

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

JUNE 2018

ISSUE 36

NORTHERN INSIGHT - YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

JUNE 2018

ITPS -
THE DATA GUARDIANS

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

issue 36

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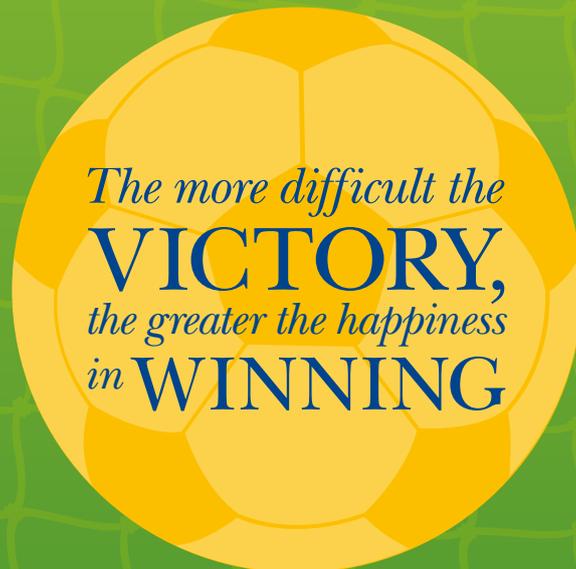
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FOREWORD

Welcome to the June edition of Northern Insight

With Summer finally here we are delighted to bring you another edition packed with all the traditional ingredients that have made the publication so popular since our launch.

Our cover stars are the IT and data experts ITPS who look at the bespoke creation of their second data hall for a household name and a third one to facilitate additional new tenants.

Ahead of the hugely popular Northumberland Plate Festival we talk to Newcastle Racecourse Executive Director, David Williamson and look at their exciting future plans.

Amongst some fabulous social coverage we showcase the first ever Children of Courage Awards honouring deserving young people in the region.

For Business Lunch we make a long overdue visit to Beamish Park Hotel and find an old favourite still delivering superb food and service.

We hope you'll find much to enjoy.

Thank you for your continued support.
Till next month.

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher



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Editorial contributions should include a stamped addressed envelope. No responsibility is accepted for drawings, photographs or literary contributions during transmission, or while in the Managing Directors or Printers hands.

Editorial must be received by the 15th of the month or no responsibility is accepted for errors.

Advertisements

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Complaints will only be considered for up to a week after publication. Advertising must be received by the 20th of the month. No responsibility is accepted for errors.



SHEARER CALLS FOR EXTRA TIME TO HELP OTHERS

As the World Cup finals approach, a very special football themed watch is being raffled for charity with the lucky winner also getting to meet a footballing legend.

Successful Ponteland businessman Rob Armstrong has teamed up with his friend Alan Shearer and Epic Social to raise money for the Rob Armstrong Rebound Therapy Centre at Hadrian School in Newcastle and Alan's own charity, the Alan Shearer Foundation.

The raffle prize is a very rare watch, made by

luxury Swiss watchmakers Hublot and valued at more than £30,000. The watch was made especially for the ex-Newcastle United and England striker and was made using a blend of modernity and traditional watchmaking skills.

In keeping with the World Cup theme, the raffle will be drawn in Russia by Alan Shearer on the 18th June, the day of England's first game against Tunisia.

The two charities benefiting from the raffle are very close to both friend's hearts. The Alan

Shearer Foundation was set up to directly support the Alan Shearer Centre in Newcastle: a highly specialist, disability, respite, residential and social provision for people with complex disabilities and acute sensory impairments. Since the launch, the centre has raised over £2.752 million.

The Rob Armstrong Rebound Therapy Centre opened earlier this year. The centre provides care and education for children aged two to eleven years old with severe learning disabilities.

To enter the raffle, a minimum donation of £50 is required on the charity's Just Giving page www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hublotgiveaway

HEAD OF NORTH EAST FIRM RECOGNISED FOR COMMITMENT TO RUGBY IN THE REGION

Mike Bowers, Managing Director of Sunderland-based business communications and systems specialist Cellular Solutions, has been nominated for the Mitsubishi Motors Volunteer of the Year Awards for his work as a rugby volunteer.

The awards are part of the Mitsubishi Motors Volunteer Recognition Programme which provides grassroots rugby clubs and recognises rugby volunteers who make up an integral part of the game.

Mike, from Gosforth, has been a volunteer rugby coach in the North East for more than 25 years. He coaches Northern Colts, the under-18s team of Northern FC, as well as Northern RFC's under-13s team. He was first appointed as a head coach in 1992 at Gosforth RFC and has since coached various age

groups across the North East.

Mike's coaching work includes creating training programmes for the teams he works with and organising rugby tours.

Mike is one of a select group of rugby volunteers in the area who has been invited to attend an awards event held at Blackshaws Mitsubishi in Morpeth on 8 June. At the event, one volunteer will be announced as a Volunteer of the Year finalist, earning them a place at the Mitsubishi Motors Volunteer of the Year Awards night at Twickenham Stadium on 7 September. Three overall winners will be announced on the evening and each one will receive a Mitsubishi car for a year as a thank you for their continued support to the game.



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MERCHANT TRAINEES TO DOUBLE FIVE YEAR CHUF DONATION



JT Dove has made a large donation to CHUF (Children's Heart Unit Fund) that has hit an incredible milestone and opened up a new opportunity.

The region's leading builder's merchants has been avid supporters of CHUF for over five years now and the latest donation has pushed their donations over the £100,000 total mark. It has also opened up an amazing opportunity for four merchant trainees to put business practice into action while raising funds for such a worthy charity.

The trainees, Amy King (23), Jess Flynn (21), Adam Marriott (23) and Shaun Liddle (19), joined JT Dove MD Steve Robinson to donate the latest cheque of £28,538 to CHUF's Michelle Fortune. They have also now decided to be part of CHUF's Champions Challenge.

Encouraged and supported by Steve, the four merchant trainees will now pull together a strategy to present to CHUF on how they intend to raise a further £100,000 in the next 18 months.

PARK ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTORS BRINGS SPECIALIST SERVICE TO HOTEL INDIGO

Gateshead-based Park Electrical Distributors has helped to shine a light on the recently opened Hotel Indigo, Durham.

Park was appointed to design internal lighting for the Marco Pierre White restaurant and bar area by Durham-based KM Electrical Services.

Simon Mooney, Specialist Services Sale Director at Park, said: "We were delighted to be brought into the project. It's a very impressive structure and we wanted to maintain its original features. Within the bar areas, the period light fitting was 100-years-old

and antique in its style. The original feature has been maintained and we have created a bespoke hanging decorative pendant with 40 drop glass shades in a finish to match the room."

"The restaurant has also maintained many of its traditional features however, we have refitted new low energy, long life, LED lamps reducing the energy by over 90%."

The restaurant and bar areas now also have a control system which manages the lighting environment during lunch and dinner periods.



NEW BRAND CELEBRATES HEAD OVER HEELS SUCCESS

Wallsend-based online fashion business Doctor Shoelittle has its customers falling head over heels for their new brand of unique shoes and accessories which mainly target the Pole Fitness sector.

Founder of the company, Rachael Vasey from Wallsend, had the inspiration to create the specialist shoes when she was partying at a nightclub in Newcastle for her Hen Night. She found herself in the company of five drag queens, one of which complained that getting bright red size 13 thigh length boots was nearly

impossible. Rachael took up the challenge and the business was born.

Since 2014, Doctor Shoelittle has grown significantly and Rachael now also supplies shoes for proms and beauty pageants. Her online business targets customers right across the globe.

Some of the country's top Pole Fitness experts use Rachael's products, including the Cherry Dance Academy of Burlesque and Pole Fitness in Newcastle's Bigg Market.

IMAGINARY FRIEND MAKES IT REAL FOR AUTHOR

Teesside-based children's author Christine Fox has used her own experiences of dyslexia and PTSD to found The Sunflower Dreams Academy and help children follow their dreams, overcome obstacles and succeed in life.

Christine has defied all the odds by writing her first children's book, 'Frickel and the Golden Locket'. The book tells the story of a frog called Frickel who is based on Christine's childhood imaginary friend.

The book is beautifully illustrated by designer Jenn Garside and is backed up by a series of educational workshops which are aimed at children aged 5-10 years old. Each book has blank spaces so that the children can express themselves and encourage their imagination and creativity.

Christine has piloted the workshops at Collingwood School & Media Arts College in Morpeth where she read the book to around 30 students who all have special needs.



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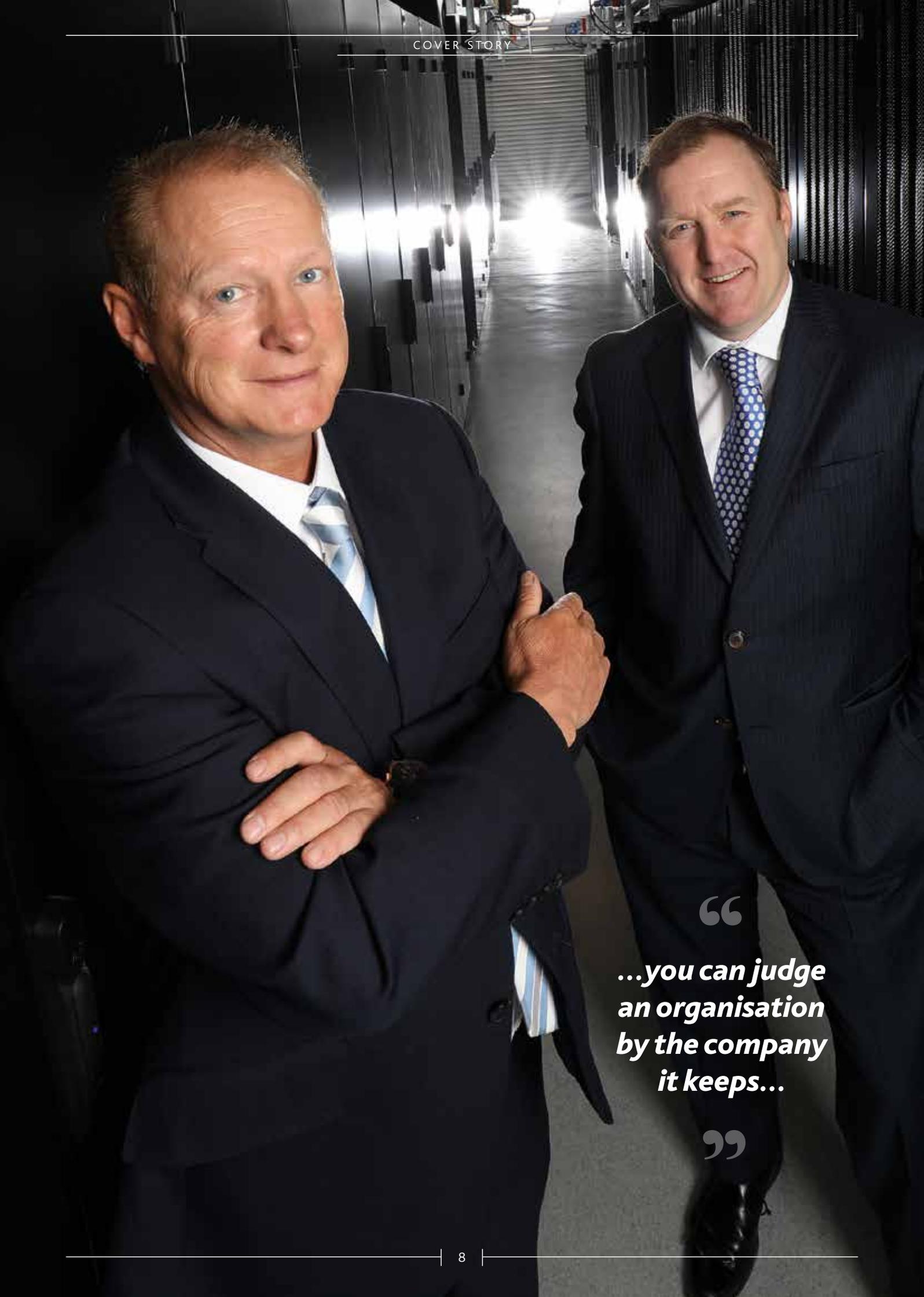
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“
*...you can judge
an organisation
by the company
it keeps...*
”

ITPS THE DATA GUARDIANS – WHO'S KEEPING YOUR BUSINESS SAFE?

When managed IT solutions and services experts ITPS invested £1.4m in its own state of the art data centre in 2014, the long term plan was to grow its market share of data centre services, and add a further data hall five years later.

Demand for its services has seen the business bring forward that plan by two years, with the bespoke creation of a new data hall two for a household name client, and data hall three to facilitate additional new tenants.

Managing director Garry Sheriff explains more about how data is helping to drive ITPS's growth: "We are in the midst of a period of unprecedented change, with experts estimating that 20bn 'internet of things' devices will need to be connected by 2020. That means a massive amount of data, which needs to be stored, processed, backed up and managed in a safe and secure environment.

Our decision to create a high specification Tier 3, ISO27001-certified data centre here in the region was based on predicting the growth in cloud services and a shift towards effectively renting, rather than buying, ICT infrastructures.

It was also in response to a growing number of UK-headquartered clients looking to have their cloud infrastructures and data held securely in their home country, rather than in a faceless data centre thousands of miles away, with no local support. Our approach helped us to attract clients stretching from the UK and mainland Europe to as far away as Dubai and North Africa, who acknowledge the UK as a secure place from which to do business."

The move has paid off handsomely and brought international recognition for ITPS, which was chosen by Microsoft as one of only a handful of worldwide ICT providers to be selected to join the Microsoft Azure Stack Early Adopters programme.

Azure Stack is based on Microsoft's public cloud offering, Azure. Billed as the biggest step change in cloud services for a decade, Azure Stack has been developed to run on a private cloud - or a hybrid public and private cloud - basis. This can be customised and managed by an accredited, local data centre partner

capable of providing a high level of expertise and local support.

"It delivers the best of both worlds to clients looking for cloud services, and we were very happy to be invited by Microsoft to work behind the scenes with their team to spearhead the UK launch," says Garry.

"Customers are moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach, in favour of working with a data centre partner who can tailor a cloud model to their specific requirements, including setting their own service level agreements around the connectivity, access, and other elements.

It means that organisations operating within stringent regulatory frameworks do not need to be concerned about business-critical functions being housed in a public cloud, which is a shared, multi-tenanted environment over which they have little or no control.

"Our USP is developing strong partnerships, not just with clients but with partners such as Microsoft, Cisco and Virgin. It gives clients confidence that we work alongside the best and can offer best of breed solutions."

The strength of ITPS's technical capabilities, its track record in delivering complex ICT solutions, and its £1.2m communications infrastructure saw it become the only North East supplier - and one of only 13 in the UK - to win stage 2 compliance and the stamp of approval from NHS Digital to deliver services across the new UK-wide NHS communications network, the Health and Social Care Network (HSCN).

"We have invested £1.2m in optical communications so our clients don't have to. We went through a rigorous assessment and selection process with NHS Digital, and were able to show that our peer to peer, high speed communications infrastructure and the services that support it go above and

beyond their requirements," continues Garry.

"The previous network connected over a million NHS staff, but HSCN also allows commercial organisations such as pharmacies, dentists, opticians and even care homes and social housing providers to access the network and share information.

It will underpin the digital transformation of the NHS, and we are delighted to be flying the flag for the region as the only North East based ICT experts to receive stage 2 approval. It puts us in a select group of major players and opens up a huge market for us, as well as helping health sector clients to deliver better value for money and ultimately improve patient care.

Even back in 2014 we could see the commercial opportunities in creating our own low latency, optical high speed network, engineering out any single points of failure so that whatever happens, our clients' IT systems and data is always available.

It's good for them and it gives us a real competitive advantage, for instance we have just fitted out Data Hall 2 for a client with very particular requirements. We do not believe any of our competitors have the same ability to do that at a granular level, and when you add in our unrivalled data centre, workspace recovery and disaster recovery capabilities, it all adds up to solutions that bring real business benefit to every type and size of organisation."

To paraphrase a well-known saying, you can judge an organisation by the company it keeps. In ITPS's case, its stellar line up of big name clients and partners is testament to an approach centred on truly bespoke ICT solutions, delivered with quality, integrity and expertise. A winning formula and one that will continue to drive growth, both for its own business and that of its clients.



DEATH AND GLORY

Forty five Scottish midges had to die in pursuit of our dream. But, unlike most midges, they gave up their lives for a good cause.

It is not every day that a pesky midge provides the inspiration behind an award-winning campaign but, when the team at Karol Marketing received a brief from client Vango to send forty five big name journalists to a municipal dump on the outskirts of Glasgow, we knew we had to do something very different.

Vango is the UK's leading supplier of tents and camping equipment. The company wanted key named journalists from as far afield as Bristol, London, Manchester, and everywhere in between, to make the arduous journey to an unknown and unbranded (for security reasons!) warehouse based on the outskirts of Port Glasgow.

To add to the challenge, the warehouse was inconveniently located next to a municipal dump. On a hot day, it had an aroma all of its own.

So why the mystery? Why did we need to entice media moguls away from their desks and computer screens?

Well, the warehouse housed the most comprehensive selection of fully pitched Vango tents, all together with colour co-ordinated camping accessories like sleeping bags, airbeds, tables and chairs, all in one 3,000 square meter show facility – affectionately known as the Green Room in a concrete jungle. Nowhere else in the world could you see Vango's full seasonal collection just in one place.

The problem is, that most journalists are very reluctant to leave their desks. Add to that the fact that, if sending information to them wasn't enough, they could see pitched tent collections, side by side

with competitor brands, in far more centralised locations like the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham and the EXCEL Centre in London. They just couldn't experience one brand's full collection. But hey, if you don't know what you're missing, you don't miss it.

Anyway, at Karol we knew the cards were stacked against us.

Says Karol's account director Jenny Dawson who led the project, "Any invitation would have to be underpinned by something special if we were to entice the media.

"We wanted to connect cognitively with our target audience and we decided to play a game of intrigue. We needed to identify something special about Vango, something that journalists, hungry for a story would find irresistible."

And so began the process of research, looking for interesting facts, something journalists didn't already know about – or if they did, then presenting these facts in a way that re-engaged.

Some years before, Vango had brought to the mass market, AirBeam, the worlds first inflatable tent. Could this be Karol's angle? But it was old news! How could we re-fresh it? How could we make it relevant?

Says Jenny, "We began by challenging ourselves to focus on and define the real benefit of AirBeam technology. This might give us an angle, a message around which to hang our communication."

The answer was simple. AirBeam tents can be pumped up in just minutes. Quick. Easy. Fun. And,

very useful if you are being eaten alive by Scottish midges at sun down and need shelter fast!

Hey, here was our theme! Midges – the bigger the bite, the better!

Karol's Managing Director Stefan Lepkowski chipped in, "Jenny and I immediately knew we had a creative angle. But what we also needed was a mechanic that put our message in context. We wanted an invitation that would be different, one that would make follow up phone calls easier. One that would lead to conversation and get our client talked about."

And, so began Karol's camping themed mystery mailers.

First out of the box was a quirky tomato ketchup (or is it mayonnaise?) bottle accompanied by a Vango orange tent peg and a "not what you expected" message all on a bed of real grass – the stuff you camp on!

A week later, a glass Kilner jar atop yet more turf arrived on journalists desks with a cryptic, hand written note saying that the glass jar contained the two ingredients necessary for speedy tent erection. Air and a midge!

Says Stefan Lepkowski, "Jenny's campaign secured editorial features from over twenty journalists and generated over sixteen million opportunities to see and hear the Vango brand. She won a Chartered Institute of Public Relations award for her work and I am very proud of her and her team's achievement."

"Most importantly, I believe we have given the much maligned mighty midge a leading role in promoting a truly Scottish Brand – Vango!"

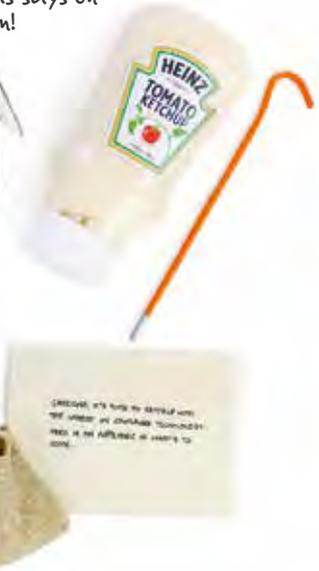
To find out more about one of the North's leading PR Agencies visit www.karolmarketing.com

TALE OF THE MIGHTY MIDGE...



1. Cutting the lawn Karol style whilst watching the paint dry!

2. Definitely not what is says on the tin!



3. Jenny holds a box containing a Kilner jar, air, and one mighty midge.



4. Please 'insect' the contents of this jar carefully...



5. BBC Radio Scotland turn up for the interviews.



6. A small sample of the sixteen million opportunities generated to see and hear the Vango name.



7. Karol's Stefan Lepkowski presents Vango's Rob Birrell with his CIPR Award for Best Use of Media Relations.



Saleem Raza Akram

3rd April 1966 – 18th April 2018

In April, we said a very sad farewell to much-loved Tyneside businessman and friend of Northern Insight, Saleem Akram.

Mr Akram, formerly Sales Director of Tyne Tees Pest Control Ltd, passed away on 18th April following a short illness, at the age of just 52. Saleem was a truly larger-than-life character whose charm was matched only by his integrity and his infectious personality meant that laughter was never far from the agenda in his presence.

"Sal", as he was known to family and friends, was born in Cardiff in 1966, where he spent his infancy before moving to Pakistan with his parents and younger brother Nadeem. The family returned to England in 1972, eventually settling in Newcastle where two more boys, Aleem and Wah completed the family. They established Akram's Mini Market near Benton Metro station, which quickly became a social hub for the local community, not least because of Sal's good humour. Sadly, Sal's father passed away in 1983, leaving him as the head of the family at the age of just 16. He became fiercely protective of his younger brothers as Nadeem recalls: "I remember one day being attacked by a gang outside our house and Sal came out and chased them away with a golf club. I always saw him as my protector and looking back maybe that incident is also what inspired his love of golf!"

Sal was indeed a lifelong golf fanatic and was a member of Parklands, Gosforth, City of Newcastle and Ponteland golf clubs during his lifetime. His other main sporting passion was Manchester City but he was always eager to point out that he supported them when they were rubbish so was definitely not a glory hunter!

His working life started in the mid-1980s working as a pest-controller for Rentokil and latterly for Canon Hygiene. His long-time colleague at Rentokil, Steve Ridley paid tribute: "Some of the clients who stayed with the company for 20 years did so because of one thing...and that was Sal. People genuinely loved and trusted him."

Sal's ability to forge trusting relationships with clients eventually inspired him to set out on his own and he established Tyne Tees Pest Control with friend and associate Eddie Barnes in 2007. The business soon flourished but Sal's laid-back attitude remained firmly intact. Brother Wah recalls one particular incident which epitomised his character: "Not long after they'd set up the business, they held a meeting with a pretty high-profile client in the hope of securing a lucrative contract. After brief introductions, proceedings were halted

by a tinny rendition of Jingle Bells. Following a good deal of silent confusion, attention finally turned to Sal's feet, which were of course adorned with musical Xmas socks! Sal gave a deadpan nod and the meeting progressed as if nothing had happened!"

Eddie added his own tribute: "More than losing a friend and business partner, Sal's passing feels more like losing a brother. Working with him was such a pleasure and we had so many laughs together over the years. I'm absolutely devastated."

Sal's legendary sense of mischief endured even in his final days, as Wah explains: "Even after the doctors had told him that his condition was terminal he was still trying to make us all laugh right until the end, but that was just the incredible character he was. Not only have I lost a brother but I've lost my best friend as well. He was the best man I've ever known".

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote that success in life is to know that even one other life has breathed easier because of you. In those terms, Sal's life was a resounding success, such was the high regard he was held in by all who knew him, particularly his daughter Anisa, 19 and son Niall, 17 to whom he was a truly devoted dad.

Rest in peace Sal. You will be sorely missed.

IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP!

“

'Whenever you see a successful business someone once made a courageous decision'

Peter Drucker

”

As leaders we are often expected to have all the answers. As great leaders we are probably expending considerable energy creating the right environment for our teams and business to succeed but what about the needs of the person at the top. Too busy making it happen, too proud to ask for help. At 360 Growth Partners we work with many owners of SMEs who have made that courageous decision and asked for help.

What is the problem you are trying to solve?

Take some time to get to the root of the problem. Ensure you are asking the right question. Using the 'five whys' methodology, credited to Sakichi Toyoda, the founder of Toyota, might help you get to the real problem. At 360 Growth Partners we often commence work by conducting a 360 degree business insight which is all about identifying the critical success factors and prioritising the activity that will add the most value.

Narrowing the search

If you were recruiting someone to the internal team what would you do? Think of how much time you spend perfecting your recruitment process from the job and personal specifications, to the selection process, personal references and the induction. The impact of selecting the wrong external partner can have far reaching ramifications for the business and for you as an individual. The internal candidate has to have the right skills, knowledge, experience and culture fit. Is external partner selection any different?

What is the required intervention?

As part of your external partner selection criteria focus on the type of intervention. So is it short term project support, knowledge transfer, training and development, specialist advice, long term business partner, Non-Executive Director, coach or mentor or just the chance to network with other like-minded people facing the same challenges.



Andrew Silver

At 360 Growth Partners we are seen as the extension to the internal senior team adding diversity of thought, experience and often acting as 'change agents'. We aim to build trusted long term partnerships with a clear focus on measuring value. We identify, coordinate and make the adjustments businesses need to accelerate growth.

Be proactive and focus on business priorities

Networks are great for making new contacts and learning but be clear what you are looking for and be ruthless in ensuring that it meets your short or longer term business priorities. There will be a long and diverse queue of suitors claiming to have the perfect solution and don't forget the importance of 'cultural and experiential' fit.

Be aware of the 'wolf dressed in sheep's clothing'

Having run businesses and spent years selecting external partners to support the business I always try to answer two key questions. Why was the business first created? – the ultimate mission and what was it originally set up to do? The first is a question of shared values and the latter a measure

of their expertise. There will be exceptions to the rule but it is a useful guide for selecting long term business partners, irrespective of field.

Trusted Advisor

David Maister talks about the components of trust in his book *The Trusted Advisor*. The components are credibility, reliability, intimacy and a low level of self-interest. No one can demand trust. It is earned by what you do, say and how you behave. Find partners who you can trust. A trusted partnership allows difficult conversations to take place in the knowledge that your partner truly cares about you and your business.

Marginal gains

Keep one eye on the long term but seek out those that are passionate about delivery, adding value and measuring impact – from day one. Measure from first contact. Do they do what they say they are going to do from the get go!?

Get started today

Start the conversation today to get a different perspective.

Andrew Silver is the owner of 360 Growth Partners who identify, coordinate and make the adjustments businesses need to accelerate growth. For more information go to www.360growthpartners.co.uk or e-mail start@360growthpartners.co.uk



< B E Y O N D >
3,2,1 | DECLARE IT OPEN!

To mark the event the new office was officially opened by a government Minister as part of his visit to the Borough.

Minister for Small Business Andrew Griffiths cut the ribbon and raised a glass to celebrate the move to new premises.

The new premises allowed the company to create a more bespoke environment, including a hi-tech Demo Suite and their newly created technology 'sensory room', where clients can be engaged with 'the art of the possible' in digital technology solutions.

Louise Richley, Managing Director of Beyond Digital, said: "The funding was vital in helping us to innovate. I would encourage other small businesses to look into the North East Fund and see if it can help to drive forward their business."



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NEW DIRECTORS APPOINTED TO BUILD ON A SUCCESSFUL YEAR AT RG

Leading Newcastle-based advisory firm Rycroft Glenton (RG) has promoted Jon Routledge and Dan Cooper to director roles following a year of strong performance.

Dan has been promoted to support the fast growth in RG's Accounts & Outsourced Services division. Having been instrumental in the development of RG's OutsourcedFD service, which provides strategic advice to clients using cloud-based real-time management information, Dan will continue to expand the firm's range of cloud based digital services.

Jon has been made a director after an 11-year career with RG. A qualified Chartered Accountant and Chartered Tax Adviser, Jon advises RG's larger corporate clients on all aspects of accounts, audit and tax.

The promotions will help RG build on the progress it has made in the last 12 months, with the firm being shortlisted for the Independent Accountancy Firm of the Year award at the 2018 North East Accountancy Awards.

Peter Glenton, Partner at RG, said: "Promoting Dan and Jon is part of our long-term strategy to develop our people, create opportunities for talented individuals to take on senior roles and enhance our services to ensure clients receive the highest levels of expert advice and support."



RAPID GROWTH FOR ARMSTRONG WATSON LEEDS



Accountant, Business and Financial Advisors Armstrong Watson Leeds are celebrating following a bumper financial year for the office, with fees up an impressive 32% on the previous year.

The city centre firm has seen rapid expansion throughout 2017/18, with the team growing to over 80 strong and four new senior people joining during the last 4 months alone.

Morag Miller recently joined the firm as partner to head up the Health Care Division, bringing with her Anna-Marie Burke and Andrea Burnett. She was closely followed by Rob Adamson, who joined in the swiftly

growing Restructuring, Recovery and Insolvency service line.

Leeds Restructuring Recovery and Insolvency Partner, Mike Kienlen, was also recently announced as the first Chairman of the firm, which will see him support the leadership and strategic positioning of Armstrong Watson, with specific focus on increasing the firm's presence in Yorkshire.

Matt Osbourne, Lead Office Partner, said: "We're building a really exciting team here in Leeds. With everyone pulling in the right direction and working hard for our clients, I'm certain we can achieve great things."

CYCLING TEAM SUPPORTED BY ACCOUNTANCY FIRM

North-East based Leathers the Accountants has become a sponsor of Storey RT, the women's cycling team set up last year by Dame Sarah Storey and her husband Barney to compete in events across the UK and internationally.

Dame Sarah has represented Great Britain in both Paralympic and able-bodied events. Having won 14 gold medals, she is the most successful British Paralympian of all time.

Leathers, which has offices in Newcastle and Durham, became involved with Storey RT after being inspired by its 'Best Version of You' mantra, which

encourages everyone to push themselves to fulfil their potential and achieve their dream, irrespective of ability or activity.

The majority of the Leathers team are now involved in various sporting pursuits through which they continue to raise funds for charitable causes close to their hearts. This year will see Leathers' staff take part in a London to Paris cycle ride for St Oswald's Hospice as well as the Great North Run.

Having already raised over £50,000 through their efforts over the last three years, this year's activities should see the team raise even more.



FACE TO FACE
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HOW R&D TAX CREDITS ARE SUPPORTING SME'S THROUGH BREXIT



Joanne Warren

The UK leads the way in many of the technological industries as the world develops solutions to longstanding problems. Science and technology are just two of the areas of innovation that are being explored across the UK and specifically in the North East of England.

Providing medical advances in terms of new medicines or technological solutions to help people live longer and healthier lives have become more commonplace. The NHS and private providers are always developing new ways to support people to live the fullest life possible in the face of whatever disease, illness or injury they face. It is by advancing our knowledge that we are able to assist people to be people and not patients. That is hugely important in their lives.

As the government looks to strengthen the UK economy with Brexit appearing closer than ever on the horizon, one of the tools they have employed is R&D tax credits. Incentivising business to invest in research and development helps SME's to make investments where in the past they may have shied away. There are innovators out there in the healthcare sector that connect a constant in our lives such as the smartphone with the medical care and attention people need at important times. Having blood pressure or blood sugar levels monitored remotely is one application currently being used across the country to save the precious resources we have in hospitals and other healthcare centres.

The finance to support his activity

Of course, all of this innovation costs money.

Ploughing cash into new products or technology is a commercial risk that small and medium businesses are not always in a position to take. There are many ways in which a project can 'go wrong' and put a large hole in the balance sheet. Playing it safe can feel like the best option. And that is why R&D tax credits have been developed, refined and promoted by HMRC on behalf of the government. They are an incentive for businesses to take these risks. The idea behind it is that we become more competitive as a nation on the world stage. But there are other benefits to this approach.

As we spend more on research and development, safe in the knowledge that there is support from the government, then we deepen our knowledge. The more we know about whether a piece of technology or new drug can actually help people, the closer we come to the cure – or at least making their life easier. With ideas and testing comes results. There are some rigorous hurdles to climb when bringing a new medical solution into the UK market (quite rightly too) and this means a long lead time from idea to market. Having the support of the government through R&D tax credits helps SME's in particular to absorb this lead time.

And how does the government support this?

R&D tax credits are the system the UK government

uses to reward businesses that take a commercial risk in order to advance their knowledge. This isn't as complicated as it sounds. And it isn't just for life science or medical businesses.

You make an application to HMRC based on –

- Advancement in your field of work
- The uncertainties you face
- How those uncertainties were overcome

This doesn't have to be something that is manufactured, as changes to processes or procedures can also be eligible for R&D tax credits. Indeed, some software projects also make qualifying claims, so you should understand R&D tax as an important part of your business planning.

Brexit will change the way we do business in many ways that haven't come to light just yet. But at the heart of a growing company is research and development to expand and stay fresh. When HMRC is rewarding UK businesses for making these investments it would be silly to miss out on the cash available. With claims on behalf of our clients averaging over £35k there is a lot to gain from a R&D tax application. In addition, there isn't a whole lot to lose. We offer a free, no obligation consultation to see where the R&D tax claims are in your business.

INTEREST RATES KEPT AT 0.50% AS BANK OF ENGLAND FORECAST INFLATION WILL FALL TO 2.0% TARGET IN TWO YEARS



The Bank of England voted by a majority of 7-2 to maintain interest rates at 0.50% on May 9th as it judged the costs of waiting for additional information on the extent to which the UK economy is developing to be modest given the fall in CPI inflation to 2.5% in March.

While expectations had formerly thought a second-rate hike likely in May, the timing of the next rate movement decreased sharply since mid-April against a backdrop of weaker-than-expected economic data as the UK economy began 2018 slowly.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee sets Monetary Policy to maintain inflation for price stability around a 2% target in a way that helps to sustain employment and economic growth.

Economists had expected growth for the UK economy to be 0.3% higher than the preliminary estimate for GDP growth in the first quarter as poor weather late-February and into early-March was blamed as it depressed construction and retail activity.

Despite this, projections for economic activity remain positive with the UK economy expected to grow by 1.75% per year on average over the forecast period. Hiring intentions have continued

strongly over the past three months, with the unemployment rate falling slightly further. A small margin of excess demand is expected to emerge by 2020 exerting upward pressure into higher rates of pay growth.

Savers had been hoping for a second rate hike as average savings rates have fallen behind inflation, negatively impacting the real value of savings.

Personal savers can earn up to 1.31% on instant access, while those saving for a house could earn up to 2.00% on instant access in the Holmesdale Building Society Home Saver account. For those looking over a fixed term period, personal savings rates hit 1.95% on 1 year, 2.16% on 2 year, 2.31% on 3 years, 2.52% on 4 years and 2.70% on 5 years.

Non-personal savers tend to hold their savings in shorter-term accounts such as instant access and notice accounts while data shows recently fixed term accounts being utilised up to a 1 to 2 year period. The best rates for non-personal savers are

however considerably lower. The best corporate rate on instant access is 0.85% while corporates and charities looking for fixed terms can earn 1.86% on 1 year and 2.02% on a 2 year.

Cascade Cash Management tracks all savings rates from authorised deposit takers in the UK ranging from instant access up to five years. The company's proprietary technology allows for depositors to spread their cash to gain full protection under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme too.

Dr Emma Black, managing director of Cascade Cash said: "The move by the Bank of England to maintain the rate is news that a lot of us in the industry were expecting. Whilst from a savers point of view an increase would have been beneficial, to maintain the rate helps the UK stabilise while we wait to see the impact of inflation. Savers certainly won't be losing anything and we will continue to offer the best possible rates through Cascade's portal on a daily basis."

For more information please visit www.cascade.co.uk



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COMFORTABLY ON TOP OF THINGS



COMMERCE HOUSE MOVES GROWS HR ALCHEMY

Local Businesswoman Jo Davies is enjoying a double business celebration.

Jo runs HR Alchemy and is one of the latest tenants to join the new business community at Commerce House in Middlesbrough. The new office move coincides with Jo expanding the company by taking on a new member of staff, office manager, Kath Holtom.

With 23 years' experience of working in senior HR positions in various industries, Jo took the plunge to set up HR Alchemy and until now has operated the business from her home.

The business however has enjoyed so much success in such a short period of time, that Jo is now setting up in the city centre offices based in the stunning Grade II listed building in Exchange Square and is growing the team to meet the demands of her clients.

HR Alchemy offers bespoke and personable HR solutions for start-ups and established businesses. Jo takes a unique approach to HR as she doesn't believe in a "one-size fits all" approach. The business thrives on quickly finding solutions to individual business' problems, dissolving matters effectively, and allowing clients to get on with running their business.

Jo, from Marton, Middlesbrough said: "Commerce House is a fantastic location for clients to visit and staff to work from. It's a really exciting time for my business and for the area - I've always lived in the North East and I love the creative buzz that is apparent in Middlesbrough now. The new office and the other tenants there are really a hub of success and the support for start-up businesses

like myself is second to none.

"This month not only sees HR Alchemy moving into our new offices, but I also welcome a new member of staff," continues Jo. "Kath Holtom has worked with me previously in a variety of HR roles for several years and I believe she's the perfect fit for the business. She has that personal touch with everyone she meets and I know she will always go that extra mile to help our clients."

Commerce House has recently been renovated with a £1.2 million investment and it offers office space; meeting rooms, hot desking and virtual office services. The office space is proving popular with just a few left, ranging up to a 14 man office from a two man office.

For more information about HR Alchemy visit www.hralchemy.co.uk or call 03338 802810.

For information on becoming a tenant or using the facilities at Commerce House, please visit www.commerce-house.co.uk or call 01642 917 116.

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L to R

Alex Gowthorpe – Accounts Assistant, Joy Clegg – Senior Outsourcing Accountant
 Daniel Sopp – Accounts Assistant, Mike Pott – Managing Director
 Rebecca Grieve – Outsourcing Accountant, Jack Sanderson – Audit and Accounts
 Kasia May – Personal Tax Senior, Aaron Jowsey – Healthcare Group Accountant
 Michelle Vogel – Receptionist and Administrator
 Nick Dalton – Audit Senior, Craig Richardson – Healthcare Group Accountant

TEN NEW FACES AT RMT ACCOUNTANTS AS PRACTICE EXPANSION DRIVE ACCELERATES

RMT Accountants & Business Advisors is launching a major recruitment drive as it continues to expand across all its practice areas.

The independent firm has added ten new people to its Gosforth-based team in the last month in response to a raft of new business wins across all areas of the firm and growing demand from existing clients.

