jessica and Gail Rich and the AkzoNobel super band.

Employees at a global paint manufacturing plant based in Felling have raised over £2,000 in aid of a local charity.

Staff from AkzoNobel have rallied to support a co-worker whose two young daughters have fallen seriously ill with a rare genetic disorder called Batten Disease.

Matthew Rich, who works as a process operator at AkzoNobel's new flagship facility in Ashington, and his wife, Gail, founded the Nicole Rich Foundation after their oldest daughter received her diagnosis in September 2016. Just three months later however, the couple received the devastating news that their youngest child, Jessica, was also suffering with the same condition.

Batten Disease is an extremely rare neuro degenerative disease which typically affects infants and young children. In its most aggressive form, Batten Disease affects the child's motor skills, taking away their ability to walk, talk and feed themselves and in some cases sufferers also lose their sight and their memory, emulating the symptoms of dementia.

After learning of the Rich family's situation through

an internal staff newsletter, staff at AkzoNobel's Felling plant decided to host a charity night in order to help raise funds for the Foundation.

Glenn Scott, awlmix co-ordinator at AkzoNobel, said: "After reading Nicole's story, we called the Ashington plant and asked if there was anything that we could do to help.

"We've hosted charity nights in the past where we have put a band together made up of members of staff. A couple of the lads have been in bands before and some of us like to do a bit of karaoke, so we thought it would be a good idea to create a Felling super band and sell tickets for a one-off, special gig.

"We hired Pelaw Social Club and started selling tickets to colleagues, friends and family. We then asked some local businesses if they would donate some prizes for a raffle, with all of the proceeds going back to the Nicole Rich Foundation.

"All in all, we managed to raise a total of £2,174

which will help towards supporting Nicole, Jessica and their family."

Matthew Rich, Nicole and Jessica's Father, said: "Myself, my wife Gail, and our three beautiful children, Louis, Nicole and Jessica would like to say a huge thank you to the team at Felling for their support; and to the Ashington team for choosing to support our charity from the beginning. We are facing this journey with hope and positivity and it is support at this level that will help us to spread awareness, raise funds for the care of our girls and find a cure for Batten Disease."

Nicole is currently receiving pioneering enzyme treatment at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital which the family hopes will slow down the progression of the Batten Disease.

The Nicole Rich Foundation is working in partnership with the Batten Disease Family Association (BDFA) to help raise awareness of the disease and vital funds for medical research.

To find out more about the Nicole Rich Foundation, visit www.nicolerichfoundation.org.uk or for more information about AkzoNobel, visit www.akzonobel.com



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THREE PRACTICE MERGER CREATES NORTH EAST'S LARGEST FAMILY DOCTOR-LED MEDICAL GROUP

Three primary care practices in South East Northumberland have merged to create the largest family doctor-led medical group in North East England.

The Wellway, Lintonville and Brockwell Medical Groups have joined forces to create Valens Medical Partnership, which now looks after the healthcare needs of around 50,000 local people.

The new practice, which is led by 18 GP partners, has around 200 people working across eight sites, and has been created to widen the range of services available to patients, to make it easier for them to access specialist care, and to take advantage of opportunities available to larger-scale practices under the developing NHS primary care management regime.

The practices' eight existing premises, at Cramlington, Seaton Sluice, Seaton Delaval, Ashington, Morpeth, Newbiggin, Pegswood, and Lynemouth, are all remaining open.

The merger was made possible by funding from Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, which also provided specialist financial advice tailored to the individual practices and wider healthcare sector.

RMT Accountants & Business Advisors and Sintons Law Firm worked with the three practices on the logistical side of the merger, which has been under discussion for more than a year.

Michaela Green, group director at Valens Medical Partnership, says: "All our partners are passionate about the NHS and about providing patients with the best possible standards of care in our communities.

"Creating this expanded practice was viewed by

all of them as the best way of ensuring this in the evolving primary care environment, and to proactively deliver more of the services that our patients require to keep them well within their local communities.

"We've taken the time to look at how other larger-scale practices operate in other parts of the country and have co-opted the best of the working practices and administrative arrangements into the way that the Valens Medical Partnership will deliver care to its patients.

"On a day-to-day basis, it's very much business as usual - our patients will still see the same GPs in the same locations, but they now have access to a much wider range of primary care expertise and will see the services that we are able to provide increase in the coming months.

"This has been a very detailed and carefully-managed process, and choosing the right professional advisors to help us complete it has been crucial to its success.

"Lloyds Bank, RMT and Sintons all brought significant practical experience of these sorts of arrangements to our projects, and made key contributions towards the efficiency with which everything has been concluded."

Stuart Harper, relationship director for healthcare, North East, Lloyds Bank, adds: "This merger has been a long time in the planning, so it's great to see it complete with such success. The new practice will provide an improved level of care to the local

community with access to more GPs, services and flexible appointment times.

"With general practice continuing to change due to patient demands, it is important that surgeries look to the future. Lloyds Bank is helping Britain prosper through its commitment to supporting local healthcare services, like Valens Medical Partnership, with expansion and succession planning."

Maxine Pott, director at RMT Healthcare, the specialist medical division of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, adds: "Primary care practices need to meet the twin challenges of growing patient demand and the ever-changing administrative environment in which they need to be delivered.

"The three practices have taken a progressive approach to ensuring they can meet these challenges in the best way possible, and we're very pleased to have been able to help them put the required new structures in place."

Amanda Maskery, Partner in the specialist healthcare team at Sintons, said: "Valens Medical Partnership has been created after a long and diligent process to ensure the needs of its patients, staff and practices have all been catered for. We are very pleased to have been able to help them achieve this.

"As specialist advisors to GPs, we have overseen a number of similar mergers across the UK, and it is an approach that can work very well to help practices share resources and safeguard the future of patient provision in an area."

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BECOMING AN APPOINTED DEPUTY

Laura Brydon is a Solicitor in the Wills, Trusts & Probate Team at Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP.

Here, she explains the issues that can arise by not appointing a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) and the costs associated with becoming an appointed Deputy.



If a person does not make a LPA and they unexpectedly lose mental capacity or the ability to deal with their own affairs, as a result of an illness for example, their family has to make an application to the Court of Protection to be appointed as the person's Deputy/Deputies.

How long does a Deputyship application take?

It is likely that a Deputyship application will take between six to eight months to complete due to several stages of paperwork that are required to be submitted. Unfortunately, loss of capacity or ability often happens suddenly and so family members are required to act quickly.

Without a Deputyship Order a family member will not be granted access to the person's bank account and will struggle to deal with simple matters such as utility bills. As well as taking time this can lead to further financial burdens for the family members until they are granted Deputyship.

When making LPAs a person can choose to hand over responsibility in respect of their financial and legal affairs as well as health and welfare but this is not the same for Deputy applications. The Court of Protection is reluctant to issue Deputyship Orders

in respect of a person's health and welfare unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. As a result, a Deputy's powers in relation to a person's health and welfare are quite basic and often limited.

How much does a Deputyship application cost?

As well as taking potentially six to eight months for an application to be completed and an Order issued by the Court of Protection appointing any Deputies, there are several fees that must be paid. These costs include legal fees (£850+VAT), a Court of Protection Commencement Fee (£400), a Doctor's Assessment of Capacity Fee (around £100) and a Surety/Guarantee Bond Premium (around £100 paid annually).

In theory these costs are payable by the person that the Deputyship application is for. However, in many cases no one has the authority to access the person's bank accounts until a Deputyship Order has been officially issued. Often this results in the person applying for the Deputyship paying the costs themselves on the understanding that they will be reimbursed once they are granted access to the person's bank accounts.

On top of these initial costs there are other ongoing

fees. Deputies have not been chosen directly by the person they are acting for and therefore have to prove their suitability to the Court of Protection. Even once appointed they will be supervised by the Court of Protection for the remainder of their Deputyship (i.e. for the remainder of the lifetime of the person they are appointed for) and must complete an annual Deputyship Report. In addition to this, a further fee of £100 is payable at the outset to have the Deputyship formally registered on the courts' records and an annual supervision fee of £320 must also be paid.

Many people are deterred from making a LPA because of the legal fees incurred. However, it is often the case that there are greater financial implications for not making a LPA.

For those who make LPAs while they still have capacity will have the peace of mind that their chosen Attorneys will have authority to deal with property and financial affairs, as well as health and welfare on their behalf. Moreover, because the Attorneys have been chosen by the individual, they are considered to be capable and trustworthy by the Court and they won't need to be supervised – avoiding all of the ongoing fees associated with Deputyship applications.

CREDIT CONTROLLER IS THE NEW 'RED FLAG MAN'

The true impact of a significant bad debt can range from damaging a business's profitability to threatening the survival of the whole company.

Once a business discovers a bad debt it is already fighting a rear guard battle, and the role of the credit controller is crucial in helping to manage the risks.

Businesses should be insuring themselves against the impact of bad debt by being proactive and using specialist legal and credit control advisers at an early stage. It's often best to go out and collect the debt, but many companies leave it too late to begin to claw that money back – and when the creditor is already in financial distress, it could be the wrong approach.

The role of the credit controller is an interesting one and there is a new school of the 'red flag man'. From a sole in-house individual to a larger business function, possibly outsourced, the credit control function is key.

It's important that credit controllers talk to their counterparts and keep up to date with the best practice and latest market intelligence. Business leaders should also be encouraging credit controllers to keep up with the latest industry developments and trends, for their own and for their business's sake.

A good credit controller is one which monitors the marketplace properly and delivers information to the management team effectively. They shouldn't just be delivering

a set of data, but providing it with insightful commentary on the marketplace, including the pros and cons of recovering payments from particular debtors and flagging the real risks of company exposure.

They will need to advise management teams on how to manage their creditors – and wave a red flag where necessary. Many people think 'cash is cash', but businesses will need to conserve their key creditors – for example, protecting a creditor in production may result in the ongoing continuity of the business.

Owners seeking to recover a bad debt need to be taking appropriate advice from advisers who understand the marketplace and use market intelligence to choose the right course of action. Acute numbers of companies operating within the oil and gas sector have been facing insolvency because of higher exposure levels due to market conditions – and it's this type of know-how which will mean the difference between a bad debt and a real threat to their business.

Credit controllers will also be able to advise businesses on who they should or should not contract with. We've seen a number of larger insolvencies in the region and big business does not always mean safe business. Credit profiling is not set in stone and a company's position and market conditions change continually.

All businesses need good advisers who can understand and interpret what the market intelligence is telling them – and raise the red flag when necessary.



Andrew Cawkwell, Partner, Banking and Restructuring Team, Muckle LLP. Tel: 0191 211 7957
e: andrew.cawkwell@muckle-llp.com [@CompanyRescue](https://twitter.com/CompanyRescue)





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"Philip was a life saver for restructuring my business with his positive nature of sorting things out smoothly and hassle free, I would highly recommend him for overseeing property portfolios, and communicating with professional bodies."

(London property investor)

ESTATE AGENT HUNGRY FOR CHANGE IN SUBURBS



A team of estate agents have set themselves the target of helping a busy student suburb settle back into a traditional family living area.

There are now almost 50,000 students in Newcastle. Many are living in a number of purpose-built student blocks which have recently been built in the city centre. The new accommodation blocks have attracted students who would have traditionally taken over Tyneside flats in places like Heaton or Jesmond. This has left many empty properties which are suitable for families and estate

agents HomeXperts Newcastle are determined to redress the balance.

The HomeXperts Newcastle franchise was set up by three members of the Toth family who came to the UK from their native Hungary a decade ago. The move from Debrecen, the second largest city in Hungary, came when brothers Laszlo and Krisztian and sister in law Vera Papp moved to Newcastle to work.

The family have now invested in an online estate agency and have used all of their experience and self-taught skills to establish themselves very firmly in a highly competitive environment.

MATT'S MAGNIFICENT MARATHON

If you complained at all about the weather at the end of April, spare a thought for Matt Holmes, Associate Director of Newcastle-based architects, JDDK Ltd, who spent 12 days at that time cycling LEJOG - up from Land's End to John O'Groats in a 12 day, 1,200 mile marathon effort that has so far raised over £2,000 for Diabetes UK.

Inspired by other cyclists and a friend's struggle with diabetes, Matt completed the 1,274 miles from the 15th to the 26th of April.

He commented, "It's still a really strange feeling buying a single rail ticket to Penzance and realising you're totally on your own to make your way to the other end of the country! It was a fantastic experience, however, with lows and highs – battling against a 45 mph head wind and thundering logging trucks on the incredibly dangerous A82 running alongside Loch Ness was definitely a low point whilst reaching the finish was a tremendous feeling I'll never forget."



NORTH YORKSHIRE PLANNING CONSULTANT CELEBRATES MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY



Lavingham Planning Consultants Ltd is delighted to have reached its first anniversary milestone.

The Northallerton based planning consultancy was set up by Andrew Cunningham in May 2016 after having completed over ten years in the Development Management and Planning Policy team at Hambleton District Council.

Andrew was keen to apply his specialist knowledge of planning in a rural, urban and heritage context to provide comprehensive, good value advice, tailored to the client's

needs, to achieve the best possible outcome for clients, and to add value to their property, portfolio or land holding.

Within the first year, Andrew has managed over 30 planning applications with successful outcomes as well as numerous appeals and has enjoyed working with a wide range of private clients, small scale developments and rural projects.

Andrew is looking forward to continued growth of the business in its second year.

NORTHUMBERLAND'S NO.1 INDEPENDENT BUILDERS WELCOMES MP

Following the General Election, the new Government must remember that housing is not built and homes are not improved without the involvement of builders, plumbers and timber merchants.

That was the message from JT Dove, the North East's no.1 independent builders' merchant, to Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP when she visited the 148-year old business in Berwick-Upon-Tweed recently.

Mrs Trevelyan was shown around JT Dove by

its Managing Director, Steve Robinson, and discussed the role, value and importance of merchants in creating local jobs and growth.

Mr Robinson explained how the company is investing in its 17-strong branch network throughout the North East, Cumbria and Scottish Borders. He also raised several key issues facing the construction industry including housing demand & supply, vocational training and skills (especially apprentices), and the consequences of the vote to leave the European Union.



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A HIDDEN VILLAGE GEM



Who would have thought that a successful London based TV producer could possibly move 300 miles north to a hidden village gem on the Northumberland Coast and continue to win TV commissions?

Well that's just what happened to Media couple Marris and Bob Whittaker who own Factual Programme indie Orion TV, when they made a lifestyle move to the fabulous tiny seaside community of Alnmouth, nestling on the coast just south of the historic town of Alnwick.

Alnmouth is situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and famous for its huge sandy bay, England's oldest 9 hole golf course and also England's most northern Franciscan Friary. The tiny village is blessed with four pubs, a village deli and post office and several restaurants and café's serving fresh crab and lobster from the bay. Various festivals take place throughout the year including the Alnmouth Arts Festival each June when home owners open their doors to allow artists to display a vast and diverse selection of works in unique locations such as sitting rooms, porches, gardens and sheds.

The location is surrounded by ancient castles, (Warkworth, Dunstanburgh, Alnwick & Bamburgh) an unspoilt coastline and some of the darkest skies in the UK.

Thanks to the East Coast mainline, locals can easily pop over the border to lunch in Edinburgh or jump a train south to Newcastle or York. But those choosing to stay at home find that Hollywood often comes knocking, as the village and surrounding areas are regularly used as film and TV locations. Most recently the new blockbuster film Transformers: The Last Knight, starring Mark Wahlberg and Anthony Hopkins has been shooting locally as has the TV crime series Vera, starring Brenda Blethyn.

The couple set up home in a beautiful traditional five bedroom townhouse just a few steps from the water's edge 10 years ago and from there have continued to produce shows for major broadcasters including Channel Four, BBC1, the History & Discovery Channels, as well as heaps of corporate video commissions.

The home is full of space and light, with a downstairs living space of over 30 feet leading to an outdoor entertaining area – fantastic for celebrating the launch of the couple's latest TV creation!



Kinross is for sale at 479,950 through estate agents Sanderson Young in Alnwick, Northumberland. Contact 01665 600170 or alnwick@sandersonyoung.co.uk
www.sandersonyoung.co.uk/property/argyle-street-alnmouth-3



ADDERSTONE CRESCENT, JESMOND



PRICE GUIDE: £4.95 MILLION

This highly individual detached house represents one of Newcastle's finest luxury city homes. Located on the western side of Adderstone Crescent, backing on to the Northumberland Lawn Tennis Grounds and Tennis Club, it is one of only five significant detached properties that enjoy such a privileged position. Internally, this very fine, period home has tremendous architectural style and offers extensive accommodation over three floors including seven bedroom suites, five reception rooms including a drawing room with media wall, a billiard room with cocktail bar ideal for entertaining, and a professionally fitted study. Externally, the secluded rear gardens are principally west facing with tall trees, lawns, a terrace, former tennis court with artificial grass, summer house, and former stables providing a beautiful gym. Meanwhile at the front of the property is a sweeping driveway with 'in and out' access and a double garage, currently used as a studio workshop.



Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 2233500 ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



Osborne Villas Jesmond

A fabulous three-storey, semi-detached villa, set back from sought-after Osborne Avenue. It benefits from tremendous space and well-proportioned rooms, a wealth of period features and charm, as well as a superb south facing garden with well stocked borders, open patios, terraces and walkways.

Price Guide: £1.395 Million

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Dipton Mill Cottage Dipton Mill Road, Hexham

A beautiful, stone built, family home in an idyllic setting to the south of the market town of Hexham. The property has been extensively refurbished and extended and has stunning grounds of 0.75 acres and a large double plus garage and workshop with studio/gym and self-contained apartment above.

Price Guide: £899,500

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LAUNCHING NEW HOMES ACROSS THE REGION

by Jan Dale, Director of URBAN BASE LAND & NEW HOMES



Level One – NEWCASTLE CITY



Woodacre Apartments - NEWCASTLE



Eden Field – NEWTON AYCLIFFE



Eve Lane – DURHAM GATE

In an attempt to fill the housing shortage across the North East, Urban Base are assisting developers, with a variety of housing designs, in great regional locations. From North Yorkshire to Rothbury, URBAN BASE may hold the key to your next home.

Level One – NEWCASTLE CITY

Prince's Building was constructed circa 1863 and was designed by William Parnell in the Classical style with sandstone ashlar and a Welsh slate roof. At four storeys, it dominates Queen Street by Newcastle's Quayside. Aficionados will be delighted to know it features panelled Corinthian pilasters, arched windows with decorative keystones, balustrade aprons and rusticated quoins. However, behind the very handsome exterior of this Grade II listed building is Level One, a superb collection of 10 ultra-modern apartments, each conveniently located, as the name suggests, up a short flight of very elegant stairs from discreet and secure entrances. With Prince's Building just one street back from the Quayside itself, Level One apartments boast truly unique views of the Tyne Bridge. The Millennium Bridge, Baltic, Sage Gateshead and a wealth of fashionable restaurants and bars are also just a short walk away. And when you run short of bubbly, the nearby Tesco Express is open late every night!

