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February/March 2024

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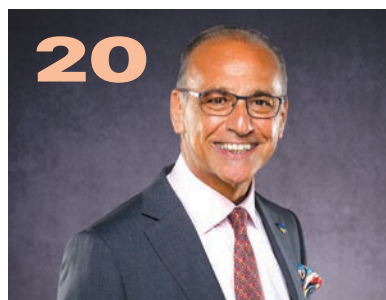
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of business news, articles, interviews and
regular columnists.

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editorial

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news

UK M&A market still expected to grow in 2024

Despite an inflation rise, the UK's mergers and acquisitions market is still expected to grow in 2024.

With 2024 poised to be the year that the IPO market rebounds, it's becoming important for founders to reassess how their businesses are positioned in the dealmaking ecosystem.

Claire Trachet, CEO/Founder of Trachet, has commented on how the rise of the mid-sized merger will form the backbone of the UK's M&A recovery:

"The British M&A landscape faced challenges in 2023, grappling with historically high interest rates and experiencing setbacks like the collapse of headline-grabbing deals such as Adobe-Figma.

"These factors dealt a substantial blow to the sector's optimism, resulting in a 33% drop in the total value of deals involving UK-based businesses

compared to the previous year. Despite this, experts from across the industry have forecast 2024 to be a bounce-back year for the sector, even with a recent rise in inflation.

"Against the backdrop of the Bank of England's decision to hold interest rates for the third consecutive time in December, the number of deals involving UK companies hit their highest quarterly total since mid-2022, whilst the amount of private equity firms buying UK-based businesses increased to 915, the highest number of buy-ups since records began in 1980.

"With the majority of the country's top economists predicting at least two cuts to the base rate of interest by the end of the year, market analysts are forecasting a resurgence of M&A activity as the cost of borrowing falls and chief executives have an easier time justifying dealmaking costs to their shareholders."

Sustainability becomes largest consideration for growth within financial services



Sustainability has become one of the largest considerations for businesses worldwide with 96% of G250 companies reporting on sustainability or ESG matters. Thus sustainability cannot, and should not, be forgotten in business's IT advancements and digital transformation.

Commentators from IT specialist providers **Jumar.co.uk** observed: "Developing your digital transformation strategy has many considerations, but one that you shouldn't neglect is the impact it can have on the environment. Integrating sustainability into a digital transformation program is not just about reducing environmental impact - it's about future-proofing your business, enhancing efficiency, and meeting the expectations of customers and stakeholders in an increasingly eco-conscious world."

"Businesses don't only have an ethical responsibility to manage their sustainability, but they also now have

the added pressure of government legislation to comply with. As climate change continues, the UK government has issued a net zero plan – looking for the decarbonisation of all sectors by 2050. This strategy pulls into focus the changes and successes of businesses in their sustainability goals – making adopting a sustainability strategy in every process more important than ever.

"It is projected that the total demand for computing power might raise up to 20% of the global demand for energy by 2030. Organisations will increasingly be measured on their carbon footprint by regulators or by customers who are made to, or decide to, measure their downstream emissions. Taking a sustainable approach to digital transformation allows them to make improvements in this area as part of existing change programmes."

"Sustainability, in all areas of your business, isn't only good for your reputation or reducing the impact you're having on the environment, but it can also be beneficial for your business in other ways. This can include improving efficiency across your business, reducing costs, and maintaining regulatory compliance."

Grand National hospitality packages announced

With less than two months to go until all eyes are on Aintree Racecourse for The Randox Grand National Festival 2024, a complete range of hospitality packages have been made available for booking.

A representative from the organisers commented: "Join us for a day of exhilarating races, exquisite dining, and unparalleled luxury at Aintree Racecourse. Make your Randox Grand National Festival memories truly exceptional with our bespoke hospitality packages and private boxes.

"From the heart of the course to overlooking the winning line, here at Aintree we have a variety of Hospitality experiences to choose from. Spend the day in one of our fantastic restaurants like Silver Birch, that boasts premium formal dining



alongside stylish lounge areas. Or experience an all-new culinary experience as award-winning celebrity chef, Paul Askew and his expert team recreate The Art School at Aintree Racecourse.

"Our teams will ensure service of the highest standard to provide you with a fine dining experience. Get ready to sit back, relax, and enjoy your day at the host of the world's greatest steeplechase."

Visit thejockeyclub.co.uk/the-grand-national/dining-hospitality/ or call **0151 522 2911**.

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New AI Opportunity Forum to ramp up adoption of private sector AI

Members of the UK's first AI Opportunity Forum have been appointed at the end of January – with a clear mission to boost the adoption of AI in the private sector.

Overseen by the Technology Secretary and the Prime Minister's Special Adviser on Business and Investment, pioneering AI companies will join forces with business leaders to bring their expertise to bear on encouraging adoption of AI across the private sector to boost productivity, fuel innovation, and deliver growth in all areas of the economy.

Motorway rapid chargers not up to speed



Government targets for the number of rapid chargers at motorway services by the end of 2023 have been missed, according to data analysed by the RAC. The organisation said data showed that only four in 10 motorway service stations had a minimum of six rapid or ultra rapid chargers installed by the end of 2023.

"Motorway rapid chargers are only a small part of what will become the UK's EV charging infrastructure," comments Ben Hugh, EV Business Development Manager at Vestel UK. *"Destination charging, where EV users will charge using traditional 'slow' chargers at home, at work, at the supermarket and leisure facilities remain the future for EV transport in the UK."*

"Given the very high price of petrol and diesel at motorway services, most consumers traditionally avoid filling up at these trunk route destinations anyway," adds Ben. *"The 'missed target' news is not an indication of slow EV adoption in the UK, but more a demonstration of how we need to adapt to a new way of fuelling our transport into the future."*

The Forum will particularly focus on the AI culture and skills of organisations in the UK, how they manage governance, awareness, and risks of the technology, and the availability of data which they can tap into – a crucial component in the use and development of AI.

Despite the importance of AI for businesses being almost universally recognised, only one-in-ten organisations are currently fully prepared to roll out the technology. The Forum will tackle this problem head-on sharing best practice and identifying measures which organisations can adopt to improve their AI readiness.

It builds on the AI Safety Summit held at Bletchley Park which set a path for building a global approach to ensuring safe and responsible AI, such as the UK's trailblazing launch of a new AI Safety Institute.

The UK's continued international collaboration efforts through the AI Safety Institute and fora such as the G7 Hiroshima AI Process, Global Partnership on AI (GPAI), the G20, and the UN will continue to advance this conversation, ensuring the entire global community can safely realise the benefits of AI adoption.

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– we are featuring a review of the **#SBS SMALL BUSINESS SUNDAY** event on 23 February

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Contact **Paul Mirage** to be in the next issue
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news

Contractors focus on cash savings at the expense of pensions

The study by Workwell and IPSE found three out of four (75%) save regularly into cash accounts but just over half (51%) put money into their pension each month.

However nearly half (47%) of the contractors, freelancers and people owning their own businesses questioned are debt-free and have cleared any mortgages, credit cards or loans. Around a third (33%) of those questioned owe less than £100,000 in total, the research shows.

Workwell, a service provider to flexible workers and recruiters in the UK and overseas, collaborated with IPSE, a community of over 35,000 self-employed people.

It found around two out of five (39%) of contractors, freelancers and small business owners save regularly into ISAs while around 34% regularly put money into other financial services products such as investments.

Among those who do invest in pensions the average monthly

contribution is around £218 compared with £215 a month going into cash accounts, £237 into ISAs and £184 into other financial services products.

Chris Mollan, Head of Accountancy Services at Workwell said: *"With interest rates rising rapidly in the UK it makes sense for contractors, freelancers and small business owners to focus on cash accounts and they may also need a cash buffer to ensure their business can continue to operate."*

"Ignoring other savings and particularly retirement savings however does come at a price and there are potentially tax benefits to be gained by making contributions into retirement savings via companies as well as tax benefits from other investments. Running a business and doing the work is often challenging enough for contractors, freelancers and small business owners and many would benefit from expert support on tax efficiency."

Clampdown on online sales earnings by HMRC could see almost one in six British workers paying more tax

From the start of the year, the UK is enforcing new rules as part of a global effort to clamp down on tax dodgers by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Firms including Vinted, Airbnb and eBay are obliged to collect and share details of transactions with the tax authorities.

Under the new rules, the digital platforms will routinely report the income sellers are getting through their site which apply to the sales of goods, such as second-hand clothes or handmade items. The threshold for earnings from these sales is set at £1,000 a year – above this, online sellers must register as self-employed and file a self-assessment tax return at the end of the financial year.

According to MoneyZine, one in six British workers is currently working in

the gig economy facilitated by many of the apps. This means that millions of self-employed or small businesses earning more than £1,000 from these kind of sales could be impacted. Failing to declare previous earnings with HMRC could mean they are hit with expensive financial penalties.

Alex Till, Chair of the National Enterprise Network, said the changes were a good reminder that getting support with taxes as part of a business support package either as a self-employed individual or as a startup or micro business is crucial.

"Research shows that working with a professional enterprise adviser leads to better outcomes for startup and micro businesses. Not only does it help entrepreneurs avoid costly mistakes and remain compliant, but the right advice ensures their business ideas can continue to thrive, increase sales and grow profitability."

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property & construction



Construction site security

Northwest-based Leisure Guard Security have acknowledged the growing concerns around construction site security.

Operations Director Saj Kadva commented: "Construction sites have become a common sight across the UK. These sites, while symbols of growth and progress, are also vulnerable to a myriad of threats.

"We safeguard sites across the whole of the UK, and can see from theft and vandalism, to safety breaches and unauthorised access, the challenges are multifaceted. In today's world, where the stakes are high and timelines are tight, ensuring the security of construction sites is not just a necessity but an imperative.

"Most sites are dynamic environments. With heavy machinery, valuable equipment, and a constant influx of workers and contractors – the potential risks are significant. A single security breach can lead to substantial financial losses, not to mention the potential harm to human life and project delays.

"In recognising these challenges, we have developed a suite of services tailored specifically for the construction industry.

"One of the primary threats to sites is theft. Expensive machinery, tools, and materials are often left unguarded, making them easy targets for criminals. Leisure Guard Security's surveillance solutions, which include advanced CCTV systems and real-time monitoring, act as a potent deterrent against such activities. Their presence ensures that any suspicious activity is detected promptly, allowing for swift intervention.

"Vandalism is another concern. Construction sites, especially those in urban areas, can sometimes become targets for graffiti, damage, or other

forms of defacement. We offer round the-clock patrolling services to ensure that such acts are prevented, and if they occur, the culprits are quickly identified.