Further new recruits are expected to follow in the coming months as RMT gears up for further growth in its tax, outsourcing, audit and healthcare teams.

Joy Clegg and Rebecca Grieve have both joined the firm's outsourcing division as a senior accountant and an accountant respectively, while Kasia May has taken up a personal tax senior position.

Alex Gowthorpe and Daniel Sopp have come into the firm as accounts assistants, while accountants Aaron Jowsey and Craig Richardson have joined the RMT Healthcare team.

Jack Sanderson is now part of the audit and accounts team, Michelle Vogel has taken a receptionist/administrator role and Nick Dalton has joined as an audit senior.

RMT provides the full range of financial and business advisory services through its accountancy, specialist tax, medical and healthcare, corporate finance and recovery and insolvency teams.

Founded more than 60 years ago, it works with companies of all sizes both within and outside the North East.

Mike Pott, Managing Director at RMT, adds: "Our practice is continuing to expand across all our areas and we're bringing in new highly capable and qualified staff to ensure we can service this growing demand.

"Activity levels for our corporate finance team have risen significantly this year, a trend that we're confident will increase with the recent launch of the North East Fund, while we're also working with a growing number of larger corporate clients from both within and outside the North East.

"We're increasingly taking on responsibility for a range of clients' business functions, such as payroll management, human resources and technology management, and with many firms not having access to this sort of expertise within their own ranks, it's something we're expecting to see even more of in the future.

"We're very pleased to have brought in such high calibre recruits, and expect to be creating more jobs in the months to come."

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MAKING TAX DIGITAL



The North East SME community is 'dangerously underprepared' for the arrival and impact of the government's flagship Making Tax Digital initiative.

That's the view of Stephen Slater, Director of Commercial Services at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, with less than a year before it becomes compulsory for all firms with an annual turnover above £85,000 to keep and file their VAT records digitally.

Making Tax Digital (MTD) will require businesses to keep digital records of invoices, receipts and other documentation, and to use systems which allow for information to be sent digitally to HMRC on a quarterly basis.

And while a range of incentives and encouragements will be offered to businesses to come into step with the requirements of the new system, there will also be a parallel range of penalties and fines that the taxman can levy on those that don't.

Stephen Slater says: "We've been speaking to our clients about what Making Tax Digital will mean for them for the last year, but in wider conversations around the region, my experience is that a large proportion of SMEs haven't begun to think about its implications, let alone put anything in place to address them.

"The implementation delays that have happened may have something to do with this, but the noises coming from HMRC and the additional inspectors that they're currently recruiting to manage the extra work that MTD will bring would suggest the April 2019 start date for digital VAT returns is likely to be firm.

"Being so dangerously underprepared for this start date could have serious operational and financial implications for the region's SMEs, and time is very much of the essence for making sure that they don't suffer problems that they could avoid by acting now."

The Making Tax Digital initiative is designed to allow the taxation process to be conducted in real time by making better use of information through a single financial account, in much in the same way as online banking works.

It was originally due to be fully in place for all businesses by 2018, but implementation has been delayed twice by HM Treasury to allow for the required IT systems to be fully developed and tested.

Full digital quarterly reporting for other financial information, such as corporation and income tax, is not scheduled to begin until at least 2020, but presuming digital VAT record keeping runs as HMRC expects, Stephen doesn't believe there will be any further delays in these new rules coming into force.

He continues: "April 2019 may seem a long way away at the moment, but when you think that it's only three or four more VAT quarters away, the imperative for businesses to act now becomes very clear.

"Our expectation is that companies will be looking for additional support in meeting their MTD responsibilities and we are building up our commercial services team to ensure we have the appropriate expertise on hand for clients.

"There's a great deal of information about Making Tax Digital on the HMRC website, and owner/managers who haven't yet begun preparing for what it will mean for their businesses would be well advised to start investigating where they stand as soon as they can."

RMT will be running a series of Making Tax Digital sessions over the coming months. To register your interest and receive more information on these sessions, please email advice@r-m-t.co.uk



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£120M NORTH EAST FUND NOW AVAILABLE TO SMES ACROSS THE REGION

The new £120m North East Fund, a follow-up to the hugely successful JEREMIE Fund, is to go live after an agreement was signed by representatives from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and The North East Fund Limited (TNEFL) on the 26th March 2018.

Supported by the European Regional Development Fund, the fund will offer a range of investments including equity, debt and mezzanine funding throughout the North East. The original JEREMIE Fund made a significant impact on the North East region since 2010, helping over 1,000 SMEs realise business goals and safeguarding or creating 6000 jobs in the process.

As part of an agreement with the European Investment Bank, it will invest exclusively in the North East LEP area but will sit alongside the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund (NPIF) to drive business across the North as a whole.

Four fund managers have been appointed to deliver

this new funding, NEL Fund Managers, Maven Capital Partners, Northstar Ventures and Mercia Fund Managers and the range of funding available covers everything from small loans of £20,000 to equity investment of £1m and unsecured lending of up to £2m. The funding is split into the following categories:

The Development Capital Fund – Managed by Maven Capital Partners

The Venture Fund – Managed by Mercia Fund Managers

The Growth Capital Fund and The Small Loan Fund – Managed by NEL Fund Managers

The Innovation Fund – Managed by Northstar Ventures

UNW worked with NEL Fund Managers and FW Capital to support SMEs who secured significant investment throughout the original JEREMIE programme, including tech firms Roxoa, Orchardsoft and Fine Equinity, who used the funding to support their commercialisation, marketing and expansion.

Neville Bearpark, Corporate Finance Partner at UNW commented "The North East Fund is an eagerly anticipated addition to the funding landscape in the North East. Such is the demand for regional SME funding that we are already working with a number of clients to secure funding through these new funds."

UNW has vast experience supporting businesses through various investment and funding opportunities. For more information, please visit our finance raising page at www.unw.co.uk/expertise/finance-raising

LOOKING BEYOND THE BALANCE SHEET – WHAT DOES IT MEAN TODAY TO BE A WELL-RUN ORGANISATION?

Financial metrics are not the only indicator of success in today's markets, and rightly so.

Organisations are facing increased scrutiny from stakeholders and requirements such as gender pay gap reporting and whistleblowing, both of which have been the subject of extensive media attention in recent months and these are just two examples of how non-financial matters are hitting the headlines. As a result, the level of exposure and transparency expected of organisations is higher than it has ever been and good business ethics and accountability are finally becoming king – or at least increasingly important.

However, expectation goes further than just telling people what you are doing. There has been a raft of changes to non-financial reporting requirements that mean organisations have to officially respond across a number of operational areas. Gender pay and whistleblowing have already been mentioned, but additionally, data protection (GDPR), modern slavery, payment practices, equality and diversity, tax evasion, bribery and money laundering also bring with them various reporting and disclosure requirements....and there are many more.

Designed to stamp out fraudulent and/or prejudicial practices and improve business integrity, these requirements allow, for probably the first time, the public, the media and employees to have an insight into the inner workings of organisations.

The level and breadth of compliance however seems to be causing confusion – verging on angst – in some organisations as to where they should focus their efforts. Do they meet the minimum requirements? Are they doing enough to satisfy stakeholder concern? Do they stand out from competitors as doing too little?

In our most recent research into the topic with YouGov, it was found that nearly 60 per cent of those questioned felt that non-financial reporting, the mechanism through which risk is minimised, is excessive or demanding – diverting major resources and hindering company operations. So what does this mean for organisations and should it be cause for concern going forward? If organisations feel that these obligations are hindering company operations, are they at risk of not ensuring that it is happening properly?

Our research suggests a worrying 'cake and eat it' mind-set within middle market business. On the one hand businesses recognise the major risks they

face, yet on the other hand remain reluctant to fully engage in a process that minimises the risk and the associated liabilities. If done well, it can engender stakeholder confidence and business value. And of course, in doing this businesses can also often gain a much broader competitive advantage.

This is most evident when looking at just two of these core issues – anti-money laundering and bribery. 81 per cent of middle market firms consider themselves at risk of falling foul of anti-money laundering and anti-bribery legislation according to our joint research with YouGov. The question needs to be asked here – is this so high because organisations cannot devote the level of resource needed to ensure compliance?

So what is the answer?

In short – there isn't just one answer, but there are certainly best practice behaviours that can dramatically reduce risk across an organisation and make these types of obligations less onerous. In brief:

Education

It is a logical conclusion to make that an organisation's workforce needs to act as a first line of defence. This applies right across the board, from the processing of customer data correctly under the new GDPR requirements, recognising and reporting unethical or illegal behaviours, through to recognising evidence of modern slavery.

It is critical to recognise that the pressures of compliance do not sit solely with senior management and it is important therefore to empower staff with the knowledge and know-how to recognise potential non-compliance.



Philip Church

Policies and procedures

Organisations need to take these requirements seriously and, without implementing policies and procedures for each one and making sure that their staff have read and understood these policies, they won't be doing that.

Supplier relationships

You can help to eliminate risk from your supply chain by reviewing contracts, carrying out supplier audits and having independent reviews. In many cases today, if your suppliers are non-compliant – this will have major ramifications (including fines and potential jail time) for your own business and its reputation.

What do you do now?

In our publication, Beyond the Balance Sheet, we have set out some of the key areas organisations need to be thinking about. This is in no way an exhaustive list, but it will begin to ensure that governance is on the board agenda.

Visit www.rsmuk.com to download the guide and start challenging your assumptions about how to approach governance across your organisation, and consider the best practice we outline for each core area.



For more information on any of the topics covered, please contact Philip Church on 0191 255 7000 or email philip.church@rsmuk.com or your usual RSM contact.

MAVEN CAPITAL PARTNERS APPOINTED TO MANAGE THE £27 MILLION NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL FUND



(L-R): Michael Dickens, Michael Vassallo, Emma Neal, Ben Jones and Alex Marsh of Maven Capital Partners.

Ambitious SMEs across the region will benefit from new funding available.

Home to some of the UK's fastest growing, innovative private companies, the North East is a hotbed for dynamic businesses with impressive growth potential.

For businesses across the region an exciting new funding opportunity is available through The North East Fund, a £120 million investment programme available to SMEs across Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. Supported by the European Regional Development Fund, the Fund will invest across the seven local authorities in the North East with the aim to support 600 businesses and create 3,500 jobs.

Appointed to manage the £27 million North East Development Capital Fund (NEDCF), supported by the European Regional Development Fund, part of the £120 million investment programme, Maven will provide equity, debt and mezzanine funding of between £400,000 and £2 million to high growth and established businesses. The Fund will support ambitious small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who are looking to develop new products, enter new markets, and/or expand their current operations.

Maven targets dynamic companies with strong

management teams and can tailor funding packages to individual business needs providing both strategic and operational support. As one of the leading SME finance providers in the UK, Maven can lead or syndicate investments and Maven's other funds can provide up to £15 million in a single transaction to finance development capital and MBOs.

Maven has significant experience of managing similar investment funds on behalf of the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine, and since 2009 has invested over £340 million in over 180 UK SMEs to support their growth ambitions.

With established offices open in Newcastle and Durham adding to Maven's strong presence across the North of England, Maven is well-resourced to provide the necessary support to local companies, both in terms of the initial investment process and the ongoing support as those businesses grow.

Maven's local investment team, led by Michael Vassallo, has been active in the market through its management of the £20 million Finance Durham Fund. Recent transactions include the investment in the fintech firm Honcho Markets, and its backing of the craft distillery, Durham Gin.

Michael Vassallo, Investment Director at Maven said: "As one of the UK's most active private equity fund managers, and with many years' experience of investing in and supporting SMEs across the North of England, the team at Maven is delighted to be working with North East Finance to deliver the objectives of the Fund. The North East is a hub for innovative smaller businesses, and there remains a clear need for this type of funding to help high-growth businesses fulfil their potential.

We recognise that dynamic and well-managed businesses come in different shapes and sizes so our flexible funding solutions reflect this and can be used for a variety of corporate scenarios.

We actively encourage high growth and established SMEs to get in touch to see how funding through the NEDCF could help drive expansion, capitalise on new contracts, or exploit market opportunities. Our aim is to help management teams achieve their goals and fulfil the company's growth potential."

The NEDCF can provide the financial resources to back business growth for ambitious companies. To be eligible for funding a business must be located in, or intend to relocate a material part of their operations to, the North East.

If your business is in need of finance to help unlock its growth potential, contact Maven's North East investment team today. www.mavencp.com

NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL FUND



The £27 million North East Development Capital Fund, supported by the European Regional Development Fund, backs high growth and established businesses via debt finance, mezzanine loans or equity investments from £400,000 up to £2 million.

If your business is in need of funding to help unlock its growth potential, please contact Maven's local investment team on:

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

CLAIRE CHARLTON

Head of Personal Tax, Rycroft Glenton

Did you always envisage a career in the accountancy industry?

I started to consider a career in accountancy when I was in 6th form as I had an aptitude for numbers and an interest in people and business, so it seemed like the ideal combination.

What is the favourite aspect of your job?

Private practice offers huge variety; no two days are the same and I relish the intellectual challenge of constantly looking for ways to help clients through the maze of ever-changing tax legislation. I also enjoy working closely with other professional advisers, such as solicitors, investment managers and land agents, so that our mutual clients receive advice which has been thoroughly considered from all angles.

Tell me about your current role?

I am Head of Personal Tax, leading a team of 10 tax professionals; between us, we deal with all aspects of personal tax and the administration & taxation of trusts.

How has the industry evolved since you started your career?

Accessing and manipulating data has become much more efficient, mainly due to huge strides in technology. Thanks to the internet, we now have a wealth of up-to-date tax research material at our fingertips. Modern software products allow us to interrogate data very easily and this means we can quickly identify and communicate with clients who are affected by changes in legislation.

What are you currently working on?

I am working on some complex inheritance tax planning projects for a number of families and assisting solicitors with complicated tax issues relating to deceased estates.

Where do you see the business in 5 years time?

In a market which has seen a lot of consolidation in recent years, retaining our independence is hugely important to us as it enables us to be flexible and to react quickly to the changing landscape. We are focusing in particular on growing our tax advisory, corporate finance and accounts & outsourced services divisions as we anticipate these being key to the business's growth over the next 5 years.

What is the best piece of business advice you have been given?

I have been trained from the outset of my career to look at things critically and make my own judgement, rather than accepting things at face value. More recently, I have attended a series of coaching workshops which have been very rewarding; I firmly believe that asking questions gets far better results than dictating demands or imposing solutions.

Who are your heroes and mentors in and out of business?

I admire anyone who has reached the top of their field but nevertheless demonstrates genuine charm, integrity and humility. Sir David Attenborough springs to mind.

How do you like to unwind?

I am a fan of the outdoors and head off for walking and cycling trips at weekends in my VW campervan. I also sing with Newcastle Bach Choir, which is challenging but so different from my day job that it is relaxing!

Favourite Book/Film/CD?

Book: I am a fan of Ian McEwan novels; he combines quality writing with interesting storylines.

Film: Brassed Off, a super example of British drama starring some of our best actors and great music

CD: Anything powerful and uplifting, featuring a choir of course!



DIVIDEND INSURANCE?

To be read in the style of the late, great Sir Terry Wogan and with apologies for the fall in literary standards.

John, Jack and George each own a third of a shoe manufacturing limited company. They are married to Janet, Jill and Mildred respectively.

The guys have been working together for several years and they have a strong business with good profits and, having taken accountancy advice, pay themselves small salaries and substantial dividends.

At a board meeting Jack said, "I'm bored."

John yawned and covered his mouth with his lace hanky. "I wonder where George is with the monthly figures. He should have been here by now," he lisped.

Suddenly there was a loud banging at the door and an ashen faced employee burst upon them.

"Come in," said John but Mr. Pimple, the foreman, was already at the window mopping his brow. "It's Mr. George, your highnesses. He's just gone and had a massive heart attack, your honours, and was dead by the time he hit the floor."

"Leave us" shouted Jack and both John and Pimple made a move for the door. "Not you, you idiot" insisted Jack and they both hesitated. Jack sighed. "John, sit down. We need to discuss the consequences of this news."

John looked relieved to be able to sit again and Pimple disappeared.

Jack said, "You do realise what this means?"

"Yess" said John. "There is no one to organise the Secret Santa this year."

"No, you fool. Under our articles of association his wife, Mildred, will inherit his shares and I refuse to work with George's old dragon."

"Well" said John, "At least she will still get her dividend, but she does not have to be a director."



Jack stared at John. "Too right, she is not going to be a director AND we are going to stop paying dividends."

"But that means we will pay more tax!" said John.

"I know but why should she get anything when she does nothing for it," responded Jack. "It's a price worth paying."

"Well I suppose she will get something when we sell the company in five years as planned," said John.

"Droppings!" shouted Jack. "I hadn't thought of that. She will be entitled to a third of all our hard work. We should have taken notice of that chap from Rutherford Hughes that said we needed a Dividend Insurance Policy because it would cover business sale too."

The door flew open and in breezed Mildred, a rather curvy lady and a little past her 'best before date.' "Hello, boys," she purred. "Now George has gone I have come to put my seat on the Board."

"I will miss him you know. All he wanted to do was bang, bang and bang away in the garage with

new shoe designs on his cobbler's last. It was quite comforting to know he was there."

"So, boys, can I have my seat?"

"I don't mind" stammered John as Mildred leant towards him exposing ample bosom.

"NO!" shouted Jack. "You have no skills to bring to this table."

"I might surprise you there," purred Mildred.

John returned home to Janet who was rolling pastry.

Janet asked, "Have you had a good day, John?"

"Yess thank you. Mildred came in and wanted to put her seat on the Board table, but Jack wasn't interested. I did say I would give her one. I feel sorry for her as she will miss her banging now George is dead."

"He might not be the only one that is dead" growled Janet.

See John be carried away on a stretcher.

See Jack wish he had taken more notice of that chap from Rutherford Hughes.

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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TUESDAY 12TH JUNE 2018

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TAX UPDATE

AT CROWNE PLAZA,
NEWCASTLE

REGISTRATION **8AM** | PRESENTATIONS **8.30AM** | CLOSE **10AM**

Presentations by Alastair Wilson, Partner, Andrew Fitton, Tax Director
and Sanjay Pugal, Tax Manager

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DELOITTE CREATES NEW ROLES IN THE NORTH EAST AS IT CHAMPIONS RETURN TO WORK PROGRAMME

Carey Stuart is a senior manager at Deloitte and head of the Professional Standards Review Centre of Excellence in Newcastle, where she is an advocate of agile working. Here she talks about Deloitte's Return to Work programme.

Going back into work after an extended period of time can be daunting as people feel the pressure to refresh and redevelop skills and often fear they may have been left behind.

This is particularly relevant to women when they have a young family. The result can be that we lose talented people from the industry.

At Deloitte our Return to Work programme is about helping to rebuild a career in a way that works for everyone.

The scheme offers 25 weeks of support, in a paid internship capacity, for anyone who has had a career break of two years or more and has had at least five years' experience in professional services or a similar relevant industry. Applicants to the Return to Work programme come from a wide range of backgrounds and have taken career breaks for different reasons, including becoming parents,

caring for relatives or just going travelling.

The award-winning programme saw 90% of last year's intake transition into permanent or contract roles with the firm, and we're hoping it can have an impact in the North East.

One of the areas of the business that offers opportunities for people wanting to return to work is the Professional Standards Review Centre of Excellence. The team focuses on audit and independent risk reviews and has grown from just two to 26 in under three years. We have plans to further increase the headcount by 15 in the coming year across Newcastle, Leeds and Belfast, and we hope the Return to Work programme can help to kick start some of that recruitment.

One of the reasons the PSR Centre of Excellence has been such a success, but also might appeal to anyone considering the return to work programme,

is that we practice truly agile working. Fifty per cent of the team work part-time, as I do myself, which means that at any one time half of the team are working remotely or reduced hours. This requires a high level of trust and engagement, which leads to consistently high levels of performance and a fulfilling work experience, while maintaining a good balance between work and home life.

More importantly this means that 50 per cent of the team successfully manage a career in audit on part-time contracts. A career that many of them didn't think was possible in this industry.

Deloitte's Return to Work programme runs four days a week and successful candidates receive a comprehensive induction to the firm, technical skills training, coaching and on-the-job project and direct client experience. Applications for this year's intake close on 30th June.

If you would like to find out more about our Return to Work programme please go to www.deloitte.co.uk/returntowork or contact me directly on 0191 202 5413 or castuart@deloitte.co.uk

THE STOCK MARKET - NAVIGATING THOSE CHOPPY WATERS



The world of stocks and shares is a complex and precarious business.

With volatility in the markets likely to increase thanks to a combination of the still unknown impact of Brexit that has caused a weakness in the value of sterling and the unpredictability of world events, investing capital in the stock market should be approached with care.

To help you take the best approach, we at wealth managers Blackett Walker have the experience to guide you through the bewildering array of options. We have managed tens of millions of pounds over decades and we have a loyal and long standing private client base.

On the face of it every investor is looking for a healthy return on their investment with minimal risk - simple.

However every investor is different. We all have different levels of tolerance for risk, different objectives and requirements and different degrees of wealth.

Combine this with a myriad of funds managed by different types of fund managers in an ever changing economic environment and what you are left with is a bewildering range of options.

That is why we take the time and trouble to research

everything thoroughly. We are fully conversant with technical vehicles, like pound-cost-averaging. A strategy, which, in the right circumstances, does not overly expose your capital as it invests a certain amount over time rather than all at once. The result is that the investor can buy more shares when prices become cheaper but fewer when they are more expensive and this strategy can help to mitigate potential losses to the overall capital stake.

Perhaps you could take advantage of a tracker fund - a fund that is linked to the shares of a number of companies within, for example, the FTSE 100 Index or we could suggest you invest in a portfolio of investments based on the analysis of a number of actively managed funds by fund managers with differing but complementary characteristics.

We currently advise on over £220M of assets - we are an independent wealth management company with its roots firmly in the North East but with its eyes firmly fixed on global capital markets on behalf of our many private clients.

Rest assured the success of your investments is a key priority to our continued reputation as acknowledged experts in wealth management.

Blackett Walker Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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KNOW YOUR ONIONS

Onions can make you cry. You know how it is, you're in the kitchen prepping your spag bol and tears are streaming down your face. So if you know your onions does that stop the tears. Well hopefully it might. Now I'm not suggesting that you chat to the onions as you chop, that could land you in all manner of padded cell, but 'knowing your onions' is quite important when you are running your small business.

A business owner, particularly a small business owner has so many things to consider. For a start you need to know as much as you can about every aspect of your trade or profession which means keeping up to date with new legislation, technology and practice. But then if you are really passionate about what you do - and that's why you started your business isn't it? - you do that anyway. But then there's all the other things to consider. You need to have an efficient 'back office' to run the admin and financial function. You need to look at marketing and PR, Health and Safety, HR and so many other things. Interaction with other businesses can give you valuable insights and can be used as a comparison to judge whether what they do would work for you. It makes sound business sense to consider an

alternative and consider the pros and cons.

You know the old saying - 'jack of all trades, master of none'. Certainly be a master of what you do, your business reputation depends on that but when it comes to all of the other jobs it pays to look at the alternatives. Take the accounting function for instance. I have yet to meet anyone who said 'oooh brilliant, I have a tax return to complete' so if looking after your finances is not something you are comfortable with it pays to have a look around at the alternatives. Would it be easier to use cloud software linked to relevant apps (with a bit of training maybe?) or could you employ someone to do this for a few hours a week. Perhaps you could just pass the whole thing on to your accountant who will present you with up to date figures each month and an estimate of the tax due. We do that for a number of clients, it means they know their financial position and we can highlight any changes very quickly. Outsourcing leaves you free to concentrate on what you do best, or even just spend some time on your allotment. So you really don't need to know all of the onions, you just need to know the best way to use the other onions that are out there on the shelves...



To find out more about accounts without tears contact CS Accounting on info@csaccounting.co.uk or give us a call 0191 4879870.

£1 TRILLION WORTH OF HOUSING UNDER-OCCUPIED BY OVER-55'S

As the UK's aging population continues to rise, more homeowners aged over 55 are looking to downsize for their retirement. With the benefits of less expense and more convenience, there is no wonder that almost half of this market is ready to downsize.

Currently, the UK has around 2.8 million vacant bedrooms in older people's homes and almost £1 trillion worth of housing in the UK is under-occupied by this market alone.

Whilst many over-55 homeowners wish to move down the property ladder to help fund their children climb up the property ladder, the rapidly growing aging population will leave the UK with an inadequate level of suitable housing for older people.

There is a large untapped market for retirees looking to downsize but as it stands there is a lack of suitable properties with only 13% of this group being able to downsize. Almost a quarter of the over-55's market would consider moving in to purpose-built retirement homes, though only 2.6 percent of current housing in the UK is classed as retirement housing.

If you are in the market to downsize your property for retirement or are just curious as to whether a downsize should be considered for your financial



situation, Wellway is here to advise you.

At Wellway we can offer advice and guidance on how to best plan for your retirement with our comprehensive financial planning services. With healthcare developing rapidly and the rate of life expectancy growing, your retirement could last twenty to thirty years, therefore planning for the future is crucial.

Wellway believes that the three keys to successful retirement planning are:

1. **Plan well ahead** - It is never too early to start retirement planning. The earlier you start the greater your chances of achieving your objectives
2. **Understand the options available** - It is

especially important to be aware of the wide range of options available and which combination would be most appropriate for your personal circumstances. Wellway provide a bespoke financial planning service that helps you to see every detail of the bigger picture.

3. **Seek professional advice** - This a very complex and continuously changing area, and we strongly recommend you seek skilled, professional advice at every step.

Our professional team can help you draw up and implement a comprehensive retirement strategy - giving you peace of mind to enjoy life to the full, now and into the future.

Contact us today to discuss how we can help you plan effectively for your retirement. Please visit the website at www.wellway.uk.com or call 01670 514 433.

AKZONOBEL ASHINGTON SCOOPS TOP REGIONAL MANUFACTURING AWARD



Jeff Hope (second from right) with some of the team from AkzoNobel Ashington at the North East Business Awards grand final.

As further testament to the hard work of our dedicated team at AkzoNobel Ashington, last month we were absolutely delighted to take home the much-coveted manufacturing award from the North East Business Awards.

Designed to recognise companies across the region that demonstrate manufacturing excellence, we secured our place at the grand final after winning the hotly-contested category at the Tyneside and Northumberland sub-regional heat.

Following several rounds of judging, including site visits from the category sponsors during which the factory's quality and sustainability practices, manufacturing innovation and processes, investment in people and equipment and overall performance was closely scrutinised, we were delighted to go on to win the top award at the grand final, which was held at Hardwick Hall in Sedgfield, County Durham.

"To receive the manufacturing award less than a year after opening the doors to our new facility in Ashington is brilliant recognition of our hard work," said Jeff Hope, head of manufacturing unit at AkzoNobel Ashington.

"From the outset, our vision for AkzoNobel Ashington was to create the world's most sustainable and advanced paint manufacturing facility and to have that vision recognised and rewarded on a regional scale by such a prestigious awards programme means a lot to us.

"We absolutely could not have achieved this without the efforts of our amazing team who go above and beyond to ensure that we deliver on our commitments and continuously improve our processes, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their hard work and support."

AkzoNobel Ashington will now be taken forward by the North East England Chamber of Commerce to the national Chamber Business Awards which will take place in London later this year.

For more information about AkzoNobel, visit www.akzonobel.com

'TOGETHER WE CAN TAKE ON THE WORLD' INSPIRES MORE THAN 300 NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEURS



The North East's most aspirational and influential business leaders gathered in Newcastle, on the 10th May, as the Entrepreneurs' Forum hosted one of the region's largest conferences, 'Together We Can Take on the World'.

Sponsored by Fairstone Group and hosted by broadcaster, artist and comedian, Alfie Joey, the North East welcomed entrepreneurs and athletes from across the UK to share their experience and inspire guests with stories and advice on a host of business topics and principles.

Sir John Timpson, owner of shoe repair chain Timpson, which has more than 1,900 branches nationwide, addressed the audience with a simple, yet effective, piece of advice:

"Common sense is so often ignored in business and it is actually one of the secrets to success. Stripping out complicated processes and giving people the autonomy to make decisions that allow the business to succeed from the front-line has served us well.

"We trust that our colleagues will serve our customers in the best way possible. We have the freedom to do this and that allows us to apply our successful 'upside-down management' structure, where those on the shop floor are at the top and the rest of us serve them."

Angus Thirlwell, co-founder of British premium chocolate brand, Hotel Chocolat, spoke of his early origins and entrepreneurial journey, while stressing the value of establishing a strong brand identity:

"With any innovative business, you have to protect your brand otherwise people will chip away at what

you've created. IP protection is incredibly important, we've had infractions right from the start and while it isn't as bad as with the fashion business, it is getting that way."

Angus' first business idea was the creation of the 'successor to the corporate pen', the Mint Marketing Company, which bore companies' logos on mints. It soon expanded to include chocolate, but it wasn't until 2004 that he founded Hotel Chocolat with business partner Peter Harris.

Mica McNeill, part of the duo that achieved Team GB's best ever women's bobsleigh result, spoke of her disappointment that funding had been pulled just months before the 2018 Winter Olympics.

It was through a successful crowdfunding campaign, #PoweredByThePeople, that she was able to compete at the Pyeongchang Games – after smashing her funding target of £30,000 in only six days:

"Focus on the process and the outcome will take care of itself. This is something that was in my head leading up to the Olympics and I think will stick with me for the rest of my career."

Adventurer, athlete, broadcaster and World Record holder Mark Beaumont, drew on his own experiences of taking on epic challenges, emphasising the importance of setting ambitious but achievable goals with the right team around you:

"One of the biggest mistakes people make is setting their goals to repeat history. Success needs to be defined and to have a clear blueprint, as you almost never do better than you aim to.

"Over the last 10 years, I have failed on many projects, but on balance, I have been successful in the team's I've been involved in. Understanding your weaknesses is important; I know what I'm not good at, which is why I need the right people to fill the voids."

Drawing the conference to a close was North East entrepreneur Julian Leighton, co-founder of pioneering interaction design agency Orange Bus.

Counting major brands like O'Neill and Force India among its clientele, Orange Bus employs over 140 staff and has offices across the UK. Recently sold to Capita - an ambition Julian always held, to build something and leave behind a legacy - it is a multi-million pound acquisition success:

"When you're growing you need credibility and the opportunity to attract key clients can come from anywhere. The key is to take and maximise each opportunity when it appears. It's not about luck, it's about being open to new ideas, trying new things and not letting opportunities pass you by."

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

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

An Entrepreneur Interview with..

CAROLINE MOODY

Moody Logistics

How was Moody Logistics formed?

The business was started by my grandfather in 1947, who had just come out of the RAF following World War II. He bought a Bedford truck and began trading, starting with moving coal and gradually grew to incorporate a fleet of wagons that delivered across the UK predominately in the tipper industry moving coal & grain across the UK.

In your own words, describe what Moody Logistics and Storage does.

We specialise in overnight pallet distribution for customers, while also offering storage and warehousing solutions, and dedicated haulage services across the UK.

With the demise of the mining industry in the North East in the early 90's my father, who was MD of the business at that time, had to look into other avenues within the transport industry. At that point in time it was the start of the overnight distribution movement, so he decided to embrace this and incorporate it into the business.

We did have a few failed starts, as we were highly involved in the British Rail setup and its overnight division named Track 29. It was an excellent concept, with the main trunking aspect of the transport being carried on the rail & local transport companies such as ourselves delivering into the local area from the rail head, but unfortunately commercially it couldn't get the impetus to grow quick enough. So, after four years, British Rail became privatised and this aspect of the business was closed down.

Tell me about how you became involved in the company and your progression.

As the company was starting in its new venture within the overnight Track 29 business was around the same time I left Marks and Spencer as a management trainee, so my Dad asked me to come on board while I was thinking about what I wanted to do next in my career.

As I had been determined not to stay and work long-term in the family business, Track 29 offered me a role direct with them in sales, covering the North East & Scotland, but this was short lived due to the privatisation of the enterprise. By this time, however, I was well ingrained into logistics so came back into work for the family business.

I worked until 2000, mainly doing the sales in Moody's until I left to have my first child. At this time we had moved to Bedfordshire following my husband's career so maternity leave meant leaving the business again, as commuting was not an option and I had always wanted to stay at home and bring my children up. It worked out well, though, as my brother, Richard, had just finished his studies and came straight into the business to replace me.

However, in 2005, my father, Alan, had the opportunity to buy our current 7.5 acre site in

Cramlington, which had the potential to add both warehousing and commercial units to let into the company portfolio. My brother didn't want to take on the responsibility on his own so he and my father came down to visit me and asked if we would consider moving back to the North East.

By this stage my two children were now starting school and nursery, and my husband was very supportive. One of the strengths of a family business is the flexibility in being able to work around family life, so we agreed and moved back!

Over the last 15 years, I've worked in the business alongside Richard, my brother-in-law, Gavin, and father. I covered most areas of the business including sales, marketing, accounts, admin and HR, coming under the title of Business Development Director. As my children got older, I steadily increased my hours and workload, until three years ago when I took over from my father as managing director.

My dad is still chairman of the business and quite frankly I don't think he'll retire! My brother and brother-in-law are also directors, who handle the operational aspect of the business and engineering side, while I focus on the sales, marketing and HR.

What is your proudest moment with the company?

Oh, it's difficult to think of just one! Last year was our 70th Anniversary since my grandfather started the business and we held a huge party at the Marriott Gosforth Park and raised £22,000 for the Great North Children's Hospital. However, I still get a buzz each day whenever driving to work and I see several of our vehicles pass by simultaneously.

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

Lots! I think sometimes we've been too cautious in the past and sometimes it can feel like it's a committee making decisions when it's a family business, so it can be slow!

Being a family business, you can sometimes make decisions with your heart and not your head, which isn't always a good thing. But, on the flip side, it can sometimes be a good thing, so there are pros and cons to it, which we've learnt from.

When the coal mining industry was drying up, business could be very tough at times I remember times when I was helping my mum chase money to be able to pay our VAT bills.

So, having been in that position, dad vowed that we would never be put in a scenario like that again. He looked after the finances and today we own our own premises and vehicles, and aren't beholden to anyone. So, for example, during the recent financial crisis, we were able to make our own decisions and stood sound financially.

What is Moody Logistics and Storage's USP?

Our relationships with customers. Most of our customers have our mobile numbers, and it wouldn't be unknown for us to assist them on a weekend, personally. For a lot of customers, the transport is an extension to their business and without good logistics and transport solutions, it doesn't help their business, so we need to be able to provide what they require.

Our trust and reliability too. We are fixated on these two principles and regularly ask ourselves whether we are delivering on these, which improves our customer service.

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

Looking after our current customers well – ultimately, the more they trade and do well, we receive more business. One feeds another and success tends to breed success.

Our sales over the last 3-4 years have grown between 6-10% which we're really pleased with.

You've also got to have the confidence to believe in yourself and have a go at things. I have focused much more on being a sales driven company and have built a sales team around us, which, in the logistics industry, is quite unusual. I also believe the future is in digital marketing, so we have invested in a new member of staff in this area – something we've never really done before.

In fact, we had two excellent candidates applied for a digital marketing position, so I hired both with the second one joining our sales team! When you get the right people, you don't want to miss out and I'm glad we were able to secure both ladies.

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

There are two quotes hung up on my wall, which I read every day. I have a passion for horses, so the first is something I can really connect with!

1) 'The speed of the leader determines the pace of the pack,' which just goes to show that you can't slow down!

2) God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

What are the future plans of the business?

More of the same, really! We need to continue to strengthen our position, support our loyal customer base and win new work.

We recently invested £500,000 in the extension of our warehouse, so we need to be able to justify this spend. Thankfully, the space is already filled, so we want to build on this positivity.

I'd also like to strengthen our two sister companies trading, Heathline Commercials and MCR Services, and their interactions with the strong, Moody brand.

A RECORD YEAR FOR BMC

BMC Recruitment Group's finance division has reported a record year, after investing in the team and growing the business to effectively exceed growth targets.

The results build on BMC Finance's phenomenal success across the recruitment market, BMC has seen a high demand for its services across the businesses' key sectors and with some of the North East's largest businesses as clients such as, Nissan, Sage, and Proctor & Gamble, with high profile candidates alike, its success highlights the requirement for a search consultancy that can deliver personable, high energy and specialist recruitment expertise to its clients.

BMC's Finance division has grown significantly and is fast becoming the go-to recruitment provider for accountancy and finance recruitment solutions, regularly recruiting for both senior and entry-level accountancy appointments.

BMC's Finance team is led by Managing Consultant, Craig Chamberlain, commenting on the success of the team, he said: "BMC Recruitment Group is an extremely ambitious, forward-thinking business and what we have achieved as a team is remarkable, it's extremely rewarding to be part of BMC's growth and to work with such amazingly talented, motivated individuals – we're all striving and working towards the same goal."

Craig joined the business in July and specialises in practice accountancy recruitment. In less than 8 months at the business, Craig was promoted to manager recognising his steadfast approach to recruitment. Working with clients such as Bellway, RSM, and NCG, Craig brings over a decade of finance recruitment to BMC and boasts an impressive network of practice professionals and clients alike.



From left to right: BMC's Senior Consultant, Sophie Goymer, Managing Consultant, Craig Chamberlain, Associate Director, David Lovenbury, Managing Director, David Blair and Senior Consultant, Nigel Spurr.

BMC's Senior Finance Consultant, Nigel Spurr was also recently shortlisted for the Outstanding Service award at the prestigious North East Employee of the Year Awards, the ceremony is to be held on the 1st June at Ramside Hall.

Leading on senior finance roles at BMC, is Senior Consultant, Sophie Goymer, who has successfully placed a number of key members in senior finance teams in some of the biggest North East businesses, including the region's biggest employer.

Sophie said: "We've had an extremely strong year, helping finance clients across the region and nationally to achieve their recruitment goals. Our aim is to help clients of all sizes, from SME's to large multinational organisations place and secure talent in order for them to achieve their goals."

Associate Director, David Lovenbury, said: "We're confident of our market position and we're building on the growth and the success we've achieved so

far by responding to client needs and working closely with them to understand their longer-term talent requirements. The results from our finance team reflect the incredible velocity and impact the consultants have had with both clients and candidates alike. We have gained a strong presence throughout the region for finance recruitment - which is recognition of the team's dedication, energy, and experience."

The business also recently announced the launch of a new risk and compliance division which will provide clients with risk and compliance recruitment solutions, a growing market within the regulated industries, signifying BMC's plans to grow, regionally and nationally.

BMC Recruitment Group is expanding – the business is recruiting and keen to hear from experienced consultants or those interested in a career in recruitment.