More importantly, Level One is the perfect location for those who work in the city centre or in the many offices, studios and workspaces stretching along the Quayside and through to the Ouseburn. **Prices From: £145,000**

Eden Field – NEWTON AYCLIFFE

Eden Field is an impressive development offering a range of well-designed homes in Newton Aycliffe. The development will house 125 quality homes with a choice of house styles to suit all needs and

budgets. Each new home at Eden Field is designed and built to the highest standards, with many clever design extras incorporated into each property, as well as environmentally friendly credentials, resulting in attractive, spacious and welcoming homes regardless of price. Eden Field is an exciting new development, which includes detached, semi-detached and mid-terrace properties, all with driveway parking, good-sized gardens and quality fixtures and fittings as standard. Some properties also benefit from single or double garages. All of the rooms in the properties are well proportioned and spacious, designed with the needs of modern day living in mind and offering great attention to detail with regards to layout and functionality. Stylish kitchens offer a range of integrated appliances, including built-in oven, hob and extractor fan as standard, whilst dining and family areas are light, airy and relaxing and the bathrooms are polished yet still totally practical. Bedrooms are light, airy and relaxing and the bathrooms are polished yet still totally practical. Contemporary kitchens and bathrooms, spacious accommodation, high quality fittings and energy efficiency are just a few reasons to start your story with Chapter Homes. **Prices From: £112,000** (Only £84,000 with Help To Buy mortgage facility, subject to criteria being met)

Woodacre Apartments - NEWCASTLE

Woodacre Apartments is a unique collection of 9 luxury 2 bedroom homes offering exceptional architectural design and value for money, set in a stunning location. Ideally situated within an acre

of mature grounds only 3 miles from Newcastle city centre and 3 minutes to the A1/A69 junction, these superb apartments feature stylish kitchens & bathrooms, superfast Broadband plus on-site parking behind an electric gate and even an internal bike store. All apartments enjoy views over the beautiful communal gardens & managed woodland at the rear of the development - with the majority having a balcony or terrace on which to relax and delight in the wider view over to Denton Dene, an important wildlife corridor running through the heart of west Newcastle. And to give you extra peace of mind, all properties have a full 10 year warranty. **Prices From: £110,000**

Eve Lane – DURHAM GATE

Welcome to Eve Lane, a brand-new residential development that offers a choice of bespoke 3 & 4 bedroom luxury homes. There are eight different styles of home to choose from, each offering something a little bit different. Home buyers have the choice to personalise their homes, from kitchens and bathrooms to carpets and tiling. At Eve Lane, the developers have taken a holistic view to design, focusing on usability of their homes as a whole. The design ethos is one of "quality without compromise", and the development offers a wide variety of homes at flexible price levels, all of which reflect the quality of the development. In addition, all of the homes are energy efficient, through the adoption of efficient insulation and building services. Heat loss is minimised at source, offering significant running cost savings. **Prices From £320,000**

For more information about what's going on across the North East housing market contact The Property Professionals at URBAN BASE on Tel: 0845 6431186 – and they will be delighted to talk property!



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IT'S ALL ABOUT ME(ES)!

I would hope that Landlords will know that before a property can be let on a new lease, it has to have an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) before it can be let. Energy efficiency levels are put into seven bands, A to G, with A being the most efficient and G being the least efficient.

As from April 2018 there will be the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard – MEEs. Under this, properties must reach A to E and those that do not meet these levels and fall into F and G will have a problem. It will be unlawful to let them on any new lease – although I may have some good news.

"It's nearly a year away!" I hear you say. But as a week is a long time in politics, a year is a short time in property! It's time to consider appropriate action NOW so you're not caught out. With councils looking at more ways to raise money, you can be sure that Trading Standards Officers (who I understand will be in charge of this legislation) will be vigilant.

One of the important things to realise is that improvements must be made to the structure of the property, and so advising tenants to close doors and windows will not be adequate. We need to look at proper permanent improvements. I have done some research on this, and it seems that there are generally considered to be four elements that can



be considered for improvement as follows:

Roofs • Walls • Windows • Heating Systems

A good EPC assessor can advise you on all of these. Whilst writing, if you are or you know of a good EPC assessor, get in touch. I don't have one at the moment.

Landlords will be aware that they may spend huge

amounts of money for nominal benefit. Insulation itself costs money, and any internal insulation will not only cost money (potentially including resiting radiators, light switches and power sockets), but will reduce the sizes of rooms. For example a room 5 metres by 4 metres exactly, (20 square metres) once insulation and new wall finish thickness of 120 mm is introduced all round, will reduce in size by 2.1 square metres. So here's two rules to be followed:

The 'Golden Rule': If an independent assessor determines that all relevant improvements have already been made to the property or that improvements that could still be made would not pay for themselves through energy savings within seven years, the work may not be required. Also wall insulation measures are not required where an expert determines that these would damage the fabric of the property. In my example above, the work may cost £2,500, £357 a year to be saved.

Devaluation: where an independent surveyor determines that the relevant energy efficiency improvements that could be made to the property are likely to reduce the market value of the property by more than 5%. In my example above, the room size reduced by 10.5%.

I told you there may be some good news.

Are you finding my articles informative and useful? I've had some positive feedback via my LinkedIn page ([linkedin.com/in/philipbowe](https://www.linkedin.com/in/philipbowe)). Anything you want me to write about? If it's advice you want, contact me at phil@bivbowes.com

COMMUNITY POLICING



Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

I am thinking of changing my business card to read "Damiano of the Yard" since Government seems determined to turn landlords and letting agents into officers of the law. Already we must check that tenants have a right to reside in the UK and face big fines or imprisonment if we default.

The latest consultation paper from HMRC suggests imposing a statutory duty of care on landlords where a tobacco offence has been committed. This includes the sale of tobacco products upon which tax has not been paid.

Aside from the fact that we already have clauses in our tenancy agreement relating to illegal and/or immoral activities at the property, I am at a loss to understand how we are supposed to comply with this proposed legislation. If a tenant is involved in the illegal import of tobacco they might be reluctant to offer their landlord cheap smokes and we are really not equipped for dawn raids on our tenants.

Once again new legislation appears to duplicate efforts already being made by responsible landlords. Nobody wishes to see criminal or immoral activity carried out at a property they own or manage and we have relevant clauses in tenancy agreements to allow us to act upon any breach of the law.

There is a small ray of light among the deluge of new legislation the lettings sector has experienced this year. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will protect some of the most vulnerable tenants by compelling Council housing departments to

act swiftly in the event of an eviction notice being served.

Until now, the advice from Council officers to tenants facing eviction is to hang on until the bitter end. Once a County Court Judgement has been obtained for possession of the property, 'the bitter end' involves police, bailiffs and the evicted tenant out in the street with their possessions. Only then would the Council act to help.

Given that an eviction is often the result of social, medical or mental health problems, the effect of this bitter end approach can only be imagined. As a result of this new legislation local authorities will be required to treat tenants as homeless at a much earlier stage. This may see tenants rehoused prior to landlords instructing a bailiff, thus saving stress for the tenant, cost for the landlord and distress all round. The Government has committed to provide £61 million to local authorities to meet the additional costs of providing the help needed to comply with this Act.

Evictions are an absolute last resort and nobody would wish them on anybody. But on the rare occasions it becomes absolutely necessary, landlords and agents will be able to advise that help is available to the tenant from the Council.

Unless of course the tenant has been involved in the sale of questionable tobacco products. Then they may fear the clink of handcuffs as Damiano of the Yard strides purposefully up the path.

TOP TIPS FOR A SMOOTH MOVE

Don't take any chances with shipping your goods overseas with this advice from Doree Bonner International...



Moving to the other side of the world is probably the most exciting and stressful experience of your life so James Dasey, International Director of UK leading removals company Doree Bonner International, has some great advice about what to look out for and pitfalls to avoid when shipping your goods to Australia and New Zealand... >>

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT REMOVAL COMPANY

If you're planning a move abroad you will already appreciate how much there is to think about and organise, but one decision you really can't afford to delay – or get wrong – is choosing your international removals company. This is absolutely central to the success of your move and will also help take the stress out of the whole process.

There are hundreds of removals companies out there and whilst there are some excellent professional moving companies some will fall far short of the exacting standards required to ensure that your move goes smoothly, so you need to start by thoroughly and methodically researching the sector.

So how should you go about finding a professional, helpful and reliable removal company?

- Personal recommendation is often the best way to choose any service – and this is no different. Ask yourself if you, your family or friends know anyone who's emigrated and could recommend an international removal company?
- The internet is a fantastic resource, but beware – you must look beyond the website as these days it's relatively inexpensive to produce a good quality website promoting a seemingly professional image but with no foundation or history to the company in question.
- Try looking at the online forums and expat community sites for impartial and independent advice about which removal company to use.
- Australia and New Zealand News the UK's only monthly migration magazine is a very useful source of information

2. QUOTATIONS AND THE ALL-IMPORTANT HOME VISIT

We would recommend getting information and quotations from at least two or three companies as soon as you have a rough idea of when you will be moving.

Remember any professional company will want to visit you at home. This is a very important part of the process as the removal cost is calculated on the actual volume of goods you'd like to take with you. Don't accept a telephone quote or an online quote – it is unlikely to be accurate and you could easily find yourself facing



hefty additional charges.

It is also the opportunity to discuss all your personal requirements with the company's representative, making sure they know exactly what you'd like to take and whether you have any particularly valuable or unusual items that will require special treatment.

You may want to take this opportunity to have that all important clear out so that you are not paying to ship items that you won't really need down under.

Talk to your chosen company about the best way to transport your belongings, taking into account your time scale and budget. Do you want sole or shared use of a container, and what is the best mode of transport – by air or sea?

3. PACKING – GET THE EXPERTS IN!

Most reputable companies offer a full packing service with highly skilled overseas packers who use specialist packing materials for different items – they should also be able to offer advice on the

best way to move difficult and valuable items. It may be that certain items require bespoke crates made to measure in order to ensure their safety. At Doree Bonner we have our own in house crate making facility, so check what facilities the company you are seeing have. You may also want to ask about the training and expertise of the removal operatives that will be doing your move, and the quality of the packing materials they use.

You should also be advised that small items such as important documents, jewellery and small items of sentimental value you should take yourself in your personal luggage.

Remember your household goods will be travelling a long way so a full Packing service is one service that is really worth paying for to make sure that your household goods arrive in the same condition that they left the UK.

Most household and personal effects can be shipped overseas with little or no problem – with goods being imported into either Australia or New Zealand tax or



duty free providing the items have been owned and used for a period of 12 months prior to exporting the goods, your representative can offer advice about exactly what you can and can't take.

4. LOOK OUT FOR THOSE ALL-IMPORTANT ACCREDITATIONS

Whilst professionalism and a breadth of experience are absolutely essential attributes when choosing an international moving company, it's critical to look out for a FAIM accreditation.

FAIM is a quality standard set by FIDI, the only worldwide organization of note for the industry. This accreditation guarantees the quality of the mover you've chosen and is held by more than 500 companies in over 100 countries worldwide, so you shouldn't have any difficulty finding one suitable for your needs. You need to ensure you trust your worldly goods to an established, financially stable company.

Reassuringly, the FIDI audit ensures

their members adhere to the highest standards with regards to a number of factors, including the financial stability of the company. You can also contact the British Association of Removers (BAR) and look for companies who belong to their overseas accreditation scheme. FAIM accredited removal companies can be found on the FIDI website at www.fidi.com and on the British Association of Removers at www.bar.co.uk.

5. KNOW WHO YOUR DESTINATION PARTNER IS

Choosing the right mover may actually stretch far beyond the initial overseas move you are currently planning. Whilst there is no exact data on the numbers of people that emigrate relocating again after the initial overseas move, there is some anecdotal evidence that the number of migrants who move internally within one state, or again over much larger distances in an interstate removal is as high as 75 per cent.

Whilst we would always suggest that

you ensure that your goods are shipped to the closest port of entry to your final destination, this may not always be possible. This is where the importance of the overseas mover at destination, cannot be stated highly enough.

Whilst it might be tempting to simply accept the cheapest quotation, you really do need to know who will be handling your goods once they arrive at destination this can be as important. A small, "man and van" company is unlikely to be able to successfully navigate the intricacies of customs clearance and quarantine inspection process and is also going to struggle to service the potential need for an interstate removal at destination.

Your UK removals company should be able to talk to you about their chosen destination partners and why they use them – you should also check that they hold the same accreditations.

It is not unheard of that in the two or three month period that your goods are in transit, your personal circumstances can change dramatically. Job offers can change >>



may also be obtainable from either the Australian or New Zealand's embassies.

You can also look at your existing household policy as a guide.

When discussing insurance cover be as detailed as possible and remember to include specific individual items that have a high replacement cost.

7. AND FINALLY

When you get the quotes in from your chosen companies, look carefully making sure that each offers the same level of service and materials.

Beware of seemingly cheaper quotes that also suggest that a move will be done in a shorter timescale. Full household moves going to the other side of the world take time to do properly and professionally.

Remember as with most things in life you get what you pay for and cutting corners on your shipping could cost you a lot more in the long run. 🇦🇺

and areas that you had researched prior to leaving the UK, may not be suitable for your needs on arrival in Australia or New Zealand. A large multi-national mover who has offices in each of the major port cities will then easily be able to handle this type of change at minimal expense to you.

6. DON'T FORGET INSURANCE

Professional companies like Doree Bonner International can provide tailor-made comprehensive insurance cover for your

goods.

Remember that although every care may be taken your effects will be travelling a long way and also may be subject to customs examination and quarantine, which can increase the risk of damage.

You should think about what it would cost to replace your household goods and personal effects in Australia and New Zealand. A good source of information will be the local press in that country, especially with regard to high value items like motor vehicles. Cost of living data

■ **Doree Bonner International is one of the UK's longest established moving companies offering trained staff to assist its customers in all aspects of their move.**

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COLLINGWOOD MANOR IS PROVING TO BE A DESTINATION OF CHOICE



One of Bellway's most successful developments sits on the perimeter of the attractive market town of Morpeth. Collingwood Manor is an ideal family location where Bellway is offering buyers a choice of three, four and five bedroom homes.

"Morpeth has always been one of the regions more popular locations to live," confirmed Bellway's sales director, Rob Armstrong. "As a consequence of the demand for homes at Collingwood Manor we are now selling the two show homes complete with all the fixtures, fittings, carpets and furniture."

"The Kirby show home offers 1,422 sq ft of living space, the ground floor is divided up to provide a large family kitchen with central island unit and plenty of space for a family breakfast table, there is a separate dining and living room and french doors from the kitchen and living room lead to the rear garden. The first floor provides a master bedroom with ensuite and dressing room, three further bedrooms are served by a family bathroom, externally the Kirby features a single garage."

"The Stourton show home provides 1,210 sq ft of living space over three floors, the ground floor provides a large kitchen dining area with french doors to the rear garden, a separate living room connects to the dining area via french doors. The first floor provides three bedrooms with bedroom four including ensuite facilities the remaining bedroom on this level are served by a family bathroom. The third floor accounts for the master bedroom which measures 13' 6" x 9' 11" and features its own ensuite."

"We can offer house hunters at Collingwood Manor a variety of buying options including part exchange where buyers can be confident in the fact that they have a guaranteed buyer in Bellway and can remain in their old homes until their new home is ready." Bellway is also offering buyers at Collingwood



Manor its Express Mover Service, where Bellway will manage the sale of your old home by appointing an estate agent on your behalf who is focussed upon completing a swift and satisfactory sale.

Customers can also benefit from the Help to Buy scheme and can secure a new home at Collingwood manor with a minimum deposit of five percent and benefit from a five year interest free Government loan.

"The Help to Buy scheme has been incredibly successful," confirmed Rob Armstrong. "It has enabled many people to access the housing ladder far earlier than they expected and has also meant the some people have been able to upgrade to

larger homes as a result of the five year interest free loan and the fact that you only require a seventy five percent mortgage, thereby during the first five years of ownership you will benefit from reduced mortgage payments."

For families, there are a number of well-regarded schools near the development, including Abbeyfields First School and Morpeth First School for younger children and The King Edward VI School for older students. Northumberland College offers a range of apprenticeships and higher education courses, and is a 15-minute drive away in Ashington, while the University of Northumbria and Newcastle University can be reached in around 20 minutes by car.

For more information, visit www.bellway.co.uk 01670 519119 Our sales office is open 11:00am – 7:00pm Thursday and 11:00am – 5:30pm Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday.

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POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION'S COMMERCIAL PROPERTY INDUSTRY



Neil Hart, Managing Director of leading North East property firm Bradley Hall and BH Group, discusses his positive outlook on the commercial property market following the results from a successful first quarter.

During the first few months of this year, we saw an impressive amount of commercial properties sold and let throughout the North East. Deals more than doubled in comparison to the same period last year, giving us confidence that the market is on the up.

The increasing number of properties that Bradley Hall has been instructed to market, enquiries from local, national and international business people as well as the deals made by our team all indicate that the region's commercial property market is healthy and thriving.

Supply and demand is remaining level thanks to the growing number of businesses and organisations taking up vacant or newly built space, especially the industrial sector. As a result, commercial property prices are fair and stable, which is then encouraging even more business people to acquire office, industrial, leisure and retail space.

Brexit and other political and economic uncertainty has failed to derail activity. The North East commercial property market has remained stable these last nine months, and continues to strengthen.

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) recently published positive results from its Q1 UK Commercial Property Market Survey, further supporting that both property professionals and businesses are set to benefit from the current market.

Despite the decision for the UK to leave the EU, RICS revealed that almost 90% of respondents in its commercial property survey reported they had seen no evidence of firms looking to relocate away from the UK in response to the Brexit vote. In fact, the report outlined that demand from overseas buyers continued to increase across all sectors throughout 2016, which we anticipate is set to continue.

We recently experienced the increasing interest in the North East property market from overseas investors during our work at the leading international property conference, MIPIM, in Cannes, earlier this year. Myself and other members of the Bradley Hall team attended as part of the Invest Newcastle group, joining representatives from one of our key business partners, Arch, to promote investment opportunities in the Northumberland and surrounding areas.

Thanks to a flying start, we see 2017 as another big year for all at Bradley Hall; as we continue to secure greater market share and present a strong property services brand to the region. We have already expanded our services this year, adding building surveying and a planning and design arm. Our expansion strategy will see us grow our team from 35 to around 50 people, which means we can look forward to taking on more projects as the market continues to grow.

For more information on Bradley Hall's commercial and residential services, please visit www.bradleyhall.co.uk or call the Hood Street office on 0191 232 8080.

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STYLISH NEWCASTLE APARTMENTS PERFECT FOR FIRST-TIME BUYERS



For those looking to get onto the property ladder in Newcastle, City Edge by Barratt Homes North East offers a range of stylish houses and apartments located in the heart of the city which are priced from just £105,995.

One of the beautiful apartments available at City Edge is the Foxton, currently available to buy from just £105,995. The ground floor apartment features a contemporary kitchen, lounge and dining area and is completed with a glazed bay window leading out onto a patio area.

All of the apartments have two bedrooms and are available to buy using the Government's Help to Buy scheme, meaning buyers only need a 5% deposit, making these homes ideal for those trying to get onto the property ladder.

Steven Ball, Sales Manager at City Edge, commented: "The apartments here at City Edge have been in high demand since we launched them and it's easy to see why. There is a big demand for housing in Newcastle among young professionals and with City Edge's close proximity to Newcastle's vibrant city centre, the homes here are perfect for them. The pricing of the apartments along with support from the Help to Buy scheme also makes them very appealing to first-time buyers. We're really excited about the new show flat here and I would encourage anyone thinking about buying at City Edge to pay the site a visit and discuss your options to avoid missing out."

City Edge is a new development of two, three and four bedroom homes situated less than four miles away from Newcastle city centre. With its great commuter links and close proximity to Newcastle, it provides a perfect location for young professionals and commuters, as well as those looking to take their first steps onto the property ladder.

To find out more, or to book a viewing, visit: www.barratthomes.co.uk/cityedge

FEE AND EASY – LOOK OUT FOR PLANNED CHANGES FOR LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

No one likes paying more than they have to for anything and the planning for the new legislation introduced earlier this year, looks to seemingly put an end to tenants and landlords alike being fleeced by some letting agents.

For years there have been rumblings about changes surrounding letting agency fees on both sides of the rental game. Now though, the Government appear to be taking action, having announced a consultation on the issue.

The proposed fees ban, if it comes to pass, would stop many from charging over the odds on some fees, including ridding the letting world of many fees often seen as unfair. The plans, which were discussed in April, are designed to ban tenant fees which allowed some agents to make excessive charges to tenants.

The move came fresh on the heels of a report from charity Shelter, which revealed around 25% of people felt they had been on the receiving end of unfair fees from their letting agents in England and Wales.

However, it's not just those looking to enter the market as a tenant who will be protected by the changes – there is also an effort to ensure that landlords are exposed to a more "transparent" market place, so say the Government.

At Wright Residential, we prefer to do our business fairly and transparently as a matter of ethics, and always have. After all, we have nothing to hide. All fees we charge will be explained prior to anything being signed and we will answer any questions you may have regarding fees, properties or any other issues regardless of whether you're a landlord or a tenant. After all, it's the right thing to do.



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COMMUNITY CONSULTATION: PR BY ANOTHER NAME?



Ruth Shepherd

In this consultation-heavy landscape we find ourselves in, the role of the consultant who deals with engagement and communications is under close scrutiny, but what is community consultation, and what does an engagement consultant actually do?

A quick glance at the Government's website and we see there are (at the time of writing, anyway) 57 open consultations, and a further 576 which have closed in the last 12 months. Visitors to the same site are invited to find out how they can engage with government directly, and take part locally, nationally and internationally. Users are also given a range of examples about how they can do this, with suggestions ranging from responding to a consultation about changing government policy, starting a petition, following a blog, as well as more direct-action approaches including deciding where homes, shops and businesses should be built, protect a local building, or set up a town or parish council.