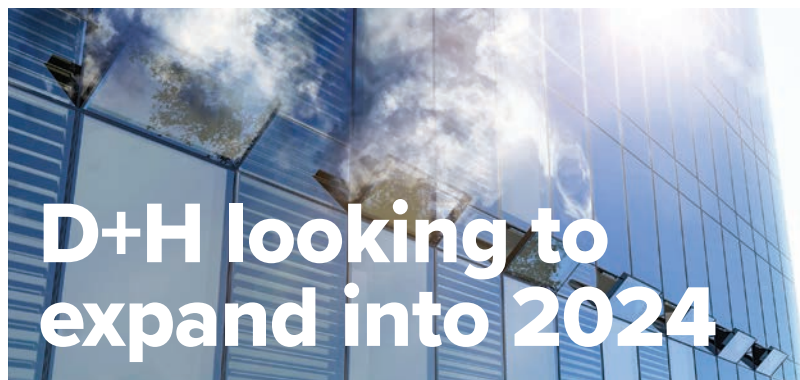
"But it's not just external threats that construction sites need to be wary of. Safety breaches, often unintentional, can lead to accidents, endangering workers and potentially leading to costly lawsuits. Leisure Guard Security's trained personnel are well-versed in safety protocols, ensuring that only authorised individuals access specific areas and that safety guidelines are adhered to.

"Also, in today's digital age, construction sites also house sensitive data, from architectural plans to client information. Our holistic approach ensures that both the physical premises and the digital assets of a construction site are safeguarded. Their state-of-the-art security systems are complemented by cybersecurity measures, ensuring a 360-degree protection umbrella.

"Training is also a cornerstone of our approach. Our security personnel, specifically trained for construction environments, understand the unique challenges these sites present. From identifying potential hazards to managing conflicts, our expertise ensures that security is maintained without hindering the construction process.

"As the construction industry continues to boom in the UK, the importance of robust security measures cannot be overstated. It's about safeguarding investments, ensuring worker safety, and guaranteeing that projects are completed on schedule."

Further information on Leisure Guard Security and their range of specialised construction site services can be found on: leisureguardsecurity.co.uk



D+H looking to expand into 2024

Smoke control and natural ventilation specialists D+H UK are looking to build on recent successes all around Greater Manchester, the North West and beyond.

The Stockport-based contractor is presently working on smoke control projects across a wide range of developments, such as the Stockport Interchange and the Watch Factory housing development in Prescot. Work is also due to start shortly on a new Extra-care scheme in Hattersley, near Stockport.

Managing Director Jon Crossley said "We're not just content with new-build developments. As a business we've got plans in place to grow an impressive portfolio of smoke and natural ventilation refurbishment works within the north-west and further afield this year.

Current projects are seeing us install replacement life-saving smoke vent systems at shopping centres in Bury and Birmingham, as well tower blocks in Leicester and installing new smoke vent louvres in Covent Garden.

"D+H UK has constantly looked to work across diverse markets within property and construction. Our high levels of customer service have also helped us develop close working relationships with Housing Associations - this has provided a significant increase in our portfolio of new service and maintenance contracts across the country."

Further information can be found by visiting dh-partner.co.uk

Cumbrian firm building for success after Sellafield contract win

The Cleator Moor company in West Cumbria, with foundations in the housing and building trade, will support the Programme and Project Partners (PPP) over the next 16-years on key decommissioning projects at the Sellafield site. It becomes the latest small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) to benefit from PPP's pioneering SME Matchmaker Service.

It has secured a spot on a £12 million framework to support key delivery partner Sir Robert McAlpine delivering groundworks and concrete (civils).

In addition, William King will be starting work on the Sellafield Product and Residue Store Retreatment Plant project, worth approximately £4 million.

It's the company's largest project to date and represents a huge boost for itself and west Cumbria's economy.

John Rossiter, head of supply chain for PPP, said: "I'm delighted William King is the next SME to secure a long-term framework with PPP. This work will



help support its future growth and expansion.

"SMEs like William King are vital for us to deliver world class infrastructure and support tangible benefits for the local community. We're excited to see the business and its commitments to West Cumbria continue to flourish."

Will King, founder and managing director of William King Construction Ltd, said: "Securing long-term contracts and frameworks with PPP enables us to grow our business and continue to employ local people. We have a great track record of employing local school leavers. We currently have 6 former apprentices working on PPP projects."

property & construction

The foundations of property investment

We are firmly into a new year, and the allure of property investment is fresh in many people's minds with the advantage of diversifying income streams as well as a solid step onto the wealth creation ladder.

Understanding the foundations of property investment is key to making good initial decisions as well as accelerating your success in this.

After 16 years in the property world, here are some of the key areas I see as the foundation of being a professional property investor.

Location remains key

Whether you're eyeing residential or commercial properties, the importance of location cannot be overstated. Proximity to amenities, transportation hubs, schools, and employment centres significantly influences property value and rental potential.

Conduct thorough research and consider emerging areas with promising growth prospects.

As an added tip visit your investment area day and night (places change!) and also speak to locals like shop keepers, the postman, window cleaners, hairdressers, etc to get a view of the area.

Diversification is a fundamental strategy in mitigating risk and maximising returns in property investment.

Instead of putting all your eggs in one basket, consider spreading your investment across different property types and locations like some Buy to Let, Commercial and Houses of Multiple occupation.

Diversification not only safeguards your investment against market fluctuations, but also opens doors to varied streams of rental income.

In short, start with the end in mind and make a plan.

Financial clarity is key to property investment

Before diving headfirst into Rightmove, assess your financial standing and establish a realistic budget.



Factor in not just the property purchase price but also additional expenses such as maintenance costs, taxes, and mortgage payments.

Review your personal credit score (and guard it like your facemask during COVID), and speak to a great mortgage broker to see what is possible.

How to add value

Can you add a bedroom, cosmetically refurbish, purchase below market value, etc?

If you know what your angle is, this will mean you have options when you find your property.

Keeping a keen eye on market trends and cycles is essential

Monitor changes in property prices, rental yields, and interest rates to understand opportune moments.

While timing the market perfectly is near impossible, it helps to get close to the right strategy for the time!

Reports like the Halifax prices index or Hometrack will give you a good idea of what is going on.

Linked closely to this is your education and upskilling

There are some amazing podcasts, YouTube educators, books and also

plenty of paid training organisations out there for this.

Find people who have done what you want to and learn from them. Do your diligence into the trainers before parting with your cash though.

Building a strong support network and power team will help you navigate the ups and downs.

Engage with seasoned professionals including estate agents, property managers and trades people, etc, who can offer valuable insights and guidance.

It's also vital to surround yourself with like-minded individuals who are in the industry and can answer the questions that you haven't even thought of yet.

Lastly, patience is a virtue in property investment

Halifax wasn't built in a day, and neither are substantial investment returns.

Understand that property investment is a long-term labour of love and requires patience, graft, and a hint of perseverance to get there.

In conclusion, embarking on a journey into property investment demands a solid understanding of its foundational principles.

By understanding location, making a plan, being financially savvy, tuning into market trends, growing a network, and thinking long term, that's the closest you can get to being a successful property investor.

Good luck on your property journey!

Nick Thorpe

A serial entrepreneur and experienced property investor and developer, Nick spends his time coaching and mentoring business owners and property investors:

nickthorpe.me

as well as connecting advance property professionals at The Property Catalyst Club:

propertycatalystclub.co.uk



Nick Thorpe
nick@nickthorpe.me
nickthorpe.me

POPs legislation



warned that they must now incinerate all upholstered waste domestic seating including seating textiles and foams.

Waste upholstered domestic seating containing POPs must not be land filled, mixed with other non-POPs-containing wastes, reused or recycled.

These items must be sent for incineration or used as a fuel in, for example, a cement kiln.

What the Floorbrite Waste Team can do for you

Many companies are still not aware of this change in legislation; however it can cause a costly issue and or fines, as **waste management companies will now refuse skip transportation if contaminated by upholstered furniture.**

However, the Floorbrite Group are able to remove these items from site, strip down the components such as wood and metal for recycling and dispose of the foam and upholstered elements in a safe way.

For customers who produce POPs waste on a regular basis, we can supply individual containers for your waste domestic seating and soft furnishings that may contain POPs.

Also, in the case where production of that waste is minimal, we can collect individual items for you using our pick-up (man and van) service. As always, we will in all cases, provide Waste Transfer Notes that correctly identify your POPs waste and its disposal.

If you would like to discuss this further or have any questions regarding this, or any of your waste management services, please contact us on:

0800 021 3773 or
info@floorbrite.co.uk
floorbrite.co.uk

What is POPs?

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are a group of organic compounds that have toxic properties and chemical substances that don't break down, can travel long distances and persist in the environment.

POPs accumulate in food chains and pose a risk to human health and the environment.

In December 2022 the Environment Agency (EA) issued new guidance on how soft furnishings containing Persistent Organic Compounds (POPs) should be managed, yet so many people are still unaware of it.

How do you know if you have POPs Waste?

Waste domestic seating is any item of seating of a household type from households or businesses that is waste.

Upholstered domestic seating may contain POPs. For example:

- Sofas
- Sofa Beds
- Armchairs
- Kitchen and Dining Room Chairs
- Stools and Foot Stools
- Office Chairs
- Futons
- Bean Bags, Floor and Sofa Cushions

This includes any part made of or containing leather, synthetic leather, other fabric, or foam.

Mattresses, curtains, blinds and beds are NOT domestic seating and are NOT covered by this guidance as are items that are not upholstered, for example, a wooden chair without a cushioned or textile back, seat, or arms.

What the EA guidance means for you

Waste upholstered domestic seating containing POPs must not be mixed with any other waste streams, it must not be broken down and needs to be

stored and handled separately. It must be sorted and stored in a way that prevents:

- Damaging it
- Release of POPs
- Contamination with other waste

POPs waste should be correctly identified and categorised. There is no specific European Waste Catalogue (EWC) code for POPs – in most cases, with sofas, armchairs, etc.

We anticipate using 20 03 07 Household and this must be clearly displayed on your Waste Transfer Notes.

The EA has clarified that it will be measuring compliance against it's regulations. It therefore issued new guidance in December 2022 regarding identifying, classifying, handling and disposing of POPs waste at:
gov.uk/guidance/identify-and-classify-waste-containing-persistent-organic-pollutants-pops

Therefore, councils have now been

"Once you see one, you see them everywhere"



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women in business

ABC+ Warranty - provi

Adele Reid,
Managing Director,
ABC+ Warranty



Adele Reid is the Managing Director of ABC+ Warranty which has been supporting the property and construction sector since 1989. The business offers a range of services to the construction sector but specialises in Structural Warranties and Professional Consultant's Certificates (PCCs).