If you would like to find out more, contact BMC's Associate Director, David Lovenbury, please email david.lovenbury@bmcrecruitmentgroup.com or call 0191 303 9298. For the latest roles from BMC Recruitment Group visit: www.bmcrecruitmentgroup.com

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BMC RECRUITMENT GROUP



NEW COLLABORATION IN THE PIPELINE PROMISES GREAT CONNECTIONS

Three internationally acclaimed pipeline integrity consultants based in Newcastle have moved into shared office space to create a network of support and expertise.

The three companies, Pipeline Integrity Engineers (PIE), HighGrade Associates (HGA) and Holistic Integrity Consulting, have capitalised on their long-standing relationships and moved into an office suite in Gosforth's Regent Centre.

The move will enable the three consultancies to benefit from each other's experience in the high technology specialist sector. The fusion of firms is set to create a collaboration that will offer a

comprehensive range of complimentary services to energy companies worldwide. Together, the three businesses have worked in over 20 countries and contain some of the leading experts in integrity management.

HGA is a expert team of engineers and consultants that specialise in pipeline integrity assessment for both upstream and downstream pipelines. PIE offers services associated with the design, construction, operation and safe integrity management of high pressure pipelines in the UK and across the globe, whilst Holistic Integrity's work includes offering engineering support to Northern Gas Networks.



HINDLEY CIRCUITS SECURES SECOND ACQUISITION

Young manufacturing company Hindley Circuits celebrates securing its second business acquisition in only a matter of months.

Based in Cramlington, the firm known for providing high quality electronic Printed Circuit Board assembly services for a range of industrial products, has taken over electronic product design and repair specialists Irridian Industrial Electronics to enhance the company's offering. The strategic move comes on the back of the business recently acquiring Blyth based Magnum Electronics.

Acquiring both businesses forms part of Hindley's ambitious plans to increase the company's turnover to £10m within its first five years of trading, something which the firm is already on its way to achieving after recently securing four record breaking sales over the last few months.

Richard Whitehead, Chief Executive Officer at Hindley Circuits, said: "The acquisition will be pivotal in allowing Hindley to offer new product development and PCB layout services through Irridian to add significant value to our customers."

Investment of £550k has already been made to train staff, as well as upgrading and improving equipment. This has seen the company invest in advanced equipment including Yamaha placement machines and Koh Young 3D automated inspection equipment.

ARCINOVA ANNOUNCES MAJOR INCREASE IN TURNOVER



Contract Research and Development Organisation Arcinova has announced a major growth in global sales.

The Alnwick-based company, which provides both integrated end to end solutions and standalone services to pharmaceutical and biotech companies, has seen its sales increase by nearly 60% from 2016 to 2017, from £5.3 million to £8.4 million.

Arcinova provides drug substance synthesis, drug product manufacture, bioanalytical/metabolism services, active pharmaceutical ingredient services and synthesis of toxic/highly potent active pharmaceutical ingredients. It also provides consultancy services and works in partnership with companies throughout the

drug development process.

The company has attributed its growth to a major increase in client numbers, after doubling its workforce in the last two years. The firm has also recently recruited new scientists into its Bioanalysis, API and CMC teams, as well as adding to its senior leadership team. Clients are also tapping into a broader range of Arcinova's specialist services.

Arcinova also recently announced the award of a £1.5 million Innovate UK grant for the development of new flexible modular manufacturing technologies. The project, which will span a three-year period, will be undertaken in collaboration with a team at the University of Nottingham.

THE MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING MARKETING SPECIALISTS

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Samantha Davidson,
Managing Director of Horizonworks.

TELLING YOUR BUSINESS STORY...IT'S IMPORTANT TO GET IT RIGHT!

Samantha Davidson, Managing Director of leading B2B marketing agency Horizonworks, explains how telling your business story accurately – both internally and externally – is a core factor to your marketing success.

Horizonworks specialises in working with B2B organisations from the manufacturing, engineering, automotive, technology and innovation-led sectors, both in the UK and worldwide. Our clients have complex products and services that need to be understood and then translated into compelling messages and marketing campaigns which set them apart from their competitors. Getting their business stories right is therefore crucial - and it should be a cornerstone of any company's marketing activity.

Here are some tips on shaping and communicating your business story effectively...

Understand your market

You should have a clear understanding of your position within the market and benchmark your business against your competitors. It is equally important to understand your target audience. Research your clients and prospects – don't rely on what you think you know, storytelling involves understanding what makes your audience tick.

Build a marketing strategy

Develop a cohesive, clear and tailored marketing strategy to address why and what story you are going to communicate. This will help you to develop your story and ensure that you get a better return on your marketing investment.

Get on message

When defining your messaging, don't think solely about what you do, but consider what your product/service actually means to the potential customer. Most importantly, your key messages should be used consistently and adapted to your target audiences.

Who are you talking to?

An understanding of your target audience is key to effective storytelling. Knowing your audience means you can adapt the tone of voice and the key messages you use to tell them your story. Take into account cultural sensibilities, customs and quirks of language when marketing abroad.

Select the right channels

Know the places where your target audience is most likely to see your story. Whether it's a press release, social media, blogs, brochures, mail, your website, video or a presentation – there are a range of marketing tools available which will help you to share your story. You just need to work out which stories are most appropriate for each channel.

Identify your stories

What have you recently achieved? Are you expanding your team or client base? Have you launched a new product or service? Every business has a story to tell – you just have to look for them.

Make headlines!

Journalists are short on time, so your press release needs to make an impact within seconds. Think about the news angle, keep it short and avoid sales jargon!

Expertise and credibility

You're an expert in your field – so why not let people know? Start by identifying a spokesperson/people in your company with specialisms. Journalists like experts and there are plenty of opportunities for comment. Alternatively you can consider writing a feature on industry trends, white papers, industry advice or even technical insight. Case studies are also important in building credibility.

Cut through the noise

Customers are bombarded with excess information, so it is critical your story cuts through the noise. You can do this through well written and tailored content, eye-catching infographics, high-quality photography and topical articles.

Horizonworks has helped a range of clients to tell their business stories – nationally and internationally – including US based AmeriWater, a premier provider of water treatment equipment, Cellular Solutions, a business communications and systems provider, The Expanded Metal Company, an expanded metal mesh manufacturer and Arcinova, a contract research and development company which serves the pharmaceutical sector.

BUILDING FIRM FOUNDATIONS FOR THE REGION'S NEXT GENERATION OF CONSTRUCTION APPRENTICES...



The construction sector is currently in the grip of a widespread skills shortage with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) recently announcing that approximately 157,000 new recruits are required by 2021 to keep up with current demand. There has also been a reported 26% fall in the number of UK apprenticeships taken up in the first quarter of 2018, a statistic that leading learning providers like Northumberland College are keen to turn around in joint collaboration with regional employers.

Working with the likes of Bernicia and Taylor Wimpey who employ apprentices across all trades, the College's purpose-built construction academy offers state-of-the-art workshop facilities and complements vocational-based training provision available to 16-19 year old students. It sees multi-trade organisations successfully working in partnership with Northumberland College to enable learners to enter employment fully prepared.

Construction-led apprenticeship courses follow frameworks and standards designed in conjunction with industry requirements and reflecting employers' exact needs. As well as mainstream construction methods, opportunities have also been created for College students to learn specialist heritage skills. This has been welcome news, especially for organisations working on older buildings, using traditional craft techniques or alternative raw materials, and has helped to plug an industry skills gap, especially in Northumberland.

Paul Richmond, Head of the Construction Academy at Northumberland College explained, "Employers,

especially those who provide niche construction services, often find themselves struggling to find the right candidates for employment so by giving our learners a complete insight into the industry across all trades, we can reduce the skills gap and offer well-rounded training. Our construction academy opened in 2014 and because of the quality of facilities, we can provide a full overview from traditional, highly skilled craftsmanship and long-standing working methods to use of modern techniques, the latest technologies and new equipment.

"For areas like Northumberland where construction could include farm or agricultural-based projects in more rural areas, this is definitely an added bonus and a boost to the local economy through greater employment opportunities."

Courses at Northumberland College are delivered by industry professionals in realistic workshop environments and range from entry level to advanced level 3. They include joinery, carpentry, tiling, plumbing, painting and decorating and property maintenance, with other, more unique

courses including building crafts, textile floor covering and block paving. Work placements are also offered to full time students.

The College updates its apprenticeship programmes regularly in line with regional partners and sector stakeholders. Due to the quality of training received, students have been very successful in their respective subject areas representing the North East in national competitions like Skill Build.

Paul added, "Our association with companies including PASLOD, Rubi, Sigma and WEBER means that learners are trained using the latest technologies in preparation for employment. We are at the forefront of learning provision and larger construction organisations with a payroll over £3m could use their levy funding to access and take advantage of employee development through apprenticeships.

"Construction companies cannot afford to dismiss the importance of attracting the next generation of talent and through apprenticeships, we can increase opportunities, especially for females, and inspire young people to join the industry."

Employers looking for more information or wishing to offer apprenticeship opportunities should contact Northumberland College's Business Solutions Team on t: 01670 841200 or go to www.northumberland.ac.uk



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THE FIRST EVER NORTHERN CHILDREN OF COURAGE AWARDS, GATESHEAD HILTON.

The event, brought by St James's Place Charitable Foundation was hosted by ITV's Rachel Sweeney to honour deserving young people in the North of England.

There were 11 awards in all split into under 13's and 13-17 year old's along with a Team Award for those who work with children. Each award category winner's story brought a tear to the eye along with a lot of inspiration through adversity

Guests were entertained by the amazing Rock Choir and the very talented Tom "Mouse" Smith.

Thank you to our award sponsors, Clarke Mairs LLP, Shiremoor Press Ltd, St James's Place Charitable Foundation, Pure Panel Management, The Morpeth Practice, Handelsbanken and Guthrie Financial Planning

Thanks also to everyone who made this event a reality, watch this space for next year....







MY WIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM

It has been hard to not get caught up in the whole royal wedding fever. And it is wonderful to see, not only the whole nation, but the globe celebrate Prince Harry and Meghan Markel coming together.

The royal wedding coincided with my own 10 year wedding anniversary and got me thinking of how blessed I am.

My wife is the most caring, kind, patient and considerate person I have ever met. Has been by my side through thick and thin, the ups and downs and never judged or criticised me, even tolerating my dad dancing on occasional social events. And looking back, the last 10 years have seen some of the most wonderful experiences of my life, all of which I have shared with her.

It is incredible how we can take things and people for granted and only when they are lost that we realise the true importance of them, my late amazing mother being one of them. However, adopting a "gratitude attitude" can make a big difference to both those around you, including yourself.

There are various thoughtful and mindful studies, including vast practical examples

demonstrating that the most successful people in life (not necessarily measured by money) adopt an approach that is focused on patience, perseverance and positivity. For me, whilst I must admit at times I am not always the most patient, I do adopt a constantly trying until you succeed approach, but the most important aspect in my life is positivity.

Being positive makes a significant difference, looking for the improvements, the good things in life and in other people around me. Waking up and thinking how can I make a difference today, rather than thinking how sad and bad the world is and burying my head in the sand, although I do admit there are times when these thoughts cross my mind.

Even the words that we chose can affect how we react in any situation. Next time you experience a problem at work or home, try changing the word "problem" to "challenge" or even better opportunity, and you will be surprised at how

you and those around you react. With a challenge you start thinking innovatively, your approach changes to making things better and learning. Positivity gives us hope and the power of hope lifts our spirits. You just need to watch Star Wars to understand how compelling hope can be.

The world is filled with despair, disengagement and divisiveness. But there is also an incredible amount of good that exists, with a vast number of initiatives that bring people and communities together all to make a difference providing hope. I am astounded by the positive response of the #Primary2Prosperity Campaign.

We just all need to get behind something good and start promoting it more, alongside recognising and appreciating the true angels in our lives. My wife is my life support system and for whom I am eternally grateful and look forward to our next 10 years!

Ammar Mirza CBE is the founder and chairman of Asian Business Connexions, Board member of North East LEP and holds various other positions across the private, public and third sectors.



ABC 9th Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony

in association with Gainford Group



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BIG PIE CHALLENGE 2018

A pioneering North East project which engages thousands of schoolchildren in activities to help develop their life skills and business acumen has been singled out for praise by the Children's Commissioner for its work.

The PIE (Primary Inspiration through Enterprise) Project has been highlighted in the Commissioner's national report as an exemplar of how to effectively engage and enlighten young people in meaningful activities, increasing aspiration as a result.

The development comes only shortly after the latest annual Big PIE Challenge, which works with scores of schools and thousands of children across the whole region – as well as offering a prize of £5,000 to the winning team, it helps to develop vital skills in areas like coding, engineering and general enterprise. In a first for the North East, primary school children can also gain vocational enterprise qualifications.

The fast-growing PIE Project, a charitable trust, was established in 2013 to work with four primary schools in Walker as a means of increasing life skills and aspiration levels, but since then has grown to work with children across the North East, with more schools being added continually. This year, the Challenge included secondary schools for the first time.

The charity works inclusively in the classroom, where every child is allowed to identify and develop their strengths and address their weaknesses. The PIE Project also includes parents, teachers and businesses, to ensure that every stakeholder in a child's life who can influence their future is actively



engaged in identifying and creating opportunities.

Businesses from across the North East have been keen to lend their support to the project, with Sir John Hall – patron of the PIE Project – who has started a campaign to raise £100,000. It is also establishing an Enterprise Bursary for schools in association with Shepherd Offshore, in memory of the late Freddie Shepherd.

The innovative PIE Project also has a PEERZ Academy, which was set up to tackle low GCSE and A Level attainment, and is helping to connect young people with culture through working alongside projects including Culture Bridge North East and the Newcastle Film Festival.

Ammar Mirza CBE founded the PIE Project in his role as Chair of Governors of Tyneview Primary School in Walker, as a means to help promote

aspiration and attainment from the earliest ages.

"Naturally, we are truly proud and grateful for the recognition in the report from the Children's Commissioner, this is an honour for our work to be highlighted in such a way," he said.

"Over the past 6 years the charity has grown significantly and made a demonstrable difference in helping realise ambitions and raise aspirations. We are committed to engaging, enlightening and educating young people in the world of enterprise and to giving them the opportunities to develop their skills from a very young age. Through us being able to offer vocational qualifications to children in primary school, we are opening their eyes to achievement in the world of business. We want to develop the 'soft skills' which aren't judged through qualifications, but are essential in developing as a person.

"This year's Big PIE Challenge was another huge success, and we look forward to finding out who has won the challenge in due course. The levels of engagement we have seen again from schools and young people has been phenomenal. Every year, the Challenge and the wider PIE Project grows to work with even greater numbers, and we are very proud of that. My grateful thanks go to those children, parents, schools, businesses and volunteers who support us, as without them, our work would not be possible."

To get involved please email info@ammarm.com or call 0191 230 8040.

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OUR VISION

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FROM COLLEGE STUDENT TO SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR



Alex Henderson, director and co-founder of NewGen Creative

Studying TV and film production at college gave Alex Henderson the ideal foundation to launch a thriving media business...

It's been three years since I took the life-changing decision to start my own venture with my business partner, Justin Edlagan – and what an amazing three years it has been!

Not only have I had the opportunity to work on well-known TV shows including Downton Abbey, Dickinson's Real Deal and Beowolf, I've also won commissions from a host of great businesses, such as Motel One, Sodexo and Harley-Davidson, and created a short film that was showcased at the recent Newcastle Film Festival.

Justin and I started out making eye-catching video and social media content for clients but as the business grew, we branched into other exciting areas including 3-D virtual reality walkthroughs of hotels, offices, shops and leisure venues.

Our business, NewGen Creative, has started to win recognition in the region. Last year we were shortlisted for a North East Business Award and voted one of the top three digital and social media firms in Northumberland & Tyneside – something which gave me a huge sense of personal pride.

It's safe to say that I wouldn't be where I am today had it not been for Gateshead College, where I

studied TV and film production. The course gave me the skills and confidence to start the business and I've not looked back since.

Although I already had a background in video production, the college gave me invaluable experience of further editing skills and pre-production workflow and logistics. More importantly, they encouraged me to develop my entrepreneurial spirit, making me president of the Northern Stars enterprise society, taking me to business events and talks and even organising an incubator scheme with Gateshead Council so we could get NewGen off the ground.

I wouldn't have achieved all of this at any other college. My teachers were so supportive and took a genuine interest in my new business, which I launched while still at college. Probably the best thing they did was encourage me to surround myself with like-minded people who are running successful businesses. Through the enterprise society I learned more about what it takes to start a business, how to look after the finances and how to network effectively with potential customers.

I also discovered how other entrepreneurs tackle

day-to-day challenges. They say it's a lonely life being an entrepreneur but it doesn't have to be, not if you talk to people who've been there and done it. Without the college's help, I wouldn't have known that these opportunities existed.

I still keep in touch with my tutors at Gateshead College and, in a strange quirk of fate, they're now one of my valued customers! I've been commissioned by the organisation to produce VR walkthroughs of facilities at the Skills Academy for Automotive, Engineering, Manufacturing and Logistics in Team Valley. Students will soon be able to take a virtual tour around the academy and see 3-D visualisations of driving simulators, spray booths and other modern equipment.

I'm a firm advocate of getting an education; it gives entrepreneurs the best preparation for starting a business. And my future goals? Ultimately, I want to create a company that can be seen and recognised as a place that genuinely helped North East filmmakers to begin their career. If one day someone told me that NewGen Creative changed their life for the better, I'd know I'd achieved what I set out to do.



DO T-LEVELS PROVIDE THE ANSWER TO HELPING CLOSE THE SKILLS GAP IN THE NORTH EAST?

In conversation with Sarah Glendinning, Regional Director of the CBI and Michelle Rainbow, Skills Director at the North East LEP

New policies introduced by the current government have put vocational qualifications firmly in the spotlight.

April 2017 saw the introduction of the new apprenticeship levy, which aims to support the creation of three million new apprenticeships by 2020.

2020 will also see the introduction of a new technical qualification - T-levels; a classroom-based qualification for 16-19 year olds who want to learn the knowledge, skills and behaviours to progress to further training or into employment.

Here Sarah Glendinning, Regional Director of the CBI and Michelle Rainbow, Skills Director at the North East LEP, share their thoughts on T-levels and what impact they will have here in the North East.

"T-levels are being introduced to make it easier for young people to take technical and vocational routes to their chosen careers and tackle long-term skills shortages across industry," said Sarah.

"The CBI has long called for a world-class technical route and supports the introduction of T-levels as an opportunity to deliver the skills that businesses and young people need."

Each T-level will last for two years and be taught full time in a college with time spent on a three-month work placement. The first three programmes – education and childcare, construction and digital – will start in September 2020, with the full system up and running by 2024.

Michelle Rainbow said: "The North East LEP

supports the introduction of T-levels. They are based on best practice in technical education in other countries so are fundamentally sound in their approach and thinking, however whilst we are developing T-levels it's really important that the employer voice is heard strongly especially when it comes to resolving some of the challenges.

"As a region we need to work on closing our skills gap and T-levels are a step in the right direction. Just like the hugely successful Good Career Guidance benchmarks, which now form part of statutory guidance for schools in delivering careers advice, the business community will play a very important role in the success of T-levels."

T-levels will be designed in partnership by business and Government. Industry has a great opportunity to play a vital role in building a system that delivers the skills it needs in the future.

As Sarah explained: "75% of businesses in the 2017 CBI/Pearson Education & Skills Survey expect to need more people with higher skills in the future, but 61% are not confident about filling these high-skilled jobs.

"Engagement between government and employers is vital to make T-levels work for everyone and ensure that training and qualifications match business need. T-levels have the potential to be transformative as a world-class route in our education system and economy."

Michelle continued: "Securing buy-in from the business community and working in partnership with industry will ensure T-levels are a success. We need employers in the North East to really step-up and get involved in their design and delivery.

"The Department for Education is looking for experienced professionals to join its 'T-level panels' across each of the 15 routes to help design the new programmes. It would be fantastic to see the North East represented on those panels."

The CBI has long-called for a high-esteem A-level equivalent so it's important T-levels establish themselves as a currency that both young people and employers understand and respect as a gold-standard qualification.

Michelle Rainbow said: "Any outdated opinions about the value of technical versus academic education must be forgotten. It's important we embrace both in the North East, and indeed across the UK, if we want to compete on a global stage."

Sarah concluded: "There has never been a more important time to deliver world class training for our young people in every part of the UK. If delivered properly, T-levels can increase skill levels in the North East so they meet business needs and help young people to progress into higher skilled, better-paid work."



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HR MYTH BUSTING!

Whether taking on your first employee or starting to scale up, employing staff can be challenging and HR has more than its fair share of myths and misinformation! And with tribunal cases increasing by 64% since the fees were scrapped in July 2017, getting it wrong can be costly.

"Given the ever-changing legislation and case law and the conflicting pressures that many SME business owners face, its no wonder that mistakes happen. Sadly these can easily lead to expensive tribunal cases" says Jayne Hart, Director of The HR Dept.

Jayne Hart further explains "When a business starts up, budget is tight and focus is on delivery, understandably HR practices are not a priority. As it grows, the cracks begin to show as the legal foundations such as employment contracts don't fit the business and the processes around the people, that maybe worked when it was a tight knit small team are no longer fit for purpose."

Jayne Hart provides us with a selection of common HR myths that can lead to expensive claims for an SME;

"You can't make a pregnant employee redundant."

Yes you can. However it must be a procedurally fair process. Careful though that there is no risk of sex discrimination in the selection process. You also need to be mindful that once a pregnant employee goes on maternity leave, they have extra legal protection by having first option on any available positions that they are qualified to do if placed at risk of redundancy.

"No one can take you to tribunal without two years' service."

Now this is a really dangerous one because, yes they can – and for a range of reasons. For example: discrimination, underpayment of wages like the National Living Wage or National Minimum Wage,



breach of working-time regulations in terms of holiday pay or a breach of contract.

"I can decide if I want someone to be a."

Oh no you can't, as Uber and Pimlico Plumbers are finding out. There are strict rules for deciding the status of people in the business. It is unhelpful that HMRC and employment law rules are different in deciding if someone is an employee, a worker or self-employed.

"You don't have to give part-time staff the same benefits as full-time staff."

Part-time staff must suffer no detriment, and so must have the same benefits as full-time staff (or broadly equivalent ones). Many benefits can be pro rata for part-time staff, such as holiday allowance.

"Casual and zero-hour staff do not get holidays."

All employees and workers accrue statutory holiday from day one. This is 20 days plus bank holidays.

"I can't contact sick employees."

As an employer you have a 'duty of care' to keep

in touch with a sick employee to see how they are doing. This doesn't mean daily calls and emails as this could lead to a harassment case. Regular contact should not just focus on their return to work, but their well-being, and if any reasonable adjustments can be made to help their return.

"You can fire employees on the spot."

Well, if they had shot a colleague it would probably fall within a range of reasonable responses. But usually the Acas code for disciplinary and grievance should be followed.

"Employees don't have a contract unless there is something in writing."

Express terms can be agreed between both the employer and employee in written or verbal communication. So, salary at the interview and pay rise promises at the Christmas party can count!

Time spent sorting out these issues and the cost of defending or settling claims can really destroy a business so ensure that your business is up to date with HR legislation, don't fall foul of any of these HR Myths.



TIME TO RECRUIT?

At the point a business is ready to expand and take on its first employee, there are some essential “Dos” and “Don’ts” the discerning employer will need to be aware of.

Effective hiring starts with a well-planned recruitment process. The focus should be on providing sufficient information to future employees to allow them to prepare for an interview and fully understand the role. By setting out a pre-prepared job description and person specification this will allow an employer to prepare and tailor their interview questions.

Here, Deb Tweedy of Hadrian HR explores the first 10 considerations of recruitment.

Pay Scales. This will be dependent upon the job requirements and experience. Whilst this may sound all too obvious it is essential that pay scales are benchmarked against industry averages. If you are operating in a low-cost market you may wish to pay national minimum wage. If you are paying for qualifications and experience you will need to understand the pay rates of your competitors to be able to attract potential candidates.

Advertising. It is essential to advertise effectively to avoid wasted costs. Do you have time to sift through CVs or would it be better to use a trusted recruitment agency?

Selection. When selecting your potential candidate ensure you follow a carefully designed selection process which demonstrates validity, reliability, sensitivity and practicability.

Recruitment. Ensure your employee has the legal right to work in the UK and obtain the relevant paperwork.

Insurance. Ensure you have up to date employers’ liability insurance in place.

HMRC. Notify HM Revenue & Customs of your intention to employ up to four weeks in advance of making your first salary payment.

Statement of Terms/Contract. The employee has the statutory entitlement to receive a written statement of particulars within two months of commencing employment. The statement must include the following information:

- The names of the employer and employee;
- Job title and description of work;
- Place of work, including details of any mobility clause, and the employer’s address;
- The date the job role/employment commences, including any continuous employment (e.g. where this is an internal promotion);
- Rate of pay and frequency of payment;
- Hours of work, including normal working hours and compulsory overtime;
- Holiday allowance (including public holidays)
- Rules relating to sickness or injury and sick pay;
- Pension arrangements;
- Disciplinary rules and procedure;
- The name of a person to whom an employee can apply with any grievances regarding their employment;
- Length of notice required by both parties;
- Any other important/essential contractual terms.

Induction. Ensure you provide a good induction programme to reinforce your early expectations and provide employees with on the job training, health and safety obligations, risk assessments, fire hazards etc.

Performance Management. By carefully tailoring a performance management system to your business needs you can ensure you obtain the best from your people assets.

Auto Enrolment. Be sure to notify the pension’s regulator of your new employee. You now have a legal obligation to pay employee contributions from day one.

Data Protection. Under the General Data Protection Regulations 2016 you have a legal obligation as a controller to protect your employees’ data. Ensure you register with the Information Commissioners Office as a data controller and check out the website to fully understand your obligations, implement staff training etc.

If you wish to become an employer of choice there is a vast array of other benefits or rewards that can be implemented without costing the earth.

Hadrian HR is an employment advisory team with specialist knowledge in both employment law and human resource management. Its team of HR specialists are on hand to provide advice on creating an equal environment for employees, with consultancy advice ranging from one off contracts to a full audit of current policies and provision of customised contracts and handbooks.



RECRUITING THE RIGHT WAY WITH WESTRAY

If you've had experience of using a recruitment agency (or Consultancy as Westray Recruitment Consultants like to be known as) to source staff, you probably approached a recruiter and explained what sort of person you were looking for and what the job entailed. You then sat back and waited for some action.

Action, a few weeks later, was probably in the shape of a number of CV's forwarded to your inbox, of candidates that frustratingly didn't quite fit the brief, both in terms of skill set and team/culture fit.

This has been the experience Maureen Wright has witnessed over the past five years as the landscape of the recruitment industry continues to change, both with the introduction of new technologies and increased competition from global, national and local recruiters.

Having started her journey in recruitment in the early 80's, she is well placed to comment on these changes and how they have impacted on her business, which she established in 1990 after returning back to her native North East from Birmingham.

"I was aware that the recruitment industry was changing. More players were entering the market and smaller businesses were being swallowed up by the national recruiters, which had an impact on staff turnover and quality of service. I was determined to do something about it, therefore Westray Recruitment Consultants had to be different, which is why I wanted to develop a boutique consultancy which looks after clients and really goes the extra mile in terms of service delivery. I'm proud to say that many of the clients we attracted in those early years in the

1990s, are still with us". It's also why Westray has become a market leader in helping companies to hire across the Professional, Engineering, Industrial & Manufacturing and Commercial sectors.

Westray Recruitment Consultants is now a family business with Maureen as MD and her daughter, Ashleigh, operating alongside her as Commercial Director.

Whilst technology has definitely aided the process of recruitment in terms of sourcing talent more quickly and on a global basis, she is keen to ensure that her team of consultants don't just rely on the technology available, but practice and continue to develop their skills in the "art of recruitment".

"Recruitment is a people focussed business where relationship building with both clients and job seekers is key. Face to face conversations on a regular basis with both is crucial, in order to understand hiring strategy, brand and culture, and to identify the type of individuals required that will allow us to make that ideal match. We wouldn't dream of recommending anyone to our clients without meeting with them first, but sadly, this happens all too often. We want to work with candidates for the entirety of their career if possible, and be the preferred and trusted recruitment partner of businesses looking for a consultancy rather than

an agency, that will add value and focus their efforts on their business".

"With regards to technology" added Ashleigh, "we've all heard about skills shortages (particularly within the STEM sectors), well, it's our job to unearth those difficult to find candidates and this is where technology does play its part. We utilise a number of different platforms which allows us to source talent more swiftly and therefore provide our clients with faster response times, getting those empty seats filled more quickly."

There's a lovely welcoming atmosphere when you arrive at the Westray offices on Team Valley. It doesn't matter whether you are from one of their major clients, or a job seeker who is looking for a new career opportunity; everyone gets the same attentive service.

Westray Recruitment Consultants provide a full service operation. From the moment a client appoints them to undertake a project, whether for a critical senior appointment or a large scale, managed, flexible workforce, Westray takes care of everything, leaving you to concentrate on running your business. Therefore if you are looking to undertake a recruitment project, speak to either Maureen or Ashleigh or a member of their team. You'll quickly find out that Westray do recruitment the right way.

"S'MARKETING" EXPLAINED

What is it and why you need to know about it

Occasionally at a networking event you'll hear a bunch of old sales hands (myself included) reminiscing about the days when we simply drove around the country with the precision of a co-ordinated army, visiting our customers and drumming up new business. Our Fords and Beemers stuffed full of samples and order forms (in triplicate of course) and what a sin it was to be in the office any other day than a Friday afternoon.

Then the internet came along and completely disrupted the way our customers (B2C AND B2B) want to deal with us.

Psychologically people hate the feeling of being 'Sold to', yet we all have a necessity to buy, so the advancement of both technology and free available content at the end of our thumbs, has allowed our prospects to delay entering the sales process until they are much further into their own buy cycle.

Great news for the buyer, but a potential disaster for businesses grappling with creating a sales funnel that allows the buyer to 'self-educate' through the now extended Research Phase.

The impact of this on the functionality of the Sales Engine is huge.

This technological disruption and ability to now reach our markets digitally, although driving traffic is a different challenge, it has now created a much wider top-heavy pipeline funnel, often with thousands more 'leads' at the top end. Leads and activity that are completely unqualified. So, deciding where to invest your valuable people resources to guide and qualify these leads is a challenge for any small or growing business.

Another challenge is to consider where the functionality between Marketing and Sales now crosses over? Before it was a much clearer line that was crossed and much much earlier in the sales process. Previously as soon as someone 'raised their hands' by contacting you for a brochure, meeting you on your stand at an exhibition, calling in to your call centre, or if in retail – simply walking into your store, the lead was easily handed over to your sales team to nurture and close.



Nicola Cook, CEO of Company Shortcuts.

Now though, as prospects prefer to stay in the Research Phase much longer, delaying contact with a real human for as long as possible (remember: people hate to be sold to), the challenge now is to build a 'Sales Engine' that delivers a personalised, tailored and bespoke sales journey for the customer. One hat pre-empts their next move, whilst also allowing your teams to prioritise profitable prospects, whilst also helping them understand where your customer is in their own self-educated buying journey. This gives your team the opportunity to ensure they continue to add value.

Your process should lift out from those sniffing about your website, downloading your blogs, watching your videos and following you on social media, to highlight those worthy (and ready for) an engagement from your sales team. Which these days by the way, are not zooming about the country, burning a hole in the ozone, but should be structured in the different functions of your sales engine, (Inbound lead qualification, Outbound lead generation, Inside sales team, Outside sales team, Key Account management.) Instead of cold calling, they should be using much more sophisticated forms of engagement.

One answer to this conundrum is to embrace "S'Marketing". My own word that I've coined to describe this blurring of the process in the Customer Buying Journey.

So how do you do it?

1. Map your Customer Journey.

Involve your team. Find a large white wall and grab a tonne of post-its. As complicated as it may seem, map out of the flow of potential touchpoints and information your prospects consume. Be clear about the 'stepping stones' you wish to create and where you can pre-empt and add value to your customer's journey.

2. Build your technology around this map.

Too often people invest in a CRM or front-end marketing system such as Hubspot, Infusionsoft or Mailchimp, and bend their process to fit the technology. No! You should always make the technology fit around your process.

3. Brainstorm the APPs and add-ons to your process.

There are so many good APPS these days that can improve micro-parts of your process, removing barriers and easing blockages. Sit with your team and ask them to write down every APP they currently use – you'll be amazed. Then decide collectively any that could be integrated 'officially' into your workflow.

Aside from the widely used applications of Microsoft Office and G-Suite, here are a few APPs that we use that have had a positive impact on our own sales process and customer journey: iZettle, Xero, GoCardless, Infusionsoft, Adobe Echosign, Asana, AcuityScheduling, SmarterQueue.



Download Nicola's Free E-Books on S'marketing at www.companyshortcuts.com

KEEPING PACE WITH URBAN LOGISTICS

Marc Reimann, a Professor of Operations Management at Northumbria University aims to help logistics companies operate sustainably and reduce their environmental impact through his latest research on vehicle routing optimisation.

His project focuses on city logistics, where increasing demand for delivery of goods is in conflict with excess traffic and the resulting impact on air quality, which is leading to several cities planning to ban diesel-fuelled vehicles, including London, in the future.

A strategy that is currently growing in popularity is the use of electric vehicles and cargo-bikes to make deliveries in inner-city locations. However, little is known about the logistical implications.

"For example, both types of vehicles have much smaller capacity, smaller ranges and often smaller speeds when compared with regular trucks. So when they are inappropriately dispatched, the favourable per-kilometre environmental and economic impact of these vehicles can be outweighed by the disadvantages," says Reimann.

In his study, Reimann analyses a strategy which aims to combine the best of both worlds, namely large delivery trucks and small environment-friendly vehicles working in partnership.

"Specifically, we propose to enable trans-

shipment between the large and small vehicles. This means the small vehicles do not have to travel all the way to reload at a depot, which is typically located far outside the city centre, for logistical and financial reasons.

"Instead, they meet with and reload from the large vehicles which can also be utilised effectively in suburban and less central areas where traffic restrictions are less critical. Possible meeting points could be the yards or car parks of large suburban customers and motorway rest areas.

"Through computational analysis we have quantified the potential financial savings and environmental benefits from this strategy using a wide range of scenarios where the combined use of trucks with electric vehicles or cargo-bikes is promising.

"We live in times of rising land prices, highly populated cities with narrow streets and increasing customer demands, logistics companies and local authorities need to look at new, more sustainable approaches to solving vehicle routing problems in the context of city logistics.

"Our research shows that synchronisation between vehicles enables companies to use small and large vehicles to satisfy all customer demands," explains Reimann.



Marc Reimann, Professor of Operations Management at Northumbria University.

Companies interested in having the model applied to their business in order to gain specific insights into possible improvements are welcome to contact Professor Reimann at: marc.reimann@northumbria.ac.uk.



Fred Howie



David Taylor

Fred Howie has worked in the recruitment industry for thirty years. He established Howie White Resourcing in 1999 to provide an alternative to database recruitment agencies. The business has now completed more than 750 assignments across a wide range of industry sectors and disciplines throughout the UK, Europe and further afield.

We don't have a huge number of clients we work with. We are not a mass recruiter and have no ambitions to be one. The vast majority of our clients are repeat customers and many have worked with us since day one of the business.

"We value relationships." Simple as that.

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HOW TO HANDLE AN UNEXPECTED RESIGNATION

Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, talks about what you should do when a valued member of your team decides they are leaving.



Imagine arriving at work to find one of your most valuable team members waiting to tell you that they're leaving. It's devastating news that you didn't see coming, but they have a new opportunity and will be gone in less than a month.

Of course, as a good leader you should always be prepared, but if you do find yourself in this situation, these five steps should help you to make the best of it.

1. Be Cool

The true colours of a company - and a leader - are often defined during difficult situations and how you handle an unexpected resignation is definitely one of those.

No matter how you feel inside, remember that this isn't personal so you must appear cool, calm and collected; even if you're far from it.

The truth is that people no longer have just one job in their career. In fact, on average, they change employer every three or four years, so if you think someone is really good it's important to keep a strong relationship with them, as they may decide to come back in the not so distant future.

2. Have an Exit Meeting

If someone is joining a competitor you may be tempted to escort them straight off the premises, but try to resist. Take a deep breath and schedule an exit meeting where you can have an open and honest conversation.

It's really important that you understand why people want to move on, so you need to prepare for this exchange properly.

Think about who is best to conduct the meeting;

this probably isn't their boss! Make the setting informal and reduce confrontation by pre-planning hypothetical questions like: 'If you were the managing director, what three things would you change about the company?'

3. Review Your Recruitment Plan

Take some time to reflect on whether your team could operate differently. No one is irreplaceable and resignations give you a rare moment to consider whether your human resources can be restructured in a smarter way.

Depending upon the level of impact a person has on your business, you may be tempted to make a counter-offer to keep them. If they're the lynchpin to everything then it might be worthwhile but, more often than not, this is counter-productive in the long-term.

Not only does it send a message to other staff that they can potentially get a better deal if they threaten to resign, usually money isn't the reason someone is leaving so, unless you're also willing to also address the real issue, there's a high chance you'll be in the same position again very soon.

4. Worry About the Others

Even if they're not close friends, when a respected member of a team leaves it can be a pivotal

moment for their colleagues. The team dynamics change and, even if they're perfectly happy in their job, this will trigger uncertain thoughts about the future.

Will I be given more work? Is there an opportunity for extra responsibility, promotion or a pay rise? If the person leaving can get a great new job, what could I get? These are all questions that run through people's minds and, if they're not dealt with, have the potential to quickly turn a business with no staffing problems into a sinking ship.

5. Communicate Clearly

It's important that you break the news to the whole team at the same time. If you fail to communicate clearly, or disclose information to people outside your company before your team, it's an invitation for office gossip, rumours and confusion.

Bringing everyone together means no ambiguity. You can publicly thank your employee for their contribution to the business and, at the same time, position the change as a positive opportunity for others.

Whilst a surprise resignation often feels like a disaster, when it's managed well it's amazing how many people look back and, with hindsight, see the moment as a catalyst to better things.

If you work in tax & accountancy and are looking for a new challenge, or need someone to help drive the business forward, get in touch: bryony@bryonygibson.com | (0191) 375 9983.



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MEET GRADVERT COACH ALISON BURGESS

Gradvert believes in improving business performance by improving people. Its coaches work up and down the country with organisations of all sizes. Here Alison Burgess, one of its associate coaches in learning and development, talks about her relationship with the company and explains how her customer engagement workshops benefit clients.

How did your relationship with Gradvert come about?

I started working with Gradvert almost two years ago. At my first meeting with Michaela and the team I immediately got that feeling that this was a great organisation to work for.