At some point, someone, somewhere, will be asked what they think about something that's being reviewed, proposed, earmarked for change, or worse, cessation.

We as consultors are responsible for the success of the communications channels we adopt, the points of contact we create between client and community, and for the maintenance of those lines of dialogue. I was asked this week about the difference between engagement or consulting, and marketing. "Surely it's all just marketing?" was one comment. In some respects, the commentator was right.

Consulting is about creating an emotional connection between a product or service and the consumer to achieve their support or endorsement. Embedding that product or service so firmly within their consciousness that they cannot comprehend a time when they wouldn't be enjoying it or benefiting from it.

Community consultation is more than this though – it's about engaging with the customer – the community and the potential customer – to build a complete journey by building awareness and understanding of the proposal at hand, which leads to them opening their minds to an alternative viewpoint of 'I don't want this development', steering them to make a reasoned critique if, after dialogue and discussion, they do not feel able to wholly support the proposal, or – ideally – become an advocate of what is proposed, and helping the project team by using their position as an informer and/or influencer, to bring others on board.

It's about listening; understanding what people are concerned about, what their priorities are, how they want to see a development proposal or services, and where you can meet in the middle. It's not always possible to give the community exactly what they want – land left untouched and undeveloped, a fewer number of houses, more green space, additional services – but it is only by

communicating, creating channels through which multi-directional dialogue is possible, maintaining discussions, and managing the points of contact, that we – and our clients – are able to engage with those we need to, and respond to their concerns.

How does community consultation fit into the property market?

We're often asked what we do with the data we acquire during consultation and engagement activity. This could range from personal data to feedback about development proposals, responses to customer surveys on behalf of clients providing construction, infrastructure and property-related services or products. Our response is always the same: we never disclose data but we do use what we need to achieve the best possible outcome for the community, the environment and the client.

Community engagement acts as a wrap-around for raising awareness, driving the client's brand, and steering communities to support proposals where possible. Community consultation and engagement is the glue which allows us to keep all of the jigsaw puzzle pieces together to create the vision while taking stakeholders on the journey with the project.

Results Communications delivers bespoke and strategic marketing, stakeholder engagement and bid writing solutions to public and private sector clients regionally and nationally. If you want to discuss how we could help with your stakeholder needs, or just want to find out a bit more about what we do we're reachable on 01434 603205 and via hello@resultscommunications.co.uk

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UKBJJA APPOINTS MSGWORKS AS PR AND MARKETING PARTNER

Newcastle based agency Msgworks has been appointed by the United Kingdom Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Association (UKBJJA) as their PR and marketing partner.

With over 150 member clubs, the UKBJJA has become the de facto body for the sport of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) in the UK and represents one of the fastest growing participant sports in the country, with an estimated 30,000 people training at clubs nationwide.

The appointment comes at an important time for the UKBJJA as it moves towards formal Sport England recognition and launches an important new sponsorship drive.

Msgworks Managing Director, Mike Williams said "I am thrilled to be involved with such a unique and dynamic sport. We want the sport to grow and reach the audience it deserves and we are looking forward to promoting the UKBJJA to potential sponsors and to a much wider audience."

The UKBJJA is launching a number of new initiatives which will help UK athletes compete on the world stage and which will encourage youth participation and development.

Francis Lambert, UKBJJA Head of Sponsorship & Marketing said: "Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is the UK's fastest growing martial art. UKBJJA is looking to harness that momentum to grow the UKBJJA brand."

Any interested companies or brands can get in touch with Francis at francis.lambert@ukbjja.org.



O ATTRACTS SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSWOMAN TO AID GROWTH PLANS



Newcastle PR, social and content agency O has added to its growing team with the appointment of Michele Finck as Business Development manager.

Michele was formerly a director of TOFFS, The Old Fashioned Football Shirt Company, where she grew the business which researched, licensed, manufactured and retailed retro football shirts to become a worldwide success. Prior to that, she worked in business development in the UK hotel industry.

After selling her business in 2015 she has been brought back from early retirement to work for former North East Woman Entrepreneur of the Year

and founder of O, Kari Owers who she had previously worked with as a client.

Michele said: "I have known Kari and worked with her team over the years and have always thought they are a very special agency; their understanding of PR in a digital world makes them both creative and results-driven which is what every client wants.

Managing Director at O, Kari Owers said: "Our agency has recorded double digit growth for the last three years running, and we have ambitious plans ahead to continue that curve, so it was time to bring in additional expertise to aid our expansion.

NEWCASTLE DIGITAL AGENCY CONCENTRATED ON DOUBLING GROWTH

A rapidly expanding North East digital creative agency says it is aiming to post £500,000 in annual billings less than three years after launching.

Servicing the new client wins has led to Newcastle based Double Concentrate immediately adding three new members to its team after a raft of client wins, both in the UK and in the United States. They include New York based tech specialists Mobicast and Norwegian broadcast company Vimond.

Double Concentrate, who specialise in brand-centred digital design, has made senior hires in Gareth Howells as Group Creative Director and Paul Marrin as Chief Operations Officer. Katie Winter also joins the team of designers at the agency, who have just relocated to new offices at the Toffee Factory in Newcastle.

Howells, aged 48, will be dividing his time between Newcastle and Edinburgh. He brings a wealth of creative agency experience, having founded and headed up his own agency, Newhaven Communications. Gareth has worked on brands such as Honda, Tennent's Lager, Irn Bru and Scottish Power.

Meanwhile, 38-year-old Marrin, from Durham will be heading up Double Concentrate's new business development with a particular focus on its heartland in the North East.



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ASK SILVER BULLET



John Dias

“Is social media more cost effective than email marketing?”

The phenomenal growth of social media and claims made by advocates as to its effectiveness often leaves the impression that every other single form of marketing is no longer of use and only promoted by dinosaurs and those believing in the flat world theory.

Despite the incredibly impressive statistics of social media – Facebook has 1.86 billion users, YouTube gets almost 5 billion views a day, LinkedIn has 467 million users and Twitter has 320 million users as of April 2017 – email marketing is still one of the most effective means of reaching a potential market for the simple reason that you’re not posting a message on a site in the hope that someone will see it and react, rather you’re delivering that message directly into a person’s inbox – even if the recipient doesn’t open it, they’ll know who it comes from and see the subject. On social media, however, you have no guarantee that they’ll even see your post never mind react to it.

The problem that this causes, however, is that there’s a temptation to then increase your contact list by purchasing a data base and sending out what in essence is spam as the persons on the purchased data base have shown no previous interest in your product or service, despite how closely YOU feel they match your customer profile – the best description I’ve ever heard of this is bad-mannered marketing, akin to a brand inviting itself into someone else’s party or home when they may well not be welcome visitors!

It is therefore far better, if possible, to organically grow your own database through great content

or offering incentives which can be promoted across different media channels – it’s the modern equivalent of the old White Paper where valuable facts and figures or learned opinion on some topic was exchanged for postal addresses and other data – it’s just a lot easier now.

However, the next most common fallacy is that either Social Media or Email Marketing is free – it’s not. You’ll either be spending your own time, asking your staff to spend their time, hiring an additional employee or subcontracting it to an external agency, but whichever route you choose, it’s not without a cost and you’ll be looking for a return on your investment. Before you therefore start then, workout exactly what RoI you are wanting and remember this isn’t necessarily immediate additional sales or revenue but could be longer term as in acquiring new leads or email subscriptions or simply boosting customer satisfaction levels to increase retention.

So the next question is what message do you send? The choice of content is dependent on your target market but there’s a few general tips you may find useful – firstly, keep it short. The maximum time you’re going to keep the recipient’s attention is under 20 seconds so you have to get your message or messages across with in that time. Secondly, emailing another person is akin to a conversation to a friend so you don’t want to come across as the

second hand car dealer with a hard sell – make it friendly and informative.

A digital newsletter is often a useful tool with brief synopses of various stories which then lead back to the full story on your own web site – allowing recipients the choice of following up the basic facts or not and giving you perfect data through Google Analytics as to what interests them, in addition to boosting your web site traffic which naturally helps your SEO. Similarly, an unsubscribe option on your emails is not only good digital manners but allows you to clean your database effortlessly, whilst a referral incentive allows you to increase it.

Another question is whether it’s better to use HTML coded messages or plain text? Investment in eye-catching graphic design to me is always worth it – your message reflects your brand so if you want to differentiate yourself from your competitors, make sure all your marketing collateral looks great. Yes, it may cost more but in the long run you’ll gain far greater engagement levels than plain text emails but maybe the best way is to have a go and see what works best for yourself?

Finally, it’s worth considering integrating the two and making your social media and email marketing work together – but maybe more of that for another day...

Do you need some assistance with your marketing? Do you need to review your strategy or do you have another marketing question we can help with? Talk to us. Email your questions anonymously to us today hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR.

NEW LOOK AND NEW FACES AT GROWING NORTH EAST PR FIRM



The Fusion PR team (l-r) Paula Sainthouse, Joanne Hunter, Amy Maughan, Leanne Tonks and John McCabe.

A leading North East public relations firm has marked its fourth anniversary and a period of growth by refreshing its brand including a new name, logo and website.

Round Table Solutions has been rebranded as Fusion PR (UK) Limited. The Blyth-based firm has also created two new jobs, appointing Amy Maughan as Senior Account Director and Paula Sainthouse as Account Executive.

Managing Director, John McCabe, who established the business in May 2013, said: "Since the turn of the year we've gone through a period of significant growth thanks to some fantastic new business wins from clients as diverse as AkzoNobel, Soil Machine Dynamics, North Sea Link and Whitehouse Farm.

"This has enabled us to create two new jobs, taking our full-time headcount to five, and we expect to be hiring again later this summer.

"The new brand is intended to reflect this growth,

saying more about what we do and how we do it.

"Our integrated approach to public relations is simple, yet incredibly effective. Each member of our team is an expert in their own specific area of communications, which means that our clients get the very best of all worlds, brought together in a single, integrated strategy.

"It is this combination of public relations expertise, together with outstanding client relationships and our wide network of contacts that defines Fusion PR and the way we work."

A CIPR accredited practitioner with a career in the industry spanning 17 years, Amy Maughan has previously worked with Fusion PR as a freelance partner. Amy leads on the firm's work with a

number of clients including Northumberland National Park Authority, AVID Technology and Legrand Assisted Living & Healthcare.

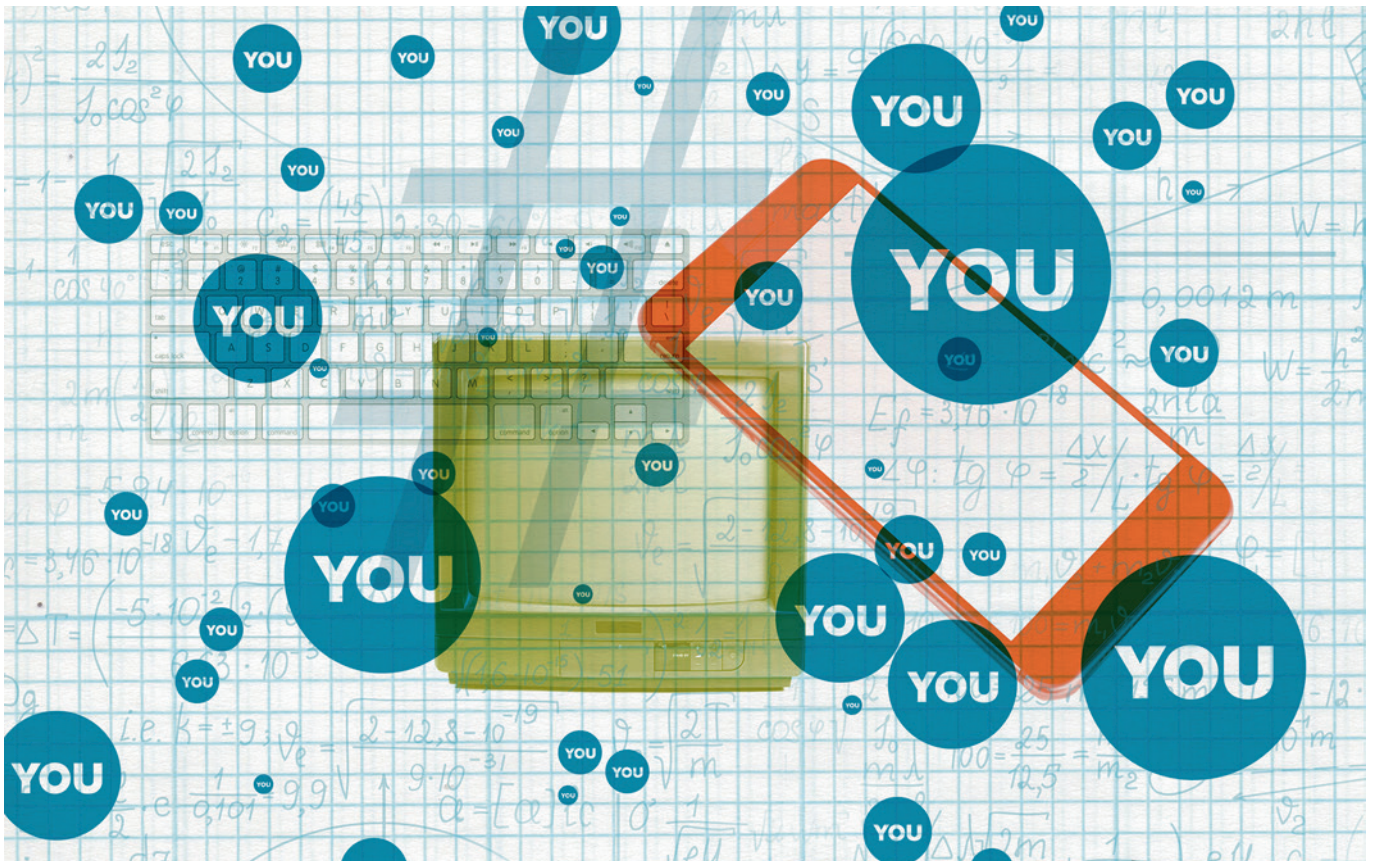
"This is a great time to be joining Fusion PR, especially as I've worked previously with the company on a freelance basis so I already have a great relationship with our existing clients," said Amy.

Also a CIPR accredited practitioner, Paula Sainthouse joins Fusion PR from Home Group, one of the UK's largest providers of high quality housing and integrated housing, health and social care.

The creative work behind the rebranding of Fusion PR, including logo design and website build, has been completed by Newcastle-based Retox Digital.

Find out more about Fusion PR by visiting www.fusionprltd.co.uk

THE SCIENCE OF MARKETING



Having worked in the creative industry for more than 20 years, Matt Clark, Creative Director at full-service marketing, advertising and digital agency, The Works, has seen the marketing landscape shift dramatically over the years. Here, he explains why there really is no such thing as a 'USP' and uses science to explain how marketing campaigns and brand messaging have changed (yes, really!)

When it comes to creativity we tend to think about style and the infinite possibilities of the universe and rainbows, but marketing these days is more scientific than just pretty colours and pictures. There are now so many ways that your brand or advertising message can be distributed that you should consider everything right at the beginning of the process, ensuring it can then filter out to the four corners of the globe. A good way to think about the way creative ideas are applied and consumed is by using the states of matter theory- stick with me and you'll see what I mean!

Not so long ago the marketing landscape was very different. Let's call it the 'solid' state where a company would produce a small number of big, key communications pieces. The marketing mix would tend to be; a TV ad (with only two channels to choose from), a press or poster campaign, direct mail and corporate or product brochures. A lot of time was spent on these few communications pieces and they could have had a common theme, or possibly worked completely independently to each other. Creative ideas were static and needed very little cohesion or flexibility, like the molecules of a solid...do you see where I'm going with this?

Fast forward a few years and things began to 'heat' up. I call this the 'liquid' state, where more communications channels became available. As well as terrestrial TV, press, posters and brochures, there was now the internet, a website, cable and satellite television to consider. Brands and their marketing had to become more flexible and open to translation across more varied media channels. A brand had to be able to spread across so many more places and media, and therefore, it was becoming more important to be able to present it in a more unified way.

Back in the present, we're now in the 'gas' state, and there are more communications channels than ever before. Gas molecules are spread out and constantly moving around in directions you cannot control, much like your brand and marketing. You now have far less ability to control and contain messages once they have been released, so it's imperative that your brand message is clear, cohesive and as simple as possible. You now exist across TV, outdoor, press, print, your website, other people's websites, email, social media, on-demand, online advertising and whatever the latest 'new thing' is.

This gaseous state can be a fantastic thing. Social media is free and can reach a huge audience. Digital advertising like Sky Adsmart can be extremely targeted and cost effective. But the more places you are seen, the more important it becomes to present a unified message.

So, where does this unifying message come from? In almost every area of business someone else will be doing what you do. They may be better or worse, cheaper or more expensive. I don't think there really is such a thing as a 'USP', but there is always a 'YouSP'. Rather than trying to think of a completely 'unique' selling point, think of 'your' selling point. What makes you different and worth considering? Is it what you do or how you do it? Is it your company's ethos or a product benefit? Find this 'YouSP' and then focus on it with everything you say, everywhere you say it. That way all the little molecules of 'You' that are spreading all over will work together.

When it comes to your brand and message, always remember, "any fool can make things complicated, it takes a genius to make things simple." It's not about being unique, it's about being you.



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THE METEORIC RISE OF THE ESPORTS INDUSTRY



Jordan Oloman, dedicated gamer and account executive at W North in Newcastle, investigates why 2017 will be the year to start paying attention to eSports.

The 1980 National Space Invaders Championship was the first large-scale competitive gaming competition.

Organised and held by Atari, the event drew 10,000 gamers across America from their local arcades and into a hotel lobby lined with TVs and consoles. Spokeswoman Ginny Juhnke described the response to the event as 'unprecedented'.

Fast forward 37 years and the same simple concept is about to become a billion dollar industry, estimated to reach an audience of 385 million people in 2017.

For a hobby born out of basement LAN parties, unprecedented doesn't begin to describe the inimitable growth of this industry from niche to mainstream.

Just last month 27.8 million hours were spent watching the most popular eSport League of Legends on streaming platform Twitch, with other heavyweights like Counter Strike, DOTA 2, Hearthstone and Starcraft filling in the top five.

This doesn't even consider the data from other platforms like Youtube Gaming, MLG or Hitbox. Naturally, worldwide total consumption of eSports is expected to reach 6.6 billion hours by 2018.

Regardless of the numbers, 2017 may be the first year most of the public hear about eSports. Sky Sports and the Daily Mail are rumoured to be about to go live on major eSports coverage across its platforms.

Whilst this medium has been nibbling controversially

at the heels of traditional sport for a long time, this is the year that the industry is starting to come into its own and gain global recognition.

Last year, you may have been one of the 31 million viewers who tuned in to watch Game 7 of the NBA finals. Would it surprise you to learn that 12 million more watched the finals of the League of Legends World Championships?

The 43 million who sat down to watch SK Telecom T1 defeat Samsung Galaxy 3-2 are evocative of the power of the eSports phenomenon. It all sounds like a different language to many of us, but this is the new generation's Match of the Day.

Just nerds in their bedroom? Think again. The team of five took home their share of a \$6.7m prize pool, and with the viewership speeding to terminal velocity, traditional sports executives understandably want a slice.

Just last year investment group aXiomatic purchased Team Liquid, one of the staple names in eSports. The board of executives consists of a number of famous names like representatives from the Los Angeles Dodgers and Magic Johnson, the American basketball legend.

Famous basketball star Shaquille O'Neal also co-owns NRC, an esports company boasting teams across a wide spectrum of video games.

Ashton Kutcher and famed DJ Steve Aoki are another set of names deeply invested in the eSports boom.

It's not just outside investment that is taking the world by storm either, as Universities and even football clubs are starting to develop their own in-house eSports division.

Manchester City, Paris-Saint-Germain, New York City FC and Wolfsburg each have respective players hired to compete in FIFA approved tournaments, representing their team on the virtual pitch and promoting the team's global brand.

It's not like they're paid any less either. The average age of an eSports player is 20, and whilst their cash flow is based on merit, the lucky few who perform well and have a fan following can earn millions in sponsorship and prize revenue.