Adele – please tell us about your journey in what is viewed as a male-dominated business sector?

"Achieving success wasn't a result of magical shortcuts or established procedures. Coming from a working-class family, my ambition was fuelled by the desire to do better than my parents – something they were very keen to instil in me from an early age. They worked long, irregular hours, and luxuries like holidays or dining out were beyond our reach.

"From 13, I juggled three paper rounds, delivering to morning, evening, and

weekend readers. Competitiveness was in my nature, leading me to enjoy various sports at school. During my A-Levels, I balanced extra hours at Deep Pan Pizza, where I became one of the youngest supervisors – it was hard work balancing the hours with my studies.

"My first full-time role post-school was as an Insurance Administrator, where I really enjoyed the busy office environment. I recall the mostly male senior managers and directors of the 1990s, with only one female among the senior team. So to advance my career, I knew outstanding performance was essential.

"At 18, I bought my first house, eager for independence. Shortly after, I qualified as an Insurance Compliance Officer and at the same time realised my true passion: houses!

"By 23, I was married with a baby and

had completed my first barn conversion, followed by a house renovation as an investment, all while maintaining my full-time job. Childcare was challenging, especially during school holidays, as my parents lived in Yorkshire and local schools didn't have the range of pre-school and after school clubs available nowadays. Anticipating the birth of my second child, I studied childcare qualifications and established an after-school and holiday club in High Legh, bringing a great business opportunity alive for the hard-working Mums in the local area.

"The housing bug was still there, and a year later I completed an eco-friendly new build. I was ready for the next venture!"

Tell us about the start of ABC+ Warranty – how you recruit and guide your team?

"My background in insurance and property development led to the creation of ABC+ Warranty. I assembled a team of Chartered Building Surveyors and property specialists, providing national inspection services.

"When I started the business 12 years ago, I already had a breadth of insurance experience AND had successfully renovated, developed and converted a range of different properties myself. Although I had hands-on experience and viewed myself as a professional it didn't make me an expert.

"Recognised industry qualifications are key to building your reputation as a business, and should never go overlooked, however I found 'people' skills and intuition in the form of empathy are crucial attributes for building your team around you.

"Since the inception of ABC+ Warranty, I have trusted my instincts and employed staff that had great customer service skills and showed potential over GCSE or A-Level results. A sound knowledge

of Maths and English undoubtedly goes a long way but that's only the starting blocks.

"Traditional 'female superpowers' are important to how we run our business offering growth opportunities for our colleagues and creating strong customer service experiences.

"Having worked from a young age whilst still studying at school, I naturally developed life skills. Working within customer-facing environments provided plenty of opportunities to work on my confidence and engage with people of all ages and diversities. This is something I try and guide my team to utilise – people naturally develop skills as they progress through life, and sometimes it's easy to forget those lessons, especially within a job that may rely on established ways of working. I try and encourage everyone to use those skills to not just excel in their roles, but to enjoy learning about themselves in the process. Self improvement is so important and also so rewarding for everyone – particularly in a business environment."

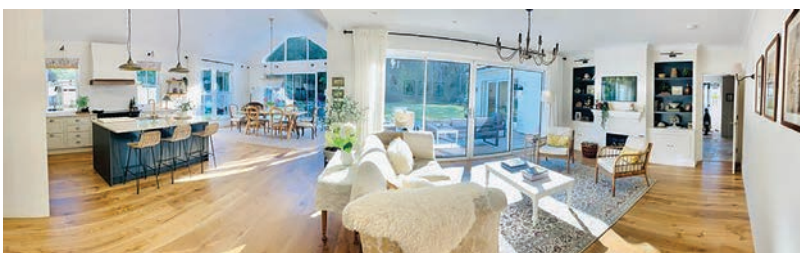
What services do you offer?

"Our services cater to builders, developers, and self-builders, offering a choice between a 10-year or 12-year Structural Warranty, also known as Latent Defects Insurance. We can also provide a Professional Consultant's Certificate (PCC). Both types of certificates meet the requirements of mortgage lenders in the UK, and are necessary for all mortgage lenders after completion of work on UK properties and buildings.

ABC+ Warranty presents a solution for claims related to significant structural issues, which otherwise could impose a substantial financial burden on the homeowner or end user. Additionally, our certificates are compatible with government-supported home purchasing initiatives like the Help to Buy scheme and are also suitable for Housing Associations."

Tell us more about Structural Warranties?

"A Structural Warranty provides a 10-year or 12-year insurance coverage against structural defects in your property resulting from poor craftsmanship or substandard materials.



To acknowledge International Women's Day' on 8 March, Business Connect has put together a special feature in support of Women in Business across the UK, showcasing achievements and championing equality by women at the forefront of British businesses.

In a government report released last year, figures showed nearly 40% of UK FTSE 100 board positions are now held by women, comparing to only 12.5% just over ten years ago, which puts the UK 2nd in international rankings. Although this is the right direction for equality in UK businesses, more still needs to be done. The features over the next few pages celebrate women and the businesses they represent.



International Women's Day

ding the perfect cover

Should any structural damage arise, this policy ensures you are financially compensated to assist with the repair expenses. The duration of this policy is either 10 or 12 years, starting from the date listed on the Building Control Completion Certificate.

"If you are a self-builder, developer, or part of a Housing Association, and you're planning to start a new housing project, considering converting an old barn, or transforming an existing property into multiple flats, it's important to think about securing a Structural Warranty provider. Even if you've already completed properties without valid certification, it's still possible to appoint a Building Surveyor after the construction work is done."

"Having either a Structural Warranty or a Professional Consultant's Certificate (PCC) is a requirement for lenders. Should you wish to sell or remortgage the property in the future, you'll find it necessary to have one of these certificates in place."

You also offer a Professional Consultant's Certificate (PCC) – how does this work?

"A 6-year Professional Consultant's Certificate (PCC), also known as an Architect's Certificate, validates that the finished construction complies with established building standards. This certificate remains effective for six years and is provided after a qualified surveyor conducts a final inspection confirming the satisfactory completion of the project. It's important to note that a PCC differs from a warranty. For broader protection, a 10-year Structural Warranty is recommended. Additionally, there's an option to upgrade from a PCC to a Structural Warranty if needed later."

What is a Retrospective Warranty?

"This type of Structural Warranty is available for properties that have already reached the completion stage of construction. Opting for this warranty at the completion stage is generally costlier compared to engaging a warranty

provider from the start though. The increased cost is due to the fact that the project hasn't been seen from the start of construction, which presents a greater risk to the insurance company underwriting the warranty.

"Moreover, most mortgage lenders favour warranties where the provider has been involved in monitoring the construction work right from the beginning, rather than just at the end."

Why Choose ABC+ Warranty for these services?

"We are an acclaimed Structural Warranty company, recognised with multiple awards, and we offer the most economical warranties available in the UK. Our coverage extends to all property types, be they residential or commercial.

"Our particular approach sets us apart from other providers such as NHBC, Premier, LABC, Protek, Checkmate, BLP, or Advantage Warranty because we don't require holding bonds or charge renewal fees, giving us a competitive edge.

"For those working within a tight budget or facing cash flow challenges, we provide flexible payment options to facilitate efficient project management. Additionally, we are capable of issuing our certifications rapidly, often within hours, as opposed to the weeks it might take others."

How important is ESG to yourselves as a business?

"Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) are terms now recognised for ethical business practices, principles that we as a forward-thinking company, have been implementing for many years.

"It's insufficient to merely adopt



internal policies aimed at enhancing environmental sustainability and ethical business conduct. Our approach has been to actively lead and promote best practices within our industry. For instance, we were among the first in the UK to establish a COVID-secure office during the pandemic. The guidelines we developed for safe client services were subsequently adopted by the UK government as a national standard for safe office operations.

Our commitment extends to championing diversity and equality, especially in the traditionally male-dominated sectors of property and construction. I have been an advocate for this cause, speaking publicly at construction events throughout the UK, such as Grand Designs Live, the Home Building & Renovating shows, and UK Construction Week.

Furthermore, we have contributed insights and recommendations to the New Homes Ombudsman service. Sharing our specialised knowledge is vital for the industry, and I believe that over the past decade, there have been significant positive shifts within the sector that are almost certainly the result of petitioning from strong female leads within the sector. Our work is making a real difference"

What has ABC+ got planned for the future?

"Building on gender equality and



diversification within the sector is really important, and the positive gains so far need to be extended. There is still a lot of work to be done, and it's something I'm very passionate about on an ongoing basis, by public speaking, and delivering thought leadership pieces to the media and through social media.

"As a business we are constantly improving our procedures via automation, which now includes using AI - using artificial intelligence. We've invested in a new website with some fantastic new features, and the site has so far been very well received.

"In addition, we've now added specialist developer finance for lending to developers of medium to larger building projects. This includes bridging loans, residential mortgages, developer finance for all sizes of projects and exit finance for those unexpected snags and last minute improvements.

"These have definitely enhanced our comprehensive suite of services and allowed us to review and develop further services in the future."

Find out more about the certificates and services that ABC+ Warranty provide to the construction and property sector:

0161 928 8804

architectscertificate.co.uk

abc@architectscertificate.co.uk




ABC+ Warranty
architectscertificate.co.uk


Approved Building Certificates and Warranties

An ABC+ Warranty or Certificate is the UK's most cost-effective structural warranty solution.

Requiring no membership or renewal fees, holding bonds or hidden costs, ABC+ is the only **RICS** registered Structural Warranty company in the UK, and offers both 10 and 12 Year Structural Warranties, along with our 6 Year Professional Consultants Certificate for complete peace of mind.

- 10 Year Structural Warranty
- 12 Year Warranty for Housing Associations
- Commercial Warranty
- 6 Year Professional Consultants Certificate
- Site Insurance
- Building Control

- Road Bonds
- Contractors All Risk Insurance
- Developer Insolvency Protection
- Architectural Services
- Stage Payment Certificates
- All Site Inspections










For further information contact our award-winning customer service team on **0161 928 8804** • www.architectscertificate.co.uk • abc@architectscertificate.co.uk

ABC+ Warranty, Century Park, 1 Anchorage Court, Caspian Road, Altrincham WA14 5HH

 07729 647493



women

I think I have bought a networking business!

After working predominantly for multinational businesses in the fashion and homeware sectors, Win Edmondson was taking a sabbatical in 2019 when her husband rang to say he had agreed to buy The Business Network South Manchester – and they could run it together.