With Gradvert, I was struck by the high quality of the work and how much the team cares about everything that they do. The feedback from Gradvert clients is always excellent because of the quality of the programmes they deliver.

Everything is completely tailored to the client, which is a fantastic approach as every business has a whole different set of needs. The more you understand a business, the more you can take a concept like customer service and make it real. That in itself is quite fascinating - to take the principle and then really make it work for different types of organisations.

You deliver customer engagement training. Tell us about this work.

I have over 20 years of experience designing and delivering customer engagement workshops.

One of my clients is Polygon, where we carried out a one-day workshop after they identified that their customer service was inconsistent.

This has now been rolled out across the whole organisation to people in numerous different roles to achieve a much better level of service.

To date 362 delegates have been on the programme, which has been such a success that Polygon is keeping it as part of the on-boarding process for new people who join the business.

Avanti Kitchens is another great company I've worked with. We delivered a two-day programme that was very sales-focused.



Alison Burgess

The aim was for all delegates to be a sales professional, as opposed to a sales person, and still maintain strong customer service. The first two groups achieved a 92% satisfaction score, with one more group still to go through the programme.

It's very rewarding when you see such excellent results.

You also deliver Apprenticeship Levy workshops. How does that work?

It's quite fascinating to understand what the Apprenticeship Levy is all about. Rather than apprenticeships in the traditional sense of the word, the Levy can be used for high level and very challenging leadership and management qualifications, so the whole team benefits.

It's why Gradvert's unique 360° approach is

so important when it comes to appraising an organisation's people strategy. My work is to help embed this and bring my experience of Leadership and Management into the apprenticeship space, delivering funded programmes for employers who want to develop their teams and take their business performance to the next level.

Funded by an employer's Levy contributions, I work and partner with Gradvert to deliver bespoke solutions for those businesses who are embarking on the training and development of their teams, which are tailored to both individual and organisational needs.

I think we need to refocus people's perceptions and let them know what a brilliant opportunity it is to get the most out of the money they put in to upskill their workforce.



BUSINESS LUNCH CLUB

...Inspiring conversation over a fine lunch...



We were honoured to have Barry Speker OBE of Sintons LLP as our speaker for the April lunch, the audience were captivated by stories from a long and distinguished career in Law and for many in the room the discovery that post used be delivered twice a day! Our thanks to Barry for being a highly entertaining and inspiring speaker.

Booking now for Monday 2nd July

Speaker - Simon Bourne - The Hand Dyed Shoe Company

Simon's story begins with a failure to reach the traditional academic success, a huge passion to do the things he loves and some opportune encounters that helped to steer everything Simon did to the moment when he could truly be a creative entrepreneur and launch The Hand Dyed Shoe Company. Simon has an infectious enthusiasm for everything he does and we know you are going to enjoy hearing his story.

Venue - The Crowne Plaza, Stephenson Quarter, Newcastle upon Tyne

Date - Monday 2nd July, 12 noon **Price** - £35pp + VAT to include a two-course lunch and coffee



Find out more - book a place - email Linda@exclusivebusiness.net

Diary Dates: Monday September 24th - Ammar Mirza, Asian Business Connections,
Monday 29th October - Stefan Lepkowski, Karol Marketing Group,
Monday 26th November - John Chadwick, Durham Distillery
NEW LOCATION – Jesmond Dene House

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Speaker - Simon Bourne, The Hand Dyed Shoe Company



*"I am often asked how I got into making hand-dyed shoes...
the truth is hard work and probably a little bit of luck"*

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2018

After a summer break we return on Monday 24th September with Ammar Mirzar CBE as our guest speaker and a new location, Jesmond Dene House.

COMING SOON

Exclusive Northern Insight Business Lunch Club Teeside - Wynyard Hall Monday 1st October 2018

for more details visit: www.exclusivebusiness.net or to book a place - email Linda@exclusivebusiness.net

HAY & KILNER BOOSTS MARKETING TEAM WITH DOUBLE APPOINTMENT



North East law firm Hay & Kilner has added two sector experts to its marketing team as part of its ongoing commercial development strategy.

Elaine Magnani and Jack Birks have joined the Newcastle-headquartered practice as a new Head of Business Development and Marketing and Marketing Manager respectively.

Elaine has over three decades' marketing experience, working in senior positions for firms including PwC,

Ringtons, Reg Vardy plc and Ward Hadaway. She is now responsible for developing and delivering Hay & Kilner's marketing and business development strategy across all practice areas.

Jack has over a decade's legal sector experience with a number of North East practices. His new role covers all aspects of the firm's marketing activities, with a particular emphasis on online marketing, event organisation and digital media.



SENIOR APPOINTMENT IN MINCOFFS' COMMERCIAL TEAM

Newcastle-based Mincoffs Solicitors is delighted to appoint specialist IT solicitor David Cox to the Commercial team as an associate, strengthening the firm's reputation as one of the region's leading technology law firms.

David graduated from the University of Oxford in 1997 and initially worked in the IT industry. During this time, he gained significant experience with global leaders in both the pharmaceutical and banking sectors and held technical certifications with major IT vendors including Microsoft.

David has carried this IT knowledge into his legal career and has advised on a range of complex and high value commercial contracts, including various engineering and technology projects.

David said: "I'm really excited to join the team at Mincoffs. Mincoffs' emphasis on providing accessible, commercially-focused advice has provided a great cultural fit for me. I really look forward to working with the firm and its clients."

GROWING DEMAND SEES PUNCH ROBSON EXPAND ITS COMMERCIAL TEAM



A Tees Valley-based law firm has strengthened its team following an increase in demand for its business services.

Punch Robson, a traditional mixed-practice high street law firm, has appointed Laurie Wilson as the new legal executive and solicitor in its commercial department.

Laurie joins the company, which has offices in Ingleby Barwick, Middlesbrough and Coulby Newham, with eight years' experience in the legal sector. She has moved from Liverpool back to her roots in Yarm and is looking forward to working in the Tees Valley.

Laurie will work alongside Punch Robson's Managing Partner and Head of Corporate and Commercial Property, Elaine McLaine-Wood, to act for clients and generate new business. Elaine said: "Laurie will be an excellent ambassador for Punch Robson. Her work ethic and experience received to date will enhance Punch Robson and the services we can offer."

AWARD-WINNING CORPORATE LAWYER APPOINTED AT LEADING NORTHERN LAW FIRM

UK Top 100 law firm Ward Hadaway has appointed leading corporate lawyer Martin Hulls as managing partner as the company begins to celebrate its 30th anniversary year.

With a national reputation built over a 30-year career, Martin has led the firm's 26-strong corporate team for many years.

Martin recently took over from Jamie Martin. Jamie will move into a new role as the firm's senior partner, working closely with Steve McNicol, who

recently joined Ward Hadaway's senior team.

The highly experienced trio, working with the rest of the executive management team, will focus on delivering the next phase of growth.

Martin said: "The role of managing partner for a firm of our size and ambition is ever-growing, so by adopting a team approach we will maintain a constant focus on great client service delivery, effective communications, active community engagement and incisive business governance."



Mincoffs Solicitors is a progressive full service law firm with a commercial, pragmatic and straight talking approach.

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BREXIT: 6 POINTS TO ADDRESS YOUR IP RIGHTS



Trade mark attorney Helena Peat from Murgitroyd - one of the world's leading intellectual property attorney firms - provides guidance on why businesses should act now to protect their trade marks in light of Brexit negotiations.

I'm sure you need no education on what Brexit is. However, with under a year to go until the agreement is due to be signed it's astonishing how little is known on the exact relationship the UK will have with the EU after Brexit or during the transition.

One business area that could benefit from more clarity is that of protecting your IP. The good news is that there will be little change to patent protection. Now for the bad news... The current system for EU trade mark (EUTM) registrations and applications will no longer apply to the UK.

The EU Commission's Draft Brexit Withdrawal Agreement proposed that any EUTMs registered or granted before the end of the UK's transition period would automatically convert to a UK registration or application, with no fee or formalities. This would be an ideal scenario for both the UK and the remaining 27 EU member states. The Draft Withdrawal Agreement will potentially extend the cover of EUTMs in the UK until December 2020.

Just because a final decision hasn't been made doesn't mean you can just sit and wait...

Working as part of a global firm of European patent and trade mark attorneys means we can

provide detailed insight and thoughts on the exit from the EU and some practical advice on what you should consider.

If you're at the start of your trade mark journey for your brand it makes sense to use the tried and tested process of a UK national application alongside an EU application to protect new brands, rather than relying on a, as yet, untested conversion procedure.

However, many of you will be asking what should I do to maintain protection?

To help answer this we've created a short checklist of six points you should review now. If you're in any doubt on any of the points, consider speaking to a trade mark attorney.

1. For existing registrations, consider filing UK national trade mark applications to protect any important brands that are protected solely at an EU level. The benefit here is that those brands will then be protected in the UK regardless of the action taken by the UK Government. UK trade mark registrations are quick and generally cost-effective, and filing now will give you certainty and peace of mind.
2. If you file applications for International registration under the Madrid Protocol, consider designating the UK and the EU. Also, think about basing the International registration on a UK application or registration.
3. If you have UK registrations and EUTMs, do not let the UK registrations lapse in favour of the EUTM. This is because renewal costs in the UK are low.
4. Review all existing agreements and licences to ensure that they will remain in force, regardless of Brexit.
5. Look at how your trade marks are used in the EU now and gather evidence of use that would be sufficient if they came under attack on the basis of non-use.
6. If you have .eu domain names, consider registering in other top-level domains (TLDs), such as .co.uk.

Murgitroyd, one of the very few IP attorney firms with well-established offices throughout Europe, including Newcastle, is closely monitoring all developments.

More information can be found on www.murgitroyd.com or you can request a meeting with one of our trade mark attorneys on +44 (0) 191 211 3550.

TO MAKE YOUR HOME YOUR CASTLE, BE SURE WHO OWNS THE DRAWBRIDGE

By Paul Illes, Head of Residential Property at Hay & Kilner Law Firm



The Government has announced plans to tackle unfair leaseholder arrangements, so it's worth understanding the difference between freehold and leasehold property.

Over the past twenty years there has been a big increase in the number of houses being sold by developers on a leasehold basis. These sales have seen ground rents being set at much higher levels than previously, and with scheduled increases. In what is considered to be the worst examples, leases include terms to allow the ground rent to double every ten years.

New measures announced by the Government will include ban on leaseholds for almost all new build houses, and changes so that ground rents on new long leases are set to zero. They will also make it cheaper and easier for existing leaseholders to buy-out their freehold, and there will be routes to redress for those facing the most onerous terms.

We must wait for further details on these changes from the Government but it is worth being prepared by understanding the basis on which a property is being sold.

What form of ownership?

It's important to check exactly what form the ownership takes, and then ask the right questions. If it's freehold, you will own the property and the land it sits on, but there may be other responsibilities that are not so obvious, such as

contributing towards maintenance of a private shared access road or other shared estate facilities.

If it's a shared freehold, then you will own your personal space in the property, and generally a share of the land and the shared spaces. Any maintenance is likely to be subject to agreement between all the freeholders, and the cost shared between everyone.

If it is leasehold, then you will be buying the right to live in the property for the remaining duration of the lease, with the land, the structure of the building and shared spaces owned by the freeholder, who may be an individual landlord or a property management company.

It's a lease, so how long does it have to run?

Leases of between 99 and 999 years are commonly granted and generally the value of a property will reduce as the lease gets closer to the end, but don't expect to snap up a bargain if you're looking for a mortgage as lenders are unlikely to make a loan on a property with anything less than 55 years left to run, some lenders requiring an even longer unexpired term. If a property has only a short time left on the lease, you can ask the seller to seek an extension, but expect to pay for the benefit. A

lease extension can be requested at any time by a leaseholder.

How much is the ground rent?

Normally ground rent will apply only if it's a leasehold property. Ground rent can be a fixed charge or one that will change over time, so check out how much is being paid currently, but look through the small print as well, to be sure there are no big increases on the way.

How much are the service charges?

Service charges can strike fear in the hearts of leaseholders, even when they have very deep pockets, as all work is likely to be relative to the size and standing of the overall building. Be quick to ask for evidence of the service charge budget and the accounts for the past three years and don't be afraid to ask around about the freeholder.

Are repairs and maintenance up to date?

Take a good look at how well things are maintained as you view the property and then check it out against those service charge accounts you've asked for.

The Residential Team at Hay & Kilner can help on all aspects of property purchases or sales.



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THERE'S MORE TO DATA PROTECTION THAN GDPR

Gillian Scribbins, data protection specialist at Muckle LLP, considers the Data Protection Bill and how it works with the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).



The implementation date has been and gone; the GDPR is in full swing, but for many the hard work towards compliance will remain an issue that rumbles on. In amongst all this white GDPR noise is a supplementary piece of legislation that businesses need to be aware of too. The Data Protection Bill.

The purpose of the Bill has confused many. What the Bill is not, is a transposition of the GDPR into UK law. The GDPR takes direct effect in this country of its own accord. What the Bill does is support and extend on the provisions of the GDPR.

The Data Protection Bill (which will become the Data Protection Act 2018 once it has been enacted into UK law) and the GDPR will sit alongside one another. Being a European wide piece of legislation, the GDPR allows for autonomy on certain aspects of the Regulation to individual countries, known as derogations.

The Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport has explained this should form a 'comprehensive and modern framework for Data Protection in the UK.'

Elizabeth Denham, the Information Commissioner, explains that: "Effective, modern data protection laws with robust safeguards are central to securing the public's trust and confidence in the use of personal information within the digital economy, the delivery of public services and the fight against crime."

The Bill focuses on these public service and crime derogations, applying data protection law to areas that are not specifically covered by the GDPR. Where applicable, it expands on GDPR provisions so that they are directly relevant to UK citizens and organisations.

Key derogations include:

1. The minimum age to process data for an online service (called an 'information society') without parents' consent, which has been set at 13 in England and Wales.

The Bill does not impose a general age of consent for processing children's data. As in the Data Protection Act 1998, a child is anyone under the age of 18, however they should be able to exercise their own data protection rights at the discretion of parents or guardians.

2. The specific powers and obligations of the UK's data protection supervisory authority, the ICO, in the UK, which are set out in the Bill.

The Bill gives increased powers to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO), to enforce the higher fines on data controllers and processors that have been highly documented throughout the press in recent months, as well as multiple regulatory actions such as stop orders and dawn raids. This power now extends to bringing forward criminal proceedings for those preventing disclosure on a subject access request.

3. The exemptions of law enforcement processing or intelligence service processing, to which the GDPR does not apply.

These specific exemptions and conditions to the provisions of the GDPR are covered in detail by the Bill. Many of these are for the purposes of national security, which are unlikely to affect the majority of organisations. Other derogations may be more broadly applicable, for example the UK specific employment, health and research purposes on which special category data may be processed.

The Bill also aims to bring continuity, by ensuring

legislation which interacts with UK data protection law will continue to have effect, such as the Freedom of Information Act.

And politically, the government is keen to ensure that in a post-Brexit world, the UK data protection laws are in line with not only Europe but the world's leading economies too. As the government estimates that data will benefit the UK economy by up to £241 billion between 2015 and 2020, protection of data is clearly integral.

While it cannot be doubted that the GDPR is the headline act, the Data Protection Bill tailors data protection to this country, so it can't be neglected. Indeed, the Data Protection Bill is for solicitors a key point of call when seeking to clarify how the provisions of the GDPR may apply in practice.

Businesses need to be aware that post May there are still numerous challenges that await them for continued compliance. One of these challenges is a solid awareness of the Data Protection Bill and its impact.

muckle^{LLP}



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Sarah Crilly

PRE-NUPS, PROPERTY AND PARENTS

Family law specialist Sarah Crilly supports the need for pre-nuptial agreements and discusses added protection for parents who may fund their children's marital home purchase.

Recent statistics tell us that nearly 50% of marriages end in divorce. On average a marriage in Britain lasts only 11 years. For second marriages these tend to end within the first five years.

Nearly two-thirds of those divorces now end with the family wealth evenly split between husband and wife. Equality has become the guiding principle for settlement, even more so where there are significant assets involved.

However, if you are embarking on marriage for the first or even second time and have either inherited or been gifted property from family members or have acquired your own property portfolio before even meeting your spouse, consideration must be given to what you wish to happen if you later divorced.

Whilst these types of property would be classed as non-matrimonial assets it does not give a party complete protection. Such assets are not automatically ring-fenced. The only way of affording yourself the greatest protection is to enter into a pre-nuptial agreement which is a contract entered into by a couple prior to marriage which sets out how they intend to regulate their financial positions in the event of a divorce.

Rather than leave the division to the court, a pre-nuptial agreement will give the parties certainty and is a sensible form of wealth protection.

Although they are not automatically binding on the court, provided it is entered into fairly and both parties have had the opportunity to consult a lawyer before signing it, there is no injustice if the pre-nuptial agreement is followed. The Supreme Court has ruled that they should be upheld and only departed from in limited circumstances.

Pre-nuptial agreements benefit anyone with assets that need to be divided after a divorce.

For instance, in cases where parents may have advanced funds to help with the purchase of the newly-weds' matrimonial home, this can be recorded in any agreement. Additionally a parent could become a joint legal owner with their child and also any co-owner if there is one.

Shares would then be set out in a Trust Deed detailing the contribution and how much is due back from any net proceeds on sale. However, if the property is being purchased with the benefit of a mortgage this would mean that the parent would be jointly and severally liable for the payments due under the terms of any mortgage but this arrangement would have to be disclosed to the mortgage company who may raise queries.

Another option is to take out a charge on the property which would rank after the mortgage and would require the owners to repay the deposit on sale of the property from the proceeds of sale after they have paid the selling costs and repaid the

mortgage. The downside of this arrangement is that there is no guarantee of getting all monies back if the value of the property falls and/or the terms of the first mortgage allow linked loan accounts or further draw-downs on the mortgage which may eat into the equity in the property.

If you simply want your child to have the deposit monies and not have to share those in the event they purchase a property with a partner and that relationship breaks down, then your child should enter into a Trust Deed with the co-owner. Again this would set out the value in the property which each co-owner would be entitled to when the property is sold.

Of course there are cases where one or both parties are in business and this can bring additional complexities to the case or their affairs may be tied up with a Trust or Farm but all couples can benefit from a pre-nuptial agreement. Couples do end up in court on some of the most uncomplicated cases where they may just be arguing over the split of equity in a house. They still have to fund the costs of the court proceedings and the stresses of litigation are exactly the same no matter how simple or complex their assets.

At Ward Hadaway, we have experience of dealing with pre-nuptial agreements and can provide couples with advice on any issues they might have.

THE POWER OF THREE

We speak to the dynamic and forward thinking management team that is Sarah J. Reid, David Place and Phillip Moir at Richard Reed Solicitors, a leading law firm in Sunderland celebrating its 70th year.

Tell us about yourselves

SJR: I've been with the firm since 2003 and since becoming an owner and Director, I took over the reins of the Managing Director role in 2017. I've also served as Secretary to Sunderland Law Society for 14 years. I'm a family lawyer specialising in private family cases especially divorce and financial. As a trained collaborative lawyer, I help separating couples find a bespoke solution to the issues that matter to them on separation in a supportive environment and outside of the court remit.

DP: I joined the firm in 2016 and became an owner and Director in 2017. I was the Treasurer for Sunderland Law Society for 18 years. I am also the Assistant Coroner for the City of Sunderland having been appointed in 2003 and a Director of Sunderland BID. I specialise in all aspects of family law especially Special Children Act cases where the child suffers Non Accidental Injury.

PM: I joined the firm in 2008, made partner in 2011, Director in 2012 and owner in 2017. I specialise in all aspects of dispute resolution work, from landlord and tenant to contested probates and everything else in between. I also deal with commercial work in terms of advising businesses and business owners with regards to their legal needs.

What is your team's core strength?

The ability to capitalise on each other's strength is what keeps us together. The ability to adapt to change, work together, share similar interests and common goals is another key factor. Combine that with dynamism, experience, the ability to listen to staff and share in their happiness and an open door policy that promotes a culture of support and understanding, the result is a team willing to go the extra mile for their firm, their clients, and their staff.

In your opinion, what makes Richard Reed Solicitors different?

A firm is only as good as its people and we believe we've got great people. This is a firm that is adapting to change and has a willingness to listen. When it comes to our clients, we make sure their trust is rewarded. When it comes to our community, we're energetic and dynamic in engaging with them. We allow staff the time to support their communities; some are school Governors and Trustees. We've got a friendly and happy environment to work in as well as a culture of openness, support and understanding.



Shot on location at Wynyard Hall

In the next 5 years, what do you hope to achieve?

We want Richard Reed Solicitors to be the leading and the 'go to' law firm in Sunderland.

What is role of employees in the firm's success?

One word? Crucial. They are the firm, they are the success. Each is as important as the other. Each is essential to the success of the firm. Each one is an asset. We talk to our staff regularly and try to involve them in our decision making where appropriate. We have Heads of Department with their own remit and control over their departments, reporting back directly to the directors.

What's your best career memory?

SJR: Successfully concluding my first collaborative case, noting that the outcome meant the separating couple moved on, with their dignity intact, little animosity, and able to discuss things constructively, seeing the real impact of a mutually supportive environment to discuss issues on divorce. I know that couple will attend their children's graduations, weddings and grandchildren's christenings together.

DP: One, being successful in a case that was reported as one of the leading precedents for emigration which remains the case to date. The second, being appointed as Assistant Coroner in 2003 (at the age of 29), the youngest judicial

appointment, as per the Law Society.

PM: The first being my first trip to the Royal Courts of Justice and obtaining a successful outcome for my client in proving that a Will was valid. The second occurred more recently when I obtained damages for an elderly couple who suffered injuries in a fire and I brought a claim against their Landlord who had maintained a position of denying liability for a number of years.

How do you like to relax?

SJR: With two young children, there isn't much time to relax! My time in the office is structured such that it enables me to spend more time with my family. Knowing I'm supported in this by my management team is incredibly helpful. I love reading (member of a book club too!), spending time with my children and swimming. I'm also a VP at my local Women's Institute.

DP: With a young sporty daughter most of my time is devoted to her activities. I am able to play football on a weekly basis. I love socialising with friends and family and I love to travel to see the world. Time permitting!

PM: Well, two highly energetic young boys keep my wife and I on our toes! So when I am able to have some time to myself, you'll find me on a golf course trying and generally failing to improve my handicap or watching sport.

TAXING TIMES – NEW RULES ON TAXATION OF TERMINATION PAYMENTS

Prior to April 2018, offering an employee a termination package, via a settlement agreement, in order to bring the employment relationship to an end, was, usually, a fairly straight-forward process.

Prior to April 2018, offering an employee a termination package, via a settlement agreement, in order to bring the employment relationship to an end, was, usually, a fairly straight-forward process.

It was common for an employee without a contractual pay in lieu of notice clause ("PILON") to be offered a lump sum payment, free of tax, so long as it was under £30,000.

However, new laws have now been introduced which significantly tighten the tax treatment of termination payments. The new rules apply to payments made where both the termination of employment and payment of the termination payment occurs on or after 6 April 2018.

Why the change?

Before the introduction of the new laws, there was a lack of clarity at times as to whether tax was payable on a termination payment in circumstances where there was no pay in lieu of notice clause ("PILON") in the contract of employment. In those cases, where the employer had paid employees in lieu in the past, there was a risk that the notice pay would be taxable. Employers could also argue that an employee's employment had been terminated in breach of contract rather than under any PILON (implied or otherwise).

What's new?

The new rules make it clear that where a termination payment is made, any period of unexpired notice is subject to tax and class 1 national insurance contributions.

This means that tax will be payable on termination payments irrespective of whether the employee has a PILON clause in their contract or whether



they have been dismissed without notice.

There are also statutory formulae to calculate what is termed Post-Employment Notice Pay ("PENP") from which tax and NICs will be deducted. Therefore, it is not just a case of taxing the notice period as normal, even for those with contractual PILONS.

What is PENP?

Tax on Post-Employment Notice Pay, or PENP, is payable in respect of the Post-Employment Notice Period.

This is the employer's contractual or statutory notice obligation (whichever is the greater). Where the employee has worked their notice in full, the issue of PENP will not arise. In all other cases, the PENP will need to be calculated using the correct formula. There is one formula for where an employee is paid in months and the notice period is expressed in months, and another for when this is not the case (or where any unexpired notice period is not in whole months).

Both formula calculate the PENP on the basis of basic pay.

What is basic pay?

Basic Pay is defined in the legislation and essentially is the employee's normal pay excluding overtime

and bonuses. However, importantly, it is what the employee would have received had they not salary sacrificed any particular benefits. This figure is likely to be higher than that which would ordinarily be made when paying in lieu. Therefore, even if the employer has paid the employee in lieu for their notice period, subject to tax and national insurance, any termination payment made on top of that, or a proportion of it, could still be taxable, if a salary sacrifice arrangement is in place.

Once the basic pay and period of unexpired notice has been calculated, the employer should then deduct any payments made under a contractual PILON to find the PENP liability.

How does that impact on us?

The new rules need to be considered and the tax liability calculated (so far as it can be) before an offer of termination is made so it is clear what the employee will receive. Ultimately, it will mean a higher cost to employers and employees will lose any tax advantage from not having a contractual PILON.

Settlement agreements should also be amended to clearly set out the tax treatment of the termination payment, and where possible, the PENP.

Employees may also be more likely to resist a standard tax indemnity.

GETTING TO KNOW...LOUISE WOODHEAD



As business manager at Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP (GBLF), Louise Woodhead is responsible for the firm's financial activity, working with the wider team to support the business through day-to-day activity and strategic growth. Outside of the office, Louise is a keen runner with several races and two Great North Runs under her belt.

What is your passion outside of work, how did you get into it and why do you enjoy it so much?

I love exercise, particularly running. I began running after having my children as it is easy to juggle around family life and you are not restricted to any set times. I have participated in several 10K runs and completed the Great North Run twice, which I am doing again this year. I enjoy running as it is peaceful, I get to see some lovely countryside and it gives me time to myself!

How would you describe yourself in three words?

Kind, resilient and honest.

What would your autobiography be called?

Nailing the daily 10,000 step challenge, I'm a bit too focused on the number of steps I do each day!

What do you look forward to most at the end of the week?

Spending time with my family, taking part in a weekly Park Run with my son, gardening and a glass or two of wine on a Saturday night.

If you could have dinner with anyone dead or alive, who would it be, and why?

David Attenborough, as it would be fascinating to

hear about his globetrotting adventures and his thoughts on the future of our earth.

What is the best book you've ever read, and why?

I've just started reading the Harry Potter books again with my kids and they are still just as good the second time around.

If you could have one superpower what would it be, and why?

Time travel, to experience history and see what the future holds.

What was your dream job as a child?

I always wanted to be a vet and work with animals.

What is your greatest achievement?

Academically, it's passing my accountancy exams and completing my training contract to become a member of ICAEW. Personally, it's my children, who are growing up into lovely little human beings.

What is it about your role at GBLF that inspires you?

As my role is in the finance department, my client is effectively the firm. So, I take inspiration in helping the firm achieve its goals by continually developing our management reporting, looking for additional ways to help fee earners monitor their financials

and supporting the firm's partners where I can.

How long have you worked at GBLF for, and what attracted you to the firm?

I have worked at the firm for about three and a half years. However, I began working with GBLF prior to this in 2013 when the SRA introduced the role of compliance officer for finance and administration (COFA). I worked as GBLF's COFA which saw me working as a consultant and spending time at the firm each week. Soon, my role continued to develop until I became a full employee. I had no hesitation in joining the firm, as I had witnessed first-hand how friendly everyone is and how everyone works as a team to ensure the success and growth of the firm.

With offices located in Newcastle and Chester-le-Street, GBLF offers a range of legal services and advice across all areas of family, residential conveyancing, wills and probate, dispute resolution, corporate and commercial law. Its dedicated team of solicitors understand that each case is unique, and provide bespoke advice and guidance to individuals and organisations.

#METOO – SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE



Paul Johnstone, partner at Collingwood Legal, gives an insight into recent cases involving allegations of sexual harassment.

The high profile “#MeToo” campaign has been headline news in both mainstream media and social media platforms for several months now.

The scandals involving Harvey Weinstein and the recent criminal prosecution of Bill Cosby in the USA are evidence of a dynamic cultural shift in the starkest possible terms that predatory sexual behaviour must be treated with zero tolerance in all institutions and workplaces. It seems rather bizarre to be making such a self-evident statement in the 21st Century – but the awful truth is that many women still experience unwanted attention from men in the workplace (and elsewhere) which can cause significant distress and which, in some cases, can result in criminal sexual assault.

From a legal perspective it is worth highlighting that there has not been any significant change in the law to bring about this cultural shift. Harassment under Equality Act 2010 occurs where there is:

“Unwanted conduct which has the “purpose or effect” of:

- violating a person’s dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the recipient”.

It is extremely important to appreciate that the intention or motive of the perpetrator is irrelevant in terms of potential legal liability. The power (if that is the right word to use) to trigger an allegation and a claim for harassment (not only on the grounds of sex but also on the grounds of race, age, disability, transgender status, sexual orientation, religious and philosophical belief), rests with the recipient of the conduct or behaviour.

The key words in the definition are “purpose” and “effect”. It is irrelevant whether the perpetrator did not intend to cause offence (i.e. had no “purpose” or “intention” to cause offence). The determinative

issue is whether the “effect” of the behaviour caused such offence and distress. That will be a matter of fact in each particular case based on the circumstances and reasonableness of the recipient’s response to the alleged discriminatory conduct.

All employers should make it clear in their workplace policies which deal with equality, dignity and respect and disciplinary and grievance procedures that any discriminatory conduct (including harassment) will be treated as a very serious issue which could potentially result in a finding of gross misconduct and a summary dismissal – that means a dismissal without notice and without any pay in lieu of notice.

The law has not changed. Attitudes have changed. Standards of behaviour in terms of professional and respectful attitudes within the workplace must follow suit. It is often said that the law can be a blunt instrument and over-regulation can stifle traditional human interaction within a staff team.

The prohibition on sexual harassment should not mean that humorous and affectionate behaviour would be absolutely prohibited but it is important to appreciate that there are boundaries which must be respected. The choice of each individual to engage in consensual flirtatious behaviour remains intact. However where such behaviour is unwanted by the recipient then that is where all parties must be aware that there is a clear legal line in the sand which should not be crossed.

The extreme criminal sexual assault cases reported in relation to Harvey Weinstein and Bill Cosby are thankfully not reflected in the day to day experience of most workers. But, the consequences of the potential abuse of power within workplace relationships where junior members of staff may be vulnerable to manipulation relating to career development prospects by senior managers is an area of risk that should be properly, carefully and respectfully managed.

In order to defend a claim of sexual harassment from an employee an employer must show that they took all reasonable steps to prevent such unlawful behaviour from occurring (s. 109(4) of Equality Act 2010). If an employer cannot prove that it has taken such reasonable steps then it could be held vicariously liable jointly and severally for the discriminatory acts of its employees. Some practical steps which may assist an employer’s defence in this regard are:

- drafting and implementing policies which specifically refer to sexual harassment as being a gross misconduct matter (ie a sackable offence);
- making the workforce aware of those policies and the standards of respectful behaviour required;
- providing effective training to all workers as to what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and how to deal with allegations which may arise;
- dealing effectively and robustly with any complaints raised;
- creating an inclusive and open culture which is respectful to all.

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission recently published a report entitled: “Turning the tables: ending sexual harassment at work” which may indicate that there is an appetite within government to strengthen the law on sexual harassment. However, according to some reports coming from Westminster, it seems that politicians in all parties would do well to take heed of the existing law and start enforcing it to tackle the culture of harassment and bullying which appears to be endemic in the Houses of Parliament. This is indicative of a key component in harassment cases: it is often those in positions of power and influence who are most likely to harass and bully those who are subordinate to them – and that includes those who make our laws.

For advice and guidance on how to promote equality and avoid discrimination claims or to book an in-house training programme on how to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, please contact Paul Johnstone at Collingwood legal on 0191 282 2870 or e-mail: paul.johnstone@collingwoodlegal.com



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ESTABLISHED LAW FIRM EXPANDS INTO MORPETH

A successful North East law firm has launched its new and fourth office in one of the region's most popular market towns.

O'Neill Richmonds, a firm which specialises in property law, Wills, Powers of Attorney and estate administration, has launched the operation on Bridge Street, Morpeth in response to demand for a traditional high street practice in the area.

Director Richard Twyford, who has over 12 years of experience in the industry, is running the Morpeth branch and has been joined by consultant solicitor Vernon Usher, as well as three other expert members of the team including Caroline Merrifield and Helen Donaldson, both of whom have had many years of experience in residential conveyancing.

Richard said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to provide O'Neill Richmonds' expert services to a thriving and growing town. We've capitalised on our vast local knowledge and experience of the local area and look forward to serving the local community.

"We have implemented state of the art technology in order to provide the highest standard of service to our clients. We specialise here in commercial,

agricultural and residential property law, and additionally provide Wills, Powers of Attorney and estate administration. We are also developing a specialisation in education law.

"No matter what the legal issue may be, we offer a personal service to each of our clients including private individuals and businesses. This is where our approach of big practice knowledge with family firm accessibility comes into its own."

The Morpeth office adds to established branches in Gosforth, South Shields and Benton.

Consultant solicitor Vernon Usher, who has lived in Morpeth for most of his life, has joined the firm following more than four decades in the industry as a specialist in residential conveyancing. He will support Richard and the firm with his knowledge and vast experience.

Senior partner John O'Neill said: "We are delighted to be launching our fourth office in Morpeth. This is a fantastic step for the business to launch its newest operation headed by Richard with additional support from Vernon. We have an outstanding team and I look forward to further

expanding our presence in Northumberland.

"Bridge Street has already proven to be a great location as we join some other fantastic businesses and retailers in a busy high street location. The town centre is bustling, which will ensure we become a recognisable brand in Morpeth and welcome many old and new clients to our firm.

"Our client care is second to none thanks to our modern and up-to-date practices complimented by a traditional and caring approach. This combination allows us to provide a swift, efficient and professional yet personal service."

Senior partner John O'Neill, who began his legal career as a partner in Gibson Pybus Reay-Smith & Bellwood. Gibson Pybus was one of the oldest firms in Newcastle established circa 1835 and John went on to form John O'Neill & Co in 1994. Following subsequent amalgamations and partnerships, the firm, still with John at the helm, is now O'Neill Richmonds Law Firm Ltd.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED - £10,700 RAISED FOR TEENAGE CANCER TRUST!



It started with a conversation over an americano in Café 95 and ended after 27.74 miles(!) on the streets of London.

I've always said I'm up for a challenge and have no regrets, having raised over £10,000 for the amazing Teenage Cancer Trust, which was always the main reason for doing this and kept me going throughout the training, physio and race day.

When training began in January, I picked up an injury almost immediately which required weekly visits to Newcastle Physiotherapy, a massive thanks to Darren Wigg for even getting me to the start line.

On reflection getting injured so early was probably a blessing as Darren helped me with a program of stretching (I have never warmed up or down for any exercise previously) and a tailored training program to nurse my ageing joints through to London.

On arriving in London, it became noticeable that the atmosphere was very different to normal, an almost carnival feel, it was also very apparent that the training temperatures of sub 5 degrees wouldn't be present on race day!

As it turned out the thermometer hit 25 degrees to be officially the hottest London Marathon ever, you really couldn't make it up.

In amongst the mix of much more experienced runners and fancy dress (Batman, a tree, Big Ben, numerous fairies etc) at the start area, nervous excitement was building and after what seemed like an age we were off.

All went pretty well to 20 miles, in just under 3 hours, after that the wheels pretty much came off, I totally underestimated the mental challenge of seeing other runners collapsing due to heat exhaustion.

Having walked for a couple of miles to gather myself for the sprint finish(!), I crossed the line in 4 hours 22 minutes, acceptable for a nearly 50 year old first time marathon runner in pretty brutal conditions.

In all this the massive result has been in the charity fundraising, to be honest coercing people

for sponsorship has taken me out of my comfort zone way more than the running or training, but I have been overwhelmed by the support I have received so a massive thank you to everyone who has contributed.

Any further donations would continue to make a huge difference to the lives of teenagers suffering with this terrible disease.

uk.virginmoneygiving.com/PAULHARDINGHAM2

If I get offered a place next year, is anyone up for the challenge? Whilst it was an amazing experience I'm certain it's not one I will be repeating any time soon...so its back to the more mundane world of mortgages for me

As part of the fund raising we have been making a contribution of £50 per mortgage completion to the sponsorship total, who knew that taking mortgage advice could also give something back?

Many thanks again for your support!

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.

NORTH EAST PROPERTY FIRM SPONSORS POPULAR RUGBY TOURNAMENT



The North East's leading property firm has continued its dedication to local grassroots sport by recently sponsoring the region's most popular annual rugby tournament.

Bradley Hall, which has sponsored several sporting people and events in a bid to support local talent and clubs, became an official sponsor for the third year running of the Morpeth Sevens rugby tournament, held at Morpeth Rugby Club.

The company provided funds to support the day's events, which included a cup win from team S Club 7s and an overall win by The Mighty Peth. Sam Busby was named

player of the competition while his team also scooped the £500 winner's cheque from Bradley Hall director of estate agency Matt Hoy.

Matt said: "Bradley Hall has a long running tradition of supporting local grassroots sports clubs, tournaments and people. The firm is dedicated to sponsoring events like the Morpeth Sevens, while also supporting local talent. The Morpeth Sevens tournament always provides a fantastic day. Both the Mighty Peth and the S Club 7s really stood out and the recognition and prizes on the day were well deserved."

KNIGHT FRANK SCOOPS NATIONAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

Knight Frank Newcastle has acquired a £19.3m landmark Newcastle office building and won a national contract to manage the property along with several others which are part of a newly-launched fund.

Dickon Wood, Head of Knight Frank's Capital Markets team, acquired the Grade II listed St Nicholas Building in Newcastle on behalf of investment company Mayfair Capital.

The 65,000 sq. ft. property is one of the first two assets purchased for Mayfair Capital's recently launched TG Thematic Growth Fund.

Following the purchase, Knight Frank's property management team won a competitive pitch for

the management mandate of the TG Thematic Growth Fund's assets.

Peter Bowden, Partner at Knight Frank, said: "We have the largest property management team in the North East and winning this national mandate is a testament to the strength of our team which handles everything in-house, from the day-to-day management of properties to accounting and tenant liaison."

Mayfair Capital's TG Thematic Growth Fund's first two acquisitions are both aligned with the 'live/work' trend where occupiers favour city centre offices which are close to amenities and transport hubs.



WEEK2WEEK SHORTLISTED FOR NATIONAL AWARD

A North East serviced apartment provider is celebrating after being shortlisted for a prestigious national award.