Whilst the money makes the industry lucrative, it's the validation and recognition that will propel competitive gaming forward, and it looks to be making constant progression.

There's not a plateau in sight, either. Competitive gaming will feature as a medal event at the 2022 Asia Games, as the practice starts to break through and become a recognised sport just like football or tennis.

Blizzard's brand new 'Overwatch League' to support the game of the same name comes out this year, and with a player base of over 25 million, a loyal eSports fan base is to be expected.

The only way is up, and for the virtual sports skeptics, it looks like its time to get on the bandwagon and put down the handbook.

Jordan Oloman is an executive at W North (www.wcommunications.co.uk) and founder of gaming review site quillstreak.com

THE BENEFITS OF A SMALLER AGENCY

There are creative agencies out there with access to resources, marketing budgets and contacts of which smaller folk like us can only dream. Can we survive against competition with seemingly unlimited resources? Definitely.

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What's most important to your potential clients? Is it the number of awards you've won? What about how many staff you have?

Our best clients are those that want a friendly, local company that makes sure every project and client they take on is important...and that's exactly what we do at JAK HQ. We're a small team of nine that values every client with which we work. We extend an open invitation to our clients to pop into our Chester-le-Street office at any time for a coffee (or game of table tennis) to discuss their project, something I know larger agencies can't do.

Our size enables us to react and make decisions quickly, especially handy in the creative world where processes (such as search engine algorithm updates) and client demands can change on a regular basis.

Here at JAK HQ, you'll benefit from a specialist, boutique approach. Our clients often tell us that they love the feeling of dealing with real people, not a robotic corporate machine. Let's not forget the cost – we don't try to be the cheapest agency around, but a smaller agency like us will often be able to offer not only a more precise, personal campaign, but a more affordable one, too.

The next time you need help with your website, marketing or other creative endeavour, consider the benefits of a smaller agency.

Thanks for reading.



Benjamin Kerry, Managing Director, JAK HQ. www.jakhq.com / 0191 388 2698



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MEDIAWORKS CONTINUES SUCCESS AT NORTH EAST BUSINESS AWARDS

Mediaworks takes home another North East Business Award, just weeks after their success at the regional heats.

We find out more:

On April 27th, the grand final of the 2017 North East Business Awards took place at Hardwick Hall in Sedgfield. The region's finest talent were out in force, all hoping to build on their previous success and take home the overall prize within their respective category.

Shortlisted in the Digital & Social Media Award category following their success at the Northumberland and Tyneside heat back in March, Mediaworks were announced as overall winners, beating off competition from fellow regional winners Maxim Facilities Management and HomeFuels Direct.

The category looks for excellent website design,

a demonstrable use of web technology and innovative use of internet technology in order to improve business performance. Mediaworks were praised for their "awareness and adoption of digital solutions" for their work creating the app in support of the Great North Snowdogs mass-participation art event.

The event helped to unite the region all in the name of a good cause — supporting St Oswald's Hospice and the outstanding work they do. In fact, new figures released by the charity show that the trail was enjoyed by some 676,056 visitors, raising £367,500 for the charity. Mediaworks is incredibly proud to have played a part in this fantastic charity endeavour.

Speaking of Mediaworks' continued success, Managing Director Brett Jacobson said: "Winning this award is a great achievement for everyone involved at Mediaworks, especially since it recognises some of the North East's most innovative and forward-thinking companies. We'd also like to extend our congratulations to all of the other winners."

On the same day as their North East Business Awards win, Mediaworks was shortlisted in the Best Use of Search category at the prestigious Big Chip Awards 2017. Let's hope the agency can continue their celebrations by taking home the award at the ceremony, which takes place on June 15th 2017.

Want to work with an award-winning agency? Get in touch with Mediaworks on 0191 404 0100

CPD – IS IT WORTH IT?

Professions are changing. In 2012 81 per cent of the professional bodies required full members to have a degree. By 2015 this had fallen to 36 per cent.

Does it mean that standards are falling? Or is it a reflection of the different entry routes into a profession? Will the 36 per cent with degrees be the only ones who will rise to the highest levels in their profession?

CIM and CIPR members complete, record and reflect on their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) every year to maintain their status. This is one reason why a degree alone is not enough. Learning and development must continue throughout their careers.

Like many things, it's not actually as straight forward as that. In fact, the way in which training and qualifications are being delivered is changing and this has an impact for both employers and individuals. Employers can use CPD as part of their recruitment and appraisal processes. Consultants can reassure clients that they are using best practice.

Clearly it has an impact on study centres such as nesma, too.

Tutors at nesma maintain their own CPD. They are all too aware that the world is changing dramatically. They need to understand not only what is happening now and why, but also what this will mean in the future.

In my job, it's almost impossible for me to avoid learning new skills every day! To support my students, I must have a good knowledge of 'what's going on out there right now' as well as understanding the latest marketing theory and trends. But I can honestly say my interest in learning something new has been invigorated by the new CIM Marketing Leadership Programme and I know my students are thriving on gaining new knowledge and skills to apply strategic thinking and analysis to their businesses.

Good professionals are always keen to learn, to find the best, most efficient way to achieve results.

The C is the key: continuing.



Veronica Swindale
Founder and Director at nesma
North East Sales and Marketing Academy

Whether it's working on your current skill set or exploring a new area of expertise nesma has all your marketing and communication know-how covered. www.nesma.co.uk hello@nesma.co.uk

IS YOUR BRAND CONNECTING?

So it is thought that your brand is what people say about you when you leave the room. Whether that be an individual, product or service, your brand is made up of the characteristics that define who you are and what ultimately make your business unique. But what is it that make some brands strong and able to connect effectively with audiences with others less so and how can you maintain the confidence and belief that your brand is delivering what you need it to as your business adapts and grows?

Every organisation, irrespective of sector or industry share brand qualities that define who they are and set them apart from the competition. From the innovation of Apple to the quality and all round Britishness of Marks & Spencer, brands and their qualities become synonymous with one another.

The success of such brands lie in their ability to fully understand who they and their markets are, alongside effective promotion of their offerings and USP's through consistent brand communications, whether that be via design, online presence or written content. However, businesses don't always get this right, with many falling short, creating a disconnect between what is being portrayed externally versus the reality of who they actually are. Often this results in 'white space' and audiences including employees and customers switching off as they are unable to fully 'get who you are'.



So how do you turn the light back on to your businesses brand? Here we provide our top 5 tips to help you keep on track;

- **Review your brand regularly alongside your business planning** - Enlist the help of a design specialist to conduct an annual brand audit assessing how effectively it aligns with the strategic direction of your business and growth plans.
- **Celebrate what makes you extraordinary not ordinary!** - Identify your brand's key qualities, differentiators and values and embed those into

all internal and external communications.

- **Understand your market** – Conduct research on your market to help understand the best ways to connect with them and ask for feedback from key stakeholders on your brand and business.
- **Be consistent** - Ensure consistency in all marketing collateral including design, brand, online and written content.
- **Find your voice** - Create a tone of voice for your written content to help bring your brand personality to life.

To create an absolute alignment of your brand and ambitions contact Abbie Hartshorn at Absolute Agency
email: abbie@absolute-agency.co.uk, www.absolute-agency.co.uk or call 0191 499 8458

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH: ALWAYS ON IS ALWAYS WRONG

By Sarah Hall,
Managing Director, Sarah Hall Consulting

Public relations almost always makes the top ten of the most stressful jobs despite not being a front line role where people's lives hang in the balance.



In communications and public relations there's no longer a clear distinction between work and play, day and night.

Mobile devices and tablets bridge the gap between the working day, and evenings and weekends. Social media means you're as likely to be friends with your boss, colleague, or client as you are with anyone else. You may also be community managing into the early hours.

The result has been a significant and persistently negative impact on practitioners' mental health.

A white paper published by #FuturePProof for the PRCA in March this year reported that public relations professionals were experiencing a range of symptoms in the workplace from absent-mindedness and anxiety to anger and depression.

Attributing factors included financial pressures; service delivery - from being always on to constant deadlines; office politics, culture and poor line management; trauma, particularly in emergency services; and a lack of respect and understanding for public relations.

Normalising the conversation

Thankfully initiatives like #FuturePProof and - on a much wider scale - Mental Health Awareness Week are helping normalise the issue and signpost to solutions.

PR professionals are finally speaking out about the challenges they face and proactively looking for ways to manage stress.

Respondents within the #FuturePProof report cited a wide variety of means for managing their wellbeing. These included health and fitness including cycling, running, swimming, walking and yoga. Meditation and mindfulness also ranked highly.

Other techniques included ring fencing family



Sarah Hall

time, socialising, limiting technology, sleep and moderating alcohol and managing diet.

Mechanisms for managing prolonged periods of mental illness included counselling, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and psychotherapy, and medication.

Prevention better than cure

Employers also have to take responsibility for their staff and organisational culture, and proactively create a positive and healthy workplace.

There is work to do; almost 60% of #FuturePProof survey respondents said they would be uncomfortable or very uncomfortable discussing their mental health with a line manager.

Many practitioners were also unaware whether their sickness policy at work specifically addressed mental health. 53.3% said they were unaware; 14.2% reported that it did; and 32.5% reported that it did not.

According to Carol Featherstone, a Relate-trained counsellor and therapist, even small steps can change things for the better:

"Being thoughtful about daily practices and what is expected of team members can make a big difference. No longer are weekends and evenings sacrosanct, especially in an industry such as public relations, where it's almost expected people are on call 24/7.

"Big organisations very often have things in place like Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programmes or even a counsellor on site. Where

that's not possible, organisations need to try and put a preventative procedure in place.

"Individuals need to be self-aware about whether they're seriously stressed and get help. Managers should be alert to employees' behaviours as the clues will be there. There will be poor performance and people taking long periods off sick."

Best practice for managing mental health and wellbeing

Here are five recommendations for managing mental health and wellbeing from the #FuturePProof report. They work for managing the mental health of your wider workforce, not just your comms team. Everyone will thank you for it.

- Make mental health and wellbeing a priority issue within the management team.
- Ensure company policies and procedures cover sickness due to mental health and provide clear signposting and training to all employees and managers on these.
- Removing the stigma around the issue of mental health in the workplace will have the single biggest impact on positive outcomes. Create safe environments for staff to talk.
- Respect the boundaries between the personal and work lives of your employees that may otherwise have been eroded by mobile technology.
- Examples of proactive support include employee assistance programmes, subsidised exercise, mental health awareness training and wellness action plans.

Visit www.MIND.org.uk for more information or www.futureproofingcomms.co.uk for more information about the #FuturePProof report.

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TIPS TO CONSIDER WHEN TALENT IS IN DEMAND

By James Blackwell, CEO, Ronald James



The way in which companies and recruiters advertise positions in the digital sector has changed drastically in recent years.

Gone are the times when they could throw together an adequate job listing and have developers and other such tech professionals queuing at the door. Instead, hiring managers are now forced to take lots of care over preparing their ads, because we are currently in a candidate's market, and candidates have much of the power.

The current climate

Candidates in this day and age are no longer jumping at any opportunity to enter the sector. With so many technical jobs on offer, and digital recruits remaining quite high in demand, they really do have their pick and are free to bide their time and look for the one job which suits them down to the ground. Qualifying for jobs is reasonably easy for candidates right now, so many end up with multiple offers during their search for work. So how can companies manage this level of competition and ensure that they attract employees without having to jump through hoops for them? Here are a few tips.

Aim to engage all potential candidates

Research suggests that more than half of the software developer population would jump ship if the right position came up, so recruiting is now all about engaging with prospective staff who may or

may not be actively looking for new employment. This means that companies in the North East need to work harder on enticing candidates from the region and beyond to get them on their team, rather than relying on people coming to them. Once on board, you can then look at ways to ensure you keep hold of them, but that's a whole different story. If you need help working on your approach, then recruitment agencies in Newcastle upon Tyne, like Ronald James, who specialises in the digital and tech sector, can certainly offer some guidance.

Make your brand attractive to prospective employees

How is your brand received? Is it a brand that promotes quality, efficiency, creativity or innovation? A developer would typically wish to incorporate all of those things into their daily activities. If your brand doesn't inspire, then it goes without saying that you are going to struggle to attract individuals to your workforce. Although you can't develop your brand to fill one role, a quick reality check and an assessment of how your brand helps or hinders your chances of attracting the best talent could help you to make better recruitment decisions in the long run. Putting to one side your actual brand, take a minute to think

about what your employer brand says about you too? Your employer brand is the reputation you hold in terms of your recruitment and general workplace ethics. Your staff will determine whether or not your company is a good place to work, but it is the management team that is the driving force behind creating a happy and comfortable environment for their workers. You can discover what your staff, past and present, think about their work experience on your site by looking at websites such as Glass Door, which allows employees to report on all aspects of your employee brand.

Don't drag your heels

Finally, when hiring new staff, don't drag out the process, as candidates want to feel needed, not neglected. If the individual gets a sense that you aren't in a hurry to get them stuck in to your business, then they will most probably accept a new role. Therefore, if you feel you have found the best person, then make sure you move quickly to keep them interested. Even if the job post hasn't opened up yet, think about creating a temporary position so that you don't lose them. They could very well end up being one of your most trusted and loyal employees.

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SYNERGI ON TRAINS, PLANES AND AUTOMOBILES

The fast-growing North-East technology transformation company Synergi have seen strong new client engagement since the beginning of the year. Peter Joynson and his team have recently won contracts to work with three major UK operators, helping to streamline processes within the rail, bus and aviation industries.

Aviation catering company Alpha LSG recently appointed Synergi, adopting the Microsoft Dynamics Sales CRM, a platform ideal in automating sales processes. Alpha LSG are enabling their business development team to improve and drive higher conversion rates, track tender opportunities and improve customer activity.

Synergi has also been working with the Alpha team in Heathrow, helping the company set up Nintex mobile form solutions that notifies ground logistic crews of any food service issues, even while on-board an airline.

Within the transport sector, the Synergi team have recently won contracts to work with major UK operators, with Arriva Group PLC and Lothian Transport joining the impressive list of Synergi clients in recent months.

Justin Short, Director at Synergi commented, "we are delighted to be working with such prestigious brands, these new clients extend our reach from Edinburgh to Central London."

Regionally existing client Mill Volvo have turned to Synergi with a requirement to improve reporting from their legacy automotive financial platform. By using Microsoft Business Intelligence platform, Power BI, and storing data using Microsoft Azure Cloud, Synergi has completely transformed how the company views data. Mill Volvo management will now have a near-real time view of sales and operations, allowing a more dynamic reporting approach.

Synergi are quickly becoming one of the UK's leading Microsoft and Nintex cloud partners – Peter concluded, "we are very proud of our team and we're all enjoying the development in this new technology era."



YOU'VE GOT TO AV IT WITH SHE'S GOT IT!

Leading event management company She's Gott It! has unveiled its new tech division as it expands into audio/visual production and hire.

The strategic move to introduce its own tech team to the business and its significant investment in state-of-the-art equipment will see She's Gott It! offer clients a range of AV and tech packages alongside its well-established creative event management offering.

The new division will give She's Gott It! Events additional control across all aspects of its events, while providing assistance to clients who require technical support or equipment for their own events.

Launched over 15 years ago by Nickie Gott OBE, She's Gott It! is growing rapidly and runs over 50 major events around the UK every year for brands such as Sage PLC, Hitachi and Vertu Motors, including conferences, exhibitions, launch events and festivals.

Nickie said: "Launching our own tech division gives us the opportunity to become a 'one stop shop' for events and ultimately gives us greater control over the end result."



TECH START UP'S AMBITIOUS PLANS ATTRACT SAGE LEADER



A North East-based technology solutions provider has strengthened its cloud computing offering with accreditations from Microsoft and Amazon.

Perfect Image, based at the Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside, is celebrating its enhanced cloud computing offering after achieving both Microsoft Gold Cloud Small and Midmarket Solutions competency and Advanced Tier Amazon Partner status following increased demand for the company's cloud services.

In order to achieve the Microsoft Gold competency, Perfect Image was required to demonstrate a 'best-in-class' ability and commitment to meet the evolving needs of customers in today's mobile-first world.

Talking about the Gold Cloud Solutions competency, Andrew Robson, CEO of Perfect Image, said: "This Microsoft Gold Cloud Solutions competency showcases our expertise in and commitment to today's technology market and demonstrates our deep knowledge of Microsoft's products and services."

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BOXING CLEVER WITH DIAMOND



The Diamond Group were lucky enough to have moved to fantastic new offices on Gateshead's Team Valley recently after years of hard work from John Burns and their entire team. Whilst they are absolutely delighted that the new premises have allowed them to assist clients and customers on a bigger scale, they do know there are other avenues for businesses to do what they do best – including working from home.

Working from home is one of those things that sounds like a good idea in theory, but is often fraught with inconveniences. Yes, you may miss that morning rush hour, but it's scant consolation when you can't access those vital files from your own home.

It may come as a surprise then, that 2016 figures from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) showed that 1.5m people work primarily from home – an increase of 19% over a ten year period.

But what is the best way to do business from the comfort of your own home? Enter Diamond and their box of tricks – or their business in a box to be exact.

From just £15 per week, the Diamond Group will provide you with everything you need to keep the wheels of business in motion – no matter where

your office may be. With a colour multi-function machine (copier printer and scanner), a PC or laptop and a telephone with free local and national calls, you'll have everything you could need to jump start your home working environment and keep it ticking over nicely.

The business in a box isn't just for those working from home though. For anyone who may be starting up their own business, the tools to do the job are often left as an afterthought.

Starting your own business is far from easy. Once you sort out the red tape and taxes, you have the small issue of sorting out an office location. Between dotting the 'Is' and crossing the 'Ts', the office equipment can get lost in the hustle and bustle.

But there's really no need to stress; Diamond's business in a box will ease one of your business

headaches and provide the perfect solution.

With everything you need to do business in one place, you won't find anything else with such value for money. And with support available every step of the way, you'll always have an expert on call to give their know-how, and help you over any bumps in the road, allowing you to get back to what's important – your brand new business.

Consider Diamond's business in a box as the water to your business seeds – helping you and your business grow and flourish to its true potential - every step of the way.

So if you are looking for a solution to your working from home problems or to launch a business of your own, give the experts at Diamond a call and ask about their business in a box and what it can do for you.

You can call them to discuss it or any other ICT, business or communication needs you have on 0191 519 3700.



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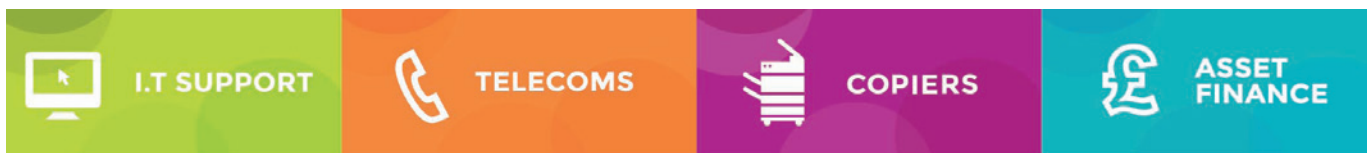
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*OfficePrinciples Survey 2015



CLOUD SUCCESS FOR SYNERGI

When it comes to business, there is no substitution for experience. That is particularly so in the fast-moving world of technology.



Synergi is an award-winning and highly experienced Microsoft Partner, specialising in cloud technologies, working with customers across the UK to develop and deliver their digital transformation strategies.

Peter Joynson and fellow director and company co-founder Justin Short have a combined experience of 53 years in the technology industry; they've spent their working lives immersed in IT solutions.

Their most recent success is reflected in a growing and diverse client list, including companies from the healthcare, transport, utilities and many other SME sectors. So why has Synergi developed such strong links with leading companies and organisations? The simple answer is that they concentrate solely on their core expertise.

"We have adopted a very clear focus on Microsoft's Cloud platform," said Justin, "That reflects our capability to deliver solutions across Office 365 (the global standard for office productivity, communication and collaboration), Dynamics 365 (the next generation of business applications, unifying ERP and CRM), Nintex (workflow and content automation), Power BI (business analytics), Azure (global services for cloud infrastructure and platform), and Surface (latest generation of devices)."

It's interesting to hear the Synergi team talking about clients. They are not interested in simply selling a product. They want to work closely with their clients and help them develop their digital transformation strategies based on the latest Cloud technologies. They work not just with IT departments, but primarily with senior leadership teams, helping businesses to engage customers, empower employees, optimise operations and reinvent their products and business models.