"My organisational background helped me to recognise efficiencies and to offer a more cost-effective way for members to pay for their membership."

"Our first meeting in 2019 was attended by 32 members and a handful of visitors who immediately

bought into the new approach – and the membership grew steadily.

"No one was prepared for a pandemic though, however, I took up a zoom account and weekly online meetings cemented the new community we had created."

"In 2022 we purchased the Chester group which results in one of the largest networking groups in the North of England and Wales."

"We now have over 160 members across the two groups ranging from sole director companies to one of the largest property companies in the North West."



Win Edmondson, The Business Network, South Manchester + Chester



Find out more! Email Win on: win@business-network.co.uk

Call **0161 503 5000** or visit: business-network-south-manchester.co.uk/
in

Revealed: The top 10 jobs where women can earn more than men!

New research has discovered the jobs where women can earn more than men, with community and civil enforcement occupations taking the top spot.

The gender pay gap measures the difference in median hourly pay between men and women. Personal finance experts Wealth of Geeks analysed gender pay gap data from the Office for National Statistics.

At the top of the list is community and civil enforcement occupations (traffic wardens, etc). Women in this occupation earn an average of £16.11 per hour, while men earn £3.61 less at £12.50 per hour; this is a pay gap of 28.9%.

Welfare professionals are second with a pay gap of 20.9%. The main duties in this job role are to mentor, advocate for, and provide rehabilitation services to individuals, as well as overseeing the process of adoption.

Third are biological scientists, with a pay gap of 20.6%. Women earn an average of £20.30 per hour, while the

average hourly wage for men is £3.46 less at £16.84.

Next on the list is hire services managers and proprietors with a pay gap of 20.3%. Fifth are personal assistants and other secretaries, with a pay gap of 17.1%.

Special needs education teaching professionals are sixth, Veterinarians are seventh, and eighth on the list is occupational therapy. Women in this job earn an average of £20.85 hourly, while men earn £18.42, a difference of £2.43 or 13.2%.

Social and humanities scientists are ninth and bringing up tenth place are Publicans and managers of licenced premises. This role has a pay gap of 11.4%, with women earning an average of £15.10 hourly, while men earn £13.55.

The information in this review may be interesting, but underlines the type of roles that women get paid more than men on average. The highest paid role for any of these jobs is for a veterinarian, where the average pay for a women is just over £25 per hour. There is a distinct lack of higher paid roles that can only be assumed to reflect the disparity still in place between genders.

Empowering Solo Architects

Pride Road Architects is a women owned UK-wide franchise practice – or business in a box – started by Lisa Raynes in 2016.

"Headquartered in Manchester, we specialise in turning houses into dream homes, whether by adding a room, reconfiguring the existing space, or doing a two-storey extension."

"So, if your space isn't working for you, and moving isn't possible get in touch and see how we could improve it!"

"I created Pride Road to share my knowledge and business model with any architect who would like to follow in my footsteps and have a good income with a much better balance between their home life and profession." Lisa Raynes



The foundations of Pride Road Architects are based on empowering women architects who have faced pay and career disparities.

"We recognise that women architects have the ambition and appetite for their own practices, and also welcome being part of group, a 'pride' if you like."

"Our franchisees can jump straight into marketing their architecture services, because they already have brand recognition and strong



The Pride Road 'Lionesses' L-R Laura Simpkins, Magda Haener, CEO Lisa Raynes, Sandy Hickey, Shuhra Rahman

digital assets. These things are set up as part of the comprehensive and enjoyable onboarding process, and backed by the central office team of business coaching, technicals, IT and marketing specialists."

"Working together is fundamental to how we do business, building a network of trusted property industry professionals."

Pride Road often hosts Constructive

Together networking events with the goal of building a roster of referral partners – do get in touch with Lisa if you'd like to come along sometime and meet everyone.

This International Women's Day, Helen Reddy's iconic song is on our minds...

We are women, Hear us roar!



Find out more!

lisa@prideroad.co.uk

07989 744336

prideroad.co.uk

f



International
Women's Day

in business

Viva la... France Line



Marie Boyer,
Managing Director,
France Line International
Transport Ltd

Marie Boyer is the dynamic owner and managing director of France Line International Transport Ltd, the Manchester-based freight forwarding company which specialises in transport and customs services for cross channel freight between the UK and France.

We chatted to Marie as part of our Women in Business feature to learn more about France Line and how Marie sees herself in a traditionally male-dominated sector:

Marie – please tell us how you became owner and managing director of France Line?

"My journey to owner and managing director of France Line started with a chance presentation at Manchester university, where I was on a student exchange programme from my native France.

"I was in the last year of my degree in English and Spanish with business. At that point I was thinking of a career in manufacturing or export, but we had a presentation on transport and logistics and I thought 'oh, that sounds interesting'."

"I began as a graduate trainee with France Line in 1996, quickly gained more responsibilities and became Operations Supervisor and then branch manager in 2008.

"I was successfully running and growing the company without the involvement of its two French shareholders – two

hauliers who had set up the business in 1980 to provide their trailers with backloads into France.

"I had introduced a new business model centred on our customers' needs and was developing new services.

"Once they neared retirement, it made sense for us to discuss a MBO and we had an independent valuation made. A price was agreed, and the contracts were exchanged in 2016, twenty years after I joined the company."

Freight forwarding has traditionally been a male dominated industry – please share with us your own experience within the sector?

"My own experience has always been positive. I have always felt welcomed and appreciated within the industry.

"I am not sure many (if any) of our clients care about the gender of the person at the helm. What matters to them is how you engage with them, our company's values of honesty, reliability, customer service and going the extra mile for them and us developing a partnership with them rather than just being a haulier."

"Over the years, I have employed more women than men, but I have never viewed gender as a factor. What matters to me are the skills, and how they fit into and perform within our team.

"It is also worth pointing out that things have changed somewhat over the past few years and that there

are more and more women in the transport and logistics industry, mainly due to different initiatives to promote the industry and the opportunities it offers to women.

"I was actually actively involved in highlighting these great opportunities when I was a steering member of the networking group Women in Logistics."

Do you see a difference in management styles between men and women?

"I am not sure if there is a difference.

"My own perspective is to engage with our customers and team, to listen to our clients' needs, create growth opportunities and new services by responding to these needs, and to lead and manage so that our team achieves our SMART objectives."

Tell us about the services France Line offer – what are the advantages of choosing France Line?

"For a long time we positioned ourselves purely as the French road freight specialist. With an award-winning French bilingual team knowing France inside out it was the natural choice.

"Some years ago, however, we expanded beyond France and into mainland Europe. To date, although France remains our core proposition, we also have export and import services to and from all the other main Western and Eastern European countries. And for all the countries we service, we handle standard freight,

but also express and out of gauge shipments.

"Post Brexit, we also offer customs services and one of the strong credentials for France Line is the ability to offer a complete service of transport and customs to both our manufacturing customers but also the larger forwarders we work with."

You have just had a record-breaking year. What do you put that down to?

"Doing the right thing by our customers. Delivering on time and providing a high level of customer service, as well as supporting our customers with our up-to-date knowledge of customs procedures. We also had some interesting project work last year that helped us register a record turnover.

"The feedback we receive most often is 'I know my freight is in safe hands' and 'you make my job and life easier'."

"The past few years have been extremely challenging for both exporters and importers. Our success has been built on the simplest of concepts: when our customers need better, cheaper and more efficient ways to get their goods to and from France and Europe, we help make it simple."

What are your plans for the future?

"We intend to carry on moving onwards and upwards, and plan to celebrate France Line's 45th birthday in April 2025 on a high and in style!"



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women

Building **wealth** through strategic management

Christiane Hutchinson has developed and implemented a value building approach for businesses over 25 years in the traditionally male-dominated sector of strategic management consulting.

Christiane has developed a framework, and moving towards SaaS, showcasing a successful career offering those skills within various successful strategic management consultancies. No stranger to the boardroom, she has advised and guided many businesses through a specific set of growth phases culminating in an exit strategy for the founders and onward growth for a successful legacy.

"Exit strategy planning is not just about the numbers. I've been developing and testing my approach to business value growth over many years, resulting in a measurable value growth framework."

Visit our Value Diagnostic on the following link: wealth-teck.com/business-value-diagnostic/

"I'm CEO of Wealth Teck, and in line with the successful modelling we impart to our clients, we apply the same positive tracking to our own business."

"One of the principle actions to follow is to build a great management team around you. This is particularly relevant to any eventual exit strategies, but it's also crucial in adding value to any business. Any buyer will not want to buy you, no matter how brilliant you are!"

"I am working alongside Finance Director Alan Tilley, and Head of



WEALTH TECK
Empowering Your Value Creation

Operations Steve Eccles. Both are renowned figures within the wealth creation sector, and it's very interesting that the dynamic between mixed genders on any board can absolutely add value to that business.

"We practice what we preach because it works so well. We are working now on growing the team. Our aim is to create a global niche in value creation."

"Our view to growth and value involves a multi-disciplinary approach. We maximise revenue not just through top line growth, but by adopting a range of strategies to attract new clients, also building on relationships with existing clients by upselling and cross selling to them."

"We aim to embed operational excellence across all functions, taking the reins in our application of strategic value creation and management. Generating surplus cash is our aim... going to the source of that very area of performance."

"This all nicely dovetails into a value proposition that can be timed, measured and controlled, giving our owners and founders the ability to plan according to their needs and aspirations. It's not simply about getting as much value out of exiting your business asset when you want to, but to ensure what you've built and developed carries on adding value and sustainable longevity to staff, shareholders and the immediate community your business has grown from, and society at large."



Christiane Hutchinson, CEO, Wealth Teck

Find out more! **0161 475 1011** wealth-teck.com
in [Linkedin.com/in/christiane-hutchinson-1151613](https://www.linkedin.com/in/christiane-hutchinson-1151613)



Kelly Gilmour-Grassam,
Director,
Making You
Content

They say time flies when you're having fun... it goes even faster when you're running a business!

"Making You Content" is heading towards its 10th birthday, and it's a total pinch-me moment.

"I'm extremely proud of the team, reputation and client base that our content agency has built over the years, and I'd be lying if I said I ever imagined us getting to where we are today when I first started out!"

"Making You Content began from freelance roots. At the time, there were plenty of content writers out there, but not many agencies

Celebrating **10 years** of making clients content

dedicated to helping brands get their message right. When you googled 'copywriting agency', nothing really came up. I decided to change that.

"From the start, we wanted to do things differently. For me, writing and editing are two very distinct jobs but both equally critical to creating stand-out, consistent content."