City Road based Week2Week Serviced Apartments has been shortlisted for the Best Serviced Apartment Provider at the 2018 Relocate Awards. It's the only company in the North East to make the shortlist, with others spanning the globe in Singapore, Krakow, London and Edinburgh.

This is the eleventh year of the Relocate Awards, which are globally renowned and considered to

be one of the most illustrious in the relocation industry.

Claire Parry, Week2Week's Director, said: "This is the second year running that we have made the shortlist and I am incredibly proud of all the work the team has done to get us here. As there is no other North East provider on the list, we feel as though we are really flying the flag for Newcastle. We are committed to going the extra mile for our clients and to see this effort recognised on a national scale makes it worthwhile."

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Westfield Grove Gosforth

4 3 2 E

A fabulous 1930's detached family home occupying a large mature garden site on this sought after road in the heart of Gosforth. The property was refurbished in recent years and retains many features of its age including high ceilings, corning, deep skirting boards and dado rails.



Price Guide: 1.35 Million

rare! From Sanderson Young

Ashleigh Sundin

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Western Way Darras Hall, Ponteland

5 2 5

A spacious, detached family home situated on a mature garden site extending to circa two thirds of an acre. It offers versatile accommodation over two floors, with five bedrooms to the first floor and an additional study/sixth bedroom. The gardens are fabulous and stretch back into the woodland with mature trees and planting.



Price Guide: £1.5 Million

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LINDISFARNE ROAD, JESMOND



PRICE GUIDE: £2.950 MILLION

25 Lindisfarne Road provides one of the most impressive and largest detached houses within its area. Constructed circa 1928, this five bedroomed property enjoys a magnificent garden site, which is certainly one of the largest plots within Lindisfarne Road. The accommodation is beautifully presented throughout including the family kitchen which is very impressive and benefits from doors opening on to the substantial private rear garden with south facing aspect. The top floor has been newly converted in 2016 and now provides fabulous guest accommodation to two tremendous double bedrooms, one with an en-suite shower room and walk-in dressing room, the other, an ideal space for a teenager's bed sitting room. Both bedrooms include sliding glass doors leading on to a fabulous south-facing terrace and patio with a glass balustrade, giving magnificent views over Jesmond and towards Jesmond Dene.



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



PLANNING CHAOS THREATENS NEW INVESTMENT IN NORTHUMBERLAND

By Jon Tweddell, Director of JT Planning

An almighty row has broken out between a property developer and the political leadership of Northumberland County Council. It reflects a growing problem with our planning system.

Most worryingly, I am concerned that investment is leaking out of the county because developers are tired of mounting planning delays and bad decisions.

Plans for the controversial Dissington Estate, near Ponteland have hit the headlines again. I read with interest a recent article in the Northumberland Gazette in respect of these proposals.

Under the previous Labour administration plans for around 2000 homes plus various other uses were supported by Northumberland County Council which was 'minded to approve' subject to the signing of various legal agreements. The plans were partially supported off the back of an emerging Core Strategy which essentially deleted the land from the Green Belt. An extremely bold and controversial move.

In May 2017 the Conservatives took control of the council. They proceeded to withdraw the Core Strategy. The Conservatives had always opposed the development at Dissington Estate and because the Core Strategy had been withdrawn they felt there was now no policy support for the proposals. It now appears that the proposals may be reported

back to the council's Strategic Planning Committee for a fresh decision – another extremely bold move.

Lugano Property Group, the developer behind the plans, has hit out at the council and has made serious allegations about 'unlawful' efforts by the leader of the council and others to prevent the scheme from going ahead. This is strongly refuted by the council and its leadership.

I find this story fascinating, but I fear that it is yet again another example of how politics has a significant influence on the planning system.

These plans are extremely ambitious and controversial in an area where new development has been controversial for decades. As a former planning officer processing planning applications in the Ponteland and Darras Hall areas I know this is true.

I had my doubts about the plans for Dissington Estate; is it too big, is it the right location? But with the backdrop of a growing need for new homes, lack of affordable housing, and lack of alternative sites perhaps a bolder approach to the housing crisis is needed.

For too long the policy has been to focus new

development on previously developed sites in existing settlements. Most of those sites have been developed and those that remain are not viable.

We need to find other ways of delivering a critical mass of housing and commercial land and well-designed 'new settlements' will help to achieve housing targets.

I also know from first hand that Northumberland County Council's Planning Department is having problems. A lack of staff and a growing workload is having a significant, detrimental impact on the service provided.

I have sympathy for the planning officers on the ground, but the service provided is struggling to cope. We recently received permission for a client for around 40 houses in Wooler, Northumberland. From start to finish it has taken 4 years to get permission – ridiculous. I have many horror stories to tell but I don't have the space to explain them!

What I do know is that investment is leaking out of Northumberland because developers are sick of delays and bad decisions. This is really bad news for our economy and someone should stand up and take action.

For more details visit www.jontweddell.co.uk

MORE HELP NEEDED FOR 'GENERATION RENT'

Director of Mortgages and Financial Services for Bradley Hall, Lewis Chambers discusses how first-time buyers can take their first step onto the property ladder. .

On average, four in 10 millennials are living in rented private accommodation at the age of 30, with home ownership feeling out of reach for many.

According to a report by think tank, the Resolution Foundation, that's double the number of those born between 1965 and 1980, known as 'Generation X'.

Stricter lending criteria, steep house prices and large deposit requirements are usually the main obstacles faced by those hoping to get on the property ladder. However, as many as 65% of those renting still aspire to own their own home.

Despite these aspirations, up to 16% of millennials are set to rent their whole lives, the Foundation said. The number of households with children renting privately has tripled in recent years to 1.8m in 2016.

The Foundation wants to see action on tenancy reform, providing greater protection for those living in rental properties, and is calling for more affordable homes for first-time buyers.

The government's target is to build 300,000 more homes a year, although there have only been six years since 1946 in which this number of homes or more were built.

Options for first-time buyers

Although first-time buyers face many challenges, there is help available. For example, recent years have seen an increase in the number of mortgage deals available to those with only a small deposit to put down. Many lenders now offer mortgages to those looking to borrow up to 95% of the property value.

There are also government schemes designed to boost the amount first-time buyers save for a deposit. The Help to Buy Individual Savings Account (ISA), for example, enables buyers to initially pay in up to £1,200, followed by up to £200 a month,



and the government will add another 25% to any contributions you make with maximum bonus of £3,000.

If you're purchasing a new build property, you may also be eligible for the Help to Buy equity loan scheme. Under this scheme, you need to put down a 5% deposit. The government will then lend you a further 20% of the property price interest-free for the first five years, or 40% if you're buying in London.

Under changes announced in last November's Budget, first-time buyers no longer pay Stamp Duty on property purchases up to £300,000, which has reduced the cost of buying a home. First-time buyers of properties up to £500,000 don't have to pay Stamp Duty on the first £300,000

Parents can help first time buys in new ways:

The Post Office says the average millennial has £3,359 in accessible savings, meaning first-time buyers often ask their parents for help with a deposit. Gifting cash towards a deposit is often the simplest option. But, of course, that's not possible for everyone, so various mortgage products have been developed to help with this.

Joint or 'First Start' mortgage

A parent can apply for a joint mortgage together with their child, meaning both incomes are considered, and the first-time buyer is potentially more likely to be accepted and loaned a higher

amount. Traditionally, the parent's name also would go on the property deeds, but 'First Start' mortgages allow you to choose whether this happens.

Guarantor mortgage

With a guarantor mortgage, a parent or close family member guarantees the mortgage debt. If the buyer misses their mortgage repayments, the guarantor will have to cover them and loans of up to 100% are available via guarantor mortgages.

Family offset mortgage

With family offset mortgages, a relative puts their savings into an account linked to the first-time buyer's mortgage. The money in this account is then deducted from the mortgage, making the child's repayments cheaper. But there is a downside: while the relative can get their money back in full, they may have to lock it away until 75-80% of the mortgage has been paid off.

Family deposit mortgage

Here, a family member deposits cash in a savings account where the money is held as security against the mortgage. This cash is held for a fixed period, during which, if the mortgage borrower defaults, the money will be taken from this account. The family member earns interest on their savings, although the rate might not be as good as with other accounts. And if the borrower meets all their repayments, it won't cost their family anything.

If you are looking for expert mortgage advice, contact our professional team for high quality and friendly simplified solutions by calling 0191 260 2000.



TODDLER GROUP HELPS TACKLE DEMENTIA AT FOREST HALL CARE HOME

A care home in Forest Hall, Newcastle, is helping brighten the days of its residents and also help those with dementia, by introducing a toddler group at the home.

Mums and toddlers regularly come into Park View in Newcastle, which is one of six homes managed by St Martins Care. There they get the opportunity to interact with the residents, use the facilities and enjoy the experience of using the space to play and learn.

They attend on a weekly basis at the following times:

Birth to crawlers 10am-11:30am
Crawlers to walkers 1:30pm-3pm

Park View assistant manager, Lisa Parry said "Our residents absolutely love the emotional and physical connection with children and babies. Dementia is a massive talking point within the NHS and care at the moment, advertising the link between old and young and how much joy and happiness it brings into their lives is crucial. The children, babies and residents can form quite strong bonds.

"The main reason for this group is reminiscing,



bringing joy and laughter and emotional connections for everyone involved. Several mums also commented how useful it was for them with newborns and entertaining young children."

Many of the residents now look forward to the visits of the children, holding the babies and singing to them. For many it rekindles memories of when they were parents, or of their own children, while one resident felt it was like going back in time. Hilda

Lambert said: "It's so lovely to see the children and have cuddles."

Resident Jean Wright said: "I look forward to seeing the babies every week and getting to chat with the mams."

Leona Bibby said: "As a parent from the local community when this group was advertised on the local community board I was intrigued to find out more. Bringing the old and the young together isn't only a lovely idea it touched my heart in so many ways and brought back all the lovely memories I spent caring for my nana before she passed.

"The smiles simply say it all, the babies are relaxed and absolutely love the cuddles, the residents also get right in the spirit singing songs and smiling away. Coming week in and week out I think it's a group I will always support as each week I attend with a smile on my face. My whole conception of care homes has changed for the better and I also have better understanding."

To find out more about how to get involved call 0191 467 0014 or 0191 266 0998.



STAYING POWER...

Longevity in business is something to be admired. In this series of features, we are celebrating some of the most accomplished professionals from across the North East business community.

Aimed at major players with extensive 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...

CHRIS PIPE

Director of Planning House

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

Initially I thought my calling was as a Geography Teacher, however I realised through studying A-levels (Sociology, Geography and Classical Studies) and analysing the changes the area I lived had gone through in the 90's (an ex-mining settlement) that my passion was to try and make a difference to people/places and that began a passion for town planning.

What is your favourite aspect of the job?

One of the perks about town planning is each project is different, residential, commercial, change of use and listed building projects all have their own set of planning issues which need to be factored into how you deal with a proposal. I thrive on knowing each day can be different.

What has been your career defining moment?

Whilst I've been fortunate to have some great achievements in my career I believe that starting my own business is by far my career defining moment, I do however believe my greatest business achievement is yet to come.

How do you measure success?

I love a challenge and strive for success however client satisfaction is my key measure as I want to ensure that I add value to a development. This is why I agreed to be a Grand Design Live Ask the Expert at the London ExCel in May, I provided advice and guidance to people embarking on their development journey.

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

Town planning constantly evolves however the biggest change in town planning during my career came in 2012 with the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which turned the thousands of pages of national policy into a 59 page document.

Whilst the interpretation of the NPPF is still being challenged and is currently being reviewed I do believe that this document has helped professions remember planning is about people and places not red tape.

How has your skillset developed accordingly?

I realised town planning is bigger than just looking at policies and regulations, at the end of the day as already said, it's about people and places, once I embraced that I became a better town planner.

I was working as Head of Planning for a Local Planning Authority when the NPPF was launched and whilst my experience was invaluable until you work in private practice I don't think you can truly appreciate the challenges developers face.

Are you a risk taker by nature or more conservative?

I think if you set up your own business there is a part of you which is a risk taker, however I like to weigh up risks before I act.

To what would you attribute your success?

I have a strong work ethic and whilst I have maintained my focus I'm open to criticism and on advice ways to improve. However ultimately you have to love what you do – and I do.

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

I have so many ideas for taking my business forward sometimes it's challenging to find time to work on and in the business at the same time. My growth plans for the next few years will however help with this.

How do you remain motivated?

Ultimately success, I have a strong desire to achieve my goals and feel empowered knowing my business direction, this drives me and keeps me motivated.

Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

Whilst not mutually exclusive I'd prefer to be respected, it's nice to be liked however if you're respected it means you're appreciated and valued in your profession.

I'll retire when....

The business is at a stage where it no longer needs me. I have a passion for town planning, however my plan is to build the business so my role becomes increasingly more limited to enable me to spend more quality time with my family.

THE NEW NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK: THINKING BIG AND SMALL

Director at BH Planning and Design, Mark Ketley, explores the current planning industry and how it is affected by the government's new housing policy.

The role which the planning profession has in helping to deliver housing growth has never been greater. The past year has seen a plethora of new policy initiatives and consultation proposals in reaction to the Government's policy agenda which is heavily focussed on planning reform and ensuring a system is put in place capable of addressing the national housing crisis. The initiatives and proposals are aimed at fixing the broken housing market and boosting supply towards a long-term target of delivering 300,000 new homes per year.

On March 5 the consultation version of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published and, not surprisingly, it identifies the delivery of additional new homes as a fundamental principle and a clear priority underpinning the whole of the Government's intended approach to planning.

The key question, and the biggest challenge facing the industry, is therefore how will a doubling of current housing supply rates be achieved whilst ensuring this is delivered in an environmentally and socially sustainable way?

Recent decades have shown that incremental developments alone will not meet the level of demand for new homes - nor will they achieve sustainable development in its truest sense. It is therefore time to start thinking outside of the box and look to support alternative forms of housing delivery on both a small and large scale.

Although the current market is providing a more attractive environment for housebuilding - with investment and improved economic conditions both contributing significantly to an increase in supply in excess of 50% nationally in the last three years - there remains a need for long term planning to ensure delivery of housing on an even larger scale.



Mark Ketley

The difficulty that the Government has is that the main volume housebuilders, responsible for around 90% of housing growth since the recession, cannot continue to expand indefinitely and therefore alternative delivery mechanisms need to be found.

Large scale garden towns and villages have been touted as the solution for accelerating supply rates, and they will inevitably make a meaningful contribution following the Government's promotion of its garden settlements initiative. However, whilst the new NPPF acknowledges that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, this is often only the case in strong market areas. Small sites on the other hand are consistently efficient across all areas and have quick build-out rates.

The draft new NPPF proposes to place a requirement on all Local Planning Authorities for at least 20% of sites identified for housing in their development plans to be half a hectare or less in size - a measure aimed very clearly at stimulating others to supplement the major residential development companies. Whilst affordable housing providers and public-sector organisations, including Local Authorities, will have a key role to play, a wholesale reinvigoration of the SME housebuilding sector seems essential if housing supply is to be

propelled towards the ambitious targets being set by Government.

SME businesses have unfortunately been in sustained decline for many years for a variety of reasons including ever-tougher tax and regulatory frameworks, access to land policy, and funding constraints. Therefore, according to the HBF, there are only 2,500 SME operators building homes today compared to over 12,000 at the height of the last housebuilding boom in the late 1980s.

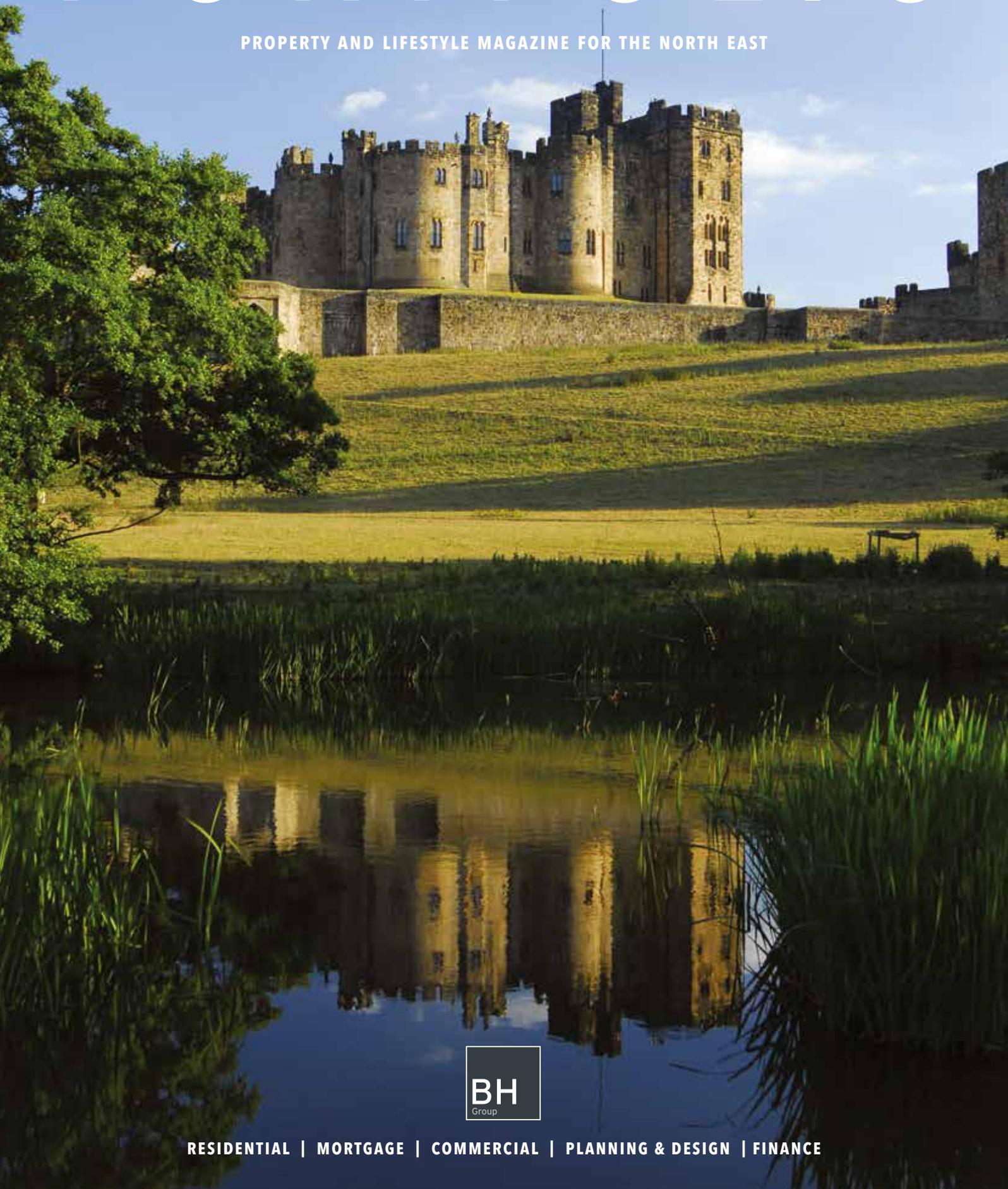
A much greater role for SMEs is anticipated, and indeed required, in the coming years with many Local Authorities starting to realise that a greater diversity of sites will help in achieving their housing requirements more effectively. This has also clearly been recognised by the Government in their proposed revisions to the NPPF.

The availability of suitable housing sites combined with the constant struggle of securing an implementable planning consent through a planning process beset by delays and bureaucracy, inevitably creates delays and costs for SMEs that have a significant impact on their ability to establish themselves and grow. Understanding these challenges and how to address them is therefore vital for our land and development clients as we look ahead to the new NPPF world.

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PORTFOLIO

PROPERTY AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR THE NORTH EAST



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TAKE A LOOK INSIDE STORY HOMES' LATEST SHOW HOMES IN TYNE AND WEAR

Five-star housebuilder, Story Homes, recently opened two luxurious show homes at its new development in Crawcrook – Fairfields Manor.

Having launched in early 2017, properties on the development – of which there are 169 in total – have been in high demand, and a number of residents have now moved into their homes.

Visitors to Fairfields Manor can now view the four-bedroom detached Warwick and Grantham show homes. The highly anticipated Grantham show home is the first of its kind in the North East.

Styled by interior designer, Suzanne Webster, the show homes enable potential homebuyers to see the space, quality and attention to detail that differentiate Story Homes from other new-builds.

The show homes display the various aspects of

the developer's high specification, which includes turfed front and rear gardens, bi-fold doors, AEG integrated kitchen appliances, and contemporary bathrooms with tiling by renowned Spanish brand Porcelanosa.

Lyndsey Walton, Sales Manager at Story Homes, said: "With the first properties now occupied and the show homes open, the development has really come to life and it is great to see the new community start to develop.

"We believe that Fairfields Manor offers something different to buyers. It combines the benefits of semi-rural living with excellent transport links

into the city centre – it is only a few miles from Newcastle city centre so is proving popular with commuters – plus the high quality build and finish that set our homes apart."

In addition to new homes, Story Homes' developments create employment opportunities for local contractors and further economic benefits for the areas in which the homes are built. The housebuilder also makes financial contributions towards local education and facilities as part of its commitment to supporting the communities that surround its developments.

Visit storyhomes.co.uk for more information and updates on all of Story Homes' developments.



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SUNDERLAND FIRM SCOOP MAJOR PARENTING AWARD

A creative company which helps educate children with its geography themed gift packs has won the MadeForMums gold award for best subscription box/service.

BIC based Geo Journey, offer a subscription service, providing children with educational gift packs containing a journal, passport, souvenir, map and stickers.

Children then receive monthly post from cartoon characters who teach them about the world's most interesting countries and cities.

Business owner Christina Armstrong said: "I couldn't believe my eyes when I opened the email and it said we had won gold.

"The fact that our subscriptions have been tested by industry experts, mums and of course the children themselves makes the win even more special."



NWD EXPANDS WITH NEW DARLINGTON OFFICE

NWD Accountancy are celebrating a successful year with a move to new premises in Darlington.

Founded by Nicola Waters-Davies in 2015, NWD Accountancy previously operated from Nicola's home until an increase in clients led to a need for additional staff and a larger office space in a professional environment. Nicola said: "I'm delighted with the progress we have made since first opening the business. Our client base has grown and we're now working with an array of businesses including actors, football clubs, sole traders, construction, and manufacturing companies."

PUBLICIST LAUNCHES NEW BUSINESS



A new business is working with high-profile authors from across the globe to help publicise their work.

Confessions Publicity was launched by Nev Murray with support from the BIC to help horror authors drive awareness of their work and increase book sales.

"I've been reading horror books since I was a kid and I started reviewing books seriously around 2012," said Nev, "but when people started buying books on the back of my reviews and the authors themselves asked me to do some promotion work for them, I thought I could use my skills to open a publicity business and take advantage of a gap in the market."

DIGITAL MARKETING AGENCY EXPANDS AT THE BIC

Sunderland based agency dodio – The Do Studio has expanded its team of experts as the city's strong digital technology industry continues to grow.

Jameson Lai has joined the team as a Senior Designer, bringing with him over a decade of experience, and having played an integral role in the agency's recent rebrand. Jameson commented:

"I am thrilled to be a part of the team, particularly at such an exciting period of growth for the business and the sector. The region has such a diverse and thriving business community and I'm excited to put my creative expertise into practise to help organisations engage with their audiences through effective design."



NEW UK-FIRST MICRO-SPA HELPS TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS



Corporate Personal Fitness (CPF) has launched the UK's first corporate micro-spa at Business Central.

Based at Business Central, the new micro-spa offers a full range of therapies and treatments from relaxing massages to reflexology, facials and dietary advice.

Director Patrick Masheder explained: "CPF's sport therapy sessions are already hugely popular with our corporate and private clients because they produce measurable results in a short space of time.

"No matter how busy you are, it's important to take some time out for yourself – to recharge and reinvigorate your body. The more you take care of yourself, the more you can do."



BIC PROGRAMME CREATES NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES

The BIC is encouraging businesses to exchange knowledge and collaborate with overseas partners.

The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme offers those in the early stages of starting a business the opportunity to spend on average three to four months in a business overseas. It also allows for established businesses in the North East to act as a 'host' and to welcome a European entrepreneur to work with them.

Business Development Manager, Louise Hardy commented: "Having been involved with Erasmus for over five years, I have seen first-hand the benefits it can bring to participating entrepreneurs. From developing international contacts to strengthening your sector skills, the project stimulates the growth of start-ups and established SMEs."



Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

ARE YOU REALLY RENTING?

Customer feedback is important for any successful business and while we regularly ask our landlords and tenants what we can do to improve their situation it is often the informal chat which is most revealing.

A tenant popping into the office, or chatting with our maintenance crew often leads to a more wide ranging discussion of their situation and circumstances.

One question put to young professionals almost guaranteed to raise a sigh is "How do your parents feel about you renting?" Because it seems the older generation just do not get it. Wrong conclusions include the assumption that the couple cannot afford to get onto the property ladder. A young professional couple will almost certainly be able to afford mortgage repayments on a starter home in developments like Great Park in Newcastle. Other questions concern security of tenure but the couple will be wise enough to realise that so long as they pay the rent and keep their property in decent shape, a landlord will be delighted to form a long term relationship.

Rather than submit to the "Oh dear, you are renting" reaction from older family and friends, young professional couples find themselves offering a vigorous defence of their choice. By renting they can live in a desirable part of town

with good transport links. If they are planning a family they can afford two bedrooms with a garden and when the family grows, up-sizing to a three bedroom property is a lot less hassle than climbing back into the property market. Their boiler goes on the blink? Simply call the letting agency's on-call maintenance team then sit back and wait for the thing to be fixed rather than worry about paying for a repair or replacement. Add to this the joy of avoiding estate agency fees, mortgage broker charges, conveyancing and stamp duty then a compelling case to rent begins to emerge.

Young professionals frequently need to be mobile in order to further their career so if a job opportunity presents itself several hundred miles away, house hunting on the rental market, armed with excellent references can often be completed in a weekend.

These are all hard-nosed, practical reasons offered by young professionals to justify their decision to rent but dig a little deeper and the heart begins to speak. Quite simply, young professionals want to enjoy the best years of their lives. They want exotic holidays before settling down to start a family.

They may want a lavish wedding, a sports car or to cut a dash in the fashion stakes and they want to do this with the freedom of youth.

This attitude may result in shaking heads and tuts from an older generation but history tells us that the drive to own rather than rent is a relatively recent phenomenon. Until around 1945 renting was the norm. The post war housing boom and increasing prosperity led to generations of families choosing to buy their home. This phenomenon was ratcheted up in the 70's and 80's with home ownership seen as a right rather than a privilege.

As landlords continue to refurbish their properties with new kitchens, bathrooms, energy efficient central heating and landscaped gardens, so the attitude of young professionals will continue to reflect the comfort, flexibility and cost effectiveness of choosing to rent rather than buy. Good news for landlords and tenants, good news for areas wishing to attract young professionals with disposable income.



LAUNCH OF KNIGHT FRANK'S NORTH EAST PROPERTY MARKET REPORT 2018

Clients of Knight Frank Newcastle attended a breakfast event to launch the firm's North East Property Market Report 2018.

Guests were given exclusive insight into the North East and UK property markets. Speakers included Darren Mansfield, Associate in Commercial Research at Knight Frank and Partners - Paddy Matheson, Simon Haggie and Dickon Wood.

The event was an opportunity to show-off Knight Frank's unrivalled access to the latest research. The company prides itself on being very proactive in the market and having its finger on the pulse to benefit all its clients.





NORTH EAST DIGITAL AGENCY WINS NEW CONTRACT



A leading North East digital agency has secured a contract to deliver a full digital strategy for the University of Winchester, adding to its reputation as the go to digital expert for the higher education sector.

Newcastle-based Roundhouse Digital was appointed to streamline the institution's digital channels and deliver market leading digital communications, engagement and supporting platforms and a new website.

Roundhouse Digital now work with over thirty universities in the UK, including Newcastle University, University of Liverpool and Lancaster University.

Roundhouse Digital were the first company in the world to produce responsive websites for universities and today almost all higher education institutions have followed their lead.

Michael Armstrong, Director of Roundhouse Digital, said: "We've been very fortunate to secure contracts with some of the top UK universities and are pleased to have been able to lend our expertise to the University of Winchester on this latest project.

"The challenge we faced was how to make the most of the University's digital communications while sympathetically reflecting its new brand and visual personality. I feel like we've gone above and beyond this to raise the bar for what is possible for higher education websites."

CREATIVE AGENCY CHOOSES NEWCASTLE FOR NEW OFFICE

An integrated creative communications agency has set up a new creative hub in Hoults Yard, Newcastle, to tap into local talent within the sector.

London-headquartered Luminous delivers award-winning strategic design and communications solutions to help corporate clients connect meaningfully with employees, customers and investors.

Specialising in brand articulation, brand communications, content and employee and investor engagement, the agency works with household names such as Britvic, National Express and Saga.

Luminous has plans to create 10 jobs in the next three years and chose

Newcastle because of the talent pool in the creative sector, as well as the rise of digital and tech in the region.

Invest Newcastle supported Luminous in the creation of its Newcastle hub by providing insight into the local ecosystem, making introductions to the city's universities and identifying property solutions.

James Moore, Creative Director at Luminous, said: "The rise of digital and tech in the region and the prominence of those business types throughout the city meant that Newcastle was a good fit for us. Newcastle also benefits from having two great universities which have courses that are closely aligned with the creative sector that we operate in."



MOBILE NETWORK THREE UK HAS APPOINTED W COMMUNICATIONS AS ITS CONSUMER PR AGENCY

W Comms are to drive wider brand engagement and support Network Three's customer growth targets, following a competitive pitch.

W, which operates under the W North banner in Newcastle, will work closely with the Three team and existing agencies W&K, Gravity Road and Mindshare to "build brand equity and love".

The agency will also support Three's wider marketing plan – including brand campaigns,

strategic counsel, tech and lifestyle media relations, influencer and talent engagement and news generation.

It will also work with the Three team to build a measurement tool that more effectively tracks the return on investment of its comms programmes.

Adam Mack, W's UK CEO, said: "We're so excited to join the Three team on their journey to make Three one of the nation's best-loved brands.

"Their willingness to push the boundaries and their desire for great, award-winning work mirrors our own ambition and attitude. It's going to be a lot of fun."

The W North team has already been instrumental in delivering an all-you-can-eat Pug Brunch in Liverpool for pug owners and fans to celebrate Three's all you can eat data deal on Snapchat.

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Our aim is for our clients to see us a vital and integral part of their business.

HOW TO HAVE AN ETHICAL APPROACH AND EFFECTIVE INFLUENCER RELATIONS

As part of your brand's PR programme, influencer relations can help you to achieve really great results. But, how do you go about having an ethical and effective approach to influencer relations in this developing area of brand communications? Here are some top tips...

Approach

There are quite literally millions of bloggers, vloggers and social media content creators out there. So how do you sort the wheat from the chaff? Ensure that you're putting your brand in front of the right people, who have the potential to help you reach a highly-engaged audience? And who share an affinity with your brand, its purpose and products?

There's no short answer. Take the time to look up these influencers online and make sure you do your homework. Don't be dazzled by big follower numbers if the target audience is all wrong and engagement figures are low. Otherwise, it's just vanity metrics and ultimately won't help you to achieve your objectives.

Then look at the influencer's Domain Authority – this shows you how much Google and other search engines trust the site. Ask to see the influencer's media pack and really interrogate the data to whittle down your list. Above all, ask yourself is this influencer that you want your brand to be associated with?

Pitch

Keep your pitches simple, short and straight to the point. This is your opportunity to show the influencer that you know their channels, content and editorial style, as well as clearly being able to demonstrate how and why that influencer is the right fit for your brand.

Remember, influencers ultimately create content – whether it's a blog, YouTube video or Instagram post – for their audience. Make it clear in your pitch why their audience would be interested in what



Anne-Marie Lacey

you have to offer and in turn, why their channels are the right fit for your brand placement.

Also, be clear about payment too. Content creators are not the same as traditional media. Many will be expecting to be paid for the collaboration.

Work

It's not only a legal requirement for you to get influencer relations right, ethically, it's in everyone's best interest to ensure the integrity and trust in your brand too.

When working with your influencer, clearly outline your expectations – what you want, deadlines, budgets and so on. This includes following the regulations set out by the ASA, CAP Code, CMA, Google and the different requirements of each and every social media platform this branded content will appear on.

Any content should be clearly marked as an advert when paid for, or when receiving product or experiences in kind, and there has been some kind of editorial control – even just asking for a post, inclusion of a specific link or hashtag is a form of editorial control according to the ASA.

The nature of your brand's relationship with the influencer should be clearly marked in the title at the top of any piece of content, so as not to be misleading to the audience and run the risk of unethically influencing followers, therefore potentially damaging your reputation as a result. If the influencer is receiving payment or payment in kind by being gifted a product in order to fulfil their end of the contract, all links back to your website should be no follow links. To be totally transparent, this should also be very clear on any social post linking to the article too.

Anne-Marie Lacey is Managing Director of Filament PR. She is collaborating with Debbie Sharratt, an award-winning PR & Marketing professional who is also now a successful blogger, to deliver a number of courses to help businesses, brands and communicators work more effectively and ethically with bloggers and other social influencers. For more information, visit www.nesma.co.uk.

A version of this article first appeared on www.vuelio.com co-authored by Anne-Marie Lacey and Debbie Sharratt.



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COLLECTIVE CREATIVITY

You often hear people say "I'm not really a creative person" or "creativity's not my strength".
But what does 'being creative' really mean?

Here, full service-agency **The Works** discuss what they think it means, and why they believe creativity doesn't just happen during the 'creative process'.

The Collins dictionary states creativity is "the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods or interpretations". So, no mention of being able to draw, colour in or anything artistic for that matter then!

Edward de Bono first coined the term lateral thinking, saying "creative thinking - in terms of idea creativity - is not a mystical talent. It is a skill that can be practised and nurtured" - we couldn't agree more. In marketing, as in life, creativity is about being open to change and not being afraid to try new things. "It is possible that the way you do everything in your life or business is the best possible way of doing it, but not likely" de Bono adds.

There are so many aspects and stages to marketing a business and at every point there are opportunities to be 'creative'. Some things are obvious, while others may appear small, but are often every bit as important. It may be an insight into the audience, a slight shift in media selection, a ground-breaking

innovation (although that's unlikely), it could be just a simple "my daughter would love that". Either way, all these things add up to the end result and its success, or otherwise.

All projects in our industry start with a brief. So, what can a bit of creativity here do? A lot as it happens. After all, this sets the tone for the whole project. Things may well have been done a certain way for years. But there's always another way. And who knows, it might be a better way. Thinking of each brief in isolation and separating the limitations from the opportunities will highlight the areas for creative input from the word go and give everyone involved more time to focus on them. You may always send the brief over in an email. But a face-to-face meeting will often lead to a change in direction or an exciting thought to explore and who knows where that will take the project...that's creativity isn't it?

Looking at what's worked before is always a good place to start. And it's the same when it comes to looking at campaign tactics and buying media space. But what about looking at new techniques and avenues to communicate with people? Digital in particular has given us so many different opportunities to reach and interact with people and

it continues to do so on an often-weekly basis, that there may be something you've never considered before that might completely change the impact of your campaign.

Most people assume creative thinking is only done by the creative team. And a lot of the time, you'd be right. However, it's not just a case of choosing fonts, colours and writing a clever bit of copy like you might think. You must consider what the creative looks and sounds like, balanced with where and how it will be used. The impact of a simple creative execution can be completely changed by thinking of a better or unexpected delivery method.

Ultimately, creativity isn't about being artistic, and there's not a certain time, place or type of person who can or can't be 'creative'. At The Works, we work collaboratively as a team of people who all have individual strengths, meaning everyone has their part to play in the creative process.

For us, it's about, as Steve Jobs says, "connecting things." "When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things."

To find out more about what we do and how we can help you, visit wearetheworks.com or follow @wearetheworks

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DATA



Ben Maughan,
managing director at Epic Social.

In recent years, social media has become an indispensable marketing tool to global brands and small businesses alike, but are you utilising it to its full potential? Ben Maughan, managing director at Chester-le-Street-based social media advertising agency, Epic Social, discusses why when it comes to social media, its real value as a marketing tool is in the data that sits behind it.

Free, readily available and widely used by consumers around the world, many businesses understand their need to have a social media presence, but lots of people aren't taking full advantage of it.

Many business owners see social media as something that they simply have to have because everybody else uses it. It is somewhere they can share business updates, promote products and services and keep in touch with customers. What many people don't realise is that the real value in using social media for marketing purposes is in the data it collects about your audiences, and if you're not analysing this regularly, then you could be missing out.

Monitoring your social media insights

is absolutely key to ensuring that your social media activity is first and foremost, being engaged with, but also, that it is hitting your target demographic. Unlike traditional forms of marketing like direct mailshots or print advertising, social media allows you to assess the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns and monitor your return on investment through the data that is collected by the platforms' in-built analytics tools.

From this data, you can learn everything that you need to know about your target audience, from who they are and where they're from, to how they interact with your brand and your posts and what type of content they find most engaging. In order to do this however, you need to analyse.

At Epic Social, we are specialists in creating high-quality content for brands, custom designed to engage target audiences. Our team of in-house social media experts monitor the effectiveness of these campaigns closely by analysing social media data, which we then use to inform future campaigns.

If your businesses social media could do with an injection of 'epic', visit www.epicsocial.co.uk to find out more.

HOW FAR ARE YOU FROM THE TOP OF THE CAREER LADDER?

If we are lucky, we have all been encouraged to 'get on in life' 'have a worthwhile career' 'make sure we can achieve what we want to achieve'. Some of us have been fortunate enough to have access to opportunities and training that have enabled us to grow as individuals and valuable employees.

However, people do move on or retire, and at that time it's, even more, important to consider what talent you have developed in the business to drive it forward. Ideally with the same verve and vigour as you and your colleagues have had over the years. Succession planning isn't just for when executives leave; it applies to teams and departments too as if your organisation is expanding, it's imperative to have an internal talent pool at the ready. Have you analysed how many people in the business are coming up for retirement age over the next five years and do you have a plan to 'lose' or replace their posts?

Succession planning is a critical part of people management. It increases the availability of experienced and capable employees.

Increasingly I am meeting people who are genuinely integrating their work with those who work around them so that their departure isn't a shock to the organisation. Ideally, you want your business to move forward without suffering delays in bringing in new talent. Typically, they may take up to six months or more to get their heads around how the place functions, let alone make a valuable contribution to managing it. Such things inevitably have an impact on the short-term success of the business.