Looking to the future, Peter Joynson shares his view of the way in which he sees technology progressing.

"Microsoft is leading the world in cloud innovation. With rapid development and evolution, Office 365 has grown hugely and has an inspiring roadmap. Dynamics 365 is the next generation in modern cloud Financial and CRM platforms – it will be another game changer and we are ready to begin what will no doubt be an exciting few years of transformation for many businesses that are still using accounting solutions that have not moved with the times."

The importance of customer service is also something that Synergi is closely in tune with. It is predicted that, by 2020, customer service will be the number one priority for businesses. Synergi are

continually looking to raise the bar and challenge their performance and strive for continuous improvement, but their philosophy seems clear and simple, that is to make life easier and more efficient for all the clients they work with, giving them more time to concentrate on running their business and providing the best possible service.

It's also worth noting that Synergi is expanding rapidly, growing their key practice areas such as Nintex, Dynamics and BI, they are likely to double in size within the next two years. Synergi is a family-minded company; everyone is part of the team and there's a real emphasis on having an enjoyable atmosphere. It's a fun place to work and to do business with and their passion emanates throughout.

Synergi is a market leader, a premier Microsoft Cloud and Nintex partner for the North and Scotland. As their blue chip client list proves, when it comes to making any business fit for the 21st Century, Synergi can truly be described as a "technology solution factory".



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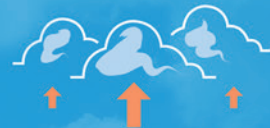
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THE IMPORTANCE OF MOBILE CONNECTIVITY FOR BUSINESSES

Chris Lee, Managing Director of North East-based IT and telecoms specialist CCS, discusses the future for mobile connectivity after the North East was recently named the best place in the UK for mobile 4G coverage.

Recent analysis of measured data of mobile signals across UK cities resulted in some interesting findings. The study analysed more than 500m data readings from mobile phones taken from over 30,000 users between December 1 2016 and February 28 2017 via an app and found that both Middlesbrough (1st) and Sunderland (3rd) were in the top five for mobile connectivity in the UK.

While these are encouraging results for the North East business community, the UK on a whole lags behind other countries in the world, such as China and South Korea, in terms of mobile connectivity and so further investment is very much needed.

Industry data suggests that the average overall availability of access to 4G signals across the UK stands at 65 percent, putting us behind the likes of Estonia and Peru. We are currently ranked 54th in the world for Long-Term Evolution (LTE) connection, a standard for high-speed wireless connection, which could be proving detrimental to the UK economy and the North East business community. These statistics make it clear that more needs to be done by Ofcom, the mobile operators and the Government.

Earlier this year the Government unveiled plans to

invest £4.7bn into the research and development of smart energy technologies, robotics, artificial intelligence and 5G mobile network technology as part of its industrial strategy, stating that it hoped these investments will 'improve living standards and drive economic growth across the whole country'.

This announcement was great news for both businesses and individuals in the North East who will benefit in the future. 5G is the next stage in mobile connectivity offering faster download speeds and the ability to run mobile internet apps with greater complexity. It will offer much more data volume and greater reliability than users currently receive from 3G or 4G, benefitting businesses in many ways.

Obvious advantages to this are greater download capacity and speeds, wider availability and higher service reliability. Initially the average speeds of 5G are likely to be at least 50 times as fast as we are currently experiencing with 4G. Faster speeds translate into enhanced efficiency and productivity for businesses, which in turn brings cost-savings and increased revenues. Businesses will also be able to operate more effectively out of the office with the knowledge that they will have reliable

connectivity without having to compromise on the service they provide.

New technologies will also improve as a result of 5G. It will support the ever-increasing data requirements of the existing network and new applications from augmented reality to the Internet of Things (IoT) – this could be anything from self-driving cars to remote surgeries. With these new technologies, drops in data could be very damaging, so reliability and speed are essential.

Ofcom has promised that virtually all UK premises will receive a 4G signal by the end of the year. This should give us some good signs later in the year but there is a lot of work that still needs to be done before we are ready for 5G – which is still in the early stages of development and we wouldn't expect to see fully functional for at least another couple of years. Implementation of 5G may turn out to be a lengthy process and while newer mobile phones will have it integrated, older phones will not.

For now, we can take comfort in the recent findings showing that North East businesses are benefiting from some of the best mobile 4G coverage and with 5G not far off this should bring further optimism to the North East Business community.

THE RECIPE FOR GROWTH



(L-R) Hadrian Technology Co-Founders Stuart Ferguson and Gary Trotter

North East-based Hadrian Technology share their recipe for growth after scooping a place in the prestigious Financial Times 1000.

Hadrian Technology, one of the UK's leading CCTV design, supply and installation companies is celebrating after having been named as one of Europe's fastest-growing businesses in the prestigious Financial Times 1000.

Based in Seaham, the company was recently ranked 252nd in The Financial Times' inaugural ranking of Europe's fastest-growing businesses – the FT 1000. The news comes only months after the company was named as one of only four North East businesses in the Sunday Times Virgin Fast Track 100.

Speaking after the announcement, Hadrian Technology Co-Founder Gary Trotter, said: "We're immensely proud to be recognised as one of Europe's fastest-growing companies in The Financial Times 1000. Being named in both the FT 1000 and the Sunday Times Virgin Fast Track 100 is testament to the outstanding sales growth we have achieved in recent years and the hard work and dedication of our highly-skilled team."

Established in 1999 by Stuart Ferguson and Gary Trotter, Hadrian Technology advises clients on the design and installation of bespoke, high-quality CCTV solutions, operating software, associated analytics and data storage systems through to ongoing maintenance and support. The company's passion for innovation and cutting-edge

technology, along with its ambition to provide innovative yet truly efficient, cost effective CCTV systems has been the catalyst of its success.

Commenting on the company's growth, Gary said: "Many people still have quite an outdated view of the CCTV industry. We all have that perception of having to sit and watch hours of grainy footage to identify an incident. However, with the acceleration of camera technology and the emergence of state-of-the-art analytical software, operating systems are both easy-to-use and can offer valuable business intelligence and analytics, including off-site monitoring, people counting and identification and heat mapping."

By partnering with industry-leading manufacturers such as Videcon, Dell, Hikvision, Vista, Genie, Concept Pro, Everseen, Facit and Avigilon, Hadrian Technology is at the forefront of advanced digital analytics and also has specialist knowledge and expertise in combatting the 'slips and trips' claims culture that currently costs businesses more than £800m a year.

One North East business to have benefited from Hadrian Technology's expertise is Hardwick Hall Hotel – one of the North East's best known entertainment venues – after Hadrian Technology's team of expert engineers were appointed to revamp the venue's outdated CCTV and replace

it with cutting edge technology. In response, the team pioneered a revolutionary technology that cleverly converts digital camera signals allowing them to run over previously installed co-axial cables before decoding the signals at the other end. The innovation enabled them to transform the hotel's camera system from analogue to one of the most advanced, high-definition digital offerings on the market in only a matter of weeks.

Its introduction prevented the disruption of ripping out and replacing significant amounts of cabling and future-proofed the system. The venue can now phase in additional high definition cameras and continue to upgrade their systems over time in an affordable way, something that would have previously been impossible to achieve.

As for the future, Gary says: "We are looking forward to continuing to grow our business – both in the UK and overseas – as the use of CCTV for business intelligence becomes more widespread. As we continue to expand, we are actively looking to harness new technologies to enable us to offer cloud-based storage software and hardware solutions that will enable clients across multiple sectors, including retail, leisure, and hospitality, to more effectively identify and defend fraudulent slips, trips and falls claims."

CYBER CRIME: ALARMING TIMES



Calibre's Steve Nelson (right) urges SMEs to re-examine anti cyber crime plans

British Chambers of Commerce figures reveal that 20% of businesses have been hit by cyber crime in the last 12 months. While large firms are usually the targets, SMEs are also extremely vulnerable says Steve Nelson, Operations Director of Calibre Secured Networks Ltd.

Cyber-crime is deadly and on the rise, and SMEs are in the sights of those criminals who inhabit a dark and dangerous digital underworld. Data from 2016 indicates that cyber breaches cost from £35,000 to £180,000 for small businesses. This might sound slight but it could spell the death knell for hundreds of small businesses existing on a financial knife-edge.

So why are SMEs vulnerable? Cost is an overriding concern - large corporates are able to invest in the latest, bespoke IT security solutions while SMEs often do not have the capital or resources for these. Consequently, they might lack the policies and procedures to protect their people and systems. Neither can they afford to train their people to the level necessary to deal with sophisticated cyber risk.

But of course, it shouldn't have to be this way and there are some basics that SMEs can implement, much of which revolves around people and processes. It's also about educating employees before even touching the technology. While no one should ever deserve to be hacked, almost daily incidences of poor practice highlight that people are always the weakest link and employees need to know security matters.

Simple tips include making sure that passwords are not left lying around and that strong passwords are adopted company-wide. Anti-virus software must be kept up-to-date and use basic encryption products. Training can help: employees can be shown how to spot phishing e-mails and better manage the web presence, and issued with some basic system configuration do's and don'ts that will all help.

Administration access to your systems should only be granted to select individuals. This can help limit exposure and the amount of damage a hacker can do if they are able to break into to an unprivileged account. Similarly, keep sensitive data, like payroll, out of the hands of anyone who doesn't need it to do their job.

The clock is also ticking for SMEs when it comes to tightening up their cyber protocols. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into force in May 2018, will strengthen and unify the safety and security of the information held by an organisation. This regulation coupled with the Cyber Security Directive, will see a further requirement for compliance for all UK businesses, forcing them to adapt, or even adopt new

approaches to the way they tackle both data and cyber security issues.

It will be incumbent upon business owners and managers to make sure that personal data is reasonably protected and an individual's privacy protected. The Cyber Security Directive will require providers of 'critical' digital services such as energy and banking to instigate 'appropriate security measures' relating to the detection and reporting of search engine and cloud computing breaches.

The internet is essential. Like any environment there are some safety rules. Protection doesn't have to cost the earth and can actually enhance your future prosperity. SMEs should not be bamboozled by corporate spin or taken for a ride with substandard products wrapped in jargon. Rather, they should be helped along the way if they are to defend themselves properly. After all, knowledge is power.

A good IT partner can help you manage your online presence in a safe, secure and compliant way. Check that they hold ISO 27001 among other relevant accreditations but also consider their experience in these matters – it always counts.

More at www.calibre-secured.net

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

ANITA BATH

Headteacher, Sacred Heart Catholic High School

What was your background prior to joining Sacred Heart school?

I left London University in the late 1980s determined not to be a teacher; the career my mother was equally determined, I would follow. However, after two years working outside of education, I began to realise that teaching was my calling; I wanted to make a difference to children's lives and share my passion for English. I have taught in several schools across the North East but prior to Sacred Heart, I had the great privilege of being the Deputy Headteacher of St Thomas More Catholic School in Blaydon.

What changes have taken place at Sacred Heart during the past 12 months?

There is no doubt that the past year has been eventful for Sacred Heart. The educational landscape is currently very turbulent and so staff and school leaders have worked very hard to embed all the curriculum changes and prepare our girls for new courses and examinations.

An ongoing project that has really taken off this year is our close association with The Royal Shakespeare Company. A highlight has been four performances of 'The Tempest' by The Royal Shakespeare Company in our school hall. This year our Drama department also led on the RSC's Learning and Performance Network, which culminated in Sacred Heart hosting the regional Shakespeare festival. Several of our girls performed Julius Caesar as part of this project, alongside over 100 children from five local schools. Two Sacred Heart students will now get the fantastic opportunity to perform at The Swan theatre in Stratford upon Avon this summer.

Can you highlight any key student accomplishments in that time?

Continuing the successes of the last two years, when six students gained places at Oxford and Cambridge, in January of this year, three students were thrilled to receive their offers in their applications to study at these institutions in 2017. Aoibh Bourke (Cambridge – Medicine), Minahil Mujahid (Oxford Medicine) and Zelna Weich (Cambridge – Geography). We wish them every success in their examinations in the summer.

Six of our students performed part of the Antigone play. This was filmed as is part of the Antione 25 project organised by The Centre for Hellenic Studies at Harvard University. Schools worldwide have each taken a few scenes and the project brings together these scenes, into a whole. The film links in with the students' study of Latin over the past year. Well done Tommi Otieno and Beth Kiddie (Year 13), Emily Huggins, Emily Robinson, Lucia Bowers and Holly Northmore (Year 9).

Congratulations also go to Elin Devine-Douglass in Year 10 who has once again won her category (violin) in the final of the prestigious Avison awards; and Meg McGrady now beginning her third term at the BRIT School.

Finally, Thomas Braun our Head of Languages has just been awarded a prestigious Inspirational Teacher Award from Oxford University. It is lovely to see a wonderful teacher recognised for all his hard work and dedication to his students.

How does a Sacred Heart education prepare students for life beyond school?

'Courage and Confidence', is the mantra we instil in our students. We

want our girls to leave us, ready to embrace all the challenges life will send them, with courage and determination. We believe that in tackling life's challenges, our students develop a real and deep confidence; the confidence to aim for what others might not think possible, the confidence in themselves to do what they know to be right, the confidence not to follow the crowd. We are currently working with Mollie Hughes who has just successfully ascended Everest from both sides: the youngest British climber to achieve this. Mollie speaks in school events and mentors our students. Her resilience and achievements embody the characteristics we want for our girls.

How much of an emphasis is there on extra-curricular activities?

School is about so much more than academic learning. It is about finding out what makes you unique and where your talents lie. Therefore, our staff run a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities: from chamber choirs and rock school, to a full orchestra; from netball and basketball to football. STEM subjects are very strong at Sacred Heart. The Science club is one of our most popular and girls have visited the Kielder Observatory as well as the Hadron Collider.

Our students also get the opportunity to participate in some exciting foreign trips. Last summer girls travelled to Kenya to volunteer in the Nairobi Sacred Heart School; they then spent time with the Masai Mara. Next summer two groups will head to Sri Lanka and Kenya respectively. We have strong links with our sister schools around the world and use these to provide students with life-changing trips and visits.

What do you consider to be the most important aspect of education?

A great education has the power to transform lives. It enables students to discover what is unique about themselves and then fulfil their tremendous potential. It should inspire self-belief as well as determination.

What changes have you seen in education during your tenure?

Too many. I began my career in the year the National Curriculum was introduced and there have been multiple changes since then, some good, many not.

And what changes would you like to see going forward?

Ensure that the changes made to our education system are founded on genuine educational research rather than the beliefs of political parties. Any new initiatives should be piloted, tested and reviewed before being imposed across the whole school system.

How do you think the forthcoming general election will affect education?

Hopefully, in a positive way. Education appears to be a key focus for all parties, in particular school funding. Whoever is elected, will need to ensure our schools are adequately financed in order to ensure a world class education for all.

Away from the office/classroom, how do you like to relax?

That is very easy to answer. Time spent with family, friends and dog walking along the Northumberland coast with my West Highland terrier Teddy.



NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY UNVEILS ITS STATE-OF-THE-ART BUSINESS CLINIC IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SANTANDER



Matt Hutnell, Director of Santander Universities UK and Professor Andrew Wathey CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University.

Northumbria University's highly successful Business Clinic has taken on a new dimension with a relocation to purpose-built, state-of-the-art premises in the heart of the city and a £150k boost from Santander Universities UK.

The Business Clinic is part of Northumbria University's award-winning Business School; recognised as Business School of the Year in 2015 and more recently the first North East Business School to win the Small Business Charter for services to SMEs.

The Clinic is an education scheme where students participate in a 'consultancy firm' to provide advice for clients. The free service is available to all types of businesses from SMEs and multinationals to charities, social enterprises and not-for-profit organisations. Students are encouraged to get to the root of the problem and deliver genuine solutions for real businesses.

To date, the Business Clinic has helped more than 600 students advise over 145 organisations including Northumbria Police, North West Ambulance Service, BALTIC Centre for

Contemporary Art, Greggs plc and Parker Hannifin. The University has invested over £800,000 to move the Business Clinic into its own 500 square metre premises on New Bridge Street. It has also secured support from Santander Universities UK to play an integral role in maximising the positive impact of the Clinic's activities. Through an annual donation of £50,000 per year for three years, the partnership will fund student placements and internships with clients.

Matt Hutnell, Director of Santander Universities UK, said: "Our purpose at Santander is to help people and businesses prosper. Initiatives such as the Business Clinic at Northumbria University are excellent examples of how this can be achieved, with students gaining an insight into the working world whilst at the same time helping to drive growth in local SMEs."

Northumbria is one of the largest universities in the UK with almost 34,000 students from 132 countries. Newcastle Business School is in the top 1% of business schools worldwide with a double accreditation from AACSB (the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business).

Professor Andrew Wathey CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University, said: "Creating dedicated premises for the Business Clinic and re-affirming our partnership with Santander brings another dimension to the award-winning work of the Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University.

"The support that the University has received from Santander will help the Business Clinic's work with individual students, giving them skills informed by cutting-edge business research and improving their chances of securing highly-desirable jobs."

If your organisation requires consultancy advice to tackle a particular problem or is seeking to grow, the Business Clinic at Newcastle Business School would be delighted to hear from you. Please email nb.consultancy-projects@northumbria.ac.uk or visit the website to find out more www.northumbria.ac.uk



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- An ethos which values and develops the uniqueness of every single girl



STEM Science Club



Sacred Heart Girls and Miss Kill
(Head of Physics) meeting Professor Higgs



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BRINGING UP TEENAGERS IS TOUGH

I am sure that, no matter how dim and distant our own teenage story may seem to be, we can all remember the pains and pangs of adolescence. The slammed doors, the sulks in the bedroom, the moans of "it's so unfair"; the emotional rollercoaster ride we endured has been a common experience for teenagers for a number of generations now.

There is one aspect of teenage life however which I think is different for youngsters these days, and it makes their teenage tribulations an order of magnitude more complex: mobile technology. There have been a number of studies recently on the impact these devices have had on the lives of youngsters and their findings make for uncomfortable reading. Sleepless nights, cyber bullying and sexting are a cocktail of ingredients guaranteed to give parents nightmares about the dangers that come with the uses of modern day technology. Stories in the media don't help; we are bombarded seemingly on a weekly basis about the evils of technology and how we are raising a generation of zombies, addicted to mobiles and unable to learn at school or conduct a civil conversation at home.

However, though there is no doubt that these are pressing concerns, the situation does need to be tempered with a degree of calm. Scares about the "youth of today" go back as far as Elvis Presley, when his gyrations on television were feared to be corrupting the teenagers of America. However, what makes our anxieties about today's youngsters more acute is the scale of the change between our social interactions back then and their online lives now.



Kieran McLaughlin

There's no doubt that technology presents a challenge. However opposing the situation we live with is as pointless as bemoaning the demise of the slide rule. We as teachers and parents need to educate children in the ways in which it is right and wrong to use their phones. In my school it is simple: pupils can use their phones to aid their learning in class if the teacher agrees; use of the phone in public places and in formal school time is forbidden. It is rarely a problem.

I would suggest at home similar rules apply. Of

course youngsters will want to spend more time than is healthy on their screens, just as in my day I wanted to watch too much television. That's where parenting comes in. It's up to us to let our children know when it's time to text and when it's time to chat, when we can converse on Facebook and when it's a face to face conversation that's needed.

And there's the rub. It is we as parents who make those ground rules and we don't do that purely in what we say. We set our expectations in how we behave. One of those many surveys I mentioned took a more interesting slant and asked youngsters about their parents' use of mobiles. Over a third of those surveyed reporting having to ask their parents to put down their phones, and half of those requests were unsuccessful. Unsurprisingly, the parents surveyed did not perceive the problem to the same extent.

I am sure there is more than a hint of truth in these findings. These pocket Pandora's boxes are infernally tempting and I know I am guilty of "just checking my emails" far too often. The challenge for us all is to practise rather than preach and establish the social values we want for our children by starting with ourselves. If we want our children to turn off, tune in to the real world and drop out of the virtual one, we need to have the discipline to do so as well.

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CHILDREN SHOULD EAT DIRT

By Ken James, Headmaster, Red House School

I often say children should eat dirt. I often get rather strange looks when saying this too. Whilst some might expect these controversial words to have come from the mouth of the formidable headmistress in Matilda, Miss Trunchbull, they seem a little surprised that the words are emanating from a pupil-centric headmaster of a respected independent school! I do, of course, say the words with the best of intentions. I also mean them both literally and metaphorically.