"So, I set about building a team of copywriters and editors who could help me serve our growing client base."

"One thing soon became clear: most clients needed more than just the written word. They wanted advice on strategy, content dropped into designs, and help pushing their value out into the world."

"It wasn't long before we evolved from exclusively offering copywriting to become a more rounded content

agency – providing an end-to-end, yet very niche, service within the marketing space."

"This evolution enabled us to really accelerate our growth. We started picking up more established businesses, including blue-chip clients and even household names."

"It also made us more resilient; while there's still very much a place for copywriting post-generative AI, our support with strategy and delivery has made our service much 'stickier' – especially for fast-growth brands where we act more as an outsourced marketing team than a content agency."

My biggest lesson along the way?

"Always be open to change. Sometimes the thing you fear happening the most ends up being the opportunity you didn't know your business needed."

"It's this agility as a leader and a business that has allowed Making You Content to hold strong through tough times – and help our clients keep pace with market developments."

"As we celebrate a decade in business, I'm looking forward to seeing what the future brings for MYC and continuing to build our reputation as a trusted marketing agency for ambitious brands."

Making You Content is a leading provider of strategic content solutions to high-growth businesses.

To find out more about how they can help, email info@makingyoucontent.com, call **0161 660 9206** or check out their website: makingyoucontent.com
f X in d

MYC



International
Women's Day

in business

Strategies to plug the gender imbalance in leadership

According to government-backed research, nearly 40% of UK FTSE 100 board positions are now held by women, which suggests that British businesses are gradually getting female employees in higher, more influential roles. While this is a promising statistic, it has also been found that 45.7% of these roles were in non-executive positions. So, more needs to be done.

As well as hindering the career of individual women, the gender gap in leadership positions can limit a company's potential, too. In fact, inclusive and diverse organisations are 50% more likely to make better decisions and 36% more likely to have higher efficiency levels.

What strategies can you put in place to plug the gender gap in senior executive roles?

Dominic Fitch, Head of Creative Change at leadership development specialist: Impact, shares some tips on how to start minimising the gender gap in higher roles.

Set up strengths- and skills-based development plans

Professional, strengths-focused plans in place for emerging women employees can

be put in place. Generally, women are more likely to undervalue or underestimate their potentialities. Setting up development plans that aim at identifying and leveraging people's capabilities is an effective way to recognise individuals' strengths.

Educate senior executives about the importance of leadership diversity

Diverse leadership can help attract new talent from all backgrounds and walks of life, as candidates want to see themselves represented at the top level. This way, as an organisation, you have a better chance to find the best fit for the role.

What's more, diversity in leadership is crucial to retaining valid employees who are currently facing challenges. In some instances, female higher-ups might be able to relate better to women in their team and identify more adequate ways to improve work satisfaction and minimise turnover.

So, educating your current executive leaders about the importance of (gender) diversity in leadership can

benefit the company. With a more diverse and inclusive range of individuals in executive positions, you can ensure your staff is as happy as can be, which will then help drive your organisation forward.

Where possible, think about reviewing your internal paternity leave policy.

As things stand, employees on paternity leave in the UK are entitled to two weeks off work, but this doesn't prevent companies from offering the new parent a more generous policy.

As well as allowing the new dad to spend more precious time with their baby, this can benefit the mother in a number of ways, both personally and professionally. In fact, it can have a positive impact on the fair advancement of women's careers, as longer paternity leaves allow both parents to flexibly share their childcare responsibilities.

More balance in childcare duties can help ease the pressure on women, meaning they can allocate more time

and energy to focus on progressing in their role and climbing the company ladder.

Tackle gender bias in leadership recruitment

Another method to plug the gender gap in leadership and promote more higher-up opportunities for women is to actively tackle bias in the recruitment process.

To do so, provide your recruitment team with ample training on the existence and dangers of unconscious bias. This should cover anything from stereotypes to the importance of diversity in the workplace.

You may also want to consider standardising your job description. In what way? For instance, you could use gender-neutral language, focus on required skills and experience, and reduce references to gender-specific traits.

With a few tweaks in your recruitment process, you will be able to attract a wider pool of talented candidates and encourage more women to apply for leadership roles.

Designing a successful architectural practice

Ellen Kitson RIBA is a chartered architect and director of KITSON Architecture Ltd based in Altrincham. The practice recently reached a milestone, celebrating a decade of fantastic growth.

"A university friend visiting from the USA recently asked me why I had a framed print of the Sheffield University Arts Tower in my home.

"I had never studied there, hence her curiosity; however, Sheffield was my hometown, and as a teenager I was invited to spend a day at my local university.

"I had always been artistic and was continually drawing, but in the eighties we were told that science was the future, so I was interested in a career as a biochemist.

"I had a great morning in the laboratories with the scientists; however, in the afternoon I took the paternoster lift to the top of the Arts Tower to visit the architecture department and immediately knew that was my destiny.

"After many years of study, I qualified as an architect in 1998 and became a chartered member of the RIBA.

"I spent 16 amazing years working in Manchester city centre for an established commercial firm. I dipped my toe in the water and started networking. Women in Property really opened up the world in terms of meeting like-minded professionals, and

I soon joined the committee and started organising events.

"Then came the shocking news that the company was closing, a casualty of the recession.

"Five days later, KITSON Architecture opened for business. Since then, we have built a busy commercial architectural practice from our office in the heart of Altrincham.

"We were welcomed with open arms by the vibrant local business community, and soon the company started to thrive. We now work across the length and breadth of the UK and across all sectors, including data centres, hotel and leisure, retail, commercial, healthcare, and residential.

"As a director, I am still extremely 'hands-on' at all stages of a project, and I love working with clients old and new. I also enjoy mentoring the future generation of architects."



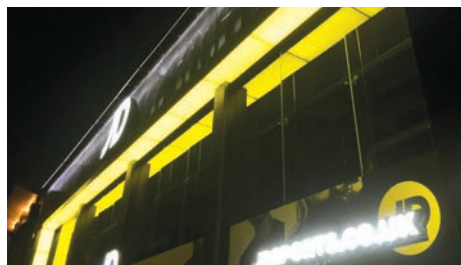
Ellen Kitson,
Kitson
Architecture



Learn more about the amazing work Ellen has completed:

**ellen@kitson
architecture.co.uk**,
call **0161 637 2764** or visit:
kitsonarchitecture.co.uk

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meeting mandate

The science behind running

by **Phil Jones MBE, Managing Director, Brother UK**

UK office workers are spending too much time in meetings to do their job properly and it's having a real impact on workplace productivity.

There's a breadth of scientific research and academic theory that can help businesses nurture a culture where meetings can be productive.

That means holding meetings that lead to meaningful results in an appropriate time, where everyone feels valued.

So, here's the science bit. What are the three theories you need to know?

Theory 1 : Tuckman's Stages of Group Development

Effective meeting facilitation is vital. But it's not something you can learn and implement overnight. It takes practice and a culture that supports and encourages proper facilitation.

To help, Bruce Tuckman's four stages of group development is a well-accepted theory from the 1960s that provides a good framework to work from.

It asks meeting facilitators to consider the cohesion and familiarity of any group for them to direct accordingly. And while it is a challenge at first to use all of these steps in a 30-minute meeting, it's achievable with practice. Here they are:

1. Forming : This is the stage where the group meets. Attendees are typically polite but guarded. The role for a facilitator is to help the team understand their roles and responsibilities, while establishing a sense of purpose and common goal for the meeting, to help take them to the next stage.

2. Storming : This is where roles and relationships are developed. Leadership and structural issues often dominate this stage, which can be a powder keg for conflict. Facilitators need to be direct, alert, keep teams on track and resolve any problematic conflicts that emerge within the group.

3. Norming : After power struggles comes cohesion, familiarity and trust.

In a group project exercise, for example, it's where plans, timelines and responsibilities are agreed. Facilitators should flex from having a directive role to more of a supporting presence, as the group takes on more autonomy. But facilitators can't let their guard down to new conflict.

4. Performing : Here, the team achieves strong, productive collaboration. They're comfortable in their goals, roles and responsibilities while motivated to get things done competently. Facilitators need to empower the team by celebrating contributions and achievements.

Theory 2 : The Mere Urgency Effect

There's a big difference between tasks that are urgent and those that are important.

We all know that the jobs on our to-do list that are the most time-sensitive are not always the same jobs that will deliver the highest rewards or move us most effectively towards our goals.

Unfortunately, studies of human behaviour show that we are not very good at prioritising tasks that are truly important over those that are merely urgent.

Let's say, for example, you have set a day aside to complete a key task that will take a lot of focused time. When the day arrives, it can be difficult to avoid spending time responding to requests because of the apparent urgency of responding.

Having a diary full of meetings only exacerbates this effect, as there is a strong temptation to prioritise your list of tasks based on which meeting you will be participating in soonest, rather than which is genuinely more important or higher-reward.

Setting boundaries for meetings, time management techniques and delegation are each important to manage the balance of meeting and preparing for meetings against the focus time needed to fulfil priorities.

Theory 3 : Parkinson's Law

"Work expands to fill the time available for its completion."

This all-too-familiar 'law' was, actually first identified and described by a historian, Cyril Northcote Parkinson, in 1957.

It will be familiar to anybody that has found themselves working on a task they had a month to complete the night before the deadline.

When they're poorly managed, meetings can be a major culprit when it comes to filling up the available working time.

In our survey, we found that 81% of respondents said most of the meetings they attend could be shorter. And more than half (59%) said that people waffling and unproductive meeting conversation, was the chief culprit for time wasting.

It's important to maintain the mindset that meetings happen in order to accomplish tasks, not to fill up allotted slots in the diary.

The insight here is get to the point and finish the meeting when you've done what you set out to accomplish.

Our three key takeaways

These theories provide us with three clear priorities and while they sound simple, our research shows that ignoring them is negatively impacting employees and creating significant time pressure.

- Proper facilitation is often lacking and should be applied to every meeting
- Managers need to be more stringent on who is invited to meetings and introduce better boundary setting to give staff more time back
- Get to the point of a meeting quickly and finish when the objectives have been achieved – stop expanding the conversation to fill the allotted time.

Ten mandates for meaningful meetings

Looking at this in more detail, 2,000 UK office workers were polled recently to get a clearer insight behind the science.

Shared experiences of UK office meeting culture were gathered to bring you ten mandates for running meetings that lead to meaningful outcomes.

1. Stop and think: can I cover this in an email?

More than half (55%) of UK office workers say meetings are stopping them getting work done effectively, and one way to prevent meeting overload is to stop and think about whether any given get-together or catch-up is necessary.