Now is always the right time to identify what skills your business needs to survive and thrive and whether you have the right level of those skills available to you or should you be training or recruiting? And remember don't just concentrate all your efforts on one person, you need to develop a group of talent.

Fortune favours the brave so be brave – so think ahead – whatever rung of the ladder you are on. And if you are at the bottom, let those who manage you know that you are keen to progress. The best person to look after your future is you.



Veronica Swindale
Director, Chartered Marketer, FCIM and
CIM Ambassador of the North 2017

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

HONEST INFLUENCERS PROVE THEIR WORTH...EVEN WHEN THEY'RE ON A LEAD

In PR and communications, working in partnership with influencers has now become a regular and daily part of the job.

With a broad range of clients based in locations across the UK, their niche interest and their geographic locations have the potential to become a very powerful tool in successfully amplifying awareness and understanding of our clients with target markets.

There are some bad ones, but generally a wonderful collection of individuals who understand the power of influence they hold over their communities and use that in a way to work closely with brands on telling their story in an authentic and honest way.

Authenticity and honesty is crucial because no amount of great communications or marketing prep will make your sous chef turn out an oozy, insta-friendly poached egg. If he serves a rubbery hockey puck on burnt sourdough, that's not bad PR, that's just bad business. If a waiter keeps bringing the wrong dish to the table, that superb pre-opening campaign counts for very little. You cannot polish turds.

One of this region's most refreshing bloggers, Pixie Tenenbaum, is one who isn't afraid to call it how she sees it. Judging by her social media feeds, its clear she's invited to a great many openings, fashion launches and various other lifestyle events up and down the country. Her most recent updates on two new bar openings in Newcastle were less than complimentary. On one: 'Excellent marketing, great premise, poor execution, weird vibe, nobody had a f**** clue what was happening and that was just the staff.'

On the other: A great idea. Shockingly bad execution,



Christian Cerisola

s*** vibe, no actual theme, looks like a brothel in a cave. Definitely is not a brothel.'

Feel the burn.

She's one of my favourites to follow. With so many others, you'd assume life and everything is wonderful, regardless of what event or launch they may be at or what product they're reviewing. We all know this isn't life. Orders get confused, bartenders forget your drink, new tech sometimes doesn't work, bookings aren't on the, erm, book. This goes for any industry.

I'd love to see more honesty from bloggers. It's in their interest. I fear some risk losing the trust of their audience. Influencers shouldn't be viewed as a simple and easy 'free hit' at great publicity. Far too many in the communications industry take that view and its to the detriment of everyone; the blogger, the client and the agency.

Paint too rosy a picture of something that isn't all it's cracked up to be and you start to blur the lines between what is honestly held opinion and, well,

advertising. And none of us like adverts, do we?

Three members from the Geordie Shore gang are under investigation from the Advertising Standards Authority for tweets around specific betting odds that were available on Coral and Ladbrokes. The ASA says its in talks with Ladbrokes and Coral, they say they run a very standard affiliate programme with celebrities which is ASA compliant.)

We recently held an event for our client, Three, in Liverpool, which was to amplify their new campaign that allows Three customers to go binge on Snapchat without using any of their data. On Snapchat, users can find their own augmented reality pet 'puggerfly': a cute cross between a pug and a butterfly.

Our Liverpool 'pug brunch' was attended by loyal pug owners, all of whom could bring their pets and, if they fancied, allow them to don some butterfly wings and pose for the cameras. Cute beyond words. Unsurprisingly, in partnership with our colleagues in London who were hosting a similar event in Covent Garden on the same day, #puggerfly soared on social that weekend.

It was here that I met two A-list pugs. Alfie and Polly boast a combined following in excess of 120,000 on Instagram alone. A crazy microscope on the weirdness of my job sometimes, but brilliantly underlining how important it is to find those who have real impact on their communities.

So, does it make it an ad if a pug with 90,000 followers says he loved his doggy treats at a pug brunch hosted by Three? It would seem not. What if he was to relentlessly plug all the new deals from Three? Different matter, that. Can the ASA even fine a dog? That's a whole other can of worms.

I have no doubt, however, that had Alfie's pawsecco not been chilled just so, or his doggie biscuits not been baked chewie on the inside just how he likes them, then we sure should have heard about it.



Christian Cerisola is head of W North, a part of award-winning W Communications. www.wnorth.co.uk @wcommnorth

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ASK SILVER BULLET...

“ WHAT IS ADDED VALUE IN BUSINESS? ”

The concept of added value is, from a purchaser's point of view, how to acquire more products or services for your budget and, from a supplier's point of view, how to differentiate yourself from your competition by offering your market products or services which are perceived to be without cost.

There's nothing new in the concept – anyone that can remember Embassy cigarettes, for example, will recall the Embassy Tokens the packets contained. Whilst similar techniques have been used, particularly in the FMCG sector, for years ranging from the incredibly popular 'free' gifts in cereal packets to stamped loyalty cards in pubs. Whilst the B2B sector has also used the technique, it hasn't been as publicised - adding free services or products to a fixed price contract is nothing new and, unlike a discount, a company offering added value is adding something to a service already being provided, usually at no extra cost.

What is new is that 'added value' is now expected and almost mandatory for a growing number of private and public tenders with the question of how a supplier will add extra value to the supply of a service or contract taking an increasingly prominent position.

It is particularly important for new suppliers who do not have the benefit of a proven track record of delivery with a customer or customers, and given the number of start-up companies in the UK, 50% of which fail due to mirrored or duplicated services and products being offered at a lower cost or higher quality, it adds to the unique selling point and differentiates a business from its competitors. In theory, added value needs to be something others are not offering, giving that extra touch from your company which could make all the difference to the customer.

In practice, however, it's also now becoming so common, that the difference between the paid-for product or service and the 'added value' is becoming blurred in many cases. How many

construction companies, for example, offer to take on apprentices when bidding for Housing Association contracts or developers offer to provide 'free' community facilities. In our own sector, the 'free' marketing audit is now being publicised as something different when it is simply normal procedure as part of the start of any new contract for most marketers.

The cost of providing real 'added value' has to be considered. For many suppliers it may not cost them anything to provide but is perceived to be of high value by the client or customer. In this way both parties win – the customer is happy to get something they value that they're not paying for, whilst the supplier has made the sale without having to lose any profit apart from, in many cases, some additional hours.

There are numerous examples of this – a law firm that offers to visit clients in their own workspaces rather than the usual practice of requiring clients to come to their premises, house builders who offer free additional items, whether this be white goods or turfed lawns, accountancy firms who hold regular networking events where their clients can sell to each other, engineering companies who offer free consultation, commissioning and maintenance on their products, website developers who offer free CMS training or, going back to consumer

goods, the toothpaste manufacturer who provides free tooth brushes or the cosmetic manufacturer that provides free make-up lessons.

Product value is usually determined by the consistency and attributes of a business. Many companies provide high quality services at a high cost, so when such a company adds value to its services it's not necessary to charge for additional services because the cost can be part of the original offer. Customers generally don't mind paying a little bit extra for a superior service.

Customers like to feel they are getting free expertise. When clients receive a high quality service at the best rate they grow to value a company, which ultimately leads to return custom and referrals. By creating customer value, a company will be viewed as reliable, trustworthy and above all going the extra mile. Clients want to feel like they are getting the best possible service and something that competing suppliers cannot provide.

When focusing on ways to market your company, focus on the USP's that clearly position you and allow you to stand out from the crowd. Decide what added value clients are looking for in your sector and work out how you can use this to surpass competitors. With added value, the company and clients are giving the business an extra push to thrive.



Jen Macdonald, Account Manager at Silver Bullet Marketing Ltd

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.

YOU'VE "HIGHLIGHTED" OUR BUSINESS - SUE TOOMEY PROPERTY LAWYERS

Highlights PR is a successful PR agency run by Keith Newman. Uniquely, their office is a boat based on the River Tyne. Here we look at how Highlights PR have helped one of their clients.

Sue Toomey of Toomey Legal has opened a new office in Fergy Space Cramlington. The addition of a new site as well as their original Corbridge office will allow for new staff recruitment and business growth.

Sue has an extensive background in a variety of legal industries. She worked as a lawyer for a Sheffield law practice before being head-hunted to work for a specialist insolvency firm. She then set up her own property law firm in 2001 before moving to the north east.

The firm is renowned for their work across a broad range of property law matters particularly with commercial and residential property law and it has nurtured links with many of the region's estate agents. Committed to providing a personal service based on fixed fees rather than recorded time, the business also specialises in dealing with rental issues and has a solid reputation with seasoned investors.

Highlights PR was brought in to let new and existing customers know about the firm's new offices and to reinforce Sue's experience and



wealth of knowledge.

Highlights PR quickly identified the newsworthy link between a property lawyer and her new site which is run by haulage and removals firm Ferguson's. Sue was featured in a number of newspaper articles, online business sites and trade and lifestyle magazines. She was also featured extensively in social media posts relating to the move.

Sue said; "Keith quickly found a very newsworthy angle to my story and got to work writing a press release that was easy to understand, contained all my key messages and ultimately got the firm great exposure levels."

Sue also attended Keith's radio media training session and her interview about her business will be broadcast on Radio Northumberland's business show during the summer.

For a no obligation chat about your PR and a coffee on-board Highlights – the floating office, call Keith on 07814 397951 or email Keith@highlightspr.co.uk



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COMMUNICATIONS OFFERS THE NHS ITS GREATEST LIFELINE

By Sarah Hall, managing director of Sarah Hall Consulting Limited



Sarah Hall

In May I published #FutureProof edition three: The NHS at 70 with wider lessons for the PR community. Once again this latest book offers a series of crowdsourced essays aimed at underlining the strategic value of PR to business. You can find out more at www.futureproofingcomms.co.uk.

#FutureProof edition three is a story of an NHS striving hard to modernise as it navigates through the toughest challenges of its lifetime, challenges that can only be overcome if it embraces an honest dialogue with the public.

An aging population with complex health needs, underfunding, political agendas, privatisation, parochial self-interest, healthcare that doesn't consistently meet quality standards and questions over the type and location of delivery, are just some of the huge questions its leaders face.

There are no easy answers.

Facing the challenges with integrity and transparency

Seventy years after it was first established, the NHS has grown beyond all expectations; a behemoth which comprises a network of organisations, occasionally with competing agendas, but all fighting with one aim: to maintain healthcare that is free at the point of treatment.

Daily life for NHS employees is a juxtaposition of medical and technological innovation within buildings and infrastructure that are in some cases no longer fit for purpose. World class frontline teams of doctors and nurses prop up a system that is creaking at the seams.

There is widespread recognition that the NHS is on a knife edge.

The greatest challenge is not where the money comes from, but how to have an honest conversation with the public about what future healthcare should

be and to educate the wider population about the change that is needed and create demand for this to happen.

Public engagement is the most powerful form of advocacy

Professional communications has never been more critical to the future of the NHS.

Public relations in its truest sense is needed not just to speak truth to power, but to engage with NHS users who think that an injection of funds will suffice to fix the issues.

Investment alone is not the solution. A much more radical overhaul is urgently required that engages both the workforce and the public.

While the general populace may be wedded to having doctors' surgeries and hospitals on every corner, this is not where a sustainable future lies.

Instead, technology is already empowering online consultations and self-care within the home setting. Non-urgent treatment is moving from hospitals into the community. Apps are providing better access to healthcare advice focused on prevention rather than cure.

This is the new reality and UK society needs to embrace this.

So what is the role of professional communicators in the NHS?

Those in the communications space offer the NHS its greatest lifeline if they have the courage to speak the truth.

Not just about rising demand versus lack of investment, understaffing, or how the whole system fails if one of its connected services falters (think hospital bed shortages and how patients move - or don't - through the network) but about the pressing need for change.

Research shows that the NHS remains one of the most trusted institutions in the UK. Much of its credibility comes from the human face of its employees, who interact with the public every day.

With this in mind, perhaps the biggest lesson for its management teams, communicators and the wider public relations community is to embrace transparency, invest in skills and use real people to lead the debate.

For the NHS this means fielding doctors, nurses and others within the care setting to start the discussion about what the future of healthcare holds, what the journey there looks like and the impact for modern society.

It requires taking one approach at scale and talking about the true cost of treatment and the value of the service that the public receives.

Explaining the benefits to a total overhaul of the system, while recognising the challenges this will create, could mobilise an army of vocal supporters prepared to lobby the government for what the NHS needs.

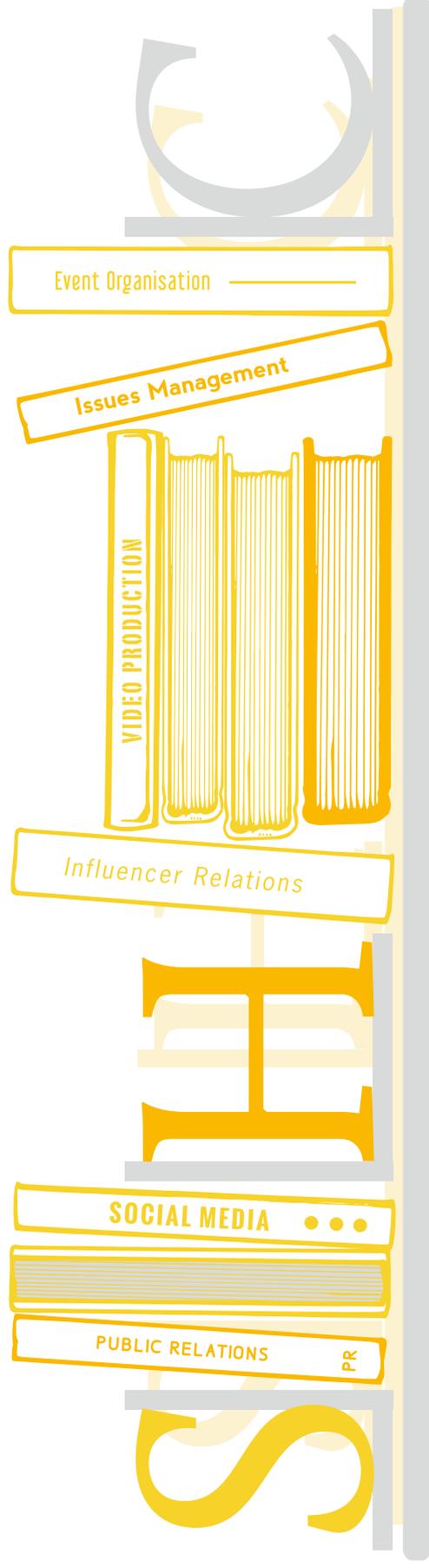
After all, as its founder said: "The NHS will last as long as there are folk with the faith to fight for it."

If you need help planning marketing or public relations activity for 2018 you can contact Sarah at sarah@sarahhallconsulting.co.uk

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APRIL GETS SOCIAL

April Bowden - Managing Director, Play the Field, Northumberland

Depending on your age, the words 'social media' will mean certain things. If you were brought up in the age of the Internet, you'll know what to expect... Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.

For those who still struggle to turn on a computer, social media is probably a local newspaper that gets delivered or, shock horror, actually writing and posting a letter. When did you actually write someone a newsy letter and have to go to the Post Office to buy a stamp? When did you last write-out a cheque? There will be a sizeable chunk of the population who can't remember when they did either of those.

Why?

Because they rely 100 per cent on social media.

And that is where April Bowden and her company, Play the Field, come in.

April has the knack of being able to spread the word about your business, your service, your product or even...yes...you. It's called Digital Marketing.

She's building an impressive and varied portfolio of clients such as Cussins, the property developer; Lycetts Insurance Broker; Beaconhill Farm Cottages, Major Family Law, Groves Estate Agents, and Turnbull's Butchers who were actually April's first ever client.

But why did April call her company Play The Field?

"I've always had a love of field sports but it's a very male dominated pursuit," said April, "so as part of my degree course I wrote about the need to get more women involved. The title of my dissertation was Play the Field...and it's sort of stuck. Actually, it sums-up the way digital marketing works because you need to make sure that as many people as possible are aware of your business or product. If you aren't promoting via social media, you can bet that someone else will be."

Many firms and businesses reading this will know exactly what April means. Everyone is aware that they should be using social media but there's a mixture of people and firms who either don't know how to do it or, and this is more likely if you are a small business or even a sole-operator...you haven't got time.

"A large percentage of my clients know that they should be using social media, but they have no idea how to go about it," added April.

With that in mind, Play the Field is now helping a host of firms in a variety of

ways. Many of them leave all of their social media up to April. Typically, she will create content, post on their social media feeds to build a following and manage their website. She can monitor what sort of response the businesses are getting from their digital marketing campaigns. Play the Field can deal with Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) so that whenever various terms and words are typed into something like Google, you or your firm will appear high on the list.

April holds tutorials on digital marketing so that firms can run their own operation. She gives lectures on that topic at Northumbria Uni as well as talking about her experiences in running her own business from a young age. Tutorials can either take place face-to-face, or on-line using Skype or in a workshop format.

Play the Field is now working for over 15 clients, looking after all of their digital marketing on a daily basis.

The best idea is to get in touch with April. She will then look at you and your business and put together a digital marketing package.

Go on. Move into the 21st Century. See what the fuss is all about.





ION APPOINTS NEW PROJECT MANAGER

A North East-based tech firm has boosted its growth by recruiting an industry heavyweight to the team, ahead of its new office opening in London.

The business has recently won projects across the UK and is opening an additional office on 'Tech Roundabout' in Old Street, London, to accommodate its rapid growth.

Since celebrating its first financial year, ION has superseded its target figures and expanded the team with its latest recruit and project manager, Rachael Kuronboev.

With a wealth of experience working with some of the biggest communications and branding agencies in the world, 33-year-old Rachael has joined the team at its head office in Gosforth to manage clients' customer relationship management systems.

Having previously worked at Newcastle creative agencies Robson Brown and Gardiner Richardson, Rachel was keen to continue her career within the tech industry.

She said: "It's a very exciting time for ION so I'm delighted to get on board for this new phase of the company's development. My role is to oversee CRM delivery through to completion, helping clients connect to their customers using the latest cloud and data technologies."



TECH EXPERTS SCORE A FIRST FOR THE NORTH EAST

Gateshead-based technology experts ITPS have become the only North East supplier to win the stamp of approval from NHS Digital to deliver services across what will be a new UK-wide NHS communications network.

The new Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) is a data network connecting health and care organisations. It replaces N3, the virtual private network that connects around 1.3 million NHS staff and was previously monopolised by large carriers, particularly BT.

By opening up the market to other approved connectivity suppliers such as ITPS, the Department of Health and Social Care say HSCN will improve consumer choice, encourage collaborative working and underpin safe, flexible and efficient information sharing between health and social care organisations.

Unlike N3, which was designed solely to connect NHS Trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups, hospitals and GP practices, HSCN allows commercial organisations such as pharmacies, dentists, opticians and even care homes and social housing providers to access the network and share information.

ITPS is one of only 13 companies in the UK to receive stage two accreditation from NHS Digital, which means it is approved to deliver connectivity services.

OCUCON LAUNCHES PIXELATE

North East-based surveillance technology start up Ocucon is set to launch an innovative new video pixelation service. Developed in partnership with Google, Ocucon Pixelate harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to deliver an intelligent video redaction tool for General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance.

Suitable for all forms of camera footage, the web-based software uniquely enables users to select the faces they wish to pixelate.

With the recent introduction of GDPR, the need for video redaction software will increase as organisations seek to abide by tougher restrictions on how they

process and store identifying personal data, including data contained within CCTV or other security footage. As a result, the new Pixelate service is expected to be of interest to a wide range of organisations including large retailers, property management firms and large corporations.

Users of Pixelate will be able to upload CCTV footage to Ocucon's secure web-based portal and download redacted files within a matter of minutes. Existing customers who already use Ocucon's powerful, cloud-based storage and retrieval platform to store their CCTV footage will have full access to the pixelation tool and will be able to select video clips to redact from within the cloud.

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ANDY HUNTER

Technical Director, ITPS

Andy Hunter is technical director at managed ICT solutions and service experts ITPS, and the man credited with establishing the region's first secure data centre back in 2001. He tells us more about his background in the design, build and management of complex networks and high security data centres across the UK.

What were your career ambitions when you were young?

From a young age I wanted to follow the family tradition and join the Royal Navy. Although I was quickly discharged medically because of eczema, it gave me an insight into teamwork and a passion for solving technical problems. I then considered an engineering career and completed my HND in Manufacturing Systems Engineering, but ended up with a job in a finance department. Switching career allegiance I qualified as an accounting technician, where I got the opportunity to install a new cash receipting system for the NHS Trust, mainly because nobody else fancied doing it. I then moved to the IT department of the RVI and started my career in earnest. I still solve problems, but now they are more centred around network and infrastructure design, rather than ships systems or manufacturing, although I do still get to play with large diesel engines, which is a plus.

What is your current role?

ITPS specialises in advanced integrated IT consultancy, implementation, data centre provision and unified communications, as well as workspace and disaster recovery, and support services. As technical director I need to make sure we maintain our reputation for the highest levels of technical expertise and accreditation, combined with an understanding of the issues our clients face, so we can create problem-solving, cost effective solutions for them.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Establishing the region's first secure data centre. I also created the ITPS national network, and drove the project that created our flagship £4m North East data centre. This attracts clients from household names in banking, shipping, government and the NHS through to smaller organisations, all looking to protect their systems and data from threats and downtime.



How has the business landscape changed in the last decade?

Cyber-crime is now the biggest threat to an organisation's survival, and nearly half of all crime has an element of cyber-enablement. For the hackers, where there is data there is potential revenue, and we need to keep one step ahead by acknowledging the threats and taking steps to manage risk. IT security has become a job for the experts.

What are you currently working on?

We have almost finished a multi-million pound bespoke fit out of a new data hall at our County Durham data centre, for a global client with very specific requirements. The responsibility for GDPR compliance and our recent accreditation as a stage 2 supplier for the new NHS Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) also rests with me.

Best piece of business advice you've ever been given?

"You can't solve problems with the same thinking that caused them." That quote from Einstein has

stood me in good stead over the years.

Who are your business heroes and who would you like to have dinner with?

My business hero is Elon Musk. He is as mad as a box of frogs, but has built so many great companies such as Paypal, Tesla, and SpaceX. My ideal dinner guest would be Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, the geordie who really won the battle of Trafalgar after Nelson died early on in the battle and he took over. Born in Newcastle, he went to Royal Grammar School and joined the navy aged just 12. After Trafalgar he went on to do great things, including rebuilding the Royal Navy after the Napoleonic wars. One of our great unsung heroes.

How do you unwind outside of work?

My love of the sea and sailing has never left me, and I am the chair of a local Sea Cadet unit, which does some great work helping young people to learn life skills and develop confidence. I'm also involved in fostering and supporting children with very specific needs, so life is busy at work and at home.

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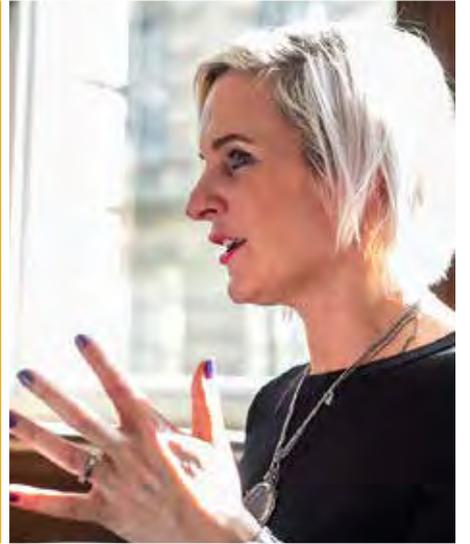


TECH DRINKS RECEPTION

Mincoffs Solicitors recently hosted another successful 'Tech Drinks' at the Continental Gin Bar, Newcastle. The event brought together the region's technology community for an evening of informal networking and is just one of a series of events planned to mark the firm's 70th anniversary this year.

Keep up to date with all of Mincoffs' events on social media.

@mincoffs #TechDrinks
www.mincoffs.co.uk





IN CONVERSATION WITH...

BEN CURRY

Commercial Director, Aero Networks

Did you always envisage a career in the Technology industry?

I did not, during secondary school I studied mechanical and electrical engineering and carried out placements in this line of work. Then, I went on to study ICT and Business Studies in Sixth Form and achieved three A-Levels. A path to University was what my mind was set on, however, after starting a part time job in retail and earning a bit of cash, I knew my time was better spent in the workplace. In late 2013, I began applying for apprenticeships in IT and admin roles and was close to deciding on which role to accept after finishing sixth form in 2014. However, an unexpected opportunity arose at my family business to become an IT apprentice.

What is the favourite aspect of your job?

Being able to design and implement solutions which not only make a change to our business, but more importantly, our clients businesses. I'm very transparent when doing business, and this is key in providing a tailored solution for each client. Even if there is a deal to be done, I believe it is unethical to sell a solution simply for the sake of winning a deal. However, cost is always a large factor in the SME Business sector, which allows me to be creative when designing solutions. Therefore, I always need to be at the top of my game to secure business.

Tell me about your current role?

Day to day I work through all areas of the business including sales, accounts, technical and management. I appreciate the nature of a small business, being prepared for anything that is presented to you in a reactive way, as well as being proactive in running the business which ensures Aero is always ready for its next challenge.

How has the industry evolved since you started your career?

The adoption of Cloud technology has been massive, many were sceptical when I first joined Aero 4 years ago, but now it is embraced by almost all our clients. 4 years ago, only 20% of our clients



were using a cloud based solution within their business. Now over 90% of our clients are utilising cloud based IT solutions to benefit their businesses.

What are you currently working on?

At present, we are changing the range of solutions the business offers to complement the change in recent IT technology. Rather than being a 'Jack of All Trades', I would like Aero to be experts in the solutions we deliver. Aero have recently completed projects, migrating our clients from traditional IT Servers to the Cloud – I see this as essential to future growth and is my main focus in the business. Recently, I completed an advanced course in Microsoft Office 365 to enhance the skill set and knowledge throughout the business which can be utilised in future projects.

Where do you see the business in 5 years time?

Industry experts in Cloud IT solutions, delivering an unrivalled service with a personal touch. Our long-term clients speak highly of our friendly approach as a business, something which will always be at the heart of Aero.

What is the best piece of business advice you have been given?

Turnover is vanity, profit is sanity.

Who are your heroes and mentors in and out of business?

A Hero, that would be my Dad, his work ethic and determination to give our family the best and never putting himself first. In my time with Aero, my Dad has allowed me to start as an apprentice and experience all areas of the business, changing where required to put my own stamp on Aero. Although we run a business together, we're still able to switch off at the end of the day and enjoy quality time outside of work.

How do you like to unwind?

Either a drive along the country side B roads to take in the wonderful scenery that Northumberland has to offer, or a visit to Whitley Bay with my girlfriend, Abbey. We like to indulge on fish and chips and ice cream, followed by a walk along the beach with the family dog, Freddie.

Favourite Book/Film/CD?

The Fire Eaters, by David Almond. A book recommended by my late Grandfather, Sean. Throughout my early childhood he encouraged me to read and use any opportunity to be creative with your own imagination. This way of thinking has been a major influence into how I use my mind to day, both in business and personal situations.



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BE MORE EFFICIENT AND LESS WASTEFUL: EMBRACE THE FOURTH REVOLUTION



The fourth industrial revolution is here, driving rapid change in manufacturing on the back of superfast internet connectivity. Dave Sample, technical director at Advantex considers what it means and how to stay safe and secure.

The current trend for automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies (Industry 4.0) is creating a real buzz and is perceived by the cognoscenti as the latest phase in the on-going industrial revolution, which started more than 250 years ago when the first steam and mechanical machines puffed and clanked into life.

Now, Industry 4.0 is here thanks to the rapid growth rate that the internet has injected into modern economies and technology. The manifestation is the creation of what are euphemistically called 'smart factories', powered by cyber-physical systems, the Internet of Things, cloud computing and highly advanced computers.

However, as we appear to stand on the precipice of a bright new digital future, bathed by the white heat of technology, the evidence suggests that not all of us are quite ready to become children of the revolution. The manufacturers' organisation, the EEF, suggests that only 11% of its members are geared up to handle the changes wrought by Industry 4.0.

Naturally, this begs the question: do we really need to enter Industry 4.0? Are the headaches

and the capital expense for all this new equipment worth it? Surely, the answer's an unequivocal yes - it offers significant benefits and will help manufacturers to produce more effectively and efficiently, stimulating economic growth and laying solid foundations for a more resilient and competitive UK plc.

So, how do manufacturers prepare themselves for the new age? A good first step is to complete an IT audit to identify where there might be gaps in your current digital set-up. Many companies, including Advantex, offer this as a complimentary or introductory service. You can then devise a plan. Remember though, Industry 4.0 and the digital changes that come with it, are not a panacea for pre-existing problems, so it's important to rectify any existing issues within your business before moving forward with your plans.

Two key elements form the backbone of a successful transition to Industry 4.0. The first is to embrace the productivity gains offered by greater integration of network-connected devices, such as IP cameras, access control and analytics. The second element is a need for a robust network that spans LAN, WAN, fibre optics and wireless technology. Advantex can design and implement your network

architecture, constructing the backbone of your business model and the gateway to Industry 4.0.

As well as building a scalable and robust network, you should also harness the latest in cybersecurity as more devices become connected to your network. Remember, each device offers a tempting potential way in for a hacker to breach or compromise your hardware and software systems. So, invest in the knowledge and technologies to keep you safe and secure.

Plan for the worse case scenarios. Have a disaster recovery plan in place and build your Industry 4.0 network with resilience, security, vigilance and strategy in mind. Using an external partner such as Advantex, who can deploy a 24/7 managed network security team, will see you protected from the risks and associated costs. Outsourcing also secures you access to some of the foremost independent expertise, closes any skills gaps, and cuts your IT security recruitment costs.

With its breadth of service, ISO9001/2000 certification and high calibre engineering team, a partnership with Advantex will build resilient and scalable connectivity for your business and deliver peace-of-mind.

More at www.advantex.uk.com



Anita Bath

ITS BEEN A JOLLY GOOD YEAR

Northern Insight talks to Anita Bath, Headmistress at Sacred Heart Catholic High School who reflects on an excellent school year and looks at what they are currently working on.

What have been your highlights of the year so far?

Rose Auditorium

Undoubtedly this year, one of the highlights has been the opening of our Rose Auditorium. This fabulous resource replaces the original hall, built in the 1960s, which had become a little tired and outdated. Our new auditorium provides girls with an exceptional resource that allows them to really showcase their talents in music, drama and dance. The acoustics and sprung flooring, together with state of the art lighting and sound desk ensure that students can rehearse and perform in a professional environment. Comfortable seating and a striking social space, The Undercroft, ensures audiences have a wonderful experience when they attend concerts, shows and parental events. We hosted our first music and dance showcase event this term, and feedback from both students and audience were that it was just like being in a brand new theatre.

Royal Shakespeare Company

This year we have continued to be the Lead Associate School for the RSC, a programme run by regional theatre companies and schools, in collaboration with the RSC. The programme is built around local partnerships that consist of a Lead Associate School and their theatre partner, which in our case is Northern Stage, who recruit a number of Associate Schools. As the RSC's Lead Associate school in our

region, our staff train alongside RSC professionals and then disseminate this to other teachers across the North East. This year's work culminated in a production of Macbeth in May, which brought together students from six local schools, Gosforth Junior High Academy, Sacred Heart Primary School, St Catherine's RC Primary School, St Oswald's RC Primary School and St Michael's RC Primary School. The production was performed to a packed audience of family and friends who were immensely impressed by the quality and talent on show from over ninety pupils.

Mentoring Scheme with Year 10 students

This academic year, 10 Year 10 students have been given the opportunity to work with The Girls' Network. The aim of The Girls' Network is to inspire and empower girls by connecting them with a mentor and a network of professional female role models. The students are taking part in a 15 month mentoring programme. Each student has been assigned a mentor who is a professional female working within the local community. The student and mentor meet once a month to look at how they are getting on in school, what career opportunities they are interested in and to develop a professional supportive relationship. The students will be supported with writing letters of applications for courses and for jobs when required. They will also look at interview techniques and how to be best prepared. The meetings are currently taking place at

Newcastle BBC which has also provided the students with an opportunity to go behind the scenes and have a look at careers in media and what goes into getting the news onto our screens. As well as the mentoring the students are provided with career events and networking opportunities help them to see the careers and futures that are possible.

What does the future hold ?

Our Year 11 and 13 students are at present undertaking their GCSE and A-level examinations and we wish them every success with these. As a school we are very proud of our track record of students leaving us to enter university, in many cases to study challenging and high tariff courses. Most years between 85%-90% progress to University both locally and increasingly further afield. It saddened me this week to see a report from the Sutton Trust and UCAS that highlighted a huge disparity in university entrants from the North East, where only 4% of undergraduates are from our region compared to 1 in 5 from London. Even, taking into consideration the larger population from the London region, this is too big a gap. As a school we will maintain our focus on ensuring that our students to continue to see higher education as a natural next step in their education and working lives and help to close this gap for our region. This work will start very early on with children from the Primary Schools in our Trust.



**NEWCASTLE
HIGH SCHOOL
FOR GIRLS**

Welcome

Senior School

The Dame Catherine Cookson Building



NEW HEAD AT NHSG

Described as a 'true 'champion of girls' education', Michael Tippett has been appointed as the new Head of Newcastle High School for Girls (NHSG) by the Girls' Day School Trust.

Following his selection for the top job after a rigorous process, Michael will take up the role formally in September. He will be the first male Head teacher in the 140-year history of the school and its predecessor schools, Central High and Church High.

Michael, 47, who is originally from Plymouth, studied Classics at Oxford University. After teaching in Greece and completing his PGCE at Queen's College Cambridge, he took up a post as Classics Teacher at the former Central Newcastle High School.

With 16 years' experience in senior management roles, Michael was instrumental in the strategic leadership of Central High and was appointed as Senior Deputy Head of NHSG when it was formed in 2014, following the merger of Central High and Church High. He has played a key role in setting the strategic direction for the new school, formulating its ethos and culture, and maintained his responsibility for pastoral care and pupils' personal development. The result has been the creation of a school community where outstanding pastoral support is a central pillar and where girls are able to explore their individuality and feel valued for being themselves.

We ask Michael more about his new role and plans for the school.

How do you feel about being the first man to lead Newcastle High School for Girls?

I am tremendously proud to be the first male Head of Newcastle High. There is a healthy precedent of male Heads at other schools within the Girls' Day School Trust and I am delighted to follow this lead by being the first at Newcastle High. I also feel the time is right – in education,

as in all walks of life, we need more men championing gender equality. Men make up 50% of the population and we need to demand equality for the other 50%; equality means equality.

What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

I am looking forward to continuing to work with staff, girls, parents and the wider school community to shape the school and the educational experience it delivers for the benefit of the girls now and into the future. I am also excited by the prospect of working more closely with my colleagues from the Girls' Day School Trust to deliver stimulating educational experiences for girls across the UK in a supportive and dynamic teaching environment.

What changes do you intend for NHSG in the short, medium and long term?

It is very much business as usual at Newcastle High. One of the huge benefits of me being an internal appointment is that I know the school, and the school and the wider community know me. As a member of the senior leadership team that founded Newcastle High, I was focused on shaping the ethos and culture of the school as well as setting its strategic direction. I am now looking forward to continuing the hard work and significant impact made by the teaching and support staff since the formation of NHSG in 2014.

Where do you see NHSG in five years' time?

In five years' time, I envisage a stronger, more consolidated Newcastle High, one performing extremely well academically – and in all external measures such as league tables. Although league tables don't adequately reflect the added value girls gain

from being at NHSG, we will work to ensure that our results continue to be among the best in the region.

NHSG moved into an award winning building in 2016, any plans for more additions to the school?

We are extremely fortunate to have outstanding buildings at both our Junior and Senior schools. Our Junior School setting is unique and enjoys fantastic outdoor learning spaces and our Senior School has just been awarded the Lord Mayor's Award for building and design. We are now entering a period of consolidation and will continue to ensure our facilities offer the very best learning environment for girls so that our spaces and resources, combined with excellent teaching, provide the best possible educational experience.

What are the challenges facing girls' education in the north-east and how will NHSG deal with them?

The fact that we are a single sex school for girls is one of our greatest strengths, with the educational experience we offer uniquely tailored to the needs of girls.

In the current climate where gender equality is still being fought for, there is a crucial role for a school such as NHSG to give girls the strength, skills and confidence to challenge inequality wherever they encounter it. In that respect being 'girls only' is something we are very proud of and it is something which will help us deal with other challenges as they arise. Many of these challenges relate to the changing educational landscape, with the new qualifications at GCSE and A Level still bedding in: our curriculum is broad and balanced and will need to be continually reviewed to ensure we are offering the girls the best possible preparation not just for these new qualifications, but also for life.

AN ORWELLIAN NIGHTMARE?

Imagine the scene. One fine sunny morning, there is a knock at the door. You answer it to find two men outside, carrying some large boxes.

"Good morning," one says, "we're from ConstantWatch and we're here to install the equipment."

"What equipment?" you ask.

"Just the usual," the man replies. "Cameras, microphones and internet monitoring equipment."

"But I didn't order any of that," you protest. "I don't want it."

"I'm very sorry," the second man begins, "but it's the law."

Seeing your expression, he continues, "yes, I'm afraid it's a new law. All households need to be fitted with this equipment so all of your activities at home can be watched. What you do, what you say and how you use your computers and mobiles. All of this now needs to be monitored."

"Monitored!" you exclaim. "But who by?"

"Ah well, we're not allowed to tell you that, I'm afraid. It's a secret."

The scene above is the stuff of an Orwellian nightmare. Or, if you have a black sense of humour, something from a Monty Python sketch. The idea of constant surveillance at home seems an infringement of our basic human rights; any government trying to introduce such a measure would face riots in the streets.

And yet, the chilling fact is, many of us have already surrendered to the situation described above. We



have devices in our homes which have the potential to watch us, listen to us and monitor our every interaction on the internet. Our phones, tablets and computers all have the potential to be put to those uses, and many already are.

I'm sure you have followed the story of a Cambridge Analytica, a shadowy firm of computer data analysts, and their alleged role in both the US presidential election and the Brexit referendum. Their method was simple: by monitoring millions of Facebook posts, likes and clicks, they were able to build up an uncannily accurate picture of the population. By looking at the areas Facebook users were interested in, they were able to build up a picture of their age, gender, location, interests, likely income, political views and so on. This information, allegedly, was used to target key voters and manipulate what they saw on social media sites ultimately influencing the

outcome of the UK and US votes. Even if you don't believe the conspiracy theory, there is no doubt that Facebook collects data on its users in order to target its advertising.