Recently, I went with a group of Year 10 pupils on their practice D of E expedition. I enjoy outdoor education and have worked in a number of different settings with a focus on the outdoors. However, I was a little disappointed to see on the kit list, hand sanitising gel. It's one of my pet hates and I was rather vocal about it. It's well publicised that hand sanitising gel is no more effective than soap and water but my main concern is that it kills beneficial bacteria and can have an effect on the immune system. I'm worried that in an over-sanitised world children will compromise their ability to fight disease. I'm sure there's plenty of evidence to the contrary (and with many of my parents being medical practitioners I am ready to stand corrected!) but mine is an opinion nonetheless which is also held by others.



What about metaphorically eating dirt? Well, children need to build up a tolerance to the challenges of life, just as they need to build up a tolerance to disease. Are we preparing a generation of young people who are adaptable and resilient to face an ever changing world? Do we, as adults, allow the children to take risks and learn from mistakes leading to greater levels of success?

www.redhouseschool.co.uk

The natural reaction of any parent is to keep their child safe. The safest option of all would be for children to do very little, but this in turn would lead to truncated development and a rather dull existence. When dealing with young people we need to be risk aware not risk averse. We need to help them overcome difficulties rather than 'helicopter' in each time to solve the problems for them.

I'm not one of life's natural risk takers. I don't particularly like standing on tall buildings, but attach a rope to a harness, fasten it securely around me and I'm pretty comfortable abseiling down most heights. I've worked a lot with children who are both climbing and abseiling. Once again, the safest option would be for them not to attempt the activities. However, managing and overcoming fear in the outdoors translates to everyday life. Learning to think rationally and assess risks easily helps the children to handle the challenges in more traditional school settings. Practical tips, for example learning to control ones breathing are also invaluable; how useful this would be in the run up to public examinations.

So, when I say children should eat dirt, I say it with a wry smile on my face. But if they're not eating dirt, please ensure they're facing their fears...with a safety rope attached!

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SOUTH NORTH CRICKET CLUB SPORTING DINNER

The 22nd South Northumberland CC sporting dinner was held recently at which a packed audience enjoyed tales from intrepid mountaineer Rebecca Stephens MBE and Rugby World Cup winner Will Greenwood MBE. The evening was a tremendous success with profits raised from the dinner helping to fund extensive junior development programmes which provide cricketing opportunities to all within the local community.





ALL-NEW MAZDA CX-5 AVAILABLE AT JENNINGS MAZDA



The all-new CX-5 model is available to pre-order at Jennings Mazda in Middlesbrough.

SUV customers looking for new levels of style, refinement and driving pleasure are pre-ordering the all-new CX-5 model at Jennings Mazda, part of the multi-award winning Jennings Motor Group.

Available at the Cargo Fleet Lane dealership in Middlesbrough from 30 June, the Mazda CX-5 compact SUV, which premiered at the Geneva Motor Show in March, starts from just £23,695 (on the road).

Ahead of the official launch date, customers are being invited to a VIP Test Drive Preview event at the Teesside-based showroom on Sunday 25 June, between 11am and 4pm.

At the event, customers will be able to see and test drive Mazda's latest CX-5 compact SUV model, as well as Mazda specialist drivers being on hand to accompany customers on test drives with the aim to deliver a personalised experience and detailed information about the latest car to join the popular Mazda family.

James Chorlton, franchise manager at Jennings Mazda in Middlesbrough, said; "The previous generation Mazda CX-5 proved very popular across Teesside and we're certain the all-new model will build on that success.

"The more refined interior and distinctive exterior are sure to be popular, and the improved handling

and driving experience will be immediately apparent for those taking a test drive.

"Perfect for families, and arriving just in time for summer, we can't wait to welcome our customers to the dealership for the VIP Test Drive Preview event to get behind the wheel for more adventures in the all-new Mazda CX-5!"

A product of Mazda's 'Jinba Ittai' - 'car-and-driver as one' philosophy, the sharply-styled all-new Mazda CX-5 delivers new levels of driver engagement and comfort for drivers in Middlesbrough. Noise and vibration within the cabin have been reduced, while steering, suspension and brakes have also been refined, helping deliver an engaging and comfortable driving experience.

The 10-model UK line-up features SE-L Nav and Sport Nav trim levels, and standard equipment includes LED headlights, auto power-folding door mirrors, dual zone climate control, DAB radio and a seven-inch colour touch-screen display with Mazda's integrated navigation.

At the top of the range, Sport Nav models are fitted with a power liftgate, plus a new head-up display

(HUD) that projects onto the windscreen (one of the first in its class to do so) and features Traffic Sign Recognition. Further features on the Sport Nav include a reversing camera, eight-way power adjustable driver's seat, Smart keyless entry, heated front leather seats and heated steering wheel. Other highlights include two new optional paint colours: Soul Red Crystal Metallic and Machine Grey Metallic.

Power comes from a range of SKYACTIV engines, available with Mazda's SKYACTIV-MT six-speed manual or SKYACTIV-Drive six-speed automatic transmissions. Mazda's intelligent i-ACTIV all-wheel drive (AWD) system can also be specified.

The Jennings Mazda dealership sells the entire range of new models, including the Mazda2, Mazda3, CX-3, MX-5, Mazda6 and all-new CX-5.

Customers can also take advantage of a range of aftersales facilities with a service, MOT, accident repair centre and parts department conveniently located on site at Middlesbrough.

For more information about the all-new Mazda CX-5 and other products and services available at the Jennings Mazda dealership, contact 01642 256655, or visit www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk



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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the all-new Mazda CX-5: Urban 35.8 (7.9) - 47.9 (5.9), Extra Urban 50.4 (5.6) - 61.4 (4.6), Combined 44.1 (6.4) - 56.5 (5.0). CO₂ emissions (g/km) 152 - 132.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing. These are provided for comparability purposes only and may not reflect your actual driving results.

Model shown: all-new Mazda CX-5 175ps AWD Sport Nav, OTR from £25,950. Model shown features optional Soul Red Crystal Metallic paint (£800). OTR price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, first registration fee, 3 year or 60,000 mile warranty and 3 years' European Roadside Assistance.

JOE MCELDERRY COMES HOME FOR CHRISTMAS



Joe McElderry will return home this Christmas in his celebrated and critically acclaimed role in the sparkling family musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. The musical will run at Newcastle's prestigious Metro Radio Arena for a strictly limited Christmas season from 19th – 31st December 2017.

This special Christmas homecoming will complete Joe's hugely successful year touring the UK playing the title-role in his first major theatrical appearance which has been met with Five Star reviews and standing ovations up and down the country. It also follows the release of his new recording of the 'Joseph' soundtrack which reached the top of the Amazon Musical Soundtrack Charts and also his top 5 entry in the official charts with new hit single *Gloria*, released

last month, as well as the announcement of his highly anticipated fifth album *Saturday Night at the Movies*.

Joe said: "I am so excited to be bringing this wonderful show back home for Christmas! I have had an amazing year touring with *Joseph* so far and we have had fantastic audiences, so to bring it back to the North East in Newcastle over Christmas is very special."

This vibrant and exciting retelling of the biblical story about Joseph, his eleven brothers and the coat of many colours sings out to young and old alike with a score which is crammed wall to wall with hits, including *Jacob and Sons*, *Close Every Door* and of course, *Any Dream Will Do*.

SISTER ACT SET TO TAKE NEWCASTLE THEATRE ROYAL BY STORM

Alexandra Burke will make a triumphant return to Newcastle Theatre Royal when she stars as 'Deloris Van Cartier' in the divine musical comedy *Sister Act* playing Mon 19 – Sat 24 Jun '17.

Alexandra wowed Theatre Royal audiences as 'Rachel Marron' in the smash hit *The Bodyguard* in 2015 and is joined in the all new critically acclaimed production by Joanna Francis as 'Michelle', Jon Robyns as 'Eddie', Karen Mann as 'Mother Superior' and Rosemary Ashe as 'Sister Mary Lazarus'.

Directed and choreographed by Craig Revel Horwood – best known as a judge on BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing*- *Sister Act* is based on the smash hit movie starring Whoopi Goldberg and Maggie Smith and tells the hilarious story of Deloris Van Cartier, a disco diva whose life takes a surprising turn when she witnesses a murder. Under protective custody and disguised as a nun, Deloris helps her fellow sisters find their voices as she unexpectedly rediscovers her own.

Alexandra Burke originally rose to fame after winning the fifth series of *The X Factor*. Her debut number one single *Hallelujah* sold over one million copies in the UK, a first for a British female soloist.

She is to perform the role of 'Deloris Van Cartier' at all evening performances whilst at the matinee performances, the role will be played by Joanna Francis.

Tickets are available from £19.50 and can be purchased online, by telephone or from the Theatre Royal Box Office.



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NORTHERN COUNTRY QUEEN RELEASES DEBUT ALBUM

Several years in production, the newly-named, Northern Country Queen, Chloe Chadwick, is preparing to take country-american music not only by storm, but to a whole new level, with the release of her debut album, 'Dustbowl Jukebox.'

Chloe, who originates from the Potteries, has been in the Toon for nearly a decade and finding love, employment and a blossoming music career – she's now living the dream.

Having released her self-titled, four track EP, in 2015, the impending album is a long time coming and is eagerly anticipated in numerous quarters. With ten tracks, two from the EP included, it features her latest single, 'Love Will Find A Way' alongside favourites like 'Big River' and 'Plain Old Jane.'



RETURN OF THE MAC

Danny Mac is to star as Joe Gillis in the forthcoming UK and Ireland tour of Andrew Lloyd Webber's award-winning musical *Sunset Boulevard* playing Newcastle Theatre Royal Mon 9 – Sat 14 Oct '17.

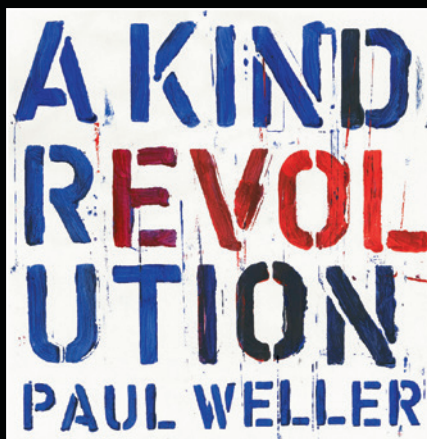
Most recently, Danny Mac captured the nation's hearts and received overwhelming support during his incredible time on BBC1's *Strictly Come Dancing* making it all the way to the final.

One of the all-time great musicals, Andrew Lloyd Webber's Tony Award-winning is a compelling story of romance and obsession, based on Billy Wilder's legendary film, with Don Black and Christopher Hampton's wonderful book and lyrics.

RECORD OF THE MONTH - PAUL WELLER 'A KIND REVOLUTION'

Approaching his 60th Birthday and seemingly not content to rest on his laurels, Paul Weller releases this, his 13th solo studio album.

Weller is known as a prolific songwriter and his musical output in recent years has been extraordinary with rumours of his next album already in the can! For the time being though, *A Kind Revolution* is a pulsating offering which continues his late career renaissance. As ever, it's an amalgamation of all his varied musical influences from soul, jazz and R&B to folk and gospel. Two real stand out tracks include the stonking opener "Woo Se Mama" and the contemplative "Long Long Road." Joining the ranks are a host of guest stars, from titans of soul PP Arnold & Madeleine Bell to Boy George who features on the funk-laden "One Tear." With age comes wisdom and The Modfather is once more in fine form here. Weller is also set to play live at the Metro Radio Arena in Newcastle on February 24th 2018. Much life in the old dog yet.



WHAT'S ON THIS JUNE?

Anastacia
June 1

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

The Curious Incident of the Dog
in the Night-Time
June 1-10

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Stand By Me
June 3

Sunderland Empire T: (0844) 871 7627
www.atgtickets.com

Ricky Gervais
June 5-6

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Under Milk Wood
June 13-17

The People's Theatre T: (0191) 265

The ELO Experience
June 14

Sunderland Empire T: (0844) 871 7627
www.atgtickets.com

Kraftwerk 3-D
June 14

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

Stand Up, Stand Up
June 14-17

Northern Stage T: (0191) 230 5151
www.northernstage.co.uk

Sister Act
June 19-24

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Dreamboats & Petticoats
June 19-24

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 265 5020
www.atgtickets.com

Jackson Browne
June 21

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

Mrs Brown's Bots
June 22-25

Metrorado Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradoarena.co.uk

Austen's Women
June 25

The Custom's House T: (0191) 454 1234
www.customshouse.co.uk

The Railway Children
June 26 – July 1

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
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**ANTHONY MARSHALL
EXHIBITION PREVIEW AT
BLAGDON GALLERY**

Blagdon Gallery were proud to host the preview of their latest Exhibition of new original paintings and limited edition prints by one of the North East's most renowned artists Anthony Marshall. Anthony was on hand to discuss his latest works and give a painting demonstration as to how he creates his magnificent works depicting both the beautiful scenery of Northumberland and the wonderful urban environments of our region. The exhibition runs daily throughout May and June at Blagdon Gallery at the Milkhope Centre.



TONY MARSHALL - RIVER TYNE ARTIST



Anthony Marshall is a fine example of the quality of North East artists in the region, of which there are plenty.

His particular forte is painting with acrylics and his favourite subject is the River Tyne and its surrounding landmarks. Married to Heather with two sons, Anthony has been an artist for as long as he can remember, "I remember the Doctor saying when I was very young, he liked the rockets I used to do and it went from there. When I was about 14, I recall painting a picture of a Golden Eagle for my dad which was much appreciated. As a result I stayed faithful to art and was retained in the A stream at school constantly," he observes.

The idea of going to college never occurred to him, so he got into green keeping with Whitley Bay golf course and progressed to Blyth Valley Borough Council and at the same time he attended night classes, where the art teacher told him he must go to college. Tony didn't feel that was worth it and felt he wouldn't make any money from his art as a result. He did achieve a GCE at that time but the

Art Teacher advised him there was a possibility he could attend the Royal College of Art.

Like most of us, Tony was earning a wage and felt the security of that and the fact he had just met his future wife, prevented him from doing that, "I didn't really take my art all that seriously at that time but following some contract employment issues, I realised I should become much more involved with the art," he advises.

Tony also has been pushing the umbrella as he says, over the last two years by expanding his work into oils. It's the acrylics which are his prevalent love though. His interest is in colour and acrylics are the best medium to satisfy his interest. His inspiration comes from the great impressionist artists and mainly Pierre Bonard a founder member of the post-impressionist movement.

In 2018, there is a highly prestigious event entitled, "The Great Exhibition of the North' where all

creative mediums will be focussed upon at events and exhibitions throughout the north. Tony is currently working on projects for the exhibition. Institutes, galleries and individuals will have the opportunity to promote creativity from sculpture to painting to architecture as well as many other creative endeavours.

Sponsorship will play a vital role for the event and any organisations who feel they would like to help with sponsorship and who feel it would be beneficial, would be most welcome to the organisers, to make this event as spectacular as possible.

As a young man, Tony and some friends did the seven capitals which include Paris, when he worked as a greenkeeper and while they went on the tour bus around the French Capital, Tony sought out the Louvre and the impressionist section. It demonstrates the artist's love of his medium which has driven his art all his life.

EXPANSION AT COMMISSION AN ARTIST



Gregory Nowicki



Lauren Sparks



Claire Hufford



Due to the success of our UK operations, we have expanded the team and officially launched new Operations in the USA last month. We have been in operation for over 7 years and have been helping USA clients for a while now and so the natural thing to do was to launch in the USA.

"After supplying artwork to a number of American clients and bringing on board a number of American artists, the USA was the next natural move in our strategic plans.

I was also thrilled to recruit the experienced Gregory Nowicki to not only help with the launch in the USA but to join the global team as our Chief Operating Officer."

–Helen Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

We provide bespoke artwork to suit your needs, ranging from pencil drawings, oil paints, sculptures, installations, to name a few. We haven't come across anything yet that we can't do!

We proactively manage the commission, so you are in safe hands. We are not afraid to solve the hard problems that everyone else avoids. You just need to tell us what you want and we will take care of everything!

"I am very pleased to join the team at Commission an Artist as their Chief Operating Officer. I strongly believe that working in many diverse industries has been an asset that has made me very attractive to the companies I have worked for. This post is a great responsibility and a great opportunity to

bring to the USA a product and experience that will not disappoint you. I assure you I will work day by day for Commission an Artist to deliver the very best product to our new market."

–Gregory Nowicki, Chief Operating Office Europe & North America

We are also proud to introduce our new website for our US customers. We recognize the need to supply our customers with information and services online, this new website provides a number of tools which will support our customers and artists to make doing business with us easier.

We are excited to bring your one-of-a-kind masterpiece to life. Visit here to know more about our services. www.commissionanartist.com.

Further additions to the team include:

Claire Hufford – our Senior Commissions Manager and Interior Design Art expert, who we are very privileged to have on board. With her background in Art and Interior Design she is the perfect fit for our team. She is currently busy helping existing clients with their commissions and helping Interior Designers on a global basis to satisfy their art demands.

Lauren Sparks – Director of Global Hospitality. Lauren is responsible for helping our hospitality sectors, so she ensures our hotels, restaurants, pubs are very well looked after and ensures unique artwork is created just for them. Her previous experience has involved helping people with their yachts and villas in Cape Town.

"I am extremely proud of my team at Commission an Artist and we now have the full spectrum of skills needed to push the firm throughout the world. My dream of helping artists and customers is firmly on the right path." Helen Johnson, CEO

Back in the UK it is still very much business as usual with a new revamped site giving you further information and galleries of our previous commissions and artists. If you would like any piece of artwork for any occasion just get in touch to COMMISSION AN ARTIST!

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an artist**

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GENDER-SPECIFIC TRAVEL POLICIES

Sexist and unnecessary, or pragmatic and essential?

By Anne Bromley - Joint Managing Director Travel Bureau

The very idea that female travellers might require more safeguards than men as they traverse the world closing international trade deals might cause an outpouring of fury from some. Sadly, however women are more susceptible to certain risks when travelling, especially alone and in a foreign country.

Isn't it right then that we should be considering the wellbeing of our female workforce as part of our business travel policies?

Women travelling for business are more vulnerable, not because they are less capable, or less skilled, but because of the perception that they are physically less able to defend themselves. If you were a pickpocket, would you choose a 6-foot broad-shouldered male as your next victim, or a petite lady? It's not rocket science, and neither is it misogynistic to point it out.

When it comes to health, there are some specific risks associated with overseas travel such as the Zika virus, which only affects female travellers, particularly those pregnant or considering starting a family.

The question then is; do we need policies tailored to gender? Or should we have an overarching travel policy, which seeks to provide maximum safeguards for all our employees? It's a huge topic companies need to address. Travel policies exist so businesses can deliver value, security, efficiency and equality of service. It's obvious then that we should seek to ensure that such policies, applied universally, deliver the best outcomes for employers and employees alike.

Some issues arising from business travel do affect certain groups more than others. Petty, non-violent, crime, is the most commonly occurring risk with young, elderly and female travellers at



greatest risk because they're "easy prey". The other two most common risks for business travellers, road traffic accidents and food poisoning, are universal, and can strike any traveller at any time; they are not specific to gender, sexuality, religion or ethnicity.

By and large, here in the UK, women are treated equally and with respect, readily accepted in a business world historically dominated by men. But in some parts of the world, this is not yet the case, so travelling overseas can lead to greater risks including gender-specific cultural, religious and social differences. These cultural differences also cross over to members of the LGBT community, which should also be borne in mind. Researching local customs and cultural difference in advance to ensure all travellers arrive suitably informed, attired and equipped to avoid causing offence is key to any travel policy.

Other considerations, on arrival, might be less relevant to all travellers, but it doesn't hurt to ensure that everyone bears them in mind. Avoiding public transport, especially after dark and not walking alone, particularly in an unfamiliar city, although most relevant

to vulnerable travellers, is good practice for all. Researching events due to take place which may present a challenge, impacting not only on a traveller's ability to follow their schedule but, ultimately affect their productivity and success, is also a good idea.

Not everybody feels equally confident and happy as a solo traveller. Travel policies should reflect this and offer a degree of flexibility to meet the needs of individual travellers. We don't all feel comfortable dining alone in a restaurant, so ensure that hotels offer an in-room dining service, or perhaps the opportunity to dine with other solo travellers in a similar situation. Others may have concerns about using local transport links, so proximity to final destination is an important consideration.