Got something to brief your teams on? An ad hoc update on a project to a client? Perhaps it could be covered in an email, or a quick one-to-one with the person that really matters. It could save your teams a lot of time.

2. Think in-person first

Hybrid, flexible working may make scheduling in-person meetings more challenging. And organisers should factor in where people will be travelling from and whether the need for the meeting warrants attendees making long journeys.

Research uncovered a big gap in the perceived outcomes of face-to-face vs virtual meetings. When asked what type of meeting they found the most productive, half (50%) said face-to-face in the office, compared to 24% that said virtual meetings.

In-person meetings are typically preferred for complex problem solving and relationship building.

3. Hold meetings between 9am and midday

We asked office workers what times of day they feel most productive in a meeting. Four in five (82%) agreed between 9am and 12pm was best.

Only 10% responded with times after 3pm.

So, time can have significant influence on meeting productivity.

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4. Only invite the people you really need

More than one in three (38%) will accept a meeting invite, even when they're not relevant, because somebody more senior invited them.

So, one way to help free-up colleagues' time is to consider whose input is essential, and who else might just want to see an actions report over attending.

Plus, think of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' two pizza rule: no meeting should be so big that two pizzas can't feed the whole group.

5. Could your meeting be shorter?

Four in five (81%) office workers also say that they could achieve the same outcomes even if their meetings were shorter. This idea is backed up by academic theory too. Parkinson's Law outlines how work expands to meet the time allocated to it, and the same could be said for meetings.

With that in mind, it's vital to avoid scheduling overly long meetings and to ensure they finish on time.

Consider allocating a specific amount of time to each agenda item. Then, when time's up, move on.

6. Pick a facilitator

More than half of our survey group (55%) said they go to too many poorly facilitated meetings.

The facilitator plays a crucial role in an effective meeting. They make sure a meeting has objectives and enables the session to deliver on them.

It's also their job to introduce attendees if necessary, to give everyone chance to speak and to keep discussion on-topic.

The logical facilitator for any meeting is the person who's organising the meeting, so if you're sending meeting invites to your co-workers, you should be prepared to act as facilitator and keep the meeting you scheduled on track so it's productive for all attendees.

7. Share a meeting agenda ahead of time

More than three quarters of respondents (78%) said they need an agenda ahead of any given meeting.

It's important to let every attendee know what contribution they're going to make in the meeting, and what they need to prepare for as far in advance of the meeting as possible, with a reminder closer to the day.

This will increase the quality of the discussion, and reduce the risk of needing to run a follow-up session to cover off aspects of the meeting that weren't completed because people weren't properly prepared.

8. Take and share meeting notes

Nearly three quarters (73%) of our survey responders say they want to see action notes circulated following sessions.

Efficient meetings result in a clear, shared understanding of what's needed next from everyone involved. The key to this is to ensure that all actionable items, takeaways, and decisions are recorded and shared with attendees after the meeting.

The key to good note taking is to allow people who didn't attend the meeting to quickly understand the outcomes quickly. When there is a culture of effective, reliable reporting of meetings in a company, it's easier for non-essential people to make the decision not to attend, freeing up their time for productive work.

9. Give everyone the opportunity to participate

Research by the Kellogg School of Management shows that in a typical meeting of six people, two do more than 60% of the talking. In a group of eight, three people do 70%. Assuming that rule four is being followed, and everyone participating in the meeting has a good reason to be there, this is probably a sub-optimal balance.

Useful insights risk being missed if attendees that are not naturally confident in dominating the floor are not given a chance to participate.

Facilitators can help people come to the meeting prepared, helping everyone to feel confident in

contributing valuable insights. They should also help to bring less-assertive attendees into discussions.

10. Discourage devices

It's harder to focus when you're multitasking – scrolling social media, checking emails, or replying to messages.

Regularly checking our phones has become normalised and this habit is increasingly creeping into meetings, sometimes to the detriment of focused discussions. Almost half (44%) of our survey said they suspect colleagues of doing other work instead of paying attention.

When leading a meeting, whether in person or virtual, it's fair to ask attendees at the outset to resist the temptation to

check their messages and give their full attention to the topic in hand.

Be the meaningful meeting organiser

With the average office worker subjected to 172 meaningless meetings every year, there's ample room for the UK to collectively up its meeting game.

If you're guilty of organising needless meetings, following these mandates could help you to deliver better outcomes from meetings, without wasting your colleagues' time.

Collectively, we could hand back hundreds of thousands of hours to companies each year for more productive means.



Phil Jones MBE, Managing Director, Brother UK

For more business insights and thought leadership articles visit Brother UK's Spark Blog :

brother.co.uk/business-solutions/insights-hub/blog

You can follow Phil Jones MBE on LinkedIn and X : @philjones40

insurance

Bringing a **personal touch** to arranging the **perfect cover**



Steve Marrs,
Client
Director,
Konsileo

There are plenty of 'off-the-shelf' commercial insurance products available, however, there comes a time when a business needs a personal approach to arranging business cover specifically tailored to their exact needs.

This is where commercial insurance brokers can dovetail the very best products, for the very best price.

However, not all brokerages are the same.

Business Connect caught up with Steve Marrs, Client Director at Konsileo - an independent commercial insurance broker that offers a fresh approach to arranging commercial cover.

Steve covers the Northwest region and works within Konsileo's local hub specialising in a wide range of sectors. These include, construction and property, fleet and courier, hospitality

and leisure, manufacturing, media and creative, motor trade, professional and financial, public, not-for-profit, education, retail, science and technology, and transport, storage and distribution insurance.

With regards the presence of the local hub, it is the No.1 community hub within Konsileo presently. This community is made up of other Client Directors located in the same region who are able to provide essential and technical support to each other, which in turn enables you to enjoy a service that is second to none.

Steve commented: "My role as Client Director revolves around the broking and management of Business Insurance policies and portfolios, predominantly property, liability, financial lines, motor, and marine insurance.

"My previous experience has provided me with a comprehensive understanding of commercial underwriting principles, as well as the ability to accurately assess and advise on risks within your business.

"In addition, I have a wide cross-class of expertise of insurance products, a good understanding of contracting law and good technical knowledge of general insurance, aided by my CII qualification."

Why is Konsileo unique?

"Your business is unique. So are we.

"This is why I take the time to really get to know you and the intricacies of your business to provide the most appropriate insurance programme.

"I pay attention to the smallest of details, including what your endorsements mean in your policy, to provide a positive experience from start to finish. It doesn't end there though.

"All businesses grow and evolve, and the unique selling point that Konsileo can deliver stems from the structure of our business.

"Geographically, we have Client Directors located all over the UK and Ireland, which enable us to work as a collaborative network, visiting clients regularly, to understand exactly how their businesses work on a personal and local level.

"We are collaborators, partners – engaging and asking questions all the time in order to bring together the most suitable cover based on the specific individual needs of a business.

"This is why we are a large team allocated specific regions across the UK. We need to engage personally to

offer the very best cover at the very best price. In this respect Konsileo are absolutely disruptors in our sector.

"This industry is also sometimes seen as somewhat speculative. It's incredibly important to us to follow our promise – to **Protect Your Business. Properly.**"

How much contact do you have with your clients?

"As a broker, I make it my duty to stay in touch with my clients throughout the year.

"As businesses grow and develop, a lot can change, be it additional risks to consider, to maintaining adequate sums insured and indemnity limits.

"Therefore, it is vital to maintain a good working relationship, with regular touch-points throughout the lifecycle of your policies. This ensures that we can keep your policy effective and ensure it reacts as it is supposed to, should a claim occur.

"If your broker isn't aware of changes that could affect your policy, this could result in a claim not being paid.

"Therefore, I make sure to keep in touch and stay relevant with my clients and provide a positive experience throughout."



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Find out more - contact **Steve Marrs** on:

0161 240 6494 **steve.marrs@konsileo.com**
konsileo.com



gmcc news



Greater Manchester
Chamber of Commerce

Greater Manchester Chamber reveals **Building of the Year** shortlist

Greater Manchester Chamber has announced the shortlist for the Building of the Year Award 2023.

The following six buildings have been shortlisted for the prestigious award:

- **New Victoria**
- **National Cycling Centre**
- **Hello Future (Manchester Museum)**
- **Aviva Studios (The Factory)**
- **Angel Square (NOMA)**
- **The Christie Paterson Building**

The aim of the award is to recognise a building's contribution to Greater Manchester in terms of construction and development.

This could include the building's



significance to the City Region, its impact on the local economy, its effect on the local community, its importance in terms of urban regeneration and environmental enhancement, its design excellence, or its contribution to urban design and townscape.

Previous winners include:

Energy House 2.0 (2022),

RHS Garden Bridgewater (2021),

The Oglesby Centre at Halle St Peters (2020),

Manchester Alliance Business School (2019),

The Christie Proton Beam Therapy Centre (2018),

Oldham Town Hall (2017)

Maggie's Manchester (2016),

The Whitworth (2015),

Manchester Central Library (2014)
and No. 1 Riverside, Rochdale (2013).

The winning building will be announced at the GM Chamber Property & Construction Awards Dinner, which takes place on Thursday 29 February at Imperial War Museum North.

The winner of the Steve Burne Apprentice of the Year Award will also be revealed at the highly regarded black-tie event, which will be hosted by TV presenter Roger Johnson.

£120+VAT for Chamber members

£150+VAT for non-members

Tickets can be booked online at:
gmchamber.co.uk/events/property-construction-awards-dinner-2024/

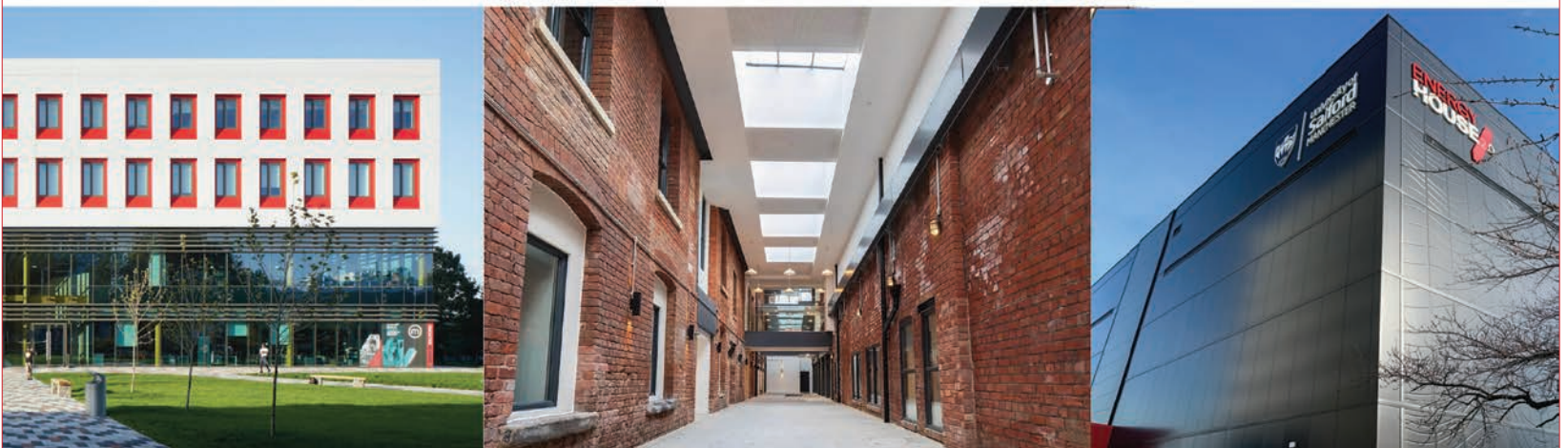
Tables are available in formations of 10 – to book a full table of 10 email events@gmchamber.co.uk direct.