And it's not just Facebook. Google also knows a frightening amount about you. If you use location tracking, it knows everywhere you've been from the very first day you started using Google on your phone. It knows everything you've ever searched, even if you have deleted it. It also stores all of your YouTube history, so they probably know your taste in music, what you think is funny, what your leisure interests might be. They can even access your webcam and microphone.

The amount of information these internet companies have on us is scary. What's even scarier is we don't know who they share it with and how they use it. You may think, so what, people have always used targeted advertising. But what is truly alarming is the effect in the young. They don't get their news from BBC 1 at 6pm; they don't form their tastes from Top of the Pops. What they are exposed to online comes through an increasingly narrow funnel, reinforcing what they think and not exposing them to unexpected ideas. We need to counter this through the offline world, through our wisdom and experience, by exposing them to what they can't find on the internet: the joys of a library, or a jazz concert; an art gallery or a lakeside walk. For if we leave them to only digest what is fed to them on the internet, we condemn them to a world even Orwell couldn't imagine.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 386 4783, email admissions@durhamschool.co.uk or visit www.durhamschool.co.uk

IN PRAISE OF SCHOOLS AND THOSE WHO WORK IN THEM

By Mr. David Tickner, Headmaster at Newcastle School for Boys.

I subscribe to a number of online services that provide me with regular updates on education news both local and national. Such digests are very useful. They help busy headteachers and other education professionals to stay informed and abreast of new developments.

They also provide an interesting overview of the representation of education and teaching in the media. It is true that, as with many sectors, these are challenging times in education. Funding, accountability and teacher recruitment are real issues and as such frequently dominate headlines.

As with other areas of the media, it is doom and gloom that is assumed to attract readers and viewers. The more hard-hitting, dramatic and polarised the news; the better, it often seems.

Working in education remains for me vibrant, energising and fulfilling. I was heartened to read recent, fleeting coverage of research undertaken by the Institute of Education that found that teachers and teaching assistants are more content in their work than workers in other professions. The research also found that school staff expressed higher levels of 'organisational commitment' compared to employees working elsewhere. The report concluded

that a school's performance depends on the level of its employees' commitment. This was a refreshing affirmation of my own experience and the success that my own school enjoys.

I have worked in schools for nearly 25 years – as a teacher, a Deputy Head and latterly as a Head. That's all very well, you may say, but you are privileged. You work in the independent sector. I don't deny that the independent sector affords particular benefits: a measured inspectorate, parents who are highly engaged in their children's education and a greater degree of autonomy for schools and teachers to prioritise what's really important in education: outcomes for children.

But schools in the independent sector face their own challenges, particularly in the current political and economic climate. The majority of independent schools are not the bastions of privilege and excessive resource as stereotyped in the media and peddled by politicians.

Education and its commentators – as well as governments – need to be careful not to do our profession a disservice. As well as supporting them, we need to celebrate schools and those who work in them. They deliver the future.



The School is currently taking applications for September 2018. To register your interest or for any queries, please contact 0191 255 9303 or admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk or for more information, please visit www.newcastleschool.co.uk.

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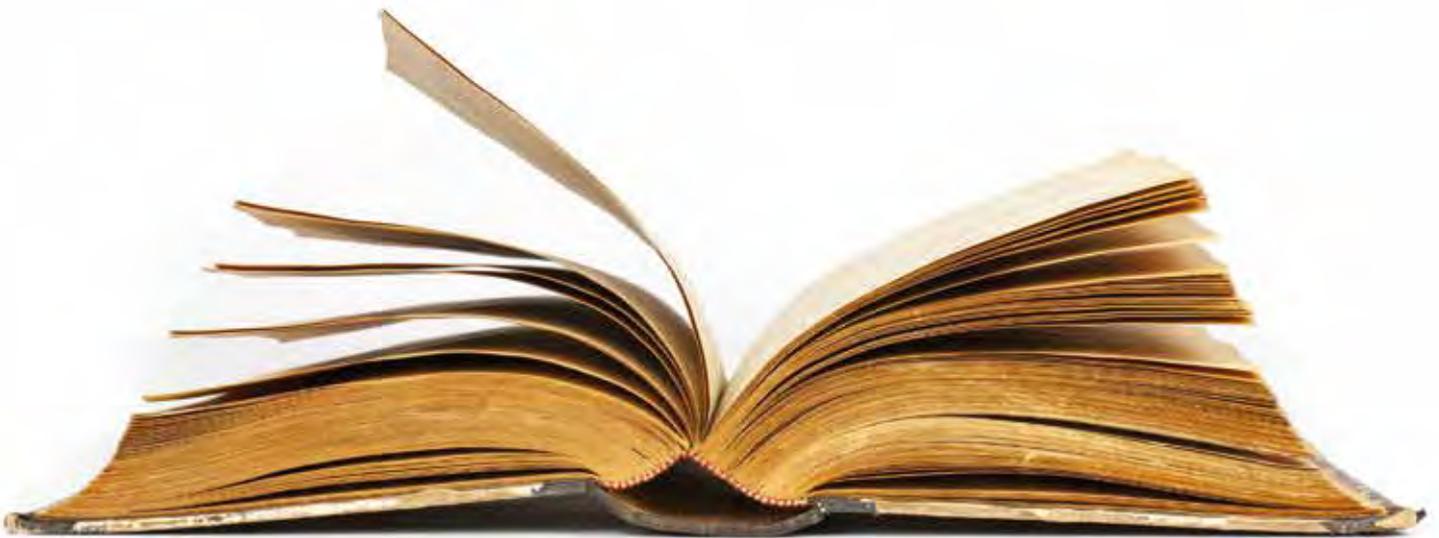
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CUSTOMERS TEST DRIVE THE NEW, VERSATILE TOURNEO CUSTOM AT JENNINGS FORD TRANSIT CENTRES



Ian Torbet, senior sales/commercial deputy business manager, with the new Tourneo Custom at Jennings Ford Transit Centre in Middlesbrough.

The latest commercial vehicle to join Ford's award-winning range, is on display and available to test drive at Jennings Ford Transit Centres based in Middlesbrough and Gateshead.

Officially unveiled at last year's Frankfurt Motor Show, the latest revised Transit Tourneo Custom, which is the ideal model for business or leisure, is available at the group's Cargo Fleet Lane dealership in Middlesbrough, and the Eslington Park site in Gateshead.

Distinguished by its bold new front-end design with five-bar chrome grille, the new Tourneo Custom has been comprehensively re-engineered to provide superior levels of refinement and sophistication, including high-quality trim materials, improved comfort and noise levels, and the latest Ford passenger car technologies.

Alan Bailes, group commercial manager, based at Jennings Ford Transit Centre in Teesside, said; "We're delighted to be able to offer the new Transit Tourneo Custom model, which is the second new commercial model, following the new Transit Custom, to be launched by Ford this year.

"The latest model offers a bold exterior styling and

a completely new premium interior with the added practicality of adaptable seating layouts as a result of Ford's new Flexible Rear Seats, which offers up to 30 different seating arrangements.

"Customers can also take advantage of a range of technologies, including Intelligent Speed Limiter and SYNC3 connectivity."

The new Tourneo Custom continues to offer both eight or nine-seat configurations in a variety of short wheelbase and long wheelbase lengths, and comes in five variants including the Shuttle Bus, Zetec, Titanium, Titanium X and Sport.

The latest model also features Ford's state-of-the-art 2.0-litre EcoBlue diesel engine, with a choice of 105 PS, 130 PS and 170 PS power ratings.

Those seeking the ultimate specification, can take advantage of the Titanium X model, which comes with leather trim, SYNC 3 with satellite navigation and rear view camera, and HID (High Intensity Discharge) Xenon headlamps as standard.

While the Sport series is ideal for those looking for a more dynamic exterior appearance and a stylish sports interior. The model combines the 170 PS engine option, a full exterior body kit with twin bonnet stripes and unique 17-inch alloy wheels, alongside partial leather interior.

Customers visiting Jennings Ford Transit Centres can also take advantage of the bold new facelifted Transit Custom model.

In addition to a striking new look, the 2018 Transit Custom has been transformed with an all-new cabin and a host of new technology.

Other models on display and available to test drive at Jennings Ford Transit Centre include the Transit Connect, Transit Courier, Tourneo Connect, Transit Van, Transit mini-bus, Transit Tipper, Transit Chassis Cab, and 4x4 Ranger.

Both Transit Centres also offer a range of aftersales facilities, including service, MOT, accident repair, and genuine parts and accessories.

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The speed at which the popularity of SUVs (Sports Utility Vehicles) has exploded in this country is staggering. Hardly a week goes by without another model appearing. It's confusing.

Thankfully, you can short-circuit all of this by going along to your local Audi dealer.... Newcastle Audi, Tyneside Audi, Wearside Audi in Sunderland or Teesside Audi. The sales guys will quickly point you in the right direction to find the best Audi SUV to suit your needs.

The compact Audi Q2 is the smallest of the Audi crossover cars. If you need some additional elbow room and carrying capacity, head for the Audi Q3.

The daddy of them all is the Audi Q7 which has massive presence on the road and terrific ability on both tarmac and the rough stuff.

In the middle is the Audi Q5. Unlike the Q2 and Q3, the Q5 also has a seriously sporty version called the SQ5. (There's also an SQ7). More about that shortly.

The Q5 is one of the UK's favourite premium SUVs. It oozes quality and style. It's comfortable and is a thoroughly entertaining driving experience. It has a purposeful stance. The pronounced wheel arches look great. The Audi Q5 also comes fully equipped meaning the starting price of £39,075 for the SE

model will not be added to by many buyers.

If you want extra luxury, go for the Sport trim; if you want added styling, go for the S line.

Every Q5 comes with Xenon headlights, LED running lights, leather seats (the front ones are heated), climate control, Bluetooth, DAB radio, multi-function steering wheel, powered tailgate, a brilliant audio system and a class-leading safety kit. Move up to the Sport trim and you'll get Sat Nav, LED interior lighting and sports seats while if you go for S line you'll end up with a Q5 that really stands out thanks to the side skirts, deep front and rear bumpers, and darkened privacy glass. It looks fabulous.

As for options, one we'd recommend is the adaptive air suspension. It smooths-out an already impressive ride but also tightens the handling if you decide to have some fun.

Every Q5 comes with quattro all-wheel drive and an automatic gearbox. All three trims are available with 2.0 litre TFSI petrol or 2.0 TDi diesel engines. The S line model can also be bought with a 3.0 litre

TDi power unit. The TFSI petrol Q5 reaches 60mph in 6.3 seconds. Top speed is 147mph. You should achieve around 40mpg. The diesel engines offer far superior economy and they sound good too. The 2.0 litre TDi (0-60 in 7.9 seconds) manages 56mpg, while the powerful 3.0 TDi, which reaches 60 in a quick 5.8 seconds, will still return 48mpg.

The king of the Q5 models however, is the SQ5 (from £51,955). This comes with a thumping 3.0 litre V6 350bhp petrol unit which produces a rapid 0-60 time of 5.4 seconds and a top speed of 155mph. These are impressive figures for what is a sizeable vehicle. It is exhilarating to drive and sounds glorious. It comes fully loaded with adaptive sport suspension, 20 inch alloys, sat nav, electrically adjustable front seats and an 8.3inch colour information display. If you need to carry a lot of gear or a family over long distances, there can be few better ways in which to do it than in a SQ5. You'll arrive in style.

SUVs come no better than the Q5 and SQ5. Go and try one at your local Audi dealer. See what the fuss is all about.





The Audi Q5. A different kind of SUV.

Solutions Personal Contract Plan* representative example from Audi Financial Services based on 8,000 miles per annum for the Audi Q5 S line 2.0 TFSI quattro S tronic.

Cash Price	£39,928.41
Less: Customer Deposit*	£1,999.00
Less: Audi UK contribution	£1,000.00
Balance of cash price/amount of credit	£36,929.41
Add charges	£7,413.84
Balance	£44,343.25
Balance payable by 48 monthly rentals of	£479.00
Followed by a final rental of	£21,351.25
Acceptance fee	£0.00
Purchase fee payable with final rental	£10.00
Duration of agreement	49 months
Total amount payable	£47,352.25
APR	6.4%
Total monthly payment	£479.00



Newcastle Audi
Sanderson Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7LA

Tyneside Audi
Silverlink Park
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE28 9NT

Wearside Audi
Newcastle Road
Sunderland
SR5 1JQ

0333 207 5691
lookers.co.uk/audi



Official fuel consumption figures for the Audi Q5 S line 2.0 TFSI quattro S tronic in mpg (l/100km): Urban 52.3 (5.4), Extra Urban 57.6 (4.9), Combined 55.4 (5.1). CO2 emissions: 133g/km. ***At the end of the agreement there are three options: i) own the vehicle: pay the optional final payment; ii) return the vehicle: subject to fair wear and tear, charges may apply; or iii) replace: part exchange the vehicle.** Available on Solutions Personal Contract Plan. 18s and over. Subject to availability. Finance subject to status. Terms and conditions apply. Based on 8,000 miles per annum, 10.8p per mile excess mileage charges apply (incl. VAT). Offer available when ordered by 30 June 2018 from participating Centres. Offers are not available in conjunction with any other offer and may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Accurate at time of publication [May 2018]. Freepost Audi Financial Services. **We can introduce you to a limited number of lenders to assist with your purchase, who may pay us for introducing you to them.**

GRIPPING NEW CHRISTIE THRILLER COMES TO NEWCASTLE

A dazzling new version of a forgotten Agatha Christie classic is coming to Newcastle Theatre Royal this month. Unsettling, shocking and full of suspense, Lucy Bailey's *Love From a Stranger* will arrive in Newcastle 12-16 June.

Love From a Stranger tells the story of Cecily Harrington, who has just won a huge sum in a sweepstake. Finally free to marry her dull fiancé, all begins to unravel when she begins a whirlwind romance with a handsome and charming stranger who sweeps her off her feet. Cecily recklessly abandons her old life to settle in the remote and blissful surroundings of a country cottage however, her newfound love is not all that he seems.

Electric with suspense and a shocking twist, this is an edge-of-your-seat, rarely seen thriller which has been rediscovered in a brand new production by acclaimed director Lucy Bailey.

Christie's play started life as a short story, *Philomel Cottage*, which was published in 1934 and later adapted for the theatre. However, despite various radio and film versions, *Love From a Stranger* fell into obscurity, until now.

Lucy said: "What attracted me most was how relevant it is, how we don't know people and what erotic addiction and compulsion blinds us in our lives. The successful liar is what's so fascinating about Christie. The story could happen any time. We are updating it to the late fifties but it could be set now."



MORE ACTS AND FOOD LINE UP ANNOUNCED FOR LINDISFARNE FESTIVAL 2018

With summer on the horizon, organisers of Lindisfarne Festival are delighted to announce another huge wave of acts set to descend on the Northumberland shores this August, with a sizzling line up of food traders also in tow!

The independent North East music festival has revealed the names of another 75+ acts who will be playing throughout the weekend at the over 18's camping event, which will take place on Beal Farm from 30 Aug – 2 Sep.

The popular 3 day event will have in excess of 150+ live acts and DJs playing across 3 days and nights, with Happy Mondays and The Levellers headlining the main stage on Friday and Saturday respectively.

Acts joining the star-studded bill include

rockabilly legend Rob Heron, Scotland's finest ska band Esperanza, Afro-latino drumming sensation the Ladies of Midnight Blue, soulful sister duo Liv'n'G and foot-stomping guitarist Ben Catley.

But it's not just about the music. With a fully loaded schedule of workshops, conspiracy debates, cocktail making classes, holistic therapies and wellness activities and a jam-packed programme of comedy, Lindisfarne Festival has something for everyone.

The festival's food & drink line up is looking equally as diverse and appealing. From the North East's infamous Fat Hippo burgers to a vegan café, festivalgoers will have plenty of options to choose from to fuel up for a weekend of dancing.



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LOCKS TO LOOK FORWARD TO AS HAIRSPRAY BOUNCES BACK TO NEWCASTLE!

Newcastle Theatre Royal audiences can prepare themselves for a week of beautifully coiffed fun once again as Hairspray returns to the city this month (25-30 June).

It's Baltimore 1962 and Tracy Turnblad, a big girl with big hair and an even bigger heart, is on a mission to follow her dreams and dance her way onto national TV. Tracy's audition makes her a local star and soon she is using her new-found fame to fight for equality, bagging local heartthrob Link Larkin along the way.

Based on the 1988 film of the same name, Hairspray the musical originally opened to rave reviews on Broadway in 2002 and subsequently won eight Tony Awards.

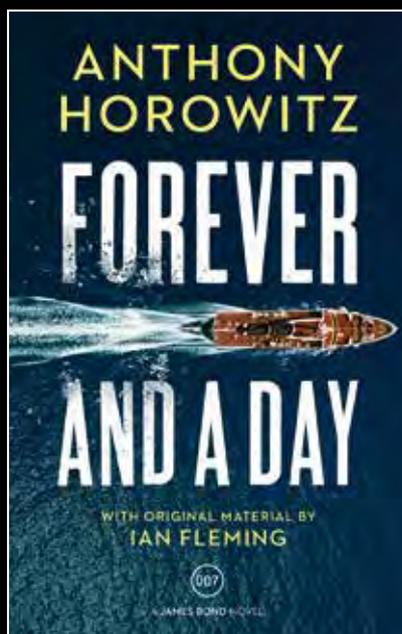
Raquel Jones (The Bodyguard, Jesus Christ Superstar) will be returning to the role of Lil' Inez having played the part for two years during the West End run of the production at Shaftsbury Theatre. Shak Gabbidon-Williams will be making his professional debut as Seaweed and Dan Partridge (Mama Mia!, Sleeping Beauty) will take over the role of Link Larkin from Edward Chitticks. They are joined by Rosie O'Hare in the leading role of Tracy Turnblad.

Featuring iconic music and lyrics by Academy Award winning duo Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, the show is choreographed by Olivier Award-winning Drew McOnie with direction from Paul Kerryson.

BOOK OF THE MONTH - 'FOREVER AND A DAY' BY ANTHONY HOROWITZ

Following on from the success of 2015's Trigger Mortis, Anthony Horowitz has been commissioned by the Fleming estate to write his second James Bond novel. Much like its predecessor, Forever and a Day embeds previously unseen material written by Fleming. Unlike other Bond novels however, the story takes place prior to him receiving "Double-O" status. When the body of the former 007 is washed up riddled with bullets, James Bond is plunged into the underworld of the French Riviera. As Bond grapples with a sinister Corsican villain, we also learn more about his backstory. The gun metal cigarette case and his penchant for Morland cigarettes, worsted shirts and Martini's – shaken not stirred.

Forever and a Day is an explosive prequel to Casino Royale which promises to please Bond aficionados and a new legion of fans.



WHAT'S ON THIS JUNE?

Gareth Malone
June 4

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

James Bay
June 5

O2 Academy Newcastle T: (0844) 477 2000
www.academymusicgroup.com

Rattle Snake
June 5-9

Live Theatre T: (0191) 232 1232
www.live.org.uk

Love From a Stranger
June 12-16

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatroyal.co.uk

Cooking With Elvis
June 12-16

The People's Theatre T: (0191) 265 5020
www.peoples theatre.co.uk

Demi Lovato
June 15

Metrorado Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradoarena.co.uk

This Is Elvis
June 18-23

Sunderland Empire T: (0844) 871 3022
www.atgtickets.com

Eric Burdon
June 23

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatroyal.co.uk

Pete Doherty
June 23

O2 Academy Newcastle T: (0844) 477 2000
www.academymusicgroup.com

Katy Perry
June 25

Metrorado Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradoarena.co.uk

Elvis Costello
June 25

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatroyal.co.uk

Kiss Me Kate
June 26-30

Gala Theatre Durham T: (03000) 266 600
www.galadurham.co.uk

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HARDWICK LIVE SET TO BRING FESTIVAL FUN



Iconic bands and singers, top DJs and a host of leading chefs will be bringing the festival atmosphere to County Durham this summer as Hardwick Live returns.

The North East's biggest live music festival is back, and this year it has been extended to two full days of sizzling live music and entertainment.

Some of the biggest names from the past four decades will be taking to the stage in the grounds of Hardwick Hall on Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 August.

On Saturday, the Kaiser Chiefs will lead a packed programme to get the festival off to a rocking start. Famous for hits like Ruby, Oh My God and I Predict a Riot, the band will be joined on the day by the likes of Vintage Trouble, Ash, Jake Shears of the Scissor Sisters plus a host of support acts.

Then, on Sunday, it's the turn of Happy Mondays, who will lead a huge line up of musical favourites from the 80s, 90s and noughties.

Led by the controversial Shaun Ryder, the band who shot to fame as part of the 1980s Madchester scene, will be performing some of their biggest hits.

And they will be joined by artists including Shed Seven, Echo & the Bunnymen, Feeder, Public Image Ltd, Heather Small and Melanie C.

Once again a number of up-and-coming acts and leading regional stars like Smoove & Turrell and the Detroit Social Club will also be performing throughout the day.

Back again for another year will be Hardwick Live's



DJ stage, featuring some of the world's biggest stars.

Brandon Block, Danny Rampling and Alex P will be hitting the decks on Saturday, while Graeme Park and Greg Wilson are joined by eight more top DJs to spin tunes throughout the day.

For food lovers, this year's event features something a little bit special, in the form of its Dine in Style sessions.

Three of the region's top chefs – Terry Laybourne, Chris Finnegan and Marcus Bennett – will each take

a turn at hosting a cooking demonstration with the chance to sample the food at the end.

These exclusive sessions will be accessible only by advance tickets, and there will be one held each lunchtime and another each evening, featuring some of the chef's signature and award-winning dishes.

There will be plenty of entertainment for children of all ages throughout the weekend, with craft workshops, storytelling, face painting and other entertainment.

John Adamson, owner of Ramside Estates which runs Hardwick Live believes this year's festival will be the best yet.

"We have lined up what we believe to be some of the biggest stars on the UK music scene for this year's event, as we strive to continue to be the region's best festival," he said.

"Every year Hardwick Live gets bigger and better, and this year we have extended the event to feature two full days of music, along with even more entertainment to keep the youngsters entertained so the whole family can come along and have fun."

Tickets for each day start from £49 for adults and £16 for 12-16-year-olds and £8 for three-11-year-olds, and weekend tickets are also available.

For the latest information and to purchase tickets, visit the website: www.hardwicklive.co.uk



HARDWICK LIVE FESTIVAL

18TH - 19TH AUGUST 2018

SATURDAY

KAISER CHIEFS

VINTAGE TROUBLE

ASH JAKE SHEARS (OF SCISSOR SISTERS)

LUCY SPRAGGAN | WILD FRONT | RASCALTON | SOCIAL ROOM | DANSI |
BETH MACARI | NICK PRIDE & THE PIMPTONES | BALTIC
DJ'S > DANNY RAMPLING | BRANDON BLOCK | ALEX P

SUNDAY

HAPPY MONDAYS SHED SEVEN

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN FEEDER

 PUBLIC IMAGE LTD HEATHER SMALL MELANIE C
THE VOICE OF M PEOPLE

THE CUBAN BROTHERS NEW YORK BRASS BAND

SMOOVE & TURRELL | INTO THE ARK | JORDAN ALLEN
DETROIT SOCIAL CLUB | DENNIS | THE VOLUNTEARS
DJ'S > GRAEME PARK | GREG WILSON

RESIDENT DJ'S - LINDEN C | JAMES PARKER | TONY HUTCHINSON | STEVE BUTLER
KEITH MARTIN | MICHAEL JOHNSON | PETE WHARRIER | ROB OXLEY

CAMPING & GLAMPING | SILENT DISCO | FAIRGROUND RIDES
CELEB CHEFS | COMEDIANS | CHILDREN'S AREA

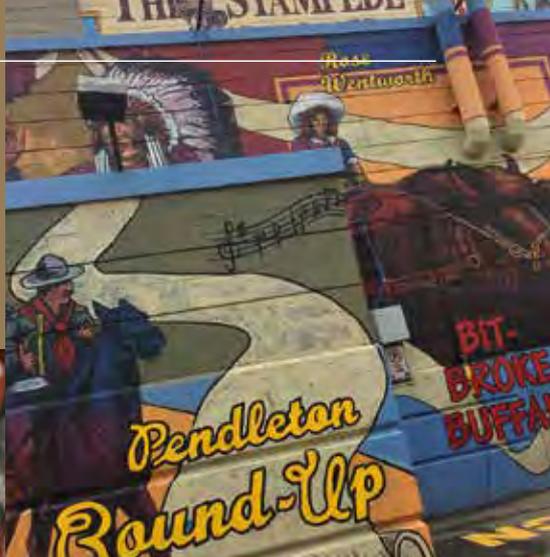
TICKETS: DAY - £49 | WEEKEND - £89

HARDWICK HALL, SEDGEFIELD, CO, DURHAM, TS21 2EH

WWW.HARDWICKLIVE.CO.UK



The Impeccable Pig
Sedgefield



YEE-HAW COWBOY!

By Kathryn Malone marketing manager Travel Bureau.

The great plains of the American west are undisputedly the home of the cowboy, but for ten days every July the Canadian city of Calgary, takes on this mantle and goes wild with the spirit of the old wild west.

Yes Siree! Like Rio's carnival and Edinburgh's festival the Calgary Stampede rolls into town and welcomes the world to a spectacular celebration of western heritage. Heralded as the 'Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth' its rodeo is the largest in the world, attracting professional cowboys from Argentina to Australia – and of course America – with a prize pot often worth well-over \$2million.

But it's not all just bull riding, calf roping and barrel racing, the extravaganza includes a festival of live music, marching bands, fairground attractions, agricultural exhibitions and displays and a nightly Grandstand Show that wouldn't be out of place on Broadway.

Our day at the Stampede was the first of several bucket list items we were set to tick off during a 2- week Canada road trip. We knew there was a lot to cram in, so after a hearty breakfast of pancakes and maple syrup (of course), we joined the revelry as soon as the impressive 208-acre Stampede Park gates opened at 11am.

Now you can't have cowboys without Indians, and Canadians are proud of their First Nation heritage. The indigenous tribes of the area have been included in the Stampede celebrations since its inception in 1912 so our first stop was the Indian Village. The impressive programme of historical storytelling, arts and craft displays, tipi raising competitions and tribal dancing opened our eyes to the traditional life that is still respected and embraced to this day by the

Kainai, Tsuut'ina, Stoney Nakoda, Siksika and Piikani Indians.

Next on the agenda was a turn around the agricultural arena, which housed a host of displays and shows I hadn't realised could be so darn exciting. The heavy horse pull saw teams of giant shire horses pulling sleds weighing five times their body weight; the Blacksmith Challenge featured the best of Canada's blacksmiths, showcasing their forging and shoeing skills; and the International Sheep Shearing Challenge semi-final, between America and Australia, pitted ranchers up against the clock to prove their speed, skill and humane handling of the sheep.

I could have watched those shearers all day, but it was Rodeo time!

We'd bought our tickets in advance for the two daily Grandstand Shows, that for most international visitors are the main reason for attending and include your entrance fee into Stampede Park. There's a host of options from Infield seating right at the heart of the action to several levels of Grandstand seating and Clubhouse VIP passes. We'd chosen level 5 Grandstand which was undercover, out of the sun and rain (as the occasional downpour can happen) with an excellent view. The interactive seating map on the Stampede's own website is a great tool to help pick your seats providing photographic views for each section.

The next few hours were spent whooping and cheering as broncs bucked, lassoes flew and cowboys and girls sped around barrels on horseback for the prestige and purse of being a Stampede champion. Some animal welfare activists may say that Rodeos should be a thing

of the past but as we sat there watching the races unfold, the skill and power of both animals and humans, was clearly matched by the respect and care each side afforded each other.

A short intermission, in which the fabulous Calgary Stampede Marching Showband performed, was followed by the prize winners' presentations, and a much needed food break, before the evening Chuckwagon racing began.

To be honest as the chuckwagons, a stripped-down version of the cowboys' mobile kitchen, raced around the track, visual only via big screens for three-quarters of the circuit, my cowboy enthusiasm began to wane. We dipped out to soak up some of the evening atmosphere as the fairground lights began to sparkle, beer started flowing and the spit roasts and grills served up mouth-watering meat cuts the size of my arm!

We'd been told the final Grandstand Show was not to be missed so we re-took our seats for a showstopping performance named 'Together' in celebration of Canada's 150th birthday. Wow and what a show! Featuring performances from singers, acrobats and dancers including the Alberta Ballet and the amazing Young Canadians, 120 young people from the Calgary area aged between 7yrs and 18yrs, recruited each year to perform at this nightly Stampede spectacular. Tracing the heritage and culture of Canada's 150 years, the performances are inspiring and the absolute highlight of the day.

As the fireworks finale filled the night sky we left the fairground revellers to party on and strolled back to the Hotel Arts, chosen for its perfect location, just 4 blocks from the Stampede Park, full of cowboy cheer and our first bucket list experience of our trip well and truly ticked.

Kathryn travelled to Canada with luxury holiday company First Class Holidays who specialise in tailor-made Canadian itineraries. To find out more about holidays to Canada call Travel Bureau on 0191 285 9321, email holidays@travelb.co.uk or visit www.travelb.co.uk.



MAGIC DONATION IS JUST THE TRICK FOR BEACH ACCESS CHARITY



A charity that helps make the beaches of the Northumbrian coastline more accessible to wheelchair users has received a special boost from a magic source.

The Magic Trust charity formed in 1994 when Founder Bodil Boanas took her daughter's fell pony 'Magic' for a drive around the country lanes near Ogle with her daughter and a young disabled boy. Since then, The Magic Trust has used horses to help disabled people learn carriage driving skills but recently the charity closed due to the retirement of its trustees. The sad demise of one charity, however,

has given another a £4000 windfall donation that will carry on the spirit of The Magic Trust to Beach Access North East.

Beach Access North East was set up to give access to the coastline for wheelchair users. The charity buys specially adapted wheelchairs and hires them out free of charge to those wanting to enjoy time by the waterfront at Blyth, Tynemouth Longsands, North Shields and at a soon to be launched new resource at Whitley Bay near to the revamped Spanish City Dome. Their patron is Paralympian Gold medallist Stephen Miller.

NEW GM FOR CROWNE PLAZA NEWCASTLE

One of Newcastle's top hotels, Crowne Plaza Newcastle - Stephenson Quarter, has appointed a new general manager to oversee its next phase of growth.

James Doyle, 39, has been appointed to the role with a personal ambition to make the hotel the undisputed No1 venue on Tyneside.

The seven-storey, 251-bed hotel is owned by Clouston Group with trading under a management contract with InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG). The hotel is proving to be a key driver in the regeneration of the Stephenson Quarter, which Clouston Group believes

will create 3,000 jobs on completion of the mixed-use development.

James, who has 21 years' experience in the hotels sector, is originally from Hayling Island, near Portsmouth, and has extensive experience working within IHG hotels. He started his career at Crowne Plaza Heathrow and has worked in various Holiday Inns before relocating to Newcastle.

James said: "Crowne Plaza Newcastle is at an important stage in its growth and development. I needed a new challenge and when the opportunity arose to move to Newcastle I jumped at the chance."



PROSECCOFLOW ADDS FIZZ TO THE NORTH EAST

A Killingworth-based man has turned his thoughts to Prosecco after being made redundant from a Seaton Delaval perfume factory.

Paul McIntyre, who had worked for the former P&G business for the past 20 years, was devastated to discover that the company's new owners Coty had decided to transfer all production to mainland Europe and close the Northumberland-based plant with the loss of hundreds of jobs.

However, the 44 year old decided to make a bold decision to try something new and has launched Proseccoflow, a purpose built mobile prosecco bar serving bubbles on tap alongside a range of draught beers and a fully stocked bar.

The self-confessed prosecco aficionado has expertly converted an original Italian Ape Classic into a fully licensed mobile bar which is available for corporate and private events, weddings, fairs and festivals.

Paul said: "This has been an incredible journey so far. Now that we're up and running, we're hoping that business will, if you excuse the pun, start to flow.

"We have had a great deal of support from North Tyneside Council's Business Factory who have offered us expert advice to make sure we start off on the right foot."

SODEXO SIGNS NEW SALES MANAGER AT ST JAMES' PARK



A new sales manager has been appointed to lead the conference and events team at Newcastle's St James' Park.

Vicki Neil, from Northumberland, has been recruited to the position by Sodexo Prestige Venues & Events, which works in partnership with NUFC to provide match day catering, hospitality and event management at the ground.

Vicki brings almost 20 years' experience to her new role, joining Sodexo from Carlsberg UK where she worked as a sales development manager. A graduate from Northumbria University, Vicki also held marketing positions at North East-based

hospitality group Vimar Leisure Ltd and Gateshead-based Federation Brewery.

In her new position, Vicki will be tasked with promoting the world-famous stadium to corporate clients and event organisers looking for a unique venue for everything from small meetings and large conferences to banqueting dinners and weddings.

Vicki said: "Sodexo is a global employer and the opportunities for innovation really attracted me to the role. I'm really looking forward to maintaining and growing existing business while attracting new business to the club and I intend to hit the ground running."



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W: proseccoflow.com
T: 07368241297

**PROSECCO
FLOW**

TANDOORI STYLE LAMB CHOPS

By Sachins Head Chef, Bob Arora



INGREDIENTS

2kg rack of lamb, cut into chops
The juice of one lemon
2 cloves of garlic
½ tablespoon of cumin powder
½ tablespoon of coriander seeds
5 cloves
4 green cardamoms
15-20 whole black pepper
A pinch of ginger powder
1 cinnamon stick
Tablespoon of paprika
¼ tablespoon of chilli powder
¼ tablespoon of cultured yoghurt
¼ tablespoon of ginger garlic paste

METHOD

Score each of the lamb chops with a knife and rub salt and the juice of one full lemon into it and leave for 10 minutes to marinate.

In a processor, blend the ginger and garlic to make a paste.

Rub the mixture into the lamb chops and leave in the fridge to marinate for a further 30 minutes.

Grind all of the dried spices and mix into the yoghurt along with the garlic ginger paste.

Take the marinade and apply generously all over the lamb chops.

Leave the lamb in the fridge to marinate for at least 30 minutes, but preferably overnight.

Pre-heat oven at 220°C, gas mark 5.

Place lamb on a metal grill tray for 20-25 minutes turning once and brushing with oil.

Finally, grill or barbecue the lamb to cook and taste.

Happy cooking – Bob Arora

The Caledonian Wedding



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for £1999.00

SPECIAL WEDDING PACKAGE

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Inclusive package only £1999.00

Includes, Ceremony room, a glass of bucks fizz arrival drink, red carpet,

3 course wedding breakfast for 40 people

A glass of prosecco for the toast

Evening hot baps buffet for 70 people

Dj 7pm-11pm

Table plan & menu cards

Chair covers and Ivory sash. (40 ceremony only)

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE TO THE SOUND OF... (TOP NOSH & SUPER SERVICE)



Drawing to the end of a long working week, my son Jack and I were looking forward to a nice spot of lunch to kick start the weekend. The Beamish Park Hotel in Marley Hill is an old favourite of mine which has somewhat dropped off my radar in recent times. After hearing a few positive rumblings, I thought a return visit was in order.

The family-run, independent hotel is a great facility boasting 42 guest rooms, chic meeting spaces, a par 3 golf course and a driving range. There's also a snug bar area perfect for informal drinks, not to mention a super-inviting, outdoor beer terrace for when the golf demands a break. The jewel in the crown though is perhaps the bright & airy conservatory bistro which serves a la carte specialities alongside lighter bites like soups, sandwiches and salads.

The hotel occupies a stunning location overlooking the rolling hillsides of County Durham. We pitched up on a sun-drenched day and really saw it as its very best.

Sometimes an independently-owned venue can mean for better service and this was especially true of Beamish Park as we received the warmest of welcomes. Indeed, our waiter Andrew looked after us superbly all afternoon.

The bistro boasts an impressive wine list, but on a day such as this only a crisp pint of Moretti would do. The bistro's airy aspect projects a leisurely vibe with its floor-to-ceiling windows affording some great views out over our surroundings. It also has style in abundance with stripped oak flooring and some Jazz-themed wall art featuring Nina Simone, Miles Davis et al. Needless to say, it didn't take us long to relax.

Having long held 2AA rosette status, this is a



restaurant with real culinary chops. Lunch is available 12pm – 2.15pm every Monday to Saturday with its menu exciting and varied. Dishes are constantly – changing, inkeeping with the seasons and reflect the best quality produce currently available.

For a restaurant in such close proximity to Beamish Museum, this is a menu surprisingly forward-thinking. To start, I chose that old restaurant staple prawn cocktail, yet shaken up here with fresh chunks of apple and avocado and served in a punchy, Bloody Mary dressing.

Jack chose the tempura king prawns, battered expertly and served with an Asian side salad. An artistic splodge of chilli jam provided much colour and interest.

Many dishes on the menu are Asian-inspired, including the Korean beef salad which I chose for main course. This was a nutritious, well-presented dish – a cornucopia of ingredients including spring onion, carrots, peppers, lentils and fennel with thin rice noodles all in a Korean sesame seed dressing. The staff are very accommodating and were happy to load this with extra chillies as per request.

Jack chose the hearty, bistro rump steak with skinny fries, black pudding and peppercorn sauce. All locally-sourced, steaks are something of a speciality at Beamish Park with a steak night taking place every Friday with some great value available.

Feeling replete, we swerved dessert but couldn't leave without checking out the golf facilities. Complete with driving range, short game area and 9 hole Par 3 course, Beamish Park has everything you need to get the swing going – but then again, they're all hard for me.

Given that The Beamish Park Hotel is situated just seven miles from the centre of Newcastle and 10 from Durham, the venue is perfectly placed for a business lunch. Easily accessible yet far enough out to feel a real sense of release. It was great to be back.

SPICE UP YOUR LIFE

By Michael Grahamslaw

Newcastle's West End has a vibrant dining scene bursting with international flavour and one of its finest eateries is Solomons, situated in Denton Burn.

The restaurant, which is the flagship site of the Solomons stable, also boasts popular sister venues, Solomons Dhaba and Solomos Lounge in Fenham and Heaton respectively. Established in 1992, Solomons is a survivor which continues to dazzle diners with its true taste of Punjabi & Kashmiri cuisine.

I'd visited recently with my pals from "The Curry Club" – a band of curry-eating, Cobra-swilling aficionados – and was so impressed that I'd been meaning to return with my wife Lisa and son Jack.

The restaurant is housed within a grade II listed old farmhouse and inside retains its exposed stonework which brings a sense of rustic charm. Patterned fabrics and little trinkets create an atmosphere which is authentically Indian, yet there's also contemporary touches like plush sofas and chic spotlighting.

Good service is another staple of Solomons and today was no different as we were greeted warmly and shown to our window table. It didn't take us long to settle in with those familiar aromas of Indian cooking pervading the air.

Its menus are very extensive with a parade of tastes, textures and ingredients to choose from.