These simple straightforward approaches can make the world of difference to a traveller – especially one who feels vulnerable, whatever their gender, physicality, ethnicity, sexuality or age. Implementing the right policy for your business will impact on recruiting, retention, willingness to travel and trip outcomes. There is a clear link between the traveller experience, productivity and, ultimately, business growth. When drafting or updating your policy, consider the needs of all stakeholders, involve a panel to include a diverse group of your workforce and solicit their opinion. When recruiting the best in the marketplace, your travel policy could be what stands you out from your competitors!

For more information on Travel Bureau's corporate travel services, call 0191 285 0346, email consulting@travelb.co.uk or visit www.travelbcorporate.com



OUT & ABOUT - GRAVESEND



When I wrote two months ago about Letchworth Garden City as an alternative to London hotels, I felt I should also mention another town with good quality accommodation and a view of the River Thames.

Midweek rooms in London of good quality start around £180, even in a Premier Inn. But I had an excellent suite of three rooms to myself, overlooking the river, for £120 including a good breakfast, and only 22 minutes by High Speed 1 train from St. Pancras (which is right next door to Kings Cross).

If I was looking for a family break close to London but without the capital's prices, I would seriously consider Gravesend. Don't let the name put you off. It's where the river opens out into an estuary, with Tilbury over the other side of the river by ferry, with its interesting Tudor fort which has been used to defend the river until WW2. It was at Tilbury Fort that Queen Elizabeth, in 1588, rallied her troops against the Spanish Armada with the words "I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too!"

As well as visiting London itself, there are interesting places such as Rochester and Chatham Dockyard nearby, and shopping centres like Lakeside (on the north side) and Bluewater (on the south side) for those interested in that kind of thing.

Don't neglect the attractions of Gravesend itself though. The Guru Nanak Gurdwara is one of the largest Sikh temples in Europe and welcomes

visitors – indeed all seekers after truth – particularly at weekends. It's a short walk from the town centre, but best to avoid all tobacco and alcohol on the way. The Clock Tower is famous locally, and has just been restored fully at a cost substantially more than the £679,20 it cost in 1887 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The information panels state that the Tower is modelled on the lantern spire of Newcastle Cathedral, which was built in 1448. I did not know Newcastle Cathedral was that ancient, but having checked subsequently that is indeed true.

My second visit to Gravesend this year saw me staying at the Clarendon Royal Hotel, which is on the riverside, a couple of hundred yards from the Port of London Authority Control Centre. Staff there monitor and direct all shipping on the Thames. Close by is the large New Tavern Fort which is now part of a large park, and was interesting to wander around in. There are lots of ancient pubs in the older quarter of the town, including the Three Daws which is a pub adjacent to the Town Pier for Tilbury, which has existed since around 1450 with the same name.

Gravesend was celebrating 400 years since Princess Pocahontas, of the Powhatan tribe of what is now Virginia, USA, arrived in the town on her way back to America, and sadly died there and was buried



at St. George's Church. I attended a ceremony in the church attended by many guests from the USA and enjoyed a sumptuous buffet in the Mayor's Parlour afterwards. I even met three chiefs from Native American Indian tribes, shown in the picture underneath the statue of Pocahontas. The inadequate Disney film had her remaining in Virginia at the end of the story, but she actually came to England, was presented at Court, and died in Gravesend on 21 March 1617. I also attended a theatrical production the same evening until I was totally Pocahontased out!

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LET THERE BE CRUMBS



One of the North East's leading tearooms has joined forces with a multi award-winning pâtissier, in a unique collaboration.

Let There Be Crumbs, at Sunderland's Roker Hotel, has partnered with Andrew Blas – former Executive Pastry Chef at London's Hotel Café Royal and captain of the UK Pastry World Cup team 2017 - in his first solo venture, Proper Patisserie.

From this Summer, Andrew's exclusive range of hand crafted cakes will be available alongside Let There Be Crumbs' new menu of breakfasts, sandwiches and ice creams.

Andrew, originally from Roker and now based at Houghton-le-Spring, is one of the UK's most highly skilled and regarded pastry chefs.

He trained under Benoit Blin – judge on TV's Bake Off: Crème de la Crème and Chef Pâtissier at Raymond Blanc's two Michelin-starred Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, at Oxfordshire – before later in his career taking the reins at Hotel Café Royal.

Andrew is an accomplished chocolatier, a Hotel Olympia silver medal winner and was the first person to co-brand chocolate with the luxury brand Valrhona.

He has also presented pastry master classes at the BBC's Good Food Cakes and Bakes Show and worked closely with Salon du Chocolat in London.

His collaboration with The Roker's Let There Be Crumbs – owned by Tavistock Hospitality – marks his return to the region and the launch of his own brand Proper Patisserie.

Andrew, whose work has taken him around the world, said he is looking forward to showcasing Proper Patisserie in his home town.

"The Roker is without a doubt Sunderland's best loved venue," he said. "Let There Be Crumbs has a superb reputation for quality and I know my pâtisserie will sit beautifully alongside its menu."

MALMAISON NEWCASTLE UNVEILS STUNNING NEW BAR

Leading boutique hotel Malmaison Newcastle has announced that it has completely refurbished its Chez Mal bar following significant investment, reaffirming its status as one of the go-to destination bars on Newcastle's iconic quayside.

In keeping with the style Malmaison is famous for, the renovation reflects the elegance of the 122-bedroom hotel, which has welcomed celebrities from around the world.

Panelled walls line the new luxurious bar area, and are met with planted ceiling rafts that bring a soft, natural feel to the space. Comfortable suede and leather seating surrounds the low tables to form "mini lounges", adding an intimate, relaxed feel to the venue, while stunning, crown-shaped feature lighting creates a more modern vibe.

Reeded glass screens and floor to ceiling curtains divide the space to create privacy, making it a perfect option for private meetings or parties.

Located next to the brasserie on the first floor of the hotel, the stylish bar will offer the fantastic Malchemy cocktail menu featuring a vibrant mix of cocktails, as well as bubbles by the bucket load, eclectic craft beers and delicious Mal bar snacks.

General Manager at Malmaison Newcastle, Richard Lockstone, said: "The space has been transformed into a romantic destination bar that oozes luxury and elegance. With rich textures, ambient lighting and private seating areas, it will give our customers a sophisticated yet comfortable setting to enjoy quality food and drinks."





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SUNDAY LUNCH FIT FOR (LOCAL) ROYALTY!

By Michael Grahamslaw



Crathorne Hall Hotel has a history of accommodating the discerning guest. Over the years, the venue has played host to politicians, socialites and even royalty.

Former visitors include the likes of Sir Anthony Eden, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Harold Macmillan, John Cleese and the late Queen Mother – none more distinguished though than Lisa's parents Joyce and Tommy! Being retired folk, they don't venture too far these days though were more than happy to accompany us to North Yorkshire for a splendid Sunday Lunch.

Set in 15 acres of prime real-estate in Yarm, Crathorne Hall is a stately and imposing country house which boasts 37 well-appointed bedrooms. The property was originally built for the Dugdale family in 1906 and today evokes memories of a golden age where Edwardian nobility rubbed shoulders in its famous corridors.

Steeped in history, there's an irresistible charm about the place, particularly in the 2AA rosette restaurant which does a fine line in traditional British cuisine. Called "The Leven" due to its close proximity to Teeside's Leven Valley, this old dining room has a special atmosphere and affords spectacular views over the hotel's manicured lawns and surrounding grounds.

On arrival, we were greeted cheerily in true North Yorkshire style and shown to our grand circular table. In keeping with the rest of the hotel, the dining area is impeccably furnished and Tommy – a former master plasterer himself – was blown away by the high gold gilt ceilings and ornate cornicing.



The food proved tantalising too as we were soon to discover. Having grown acquainted with a nice, rich burgundy our starters arrived. Lisa went for the Crayfish cocktail with baby gem lettuce and brown bloomer whilst I tucked into the Country-style pork pate with toasted brioche, picallili dressing and a sassy mustard cress.

Joyce and Tommy have a penchant for plainer, simpler fayre and instead raised a spoon to an excellent roast tomato soup. This came with garlic croutons and was signed off by an artistic spiral of basil pesto. It's worth mentioning that Crathorne Hall has a longstanding association with good food so our expectations were certainly high and we were not to be disappointed here.

Four great starters were followed up by four rounds of the traditional roast. Lisa and her parents both went for the Roast Sirloin of Beef which came with Yorkshire pudding, roast potato and seasonal veg whilst I deviated from norm with the Pot Roast Chicken served on a bed of fondant potato. Sometimes quite bland, this was given real flavour thanks to the addition of the caramelised pan juices. Indeed the meat was cooked exquisitely, the veg fresh and crunchy and we all agreed that this was a Sunday Lunch in the top echelon.

We then moved onto dessert which posed a serious threat to my summer diet plans. "Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels" once quipped Kate Moss who clearly hasn't tried the Chocolate Tart at Crathorne Hall which came with a dollop of orange marmalade ice cream.

Teas & coffees rounded off a truly memorable day yet we couldn't leave without a quick tour of the Hotel's magnificent gardens. There's just a real tranquillity about the place which soothed some of the executive tension ahead of another busy working week.

Northern Insight is gaining much interest and traction within the Teesside region and this is one of the most outstanding hotels in the region. Their polished food and drink offering is unquestionably a real strength and we'll definitely be back for more soon. A fabulous spot for entertaining "The Outlaws!"



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**ALLOUT
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LANGUEDOC & ROUSSILLON

With summer holidays fast approaching, many might be thinking of a couple of weeks in the South of France.

Provence is still the most popular area with beautiful scenery, almost guaranteed good weather and a seemingly permanent scent of lavender, thyme and expensive sophistication hanging in the air. It can also be extremely busy with more British accents than French.

For a change, why not turn the other way and head west towards the Spanish border. This is the area of Languedoc and Roussillon. Maybe not as swanky as the French Riviera but certainly full of charm and very typically Mediterranean. Here, the landscape is somewhat wilder and more rugged, the weather is equally good and with a more genuine French feel to it it makes for an excellent holiday destination. Oh, and there are vines stretching in every direction!

Although this was the first part of France to be introduced to vine-growing and wine-making by the Romans, its recent reputation as a wine producer has been for quantity rather than quality. When France went through its industrial revolution and railways reached this south western corner, it quickly became a vast area of production of light red wines to satisfy the needs of the industrialised north. The hillside vineyards planted by the Romans were now eclipsed by massive

swathes of vineyards planted on the wide coastal plain. Here, a combination of undemanding grape varieties and huge yields, four or five times that seen in top quality producing areas, resulted in wine so ordinary that it often had to be bolstered by more robust imports from Algeria and adjacent Spain. This was where the European Wine Lake was born. The co-operative movement was, and still is, very important here and still today the vast majority of vine growers, smallholders in the main, have absolutely no experience of wine-making techniques.

By the 1970's Languedoc/Roussillon was regularly producing 10% of the total global wine production but, in the following decade, as French consumption of basic Vin de Table plummeted, it became clear that there was no sustainable future for the type of wine that the region's economy was based on. Over the following 30 years the area has been slowly transforming itself from a region where thousands of small vigneron were producing wine that nobody wanted to drink into one where smaller numbers of growers are producing wines of medium to high quality that the region is demonstrably capable of producing.

This is very much a region based on red wine

although small amounts of rosé and increasingly interesting whites are now being made. For the reds the traditional variety is the Carignan and the region, because of its long history of grape growing, has some of the oldest vines anywhere. Sometimes a little tough, the Carignan provides excellent structure and in recent years the introduction of Rhône varieties such as Grenache, Mourvèdre and especially Syrah (Shiraz) has improved the wines beyond all recognition. Try the wines from the following areas – Corbières, Fitou, Minervois, Saint-Chinian and Pic Saint Loup.

For rosé, look to the Grenache to produce dry and elegant styles that can have a real Provençal feel to them. The whites tend to be a mixture of local varieties, especially Picpoul and Clairette, as well as "imported" varieties such as Grenache Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. Where modern temperature controlled fermentation is used these can be very exciting indeed.

It is a long and slow process however, and much of the wine production can still have somewhat of a rustic feel to it, but bit by bit modernization both in the vineyards, wineries and marketing will surely get the region the recognition it fully deserves.

Further information about the aforementioned wine can be found at www.richardgrangerwines.co.uk or instore at Richard Granger Fine Wine Merchants, West Jesmond Station, Lyndhurst Avenue, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 3HH



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REPORTING FROM ROKER

Michael Grahamslaw stumbles across a jewel in the Sunderland coastline.



The Sunderland coastline is a lovely part of the world. With its sandy beaches, wide promenades and seaside idylls, it has been synonymous with holidaymakers for centuries.

The seafront retains a faint air of Victorian grandeur even today, particularly at The Roker Hotel one of the longest-standing hotels in the area. A handsome seafront property, The Roker is a firm local favourite which offers breathtaking panoramic views across the bay and its meandering pier.

Inside, there's 43 bedrooms and they're all very tastefully furnished. Tranquillity prevails with neutral shades combining with rich fabrics and comfy bedding. Ours also came complete with a hi-spec, modern bathroom and that highly desirable sea view.

Another lovely touch was the welcome pack-cum-newspaper left in the room. Dubbed "The Roker Reporter" this was in the style of an old school broadsheet and would become our almanac for the duration of our stay. It outlined the history of the hotel and also the wealth of amenities and attractions on-site and nearby. As it turns out, The Roker Hotel has a rich heritage in hospitality and was originally conceived as accommodation for wealthy travellers in the 19th century. Its original features were even designed by distinguished local architect John Dobson back in 1842. Much has changed since then though as we were soon to discover.

Today the Hotel boasts a diverse food and drink

offering where guests can take advantage of not one, but three different venues. How about that! First up is the "Let There Be Crumbs" cakery and tea rooms. Sumptuous in décor, this is a sunny haven of soft colours where one can take tea or coffee and indulge in a decadent array of sweet treats. They've recently expanded their list of specialisms with a brand new ice cream parlour which serves up cones and sundaes and champions local produce in the Italian gelato style.

Now that's all well and good, but can a man get a proper drink around here? Fear not, he certainly can! In fact, The Roker Hotel even plays home to the Poetic License distillery. The sleek, wood-panelled bar area radiates an easy opulence and houses a 500-litre copper pot still which is used to craft all of Poetic License's award-winning spirits. Woweeeee!

This is clearly an establishment with a finger on the nation's pulse as there's a big emphasis on gin – many people's current tippie of choice. The general ethos is to produce small batch, artisan spirits with bold flavours and a commitment to quality. Our imaginations were immediately captured and we couldn't wait to sample the wares. Luckily, Marketing Manager Grace Noon was on hand and was more than happy to provide us with a crash course. "This could get messy" we thought as

she racked up a series of different gins and their corresponding tonics. We glugged our way through a range of different flavours, botanicals and spices notably the "strawberries & cream picnic gin" and the winter-warming "mulled fruit & juniper fireside gin". I wouldn't call myself a proper gin connoisseur but this was an eye-opening experience for me and I was astonished by the creativity and dedication to the craft.

Feeling a touch glassy-eyed we were in need of some sustenance and sought it in the Roker's Italian farmhouse ristorante. This exudes a homely rustic charm and delivers irresistibly simple pizza pasta dishes alongside seafood and from the grill options. Lisa opened with the classic Bruschetta Classica whilst I went for the steamed mussels which swam in a heavenly broth of tomato, chilli and garlic. This was followed up by a superb Pollo Valdostana and an incendiary Pizza Diavolo freshly baked in their wood burning oven.

The following morning, we breakfasted royally overlooking the sea and were left to reflect on an overnight stay which exceeded all expectations. A sense of quality underpins the whole place but also a quirkiness too. Much thought has clearly went in to the offering and the team at The Roker Hotel have got it bang on. Sun, sea and super service – we left in high spirits!

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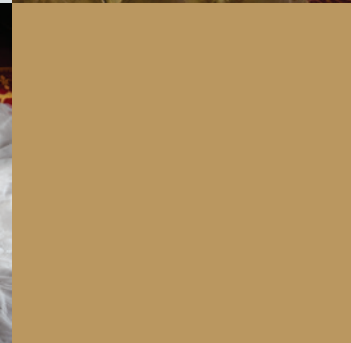
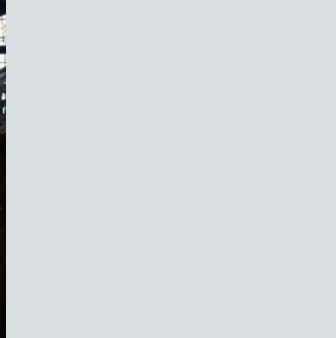
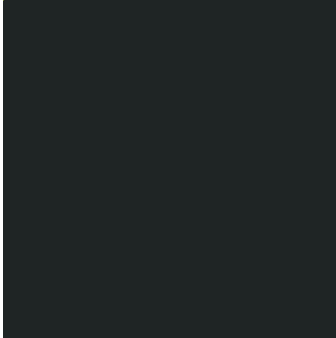
ARCH 2 BREWPUB AND KITCHEN LAUNCH PARTY

Transformed from an old tyre garage into Ouseburn's latest exciting development, Arch 2 Brewpub and Kitchen opened its doors on 19th May 2017.

Situated on Stepney Bank, the venue is set in an arch under Byker Bridge, and includes an open plan bar, café, beer garden and microbrewery that accommodates up to 80 people.

Lovingly restored by Newcastle Brewing Ltd directors Leo and Mike Bell, and Dil and the Bear owner Dilaila Galbraith, this joint venture is open daily serving meals until early evening and drinks until closing at 11pm.





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yolo TOWNHOUSE VIP LAUNCH PARTY

Newcastle City Centre's newest bar and eatery hosted a glittering VIP Launch event to celebrate its arrival on High Bridge Street.

Guests arrived to a Champagne reception and had the chance to win a £500 bottle for themselves, as each invitation for the exclusive evening contained a key which could have unlocked the bubbly prize.



Canapes were served throughout the night and guests were entertained by a DJ on the ground floor (yolo Main Bar) and acoustic act on the first floor (The Parlour). The bar's second floor roof terrace was also open for those looking to catch the last of the sunshine before nightfall, complete with heaters and its own undercover bar.

Now open to the general public, yolo Townhouse can be found at 14 High Bridge Street and is open seven days a week from 8am to 2am. Everything from morning coffees and breakfast/brunch, to lunch, dinner and casual cocktails are served across three floors.



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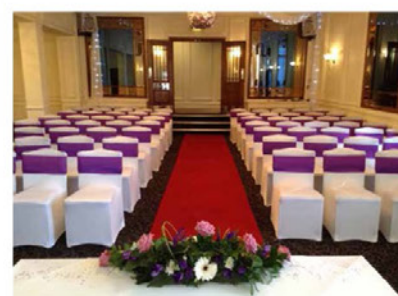
Come along on 26th February to our Wedding open day 12 noon to 4pm and we will be happy to help and discuss your requirements

Contact us

The Caledonian Hotel
64 - 68 Osborne Road
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 2AT

events@caledonian-hotel-newcastle.com

Tel: 0191 281 7881





NORTH EAST PHARMACY SECTOR UPDATE

Pharmacy professionals from across the North East attended the sector's annual regional event to give insight and updates from expert advisors. More than 60 people attended the annual North East Pharmacy Sector Update, which is held jointly by law firm Sintons, Lloyds Bank and RMT, all of whom have highly-respected healthcare teams and work extensively in the pharmacy sector. The event, held at Newcastle Falcons' Kingston Park, heard from expert advisors to the profession, including Chris Vowles and Tony Evans from Christie & Co, who gave an insight into the effects of funding cuts and their implication on valuations, as well as analysing the current market situation with regard to sales and acquisitions.



BALTIC 1000

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THE HOLIDAY INN MEANS BUSINESS

By Michael Grahamslaw

Having an important business pitch South of the Tyne early one morning, I decided to hole up for the evening at the Holiday Inn Washington. This longstanding North East Hotel has always been a firm favourite of mine and caters well for the discerning business traveller.