Sponsorship packages are available for the dinner – email diane.elebertmorgan@gmchamber.co.uk for more information:

For more information on how to get involved please contact Diane Elebert-Morgan: Diane.ElebertMorgan@gmchamber.co.uk
07740 196476 Visit: gmchamber.co.uk



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#SBS small business

Taking a closer look at

The BIG INTERVIEW

#SBS Small Business Sunday is one of the foremost networks for small businesses in the UK. With 4,000 active members, the organisation has been nurturing and supporting small businesses since 2010 when retail entrepreneur Theo Paphitis - the 'Godfather to Small Businesses' - created the network.

Every week 6 new businesses are chosen by Theo who in turn promotes them across his personal Twitter and Instagram network.

Business Connect Magazine is very pleased to be invited to Birmingham in February to take part in the annual #SBS event hosting 1,000 winners, plus guest speakers and leading industry figures, as well as Theo himself.

In support of the event, Theo has shared an exclusive interview with us talking about his passion for small businesses:

As a successful business entrepreneur at the forefront of a large business group, what makes you so keen to help small businesses?

"I know exactly how lonely it is to find yourself struggling to make sense of running a small business. The late nights, finding yourself trying to understand a business plan as

the clock strikes midnight. Wondering how to raise capital, what to spend it on to guarantee growth for your fledgling start-up.

"It's a situation that all entrepreneurs find themselves in regularly, especially at the beginning of their journey. The feeling that you're the only one that can navigate the correct course for your business and that you're completely on your own is something that resonates very strongly with me.

"It doesn't need to be this way though. The fact is there are tens of thousands of small businesses

out there going through exactly the same kind of self reflection. Not just businesses at the start of their journey, but at many stages of their growth.

"It was this that inspired me to create Small Business Sunday. My vision was to create a friendly club, where like-minded business owners can share their stories, problems, needs and learnings. It's a place where people don't have to take a lonely path to make their business choices, they can share and compare those experiences with others, and hopefully make better informed decisions about their journey."

What types of businesses are in the #SBS network, and are there any that stand out?

"There are so many different businesses within the network. From a kitchen table operation run as a side hustle to a day job, through to multi-million pound businesses that I've seen grow and grow at an incredible pace since winning #SBS, there are so many different styles and sectors in the mix.

"Rather than specific businesses that stand out, it's the sheer diversity that shines through. We have an incredible range of different demographics that goes to show there's something for everyone to aspire to, and success can come in many different forms."

What would you say are the most important skills or attitudes in making a business successful?

"Well, the first thing you have to do right is to understand what you're doing. It may sound simple, but you need to have a passion for seeing your idea turn into a working business, and to understand why you're building it in the first place. This drive will

get you through the incredible hard work bringing your idea to life.

"If you have the passion, it can be quite lonely, and you can never seem to switch off in your drive to get the business moving. However, with tenacity and a little bit of luck, your dream can become real.

"There's an old business adage which I've always used since day one of my own journey, and that is the harder I work the luckier I seem to get. Luck is about that chance meeting with a dream client that takes your business on a steep curve upwards, and the more effort you put into a business always increases the chances of those lucky opportunities."

How would you approach funding for a small business that can't go through the usual channels?

"Funding can be a real issue for businesses at all stages of their growth. We have many opportunities to find out more about funding at our #SBS event in February, not least the support from NatWest as one of our partners offering help through their small business accelerator programme. This gives advice and showcases support opportunities from not just NatWest but many other areas of alternative funding, including government grants as well as other investment vehicles.

"It is tough out there, but you've got to go and search for the right financial support. Talking about different types of finance with other businesses is a great start, and also being clear on strategy is very important. You could borrow big to grow fast or take a measured approach with reduced risk, but there isn't actually one best way of financing.

"Some businesses need a large investment that offer a critical mass to grow, however, some benefit from a more organic pace keeping borrowing down



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Small Businesses

with Theo Paphitis

in favour of a slower growth. It's horses for courses, but the key point is you need to understand the best path for your business and have that decision already made in your mind when you start your business journey."

How do you see traditional retail businesses developing over the next few years – particularly on the high street?

"The marketplace has been changing rapidly over the last 10 to 12 years, particularly with the challenge of the online sector. I don't think there will ever be a situation where the high street would be gone, particularly when figures like those posted recently from great physical retailers like Marks & Spencer show strength in specific high street offers."

"Unfortunately we still have to navigate that dreaded, and I do say dreaded tax, which is business rates. Yes – there is some small respite at the moment, but the whole system of physical and virtual marketplace taxation needs to be looked at."

Which external services are important for a small business to put in place?

"You can sub-contract most of the elements that are required for the successful day to day running of a business. In terms of costs and flexibility, there are a great choice of alternative suppliers and services available. For example, websites come at budget prices with added functionality – ecommerce, customer engagement, automated stock control for example. Somebody's out there offering full suites of services, many under the one umbrella, from payments, marketing, PPC to hosting and creating a website from scratch."

"The important thing is to choose the right partners based on your actual needs as a business. This is where listening to other

businesses is so important to identify the correct levels of investment in those outside services."

When or what should a business owner look out for when it's time to walk away?

"It's easy to say a positive bank balance is the simple answer to business success, but the reality can be much more subtle. There are many businesses that have exceptionally good turnovers, and it's easy to see the transactions creating a false sense of security. As they say 'Turnover is Vanity, Profit is Sanity' – no-one wants to be a busy fool, and it's sometimes easy to get carried away with a rapid turnover of stock."

"A close examination of running and ongoing costs, investment, profits and general financial health of a business can highlight a business growing whilst at the same time seeing declining profit margins mirroring the growth."

"It's situations like these that need reviewing to see if improvements can be made. It may be raising the price of the products may help the situation, but not at the cost of reduced sales."

"You've started this business with passion and belief, and being dogmatic is a quality that can be both a gift and a curse. Yes – it's important to keep absolutely focused and drive, drive that business forward, but there is a second side to that coin, and you always need to take a step back to re-assess how things are going, and crucially, how successful you are actually being. It may be the case that you simply wish to take a living out of the business, however, that may change with personal circumstances and needs."

"The most difficult decision is simply based on you being realistic about your own business."

What advice would you give to anyone in an already established business who may perhaps think that #SBS is not for them?

"I love talking to people running businesses, especially around day-to-day issues, and one of the things I'm aware of is that it's a two-way street."

"You can chat to people in wildly different sectors and types of business, but more often than not there are similar problems, observations and experiences that can be shared."

"This is especially the case for businesses that are already established. Everyone has a story to share and the expression 'a problem shared is a problem halved' is never more true when it comes our #SBS network."

"How many times have you come to a brick wall in one way or another with your business journey. Talking with a fellow business owner who can share that similar experience, and not just share, but offer a solution and guidance based on personal experience, makes you feel inspired and energised to continue."

"This is the same for many businesses that have been going for years – there's always a solution to every problem and our network is the perfect platform for finding those solutions."

Who inspires you, and why?

"I've already said how much I love meeting and chatting with small business owners. I love the energy and passion they have, and the way they make me think about issues that aren't

immediately obvious when running my own businesses. I can be chatting with someone and be thinking what they are referring to may seem 'blindingly obvious', however, when viewed from their perspective a whole new angle can be revealed. I find these business owners totally inspirational."

"Another source of inspiration are charities, and also how important for businesses to get involved, particularly as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility."

I remember when we first met at a fundraising event for Royal Manchester Children's Hospital through Maurice Watkins CBE - a good friend of ours. Maurice was a fantastic inspiration as a fundraiser. He helped raise £20million for the Children's Hospital, a legacy that he built tirelessly over the years – God bless his soul."

"Any business that includes CSR as part of their corporate ethics and align themselves with supporting charities will find themselves enjoying very real benefits on many levels."

CSR is not simply a box-ticking exercise, but can open doors and engage with an immediate business community that can deliver real returns back to that business. This can also be seen as part of the moral compass of your business."

"Going back to the question of being inspired – businesses who take CSR seriously provide inspiration not just for me but for their wider business community, and business is as much about making and identifying opportunity as simply keeping customers happy."



THEO PAPHITIS
SMALL BUSINESS
SUNDAY
#SBSEvent2024

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#SBS small business

Theo Paphitis partners with Titan and motivate the UK's leading

TV Dragon and Retail Entrepreneur Theo Paphitis will be hosting the annual free #SBS Small Business Sunday event at the Birmingham ICC in February.

The event is the annual highlight for many small businesses in the UK, and is an opportunity to hear from industry experts and partners of the #SBS Community. This is the 11th free event that Theo Paphitis has hosted for his network of winners, since its launch in 2013.

On supporting small business, Theo commented: "I am delighted that the #SBS voice is recognised as a free initiative that packs a punch for UK's small businesses. To have industry-leading backing, through a fantastic and exclusive list of

innovative and expert partners, will open doors of opportunity for the 4,000-strong network.

"In these tough times SMEs need our support more than ever and the value of being part of the #SBS community is immeasurable in upskilling, supporting and motivating some of the brightest startups and small businesses in the UK.

"Our partners lead by example - sharing their unrivalled expertise and leading the way for SMEs to thrive. Great for them and great for the UK's bottom line!"

For this year's annual event #SBSEvent2024, #SBS has joined forces with titans of industry as

supporting partners including NatWest Business, Ryman, Robert Dyas, Sum Up, DHL HP, Spring & Autumn Fair and first-time partners FreeAgent and the Department of Business and Trade's UK Export Academy.