We kicked off with our favourite starters. Lisa – who enjoys a taste of everything – chose the Indian snack selection comprising onion bhaji, mini samosa and vegetable pakora. Jack chose a tangy, aromatic Lemon & Garlic King prawns whilst I enjoyed an old favourite, the Punjabi murgh tikka, tossed in a torrent of hot spices and cooked delicately in the tandoor.

In between a few long pulls on our cobras, main courses arrived. We dined regally on Chicken Tikka

Madras (guess who?), Chicken Jalfrezi and a sizzling Chicken Shaslic – another tandoori speciality with fresh peppers, onions and tomatoes in a Punjabi barbecue sauce. Dishes use only the freshest ingredients and boast that telling depth of flavour. A glance across the table revealed nods of approval all round!

All in all, Solomons remains an Indian food-lovers paradise.

www.solomonsrestaurants.org

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A QUALITY SUNDAY LUNCH

By Jackie Marston

When I was asked to try the Quality Hotel's Sunday lunch, I thought to myself, yippee, that's on my doorstep in Boldon, I'll take that one!

That was the first of the many things I got right about this gig, as it was a truly lovely afternoon with my husband, Richard and our daughter, Ayesha.

The restaurant itself is just off reception, next to the bar and had a lovely buzzy atmosphere, mainly down to the baby shower taken place nearby. This looked like it was going down a storm with some very encouraging mmm's and ahhh's when the food was being served, which we read as a good sign.

We were warmly welcomed by two waitresses one that seated us and took our drinks order and the other that gave us the menu options.

The Quality Hotel serve traditional Sunday lunch, and on offer that day was beef, pork (with crackling), chicken and a fish option. Starters were ordered, I gave this course a miss, but hubby ordered pate and gluten free bread and Ayesha ordered the brie. Both came quite quickly and I was pleased to see that the brie was of the home-made variety with a crisp light batter coating and came served with a fresh salad and sweet chutney. Ayesha said it was delicious and that she would definitely order it again. Hubby's pate was a nice strong tasting one, which he loves, so that went down well, even with gluten free bread, which he has to have. Thankfully they toasted it, so



it complemented the pate well, as this type of bread can sometimes completely ruin a dish.

A little gap and our mains were placed in front of us. I had beef, done pink, Ayesha had hers cooked a little more and Rich had the pork. Very generous portions of meat were delivered on each of the very large plates, sitting on top of deliciously creamy mashed potato and hiding two crunchy roast potatoes. Meat melted in the mouth on the pork and beef, so no complaints there. Enormous Yorkshire puddings with gravy were served in a separate dish, along with another one full of carrots, beautifully white cauliflower and broccoli. Vegetables were cooked

exactly how we love them, crispy, but piping hot. Two large boats of gravy complemented the lunch very well too, which when there are two people sitting at the table that are not happy unless everything is floating, it's just as well!

I skipped dessert too, as I was full, but their chocolate mousse and lemon tarte looked beautiful. Hubby said that the chocolate was rich and creamy and you couldn't eat much of it, but all the same delicious yet the best dessert of those two was definitely the lemon tarte, which had just the right amount of tartness, mixed with a smooth creamy texture and incredibly light pastry. This I tasted and wished I had ordered in the end!

The cost for three courses at this hotel is just £14.95 and as I only had one, it was just £7.95. This really should be advertised more as it was absolutely spot-on. You can tell when chef's care about what they're serving and this definitely shone through. If I was going to have a moan about anything, it would be that they didn't have some of the choices of wines on the menu, which would be better taken off if they haven't got them in stock, but that is a minor whinge, and really didn't alter our experience at all, as there was plenty of others to choose from.

We will definitely be back very soon, and as it's on our doorstep, it's a bonus. Next time though, I shall be ordering a dessert!

www.hotels-sunderland.com

JOINT UNION OF THE UNION ROOMS

Owners of the North East restaurant chain San Lorenzo have recently announced they have taken over an iconic listed building in Newcastle.

Lorenzo NE Limited which is headed up by Stuart Young has recently taken over The Union Rooms site on Westgate Road.

Originally built as a Gentleman's Club, the Union Rooms had been a Wetherspoon's until early 2017 when businessman Andrew Ward purchased the property, initially leasing it to a local leisure operator.

Ward has now leased the iconic building to Lorenzo NE Ltd who has stepped in to rescue the site.

The owners of Lorenzo NE Limited, although keeping their cards close to their chests, have given us a glimpse of their future plans. Young told us: "We plan to bring the upper floors of the venue back into use as hotel bedrooms aimed at the budget boutique market. There'll be some huge changes to the venue and refurbishment plans are due to commence once all approvals have been obtained.

"We estimate the renovation is going to cost in the region of £1m and will be something very unique to add to Newcastle."

Newcastle City Council is shortly due to begin improvement works to the area around the George Stephenson statue, directly in front of the Union Rooms, all of which will help to further enhance this part of the city.

The Grade II Listed building has been an imposing structure in Newcastle's City Centre in a variance of



guises, however Young has assured us that they plan to keep as many as the original features of the iconic structure as possible.

Lorenzo NE Limited currently employs 60 staff and this will not only enhance their portfolio but will see the employment of a further 40 staff comprising of admin, cleaning and waiting staff. Once the full

renovation is complete, Lorenzo NE Limited expects another 20 job roles to become available.

Works are expected to be completed in two phases with works to the bar taking place in around six months time and the hotel ultimately launching in 2019. In the meantime, the bar will be open as normal.

www.unionrooms.co.uk



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STACK REVEALS FURTHER TENANTS SIGNED UP FOR NEW SHIPPING CONTAINER VILLAGE



STACK, Newcastle's first shopping and leisure destination using up to 60 shipping containers is due to open this June and further businesses are now on board as part of the exciting development.

Popular eatery and mobile van, Hatch 76 is the latest business to join STACK. Owned and ran by Gateshead businessman Alex Hindson, formally of Aycliffe Village, County Durham, Hatch 76 are keen to be involved in a bid to expand the business.

Fast becoming famous for their duck fries, Hatch 76 started out in 2016 after buying a 1976 J7 van. Kitting it out with a kitchen, Alex took the van on the road to food festivals, music and corporate events and found he was really on to something successful. He told us:

"I am a chef of 17 years and have worked in the contract catering world for 10 years, working some really unique venues but over time I began to lose my passion. I was travelling with my dad and I came across the van that I purchased from a local artist in the South of France. This relit my passion which led me to create the mobile catering unit now known as Hatch 76.

"I love the concept of STACK; it's about getting passionate, local people together in order to develop something creatively cool. What we offer at Hatch 76 is different and our main focus is simply on getting it right."

Equally as passionate about the north east is fifth vendor Black Storm Brewery who'll be launching their brand new business, Beer Box within STACK this June.

Starting up only 12 months ago but already putting themselves firmly on the map for their IPA's, bitters, porters and blondes, Black Storm Brewery have found themselves in a unique market that has



really taken off in Newcastle.

Operations director, James Davie-Baguley from Whitley Bay tells us about the creation of Beer Box: "We have 152 beers to sell and currently these are available across selected bars and pubs in the north east. We came across STACK in the early stages of planning and thought it seemed like something that matched our style and brand perfectly.

"We're a young company that's had great successes to date and we believe STACK is all about

supporting local businesses which is our biggest mantra."

The sixth business announced is Beacon Burgers which was started after the owner took a road trip round California. America is of course famous for fast food, but they found the thriving street food and food truck scene amazing; offering really great locally sourced products. There was nothing that stood out like that back at home and from there, Beacon Burgers was born.

In their first year of trading Beacon Burgers appeared at some of the UK's busiest events including Manchester's Parklife Festival, Latitude Festival, Rewind Festival and Newcastle's very own Ladies Day to name but a few. Now, Beacon Burgers are looking forward to bringing their authentic food back home to the masses of Newcastle.

Neill Winch, chief executive of STACK, said: "The development is shaping up to be fantastic and we're really happy with the businesses we have involved so far. There are some amazing independents that are part of STACK and it's great that we can all support each other with this new project."

STACK will be home to over 40 independent traders, from bars to delis, restaurants and numerous bespoke retail shops. There'll also be a changing outdoor area starting with an Enchanted Garden, followed by the return of the much-loved Hadrian's Tipi before the launch of their brand new project Antartica at the turn of the year; an ice bar and igloo serving cocktails and hot drinks in a sub-zero setting.

Further names are to be announced in due course.

To follow the development visit @stacknewcastle on Facebook. For container enquiries please contact Tim at Bradley Hall 0191 232 8080.
www.stacknewcastle.com

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FASHIONISTA TISKA

One of the World's leading fashion designers, Vivienne Westwood once said... "Buy less. Choose well. Make it last. Quality, not quantity. Everybody's buying far too many clothes."

In other words, make sure that you buy well made, timeless, stylish clothes. Okay, they will almost certainly cost more but you will be able to wear them again and again.

It's a view fully supported by one of the North East's up-and-coming fashion designers, Kimberley Stacey who last year established the TISKA London label.

Kimberley's latest collections have a seriously Nordic theme. There's a very good reason for that; her father owns a travel company specialising in trips to Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland. Kimberley was brought up exploring those countries which now feel like a second home.

She also fell in love with Nordic style.

Kimberley's brand promotes positivity, strength and independence in women. Each TISKA London collection is based on a story written by her and each garment has a Nordic inspired name. The

collections are not based on current trends. This allows them to have a unique style which won't date, meaning they are more of an investment than a response to fast fashion.

TISKA (which means 'fashion' in Icelandic) currently has two collections, Lilya was unveiled last year, and now the Aría collection has just been launched.

As you can see from the photos (taken by North East photographer Laura Massey of LMASSEY PHOTOGRAPHY), Kimberley has a style all of her own. TISKA London is already attracting attention and has appeared in British Vogue Magazine and has gained strong social presence (@tiska_london on Instagram)...but now it is a case of moving the business forward.

As any mother will tell you, mixing work with looking after a lively 7 year old son, takes a lot of juggling.

"TISKA London is ready to move onto the next

stage," said Kimberley. "The clothes have been designed, so it's a case of getting them out into the boutiques and letting people see them, feel the quality and try them on.

"But I need help. I'm currently contacting boutiques and also asking for some to get in touch with me. I'm also investigating whether investors would like to get involved and I am about to launch a crowd-funding campaign. Everything so far has come from my own financial resources but, to really take TISKA London onto the next stage, I need support."

Kimberley has enormous drive, ambition and undoubted skill. Her two collections have won rave reviews but it's obvious that if TISKA London is to grow, she will need backing.

Kimberley Stacey and TISKA London; they're fashionably good.

To check out her collections, visit www.tiskalondon.com. You can read about the inspiration behind her Lilya and Aría ranges and also find out how to contact her.



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OUR DIRECTOR'S NICK AND ALEX BRADLEY GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON RESTAURANT DESIGN

What aspects should be considered when planning a redesign?

The first stage in our process is to establish the design brief. In some cases, our client will be an experienced operator and will have already formulated a detailed brief. If this isn't the case, RDA can assist in a joint approach. Most critically, the menu and service style should be considered as this is the main driving factor for everything else. The demographic (i.e. who is the customer?) is also very important, as is a careful consideration of who your competition is. With restaurants, cafes and grab and go food outlets on the high street booming, one of the key challenges for businesses is to provide an appealing offer which is at the very least comparable to the competition from outside the building.

What are the benefits of a redesign?

There are many benefits of a re-design but ultimately restaurant interior design can have a profound impact on customers. Implementing a new and unique style of décor can help bring in more guests and boost revenue. More and more, the food industry is building its business around a

central theme or concept and this extends to how the dining space is designed and organised.

For instance, one of the most important aspects that the younger generation consider when going out is the Instagram potential of a restaurant, or whether the decor is unique enough to post on social media. So, you should keep in mind how photogenic your dining space is, especially if you are aiming at a younger market.

What looks, trends, etc are fashionable at the moment?

Design trends are constantly changing based on society and what's popular with consumers.

Some of the popular themes we are seeing with clients across the UK from the high street to education sectors range from the Botanical theme through to Industrial/Rustic and Modern.

For example, there is a growing trend in many food service establishments to offer food that is not only delicious but also healthy and nutritious. As a result, many of our clients are choosing to use greenery and living walls in their décor that reinforces a feeling of health and vitality.

Many restaurant owners are also choosing a more minimalist style giving a sleek and modern uncluttered feel with cleaner lines, crisp colour palettes and understated furniture, providing a timeless look which won't feel dated as trends come and go.

The urban industrial/rustic style is still proving a favourite. Exposed brick and aged leather seating, conduit feature lighting and feature piece counters are all key elements of this popular design.

Finally, lighting design is always a crucial factor in any restaurant design process and whilst feature, big and bold Edison bulb lighting remains popular, there is a nod towards more natural, recessed lighting, lots of natural light, picture windows and sleek fixtures, which is both adaptable and flexible.

What is the most important thing to remember when undertaking this kind of work?

Speak to the experts. There are business' like ours set up to assist operators in making the correct initial decisions on design concepts, interior and equipment selection, through to implementation and installation.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

Northern Insight's Steve Russell meets

MATT MAVIR

Founder of Last Night of Freedom, the Stag and Hen Party specialists, who are making a name for themselves on the national and international stage.

There is something slightly surreal about receiving a tour of Last Night of Freedom's stockroom by the company's urbane and savvy Managing Director, Matt Mavir. The surrealism stemming mainly from said room housing more phallic artefacts than the average Roman museum (albeit phallic artefacts with a somewhat wider range of colour, size and purpose than their Roman counterparts!).

These are accompanied by every imaginable stag and hen accessory, from bubble-wrap suits to a fine collection of Fezs (all of which they sell by the thousand)! However, the sense of mischief which prevails in their Gateshead headquarters belies what a serious business stag and hen parties have become, and few companies take them more seriously than Last Night of Freedom.

Offering a truly bespoke service from inspiration to delivery, the LNOF team pride themselves on creating unique experiences for the soon-to-be-married and their merry tribes. Whether you want to mud-wrestle in Bratislava or free your inner-Schwarzenegger and shoot an Uzi in Poznan, they've got you covered! On the off chance your requirements aren't featured in their impressive dossier of activities, they'll do their best to deliver but this isn't always possible as Matt explains: "We get some pretty dodgy requests, most of which I can't even mention but the strangest one that springs to mind is the guy who asked us to charter a submarine!"

They may be disappointing potential submariners, but they're delighting the vast majority of their clients and are now industry leaders in the sector.

However, the slick operation of today is a world away from the almost accidental inception of the business, as Matt recalls:

"I was living in a shared house in Heaton in 1999 nursing a rugby injury and feeling a bit bored so being around the time of the dot.com boom, I decided to try designing a website. I couldn't really think of content so for fairly random reasons I chose to write about stag nights, inspired by Newcastle's nightlife initially."

After eight months he had accrued the princely sum of £23 but almost overnight things began to change:

"I think Google changed their algorithms because suddenly we were topping search lists and traffic increased exponentially. We started getting requests to organise stag weekends but we couldn't at the time so started selling other people's products."

In Matt's words, the business "bumbled" along for a few years before growing rapidly between 2003 and 2008 when they began to develop their own products. Business was booming until the credit-crunch led to what he describes as a "horrific" year in 2009. Having survived that, Matt and his growing team began diversifying and at one point had 23 websites in their portfolio. However, this proliferation, in tandem with his difficulty adapting to an expanding workforce, led to an identity crisis of sorts and in 2013 he began asking himself some fundamental questions: "I instigated a massive branding exercise aimed at finding out who we were as a business. I interviewed our staff and asked what Last Night of Freedom meant to them. It became clear we all had different ideas, so although I've

always hated the concept we devised a mission statement."

To summarise that statement, they aim to "amuse and delight" clients via a combination of industry leading technology and exceptional customer service. A look through customer reviews on their website suggests that they are doing just that and it's easy to understand why. If you've ever suffered torture by WhatsApp, trying to get 15 grown men to agree on and pay for a stag weekend, the idea of delegating to a team of experts certainly has its merits! Throw in ABTA accreditation and the use of local guides in many of their European destinations, and the benefits keep stacking up.

Now 40, Matt acknowledges that he is no longer the target demographic of his company and perhaps that factor explains his expansion plans. They are currently developing "HoneyPot House", accommodation in central Newcastle which will tie in with their core business but Matt is also keen to reach a wider online audience: "Stag and hen is very niche but I'd like to leverage what we've got in terms of our systems (which have been developed in-house over 4 years) and see how we can take that to more of a mass market."

Whether or not those plans come to fruition remains to be seen but in the meantime Matt is happy with where his business is at and so are his staff if our visit was anything to go by. Last Night of Freedom are elevating the stag and hen experience beyond the cliched booze-up to something far more adventurous, so if your own nuptials are upcoming, save yourself the endless WhatsApp misery and try the professionals instead!

22ND NATIONAL BBQ WEEK IS NEARLY HERE

National BBQ Week returns for the 22nd year in 2018 and as one of the leading awareness weeks in the UK* it is back with a huge boom with an anticipated 5 million BBQ's in the UK being dusted off and fired up.

Launching on Spring Bank Holiday and running the whole week from 28th May until the 3rd of June, the awareness week will have those that love food, healthy eating or gastro grilling, outdoors alfresco eating and sociable family and friends time hitting the gas or the coal.

There will also be a pop-up BBQ by the River experience for all BBQ lovers from 1st to the 3rd June, with an anticipated 150,000 people attending. This event is the launch for the summer-long festival, Summer by the River located between London & Tower Bridge.

National BBQ Week this year is backed by leading big brand sponsors including Budweiser Prohibition Brew (Alcohol-Free), Walkers Max Strong, Branston & Primula, with Bodean's as the BBQ restaurant sponsor.

The much-loved BBQ Bapts video awards competition returns, where consumers will be encouraged to send in videos of their fun Barbi's or grilling technique and results, with the aim of winning not only a coveted BBQ Bapta Award, but also a big money prize with Barbi Boxes, full of sponsor goodies for runners-up.

Along with the UK's biggest BBQ website full of the



widest range of BBQ hints, tips, recipes and guides to being a Better BBQ'er, plus Legends of the Grill and tips for Barbi Babes (first-time BBQ'ers). There's also a daily Barbi Blog, with messages from the sponsors and chief GrillMaster, Brian George, founder of National BBQ Week. He said:

"National BBQ Week is one of the UK's biggest awareness weeks* and has not only been the catalyst for growth in the BBQ Market**, but has also fundamentally helped changed consumer BBQ

attitudes and usage** up from just 9 million in 1997 to over 130 million last year with the overall BBQ food & drink market now worth around £1.5 billion, up from just £150 million back in 1997.

"We are delighted to be working with such high caliber sponsors once again, and over the moon to be part of the Summer by the River launch week, with our BBQ By the River. 22 years is a long time for a campaign to not only survive but to have grown in strength and popularity."

For more information, visit nationalbbqweek.co.uk (live from 14th May 2018) or tweet using #NatBBQWeek OR #GetTheGrillOn

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NORTH EAST HOTELS ASSOCIATION CELEBRATE THE INDUSTRY'S FINEST

Over 400 employees from hotels across the region gathered to honour the brightest stars in the industry at the eighth annual North East Hotels Association Excellence Awards 2018.

The awards, hosted by the Newcastle Marriott Hotel Gosforth Park and organised by the North East Hotels Association (NEHA), are a celebration of the outstanding people working in the region's best-known hotels and the exceptional service they provide to guests and their local communities across ten categories.

Lisa Crocker joint chair of the NEHA and general manager at Staybridge Suites Newcastle, said: "The Excellence Awards are a great platform to recognise the huge range of talent in our sector. It's important to showcase and celebrate the people who go the extra mile every day to provide outstanding customer service, demonstrate their potential and work so hard to make the North East hospitality industry so successful."

Guests and industry professionals in attendance were also treated to a prize-winning menu devised by two talented chefs who won the NEHA Great North Menu Challenge 2018.





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sachins 

main **mama arora's curry**

this recipe can be used for beef, lamb, fish or even vegetables.

ingredients :

4 chicken breasts
2 large onions
tin chopped tomatoes
garlic ginger paste
fresh coriander
haldi
chilli powder
garam masala
salt
channa masala
dry fenugreek
cumin powder
coriander powder
chilli flakes
ground fennel seeds
tomato purée

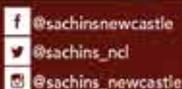
cooking method :

finely chop two onions
warm two table spoons of vegetable oil in a pan
once hot add onions, keep stirring
add a table spoon of garlic ginger paste with a touch of water
add tomatoes, keep stirring, mash the tomatoes
add a pinch or two of salt
add about 250ml of water
add 1 tea spoon of haldi and mix into masala
add 1 tea spoon of chilli powder and mix into masala
add 1 tea spoon of garam masala and mix into masala
add 1 tea spoon of channa masala and mix into masala
add a pinch of chilli flakes, fennel and coriander powder
then add your diced chicken, keep stirring
once cooked add a small handful of dry fenugreek, rub together
add a tea spoon of tomato purée and mix into the dish
finally add some chopped coriander to the dish

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HERE COMES THE SUMMER



Summer holiday's are nearly upon us and YES you still have time to make changes and look good for the beach. Your life, not just your shape can be transformed in a matter of weeks, its never too late to make changes and break an unhealthy lifestyle.

Positivity and a strong will to put a structure in place will give you that feel good factor both physically and mentally moving forward.

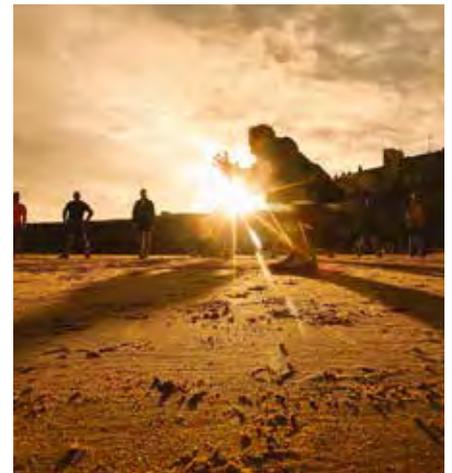
Here are a few tips how can this be achieved:

- Cut out refined sugar or as I call it 'white death' this will make a huge difference to your waistline, energy levels and stop those afternoon tiredness slumps.
- Change your shopping list by adding as much fresh natural food as possible, in other words, what we are designed to eat. Lean meats, fish, vegetables, salad, eggs and water is the way forward.
- Over 20 years of training clients, the most natural way of eating known to man has never failed. Its all about consistently eating well, this will make a big difference leading up to your holiday
- Two glasses of wine a day amounts to a massive 110,000 calories a year equivalent to 31lbs of fat. If you want to make big changes and be totally focused, this needs to go. You can see how easily things add up, even over a few weeks never mind months, years and decades.

● Adding exercise alongside your new food regime will have a massive impact. Not sure where to start? Seek advice, we run six week body transformation courses as part of our full well being programme. These sessions are popular for a reason, because they work.

Is this another year where you feel self conscious on the beach or are you going to change it? Start now and put a plan in place which will make you feel fantastic and regain your self confidence, those who want it badly enough do it!

David's summing up: 'If you want to feel fit and confident this summer - what are you waiting for!!'



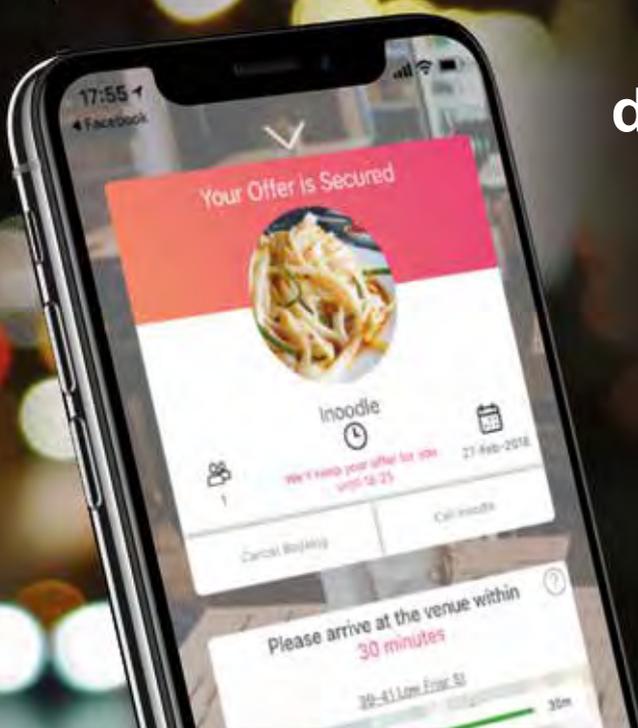
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GO ON, SMILE!

Founding partner and Queensway dentist, Dr Paul Averley, gives his advice on caring for your smile.

To support National Smile Month, Queensway Jesmond wants to remind adults that the maintenance of their mouths is just as important, if not more crucial, as they get older.

Choosing the right dentist

Whether you are looking for a new dentist or are in need of more specialist dental care, finding the right dentist is vitally important, but how do you know where to begin?

Qualification and expertise – Do your research. Websites such as the GDC (General Dental Council) can give information on individual dentists, their qualifications and their specialism. You can also find more information about the qualifications and credibility of the team through their practice website.

Trust – Do meet the team. It's hugely important to feel happy and comfortable with your dentist. Visit the practice, speak to the team, and find out everything you need to know to help you make the best choice about your dental care.

Word of mouth – Do ask around. You would read the reviews when booking a hotel or trust a friend's recommendation when going out to dinner, so why should choosing a dentist be any different? Look at their online reviews, ask around, and find out about the experience of others.

When you do find the one, how often should you visit?

For routine check-ups you should visit as often as your dentist recommends, for many people this



Dr Paul Averley has over 25 years' experience treating patients

is between every 6 to 12 months, however for more specialist treatments or problems this might be more frequently. Either way, it's important to maintain your oral health between visits to keep your teeth and gums healthy, and prevent any problems in the future!

Top Tips

You should:

- Brush your teeth for two minutes twice a day using a fluoride toothpaste, cleaning in between the teeth regularly with interdental brushes or floss.
- Visit the dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.

- Take diet into consideration – reduce how often you eat sugary foods and drink fizzy drinks.

National Smile Month is organised and run by the Oral Health Foundation, a leading national charity working to improve oral health. The aim being to improve people's lives by reducing the harm caused by oral diseases – many of which are entirely preventable. As part of National Smile month Queensway are offering new patients a free consultation with a dentist. Book a free, no-obligation consultation between 14th May and 14th June for your chance to win a Philips Sonicare Diamond Clean electric toothbrush and air-polish with a hygienist for a super clean smile.

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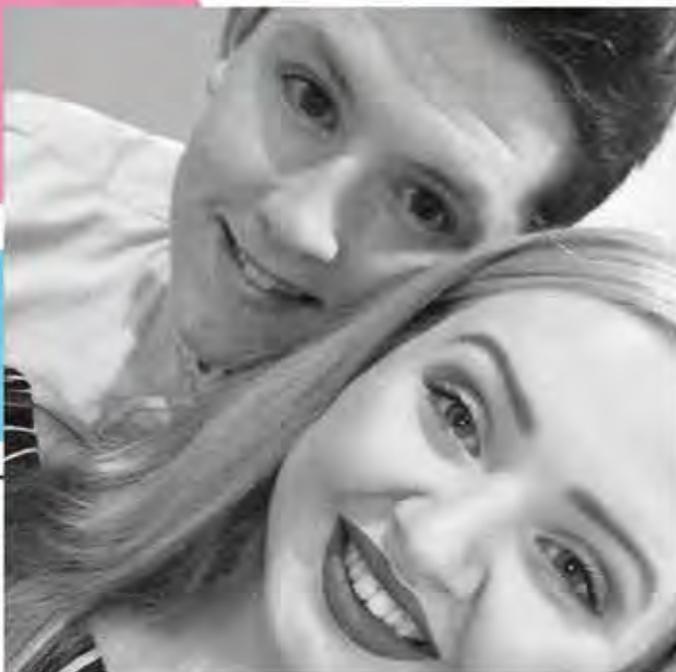
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WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE - WHY ARE WE SUDDENLY LISTENING AND ACTING?



Claire Hawes and Nicky Robertson,
co-directors, Back to Balance

The latest trend and buzz word all round is 'wellness', and this includes wellness in the workplace.

Wellness programmes have been around a number of years but have only gained traction more recently as employers around the globe are looking for ways to support their workforce with ever increasing demands being placed on them.

Longer working hours, greater targets, commission based pay, restricted break times with no movement from your desk or workstation for hours on end, journeys made in cars, trains or planes in economy class are more common than ever – even in a world where we are seeing more people being able to work from home and conference call meetings – the pressures of work life mean that the top reason for long and short term sickness absence are fairly similar. Musculoskeletal (backs, necks, muscles and joints) and mental health (ranging from stress through to severe depression and anxiety disorders) are becoming more prevalent.

So, what is in it for the employer who decides to invest in their employee's wellbeing? Evidence is plentiful, there are several research documents which identify the return on your wellness investment showing that the bottom line increases through decreased sickness absence – savings on temporary staff and sickness pay. You will also see a rise in productivity – how this is measured may vary but

having your staff happier at work means that more work will get done, and staff morale helps everyone get along. Being an employer with employee welfare at heart makes you stand out from the competitors – an ethical company attracts business nowadays, clients want to know that they are investing in companies where there are fair standards for the staff, and wellness programmes can tick a lot of boxes when people are choosing where to work as well. Attracting top talent also means that the perks may be what sets you apart from the competitor – and what better way to show your potential staff that they should work for you by saying you care about their health and wellness.

Wellness is different to health, although both are often used interchangeably and are connected. When we think of health we think of fitness, absence of illness, we think of your physical or mental condition. Health is a state which is achieved through exercise and good food. Wellness however is about balance – balance in all aspects of your life. From your physical, emotional and spiritual self, through to your work-life balance, your social self and your occupational self. These are all interlinked, which is why balance throughout is essential as a discrepancy in one area means a problem in another.

Think about self-esteem – part of your emotional self, how does this affect your social and occupational self, or prevent you from achieving your goals or dreams? Think about a chronic health condition – part of your physical self, the impact that this has on the social and emotional aspects of you? Think about a heavy work load or long hours at your desk – how does this impact on your physical, emotional, occupational and social wellbeing – and how do all of these affect how you see yourself in the bigger picture – your place in the workplace, your family, and even your purpose in life – your spiritual self.

So, choosing to work on a wellness programme with your staff should be a deep consideration. If you want to explore the positive impact that a variety of different programmes or interventions may have, we at Back to Balance can help you. By looking at the individual issues that your company faces we can help you deliver a programme to your workforce that will have maximum impact. We are happy to meet you for a free discussion of your company's needs.

We are offering a series of articles over the next few issues which will look in more detail at different aspects of wellness in the workplace. Next time our hot topic will be: Mindfulness in the workplace...



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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

DAVID WILLIAMSON

Executive Director, Newcastle Racecourse

How has the new all-weather racetrack been received in its first two years?

Despite the initial outcry at lifting the turf track to replace it with a synthetic surface, the feedback from racing professionals has been better than even we imagined, with many plaudits received for the safety and fairness of the surface for both horse and jockey.

The number of horses now being run at the course from southern yards and top trainers has also added to the attraction, with some expensive equine purchases having their first visit and run on a race track at Newcastle. The initial unease of the population in the North East has also subsided following two years of highly competitive, top class racing action.

What have been your racing highlights over the past two years?

The highlight, without doubt, is the victory of Enable here in 2016 as a two year old and then going on the claim both the Oaks at Epsom in June and the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe at Chantilly in October last year. We stated at the time of laying the all-weather track that we could potentially see a classic winner at the racecourse and Enable managed to prove us correct within a year. Enable isn't an anomaly either. Rajasinghe, Forest Ranger and Stradivarius have all gone on to claim top class success after victory here, and this year we look forward to the unbeaten son of Frankel, Without Parole, setting the racing scene alight following impressive debut success here in December.

What projects and upcoming events are you currently working on?

Following the recent completion of the racetrack and Border Minstrel development (Phase 1), we are currently working on Phase 2 of the development masterplan for the entire 812 acre estate, which includes a refurbishment of the existing facilities before moving on to Phase 3, which will be the demolition of the old Silver Ring Stand to be replaced by a 2,800 sqm Exhibition Hall. It is also our intention to upgrade the onsite racing professionals accommodation to a 35 bedroom Lodge, which will be available for bookings all year round as a bed and breakfast style accommodation.

How are Newcastle combating the racing industry wide struggles of attracting new racegoers?

Racing is still the second most attended sport in the United Kingdom but levels of expectation continue to rise, and like many racecourses countrywide, we will continue to invest in facilities to ensure that a day out at the races is high on peoples list as an option for the leisure pound spend. Our offering is enhanced year on year through unique events and entertainment, which are carefully planned and executed to attract many different audiences to Newcastle Racecourse. We also race on many Friday nights under floodlights throughout the year, which has proved popular with many attending.

What makes the Northumberland Plate and Ladies Day meetings so popular?

These are two dates that people diarise as soon as the fixtures are released, with the three day Northumberland Plate meeting always being the racing highlight of the summer season here at High Gosforth Park. The Collingwood Insurance Beeswing Ladies Day is the social event of the year with fashion very much to the forefront, and this year we have introduced the addition of a well-known DJ, Marvin Humes, to perform live after racing.

With Deacon Blue appearing on Plate Friday and Marvin Humes on Ladies Day, would you like to host more regular live music at High Gosforth Park?

We have two great venues in Newcastle at St James' Park and the Metro Radio Arena, so opportunities are limited, however if the right band or entertainer is available then we will always consider an event to supplement the racing. Madness were very popular here in 2013, and with their 40 year anniversary next year, a racecourse tour of the UK is a possibility.

How is the non-racing business at Newcastle Racecourse developing?

We have a very popular conference & events business here at High Gosforth Park. We host many events, both indoor and outdoor, which is why we believe the refurbishment of current facilities and the creation of a purpose built exhibition hall will add to the flexibility and offering we have on the



Estate. With free parking for over 10,000 vehicles and access to major road networks, we have an offering that not many other venues can match.

The Border Minstrel is a hugely popular part of attending events at Newcastle Racecourse. What changes has the venue undergone in recent times?

A refurbishment of the Border Minstrel in 2016 has been well received and it has become a popular destination for lunch and dinner, especially Sundays when we have a very popular Carvery operation. Live music after racing has also proved a success with many people staying after racing to enjoy the atmosphere and with further investment planned for the beer garden area we are looking forward to a busy summer.

What are your plans for Parklands Golf Club?

We have invested heavily into the golf course itself with hundreds of kilometres of drainage installed over the past 3 years. Investment into the greens has also been carried out and we are halfway through a five year development plan for the course. The mini-golf continues to be well used also and the facility is due an upgrade of the surface this summer, so we will continue to invest in the facilities for both the membership and the visiting public. We have also just brought on board a golf club partner in 188BET which has allowed us to refresh the current site and provide a greater offering to our members and visitors.

What does the medium and long term future hold for the High Gosforth Park estate?

In the next two to three years we will put forward the planning application for the Phase 3 development of the entire High Gosforth Park estate, transforming the business into an all year round sport, business and leisure destination that the city will be rightly proud of. Ongoing refurbishment will take place from 2018 for existing facilities. All of this in addition to the fantastic racing and events to come. It's a very exciting time in High Gosforth Park.

COMMENT WITH... Barry Speker

barry.speker@sintons.co.uk



“

Who else would think of staging the story against a backdrop of the 1940 Battle of Britain?

”



The Deputy Governor of the Bank of England caused a storm when, in an interview, he said the British economy has entered a 'menopausal' phase. He explained the metaphor as indicating that the economy is no longer 'potent'. The use of the term was leapt upon by the #MeToo campaigners as indicative of rampant misogyny and sexism. His profound apology for a poor choice of words may save his job but perhaps will affect his previously predicted prospects of becoming the next Governor.

An eminent London University academic Professor Richard Lebow was also caught in the #MeToo crossfire after joking in a lift at a conference, asking someone to press the button for 'ladies lingerie'. Shades of 'Are you being served'? Also in the lift was Simone Sharoni, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies. She demanded an apology but he refused arguing that freedom of speech is being suppressed by some crazy people who intimidate anyone trying to make a joke. Apparently the quip has been used in a Harry Potter film. Calling out the floors in lifts was once regarded as light hearted banter, albeit a lame joke, but certainly not an affront to the female of the species.

The campaign was also noted out in force at the Cannes Film Festival which said 'oui' to Equality, noting that of the 21 films in the running for the Palme d'Or, only three were directed by women. Cate Blanchett, this year's Cannes jury president led a red carpet protest which also extended to Naomi Campbell's Fashion for Relief catwalk show.

#MeToo was also influential in the Eurovision Song Contest in Portugal, with a victory for Israel's Netta Barzilai and her highly original song 'Toy'. The theme was diversity and Netta wore colourful kimono and Japanese hairdo, the song including clucking hen sounds. It was certainly original and challenged the customary political voting patterns. Netta said it was an 'empowerment song for women'.

Inevitably there were criticisms of cultural appropriation in using Japanese costume as well as arguments that Israel is not in Europe - but then nor is Australia, I believe.

Was it against the trend that a celebrated nude



painting by Amadeus Modigliani made history when sold at Sotheby's in New York for a record \$157.2million (£116million)? When the painting appeared in Modigliani's only solo exhibition in Paris in 1917, the police closed the show within hours on the grounds of obscenity. The painting, Nu Couché (Sur Le Côté Gauche), eclipsed the record set by Edvard Munch's The Scream in 2012. Art for art's sake of course.

On which theme I was privileged to see the exhibition BT the Royal Society of Portrait Painters at the Mall Gallery near Trafalgar Square. A fantastic variety of styles and subjects, well worth a visit. As is the amazing China and Siam: Through the Lens of John Thomson. This is a collection of early photographs taken by the 19th century photographer during travels through the Far East. The pictures are of amazing quality and capture life in China which is long gone, but preserved for us in these pictures. My good friend Betty Yao, has put this together. It has already been around the world and will be in the Brunei Gallery at London University until late June.

I had almost forgotten quite how beautiful the Lake District can be, when the rain disappears. Thanks to John and Isabelle Nicholls, we enjoyed Keswick and Borrowdale for an uncharacteristically hot May Bank Holiday weekend. If you have the chance, try to book at The Grange.

Matthew Bourne's production of Cinderella at the Theatre Royal was another demonstration of his amazing versatility and imagination. Who else would think of staging the story against a backdrop of the 1940 Battle of Britain? When the clock struck 12 for Cinders, there was a literal blitz, with the Theatre rocked by astounding effects.

And who would portray the Fairy Godperson, as a tall lithe male dancer in shiny white silk suit? The story will never be the same again.





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