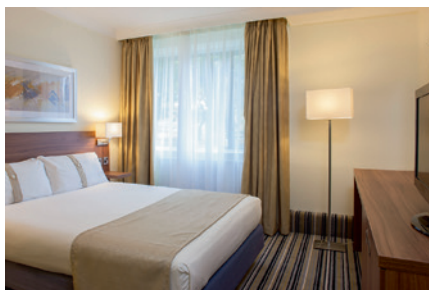
Of course belonging to a stable of impeccable credentials, the hotel offers both comfort and luxury and continues to go from strength to strength under the astute management of Paul Mandeir. Located just a stone's throw away from the A1's junction 64, the hotel is easily navigated and acts as a great basecamp from which to explore all of which Tyne & Wear has to offer.

Eager to avoid the teatime rush, I'd got down there nice and early was pleased to find a host of business facilities on site. The 5th and 6th floor executive rooms are all tastefully furnished and are also very well equipped which enabled me to play out the remainder of my working day.

My bolthole for the evening would include; a large writing desk, free high-speed internet, a flat-screen plasma TV (a man needs some background freeview entertainment), a comfy office desk chair (needs must for my dodgy piriformis), a modern-spec power shower and also enough tea and coffee to satisfy one media hack's latent caffeine addiction. Just the job.

Thoroughly content, I beavered away for a highly productive couple of hours before deciding to grab a bite in the hotel's in-house restaurant. En route, I bumped into aforementioned GM Paul, who also clocking off, joined me for a swift pre-dinner sharpener. (Birds of a feather and that)

Paul told me how the hotel continues to do well but also about their support of local charity Greenfingers. The charity supports children who use hospices throughout the UK by creating magical



outdoor spaces where they can relax and play with friends and family. Nominated as their charity partner until 2019, The Holiday Inn work closely with Greenfingers and unwaveringly support with fundraising events like cake sales, accumulator challenges and charity golf days. Together they hope to make a real difference to children and their families in local communities. What a great story.

"Traders" – the hotel's very own eatery is a lovely bright and airy dining room where guests can enjoy

modern British cuisine alongside international comfort food favourites. You get the choice of both the a la carte and the lounge menu and guests are free to mix and match as they fancy.

This was classic hotel fayre at its very best and I was seemingly spoilt for choice, settling in the end on the Tandoori chicken salad followed up by the obligatory 8oz Sirloin steak with peppercorn sauce and all requisite fixtures and fittings. As I knew from my recent Sunday lunch review, the food at the Holiday Inn is wholesome, tasty and wonderfully nourishing which was very much the case again here. In addition, the service was incredibly friendly and attentive throughout. There's a great team ethic underpinning the whole place which is a real credit to Paul.

Totally replete, I retired back to my quarters to have a quick browse of the papers before settling down for a serene night's sleep. The following morning, I practically leapt out of bed and bounded downstairs because – as you may know – Holiday Inn do one of the finest breakfasts in all the land. There's a broad selection of cooked items on the buffet alongside a range of continental classics, fresh baguettes and buttery pastries. Everything is uber-fresh and delicious and really provides a nice ballast for the day ahead.

Though it may not be your immediate choice, The Holiday Inn Washington has an awful lot going for it. If, like me, you're a travelling business executive or you're simply looking for a change of scene, this hotel is a quality outfit which cannot be overlooked.



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SUMMER, EXPANSION AND QUALITY SERVICE AT THE BLACKBIRD, PONTELAND



Summer is finally here and whether you're one for a gin and tonic in the sun or perhaps you're more of a real ale drinker, The Blackbird in Ponteland has your perfect summer drinking spot covered with an ample selection of both gins and real ales certain to quench any palate.

The Blackbird is rich in heritage as it was once part of Ponteland Castle which was destroyed in 1388. In 1935, experts uncovered an ancient tower, a beautiful Tudor fireplace and many other prehistoric objects which, due to restorations, can still be found in the pub today.

The Blackbird is at the pinnacle of traditional pubs in the North East. Located in the heart of Ponteland village, it boasts creative flair in the kitchen with an ever-changing seasonal menu.

Being able to provide an even higher level of standard to The Blackbird customers is a goal General Manager, Michael Downey is working towards. A veteran of 12 years within the catering industry, Michael understands the needs of the business and believes strongly that the Blackbird provides "quality, local and loyal" service to all customers.

Upon sitting down with Michael, it was clear that his role at The Blackbird is pivotal to their first-rate service. Much of the discussion spotlighted the ways in which Michael finds the General Manager position rewarding as he reiterates his appreciation for the praise and thankyou's he receives from customers.

"It's great being able to accommodate for all of The Blackbird customers, even if we're just leaving a dog bowl at the door. We serve a range of different ales at The Blackbird and I love being able to share with my customers local and regional ales. In terms of the ales we sell, I always take on board the



feedback I receive so I can accommodate new and exciting ales for everyone."

Offering a magnificent range of ales and gins is one of the unique elements of visiting The Blackbird for a drink. Boasting a generous range of 70 plus gins, you'd think it'd be hard to pick just one favourite, though this isn't the case for Michael. Even though he expresses his enjoyment for all of The Blackbird gins, he declares his favourite to be Sipsmith.

It's clear that customer satisfaction is essential to how Michael works, "The Blackbird I'd say sets itself aside from the usual pub fayre, we like to be

able to provide dining with a smile from both our customers and hardworking staff."

"It's nice to get to know the customers and being able to provide new and exciting twists on normal dishes brings a level of flare to our food you wouldn't find on the average pub menu".

As the conversation manoeuvres into the discussion of the future, there is talk of plans to expand and renovate The Blackbird kitchen: "There's already plans in motion and groundwork in place to expand The Blackbird kitchen. In doing so we'll be able to expand on the range of dishes we'll be able to offer.

"Not only will we have an extended kitchen for our chefs to work in, we're also excited to be able to expand the range of cooking techniques and standards of catering."

The Blackbird kitchen extension is a culmination of almost two years behind the scenes work from acquiring planning permission to putting together a strategy and plan.

The Blackbird is also home to their spacious Minstrel Gallery. The Minstrel Gallery is the perfect venue for hire to host private functions and family parties. As well as boasting the magnificent Minstrel Gallery, The Blackbird has a comfortable bar where both food & drinks are served plus the Tunnel Room dining area.

As the summer months roll around, it's time to start thinking about where your summer hot spot is going to be. Whether you're visiting for an ale or a gin and tonic after a nice stroll, The Blackbird is always happy to welcome new customers.

To book a table at Blackbird Ponteland, call now on 01661 822684 or visit the website.

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TWENTY YEARS OF 'FARMTASTIC' FUN AT WHITEHOUSE FARM CENTRE

Once the North East's largest egg producer, Whitehouse Farm Centre near Morpeth, is now best known and loved as one of our region's top tourist attractions. 2017 is a huge milestone for the centre as they celebrate their 20th anniversary, and everyone is invited to the big birthday bash this July!

In 1997, with egg sales in decline, the Slater family decided to diversify and opened a small Farm Park. They could hardly have imagined where the new initiative would take them and how different the Farm itself would be in 20 years' time.

Originally a poultry farm, home to thousands of chickens, Whitehouse Farm's animal population is far more varied these days, with a zoo licence granted in 2008 allowing more exotic creatures to take up residence. The Centre has an impressive menagerie, including a collection of snakes and other reptiles, meerkats, skunks, marmoset monkeys, deer, wallabies, llamas, ponies, owls and parrots, all living happily alongside the more typical farm animals you would expect to find in the Northumberland countryside; sheep, goats, pigs and cattle.

Whitehouse Farm Centre now welcomes around 100,000 visitors annually, providing fun for all ages with a range of indoor and outdoor activities across its 40 acres. Visitors can get hands-on feeding and grooming the animals, enjoy a tractor trailer ride or get to grips with the go-karts, adventure playground and trampolines. Whatever the weather, there's always something happening at the Farm.

Facilities added over the years include a dedicated Visitor Centre, an indoor soft play barn, and the Whitehouse Farm Kitchen. Heavily involved with the local and wider community, the Centre employs over 50 staff, welcomes pupils from many regional schools on regular educational farm visits, and works closely with countless local suppliers and traders.

The 20th anniversary celebrations are planned for the weekend 1-2 July and with numerous special activities and attractions taking place, a 'farmtastic' time is promised for all! Whether you first came with your parents, or on a school trip, brought your own children when they were small, or are yet to visit, Whitehouse Farm Centre is keen to welcome friends old and new to join in the festivities and mark 20 years of fun on the Farm!



To find out more go to www.whitehousefarmcentre.co.uk

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THE VICTORY TOUR COMES TO NEWCASTLE

World heavyweight champion and Olympic gold medallist, Anthony Joshua, head to Newcastle this June for a special date at the Tyne Theatre & Opera House.



The Victory Tour, promoted by Gold Star Promotions, sees the heavyweight bandwagon roll into Toon on June 15 with Steve Wraith (Newcastle Legends) and Daniel Cox (Relentless Promotions) working in association with Gold Star to bring the fighting legend back 'home.'

It's not the first time the now world champion has appeared in the region, in fact we've had the honour of his presence three times in the past, including a special evening at Close House Golf Club with the legendary Newcastle United striker, Alan Shearer.

Then you've got April 2015, the night AJ wowed the Geordie Nation at the Metro Radio Arena, stopping American challenger, Jason Gavern, after eighty-one seconds of the third round, on the under card of Anthony 'Babyface' Nelson's Commonwealth title success over Jamie Wilson.

Anthony's stock came to prominence in the summer of 2012, wowing the nation on his way to Olympic Gold in the nation's capital, London. Shortly afterwards the Queen bestowed upon him an MBE for his services to boxing and he repaid that honour by turning professional with Eddie Hearn and Matchroom just six months later, making his debut in the October at the O2 Arena.

It's been a roller-coaster ride for fight fans everywhere, many saying he'd not been tested –well, April this year, against the Ukrainian powerhouse, 'Dr Steelhammer,' Wladimir Klitschko, AJ recovered from a sixth round knock-down, having put Klitschko on the canvas minutes earlier, to claim an equally impressive stoppage win in the eleventh to claim the WBA Super, IBO and IBF World titles.

A victory tour was somewhat expected, even before the fight, with AJ already on course to become the greatest British athlete of all time. Now, immediately after his win, dates were released as AJ takes in London (O2 Arena), Manchester, Bolton, Leicester, Doncaster, London (Palladium), Bristol, Leeds, Warrington, Hull, Birmingham, Newcastle, and Arshire (Scotland) between May 11 and June 16.



Gold Star Promotions said of the Victory Tour: "We are delighted to be putting on such a magnificent tour with a fantastic athlete.

"Coming straight after we brought The Money Team to the UK, we believe this is one fight fans will take to, and put their hearts into. AJ is the man of the moment and he's looking forward to doing this tour just as much as we are.

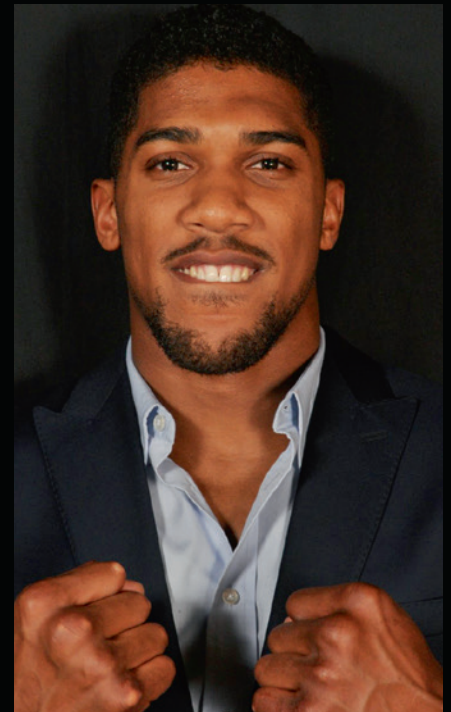
"It's also amazing that so many different cities are putting dates on, including Steve and Danny up here in Newcastle – it's because of that we know it can be a success."

Steve Wraith of Newcastle Legends, someone who has brought many a boxing, and sporting legend to the region over the years, is understandably delighted to be adding another AJ event to his resume never mind AJ – World Champion.

He said: "The proudest moment in my role as a boxing promoter was working with Eddie Hearn and Matchroom at Geordie Roar.

"To get someone of AJ's calibre back to the region, for what is the fourth time in just two years, is immense. I hope people realise that this could be the last time they see him here as America's bright lights beckon for the shining star.

"That fight (with Klitschko) was certainly AJ's hardest, and it was a fight that I, and everyone else,



was glued to with immense pride and pleasure; we look forward to welcoming him back to Tyneside."

Daniel Cox added: "We're delighted to welcome Anthony Joshua to Newcastle so soon after his huge victory over Wladimir Klitschko.

"That huge win catapults Joshua to being the number one heavyweight in the world and we look forward to hearing stories from his career to date, as well as hearing his plans for the future."

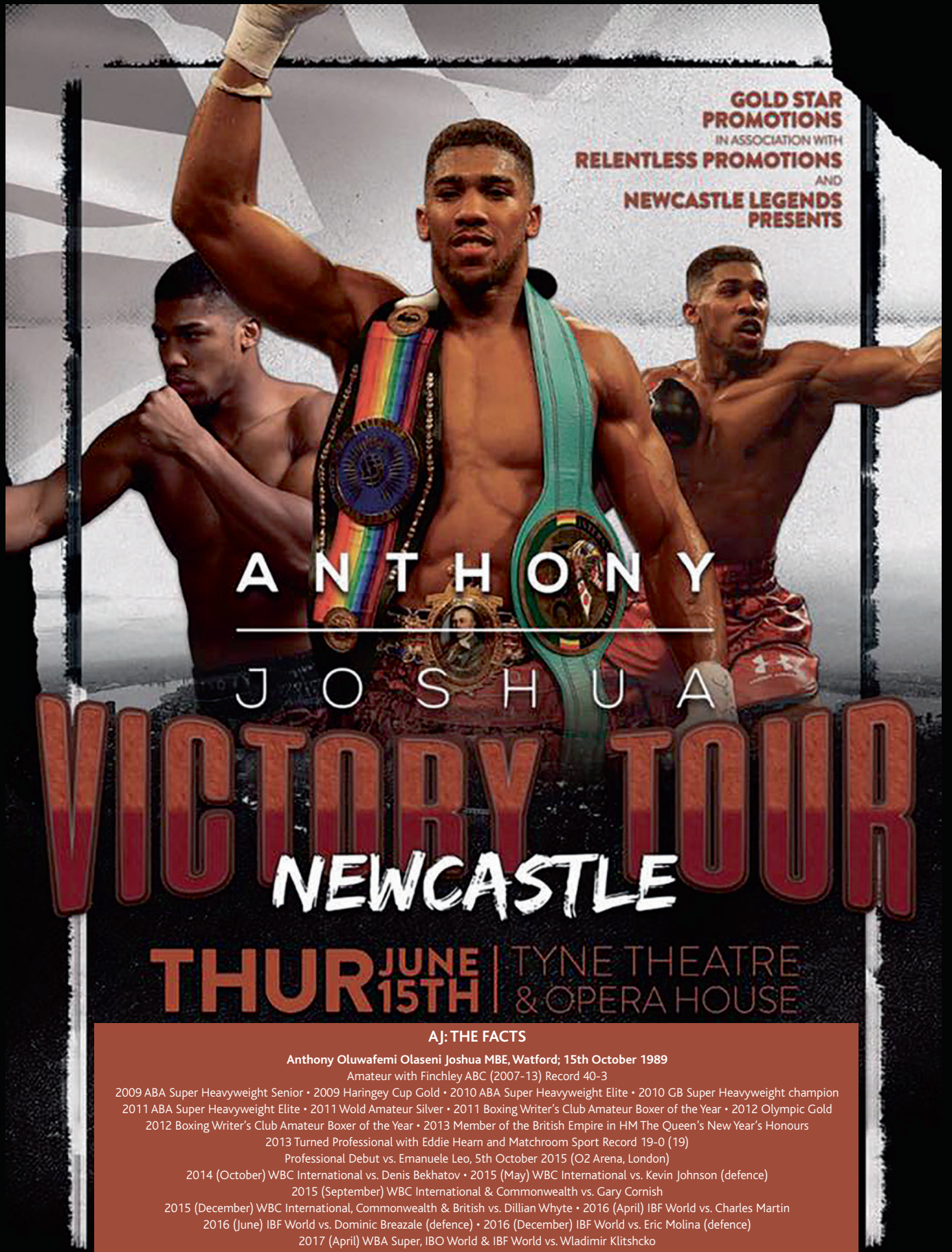
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AJ: THE FACTS

Anthony Oluwafemi Olaseni Joshua MBE, Watford; 15th October 1989

Amateur with Finchley ABC (2007-13) Record 40-3

2009 ABA Super Heavyweight Senior • 2009 Haringey Cup Gold • 2010 ABA Super Heavyweight Elite • 2010 GB Super Heavyweight champion

2011 ABA Super Heavyweight Elite • 2011 Wold Amateur Silver • 2011 Boxing Writer's Club Amateur Boxer of the Year • 2012 Olympic Gold

2012 Boxing Writer's Club Amateur Boxer of the Year • 2013 Member of the British Empire in HM The Queen's New Year's Honours

2013 Turned Professional with Eddie Hearn and Matchroom Sport Record 19-0 (19)

Professional Debut vs. Emanuele Leo, 5th October 2015 (O2 Arena, London)

2014 (October) WBC International vs. Denis Bekhatov • 2015 (May) WBC International vs. Kevin Johnson (defence)

2015 (September) WBC International & Commonwealth vs. Gary Cornish

2015 (December) WBC International, Commonwealth & British vs. Dillian Whyte • 2016 (April) IBF World vs. Charles Martin

2016 (June) IBF World vs. Dominic Breazale (defence) • 2016 (December) IBF World vs. Eric Molina (defence)

2017 (April) WBA Super, IBO World & IBF World vs. Wladimir Klitschko



ROLES REVERSED



Lauren Stirling suffered from severe tonsillitis and tonsil stones for over three years, making her ill for weeks at a time. After one final bout, Lauren decided to do something about it and fortunately for her she knew just the place to go to.

She tells her story here:

"I had suffered from tonsillitis and tonsil stones for a number of years. I'd be constantly prescribed antibiotics from my GP, which would work, but then a couple of weeks later it would return and I'd be just as ill again, if not worse. I asked my GP about having them removed but unfortunately I could not be referred.

"Luckily I have private medical insurance through my job, which happens to be at Spire Washington Hospital, so I decided to look into having my tonsils taken out that way. I'm a customer service adviser and communicate with patients every day so it was somewhat strange being on the other side.

"I was booked in for an appointment within a few days, with one of the ear, nose and throat specialists – Mr Leontsinis. I explained how many episodes I had and told him that I had been suffering with tonsil stones. I explained that on some occasions I would even lose my voice – not ideal when the main part of my job is speaking to patients every day. As soon as he examined me, he said that my tonsils needed to be removed.

"Following my consultation, surgery was booked for two weeks later. I received all of the relevant paperwork that explained everything about my surgery and what would happen on the day. When I arrived on the day of surgery I was greeted at reception and taken to my own private room.

"Both the consultant and anaesthetist came to see me to check I was OK and ready for surgery. I was then taken down to theatre and the next thing I knew I was waking up in recovery. It was over just like that.

"Before surgery I didn't want to stay in hospital overnight – I thought I'd just want to get back to the comfort of my own home. But due to the nature of the surgery I was required to stay, and I don't know why I was so concerned. The staff continued to check on me and they looked after me with great care.

"I had breakfast the next day – despite some difficulty swallowing it – and was discharged and home by 10am after a chat with the nurse and pharmacist.

"I'm now fully recovered and back to work. As I work at the hospital I'm aware of how brilliant our staff are but being on the other side as a patient has made me appreciate it even more. Having my tonsils removed was definitely the right decision and the process was made so much easier by coming to Spire Washington Hospital."

Mr Leontsinis said: "Lauren had been concerned about her tonsils for some time. She booked in for a consultation using her private medical insurance.

"I recommended that Lauren undergo a tonsillectomy which is the only effective treatment for her condition, which can be painful and a nuisance.

"Lauren had surgery, recovered well and was back to work in within two weeks. She was pleased with the outcome when she visited me for her follow up appointment. This is always a huge relief – especially when the surgeon is operating on a work colleague in the same hospital!"

To book a consultation or for more information on accessing treatment and services at Spire Washington Hospital via private medical insurance, or to find out more about Spire's exclusive private medical plan, call 0191 448 9645.



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