All are experts in their field, who are supporting the #SBS Small Business Sunday network and are committed to helping the UK's SMEs grow.

With over 1,000 SMEs expected to be in attendance, this year's annual event will be a day like no other, filled to the brim with must-have advice, workshops and many other opportunities - all for free. The line up of speakers and sessions

will be announced in the coming weeks.

Debbie Lewis, Regional EcoSystem Manager at NatWest, said: "We understand the value of small businesses to the UK economy and the positive impact they make in our towns and communities.

"We're committed to removing barriers to enterprise and providing more opportunities for companies to grow and thrive."

Laura Jenkins, Director of Small

#SBSEvent

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SPECIAL REVIEW

In our April/May edition, Business Connect Magazine will be running an **exclusive review** of the Small Business Sunday event in Birmingham covering the highlights of the day in a special feature.

We are offering all businesses the opportunity to advertise at **special rates** in this feature.

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s of Industry to upskill small business network

Business Marketing FreeAgent said: "FreeAgent shares the same commitment and passion for helping entrepreneurs and small business owners pursue their dreams and fulfil their potential."

Sarah Singleton, Marketing Director at Ryman: "Small Business Sunday is an invaluable opportunity for Ryman to connect with a growing and thriving community of small businesses in the UK. The annual #SBSEvent is not just about business transactions; it's about

building relationships, fostering growth, and ultimately, contributing to their success. We get to understand the heartbeat of small businesses; engage with these passionate entrepreneurs, listen to their challenges and successes, and ultimately offer guidance and solutions that can truly make a difference in their journeys."

Sue Beverley – Deputy Head of Events, UK Export Academy: "The UK Export Academy is a free online training programme provided by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), designed to give businesses of all sizes across the UK the confidence and know-how

to grow their international sales."

Mary-Jane Rose, PR & Partnership Manager for Robert Dyas: "We're immensely proud to be partnered with #SBS Small Business Sunday 2024. As one of the leading small business networks in the UK for over a decade, the annual #SBS Event allows Robert Dyas the unique opportunity to connect with and celebrate the achievements of hundreds of small businesses as part of a growing community."

Duncan Heron, VP DHL Express UK said: "We are committed to supporting small businesses with their international trade growth, and our long-standing partnership with #SBS helps us to deliver this."

Nick Davison, Portfolio Director, Spring Fair said, "During our incredibly rewarding 5-year partnership with #SBS, we've supported over 50 start-up businesses. We love seeing the next generation of businesses come through and are really looking forward to attending the 2024 event."

The #SBSEvent2024 will take place in Birmingham on 23 February 2024, at the ICC in Birmingham.

It is the 11th event since Theo Paphitis' #SBS Small Business Sunday launched in 2010, and will be packed full of speakers, #SBS winners, networking and opportunities for the network.

ent2024

"I am the founder of Access My Events, created in September 2018.

"I have worked and volunteered for several public, private and voluntary organisations in various roles. Unfortunately like many disabled people, I found it hard to find a job in the events industry, so I decided to take the leap and start my own business. Access My Events is an award-winning consultancy service that advises businesses on how to make their events accessible to deaf and disabled people.

"Business is something I have wanted to pursue for a long time, and as a disabled person new to business, I found there was a lack of support when I first started.

"Thinking back to the organisations I had approached, I found it hard to get

the right guidance and support from them to get it off the ground.

"It has been difficult to get businesses to believe in my idea and what I'm trying to do. There have been many times I have felt like giving up, but I have since connected with some amazing people who have been supporting me on my business start-up journey. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to keep pursuing my goal of having my own business.

"In July 2023, I entered the #SBS competition, after seeing a post about it on LinkedIn.

"I didn't expect to win. However, when it was announced that Access My Events was chosen as a winner of #SBS, I couldn't believe it. This is one of the UK's leading business networks founded by Dragon's Den star, Theo Paphitis.

"To have support from Theo really motivated and inspired me to keep pushing my business goals. I'm really look forward to attending my first #SBS event in February and meeting with Theo, while having the opportunity to network with other business owners.

"In addition to this, I have been

nominated as a finalist for the British Asian Women's Awards 2023.

"I also co-host a podcast called My Voice, which gives disabled people from ethnic minority backgrounds a voice, which often goes unheard.

"To top it all off, I made history in 2023 as the first disabled person to model at Europe's largest Asian Wedding Show, raising awareness in the fashion industry and challenging perceptions of disability.

"If you are looking to start a business, I think it's helpful to get a mentor on board from the beginning to help guide and support you.

"Try and find someone who has experience of running a business in your area and therefore knowledge of the industry. It's also beneficial to do your own research before taking a mentor on board.

"Finally, always surround yourself with like-minded individuals who can help you grow to reach your full potential and get you through challenges by sharing their experiences with you.



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exporting

What's the beef...



...with the beef?

The recent suspension of Free Trade Agreement negotiations between the UK and Canada has caused some surprise and consternation.

The “pause”, initiated by the UK, comes after years of negotiations on an enhanced trade deal that was intended to go far beyond the holdover agreement inherited from UK’s membership of the EU.

International relations are not always as they seem, and whilst the UK and Canada have broken off negotiations over a new trade deal with time running out for the temporary deal in place, there had already been considerable issues over UK cheese exports to Canada – and the Canadians attitude was **hard cheese to the British.**

But now things have taken a further downward turn when the UK walked away from the table because of a beef over beef!

The Canadians, under considerable pressure from their own farming lobby, had sought to add in hormone injected beef to the trade deal; something that crosses the UK’s red lines – that’s an absolute no no.

If the UK were to even consider the idea, it would cause serious issues over here with our European neighbours, and others and the trade deals that we have with them.

The Americans call this **“Pork Barrel Politics”** when special interest groups add their favoured cause to an unrelated agreement.

And this is not the first time this has happened with the Canadians; when the CETA agreement between EU

and Canada was in its final stages, minority causes in Belgium – the Walloons – held the agreement to ransom for a while.

The Canadian farmers have felt for some time that it is unfair that they are blocked out of participation in the UK market (amongst others...), whilst at the same time UK beef can be accepted in Canada.

The strength of the Canadian agricultural lobby is what is really on show here; not so much the tail wagging the dog as the cow ringing the bell.

The Canadians are not alone.

The USA and Canada have been in a series of disputes with the EU at the WTO emanating from the 1981 EU resolution (when UK was still in the EU) banning hormone injected beef.

That the issue is still going on after 40 years shows how intractable the differences are.

Nor are beef and cheese the only contentious issues; the percentage of a car that originates in the other party is also a major bugbear for the Canadians as it was in their negotiations with Japan over the CPTPP.

This was eventually settled with a side agreement.

So does this really mean that it's all over in our negotiations with one of our closest allies?

Nothing would ever be that simple!

Let me take you back to the CPTTP – a comprehensive partnership agreement that includes both Canada and the UK. ***How will this dispute affect that agreement, if it does at all?***

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a trade agreement between original members Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.

The UK formally signed the agreement in July 2023 and along with the other member states are currently in the process of ratification.

Does this mean that Canada could hold up, or prevent the UK's accession? Well it can hold it up but cannot, by itself, prevent accession.

Having already agreed to the

UK's joining, Canada can delay ratification, however there is a clause that allows for full accession once the UK and a majority of member countries have ratified the agreement.

But to think that the CPTPP trade agreement is the same as the agreement that the UK and Canada have been negotiating would be a mistake.

Indeed it is not comparable to the Canadian/EU CETA deal, it is far more advanced.

The UK has been negotiating, and in some cases, for instance Japan, agreeing, what are known

as FTA 2.0, a more advanced trade agreement, which are better suited to the UK's substantial services sector (The UK is the 2nd largest exporter of services in the world after the USA).

So the next steps in this saga will be keenly followed; my own view is that this is a hiatus not a break.

The countries are too closely aligned for it to be otherwise.

The big question you may now be asking: is this really how international relations work?

Well the simple answer to that is yes, sometimes it is.



Tony Goodman MBE

is a successful exporter and has been doing so through a variety of different businesses.

He is currently Marketing Advisor at Forest and Co who specialise in offering guidance on branding, exporting and sales:

www.forestandco.com

Useful links: **gov.uk/business-and-industry/exporting**

gov.uk/government/publications/export-strategy-made-in-the-uk-sold-to-the-world/made-in-the-uk-sold-to-the-world-web-version

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Continued from
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exporting



Steve Swinburn,
Managing
Director,
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Freight

Focus on... Harbour International Freight

Business Connect asked Steve Swinburn, managing director of Harbour International Freight, to showcase the services that the UK, Ireland and European freight specialist delivers to their customers.

"Harbour International Freight is a prominent logistics company specialising in the seamless transportation of goods between Ireland and the UK. With our robust network and extensive experience, we excel in providing efficient and reliable haulage services for businesses engaged in international trade.

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timely and secure transportation of their goods. Whether it's importing/exporting from Ireland or international movement of goods, we ensure a streamlined process, optimising transit times and minimising delays.

"We prioritise safety, reliability, and efficiency. Our fleet of well-maintained vehicles are equipped with the latest tracking technology, allowing real-time monitoring of shipments. Additionally, our experienced drivers and logistics professionals work in tandem to guarantee the smooth and secure transportation of goods.

"Operating from 31 locations across the UK and Ireland, we've been building our services since our beginnings in Ireland over 50 years ago. Nowadays, we offer you total transport, customs clearance management and freight forwarding solutions. We are also members of

CTN (Certified Transportation Network) giving us access to the very best international partnerships offering our customers enhanced effectiveness when building their crucial supply chains.

"Another very important affiliation is that we are also a shareholder member of Pall-Ex, who provides

award-winning international palletised freight distribution services through a network of independent logistics businesses. When you combine this enhanced choice of providers, along with our own network of depots in the Republic of and Northern Ireland, we can offer a comprehensive range of options for all your freight needs."



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Debt management for small businesses



For any business, large or small, managing cashflow is crucial to the commercial wellbeing of a business.

It's still the case though that many larger organisations expect their supply chain to adhere to credit terms that are seemingly set in stone, and the sad fact is that for many smaller businesses winning those hard-fought contracts seems to end up in a one-way conversation when it comes to agreeing payment schedules.

How often does a smaller business try and raise an invoice just before the actual end of the month in order to minimise the wait for payment?

One day over can sometimes add another 30 days to the wait for settlement, and sometimes that patient

wait for the monies to appear in the company account can without warning start stretching far beyond any agreed or expected terms.

At times like these a business can become very exposed financially and very quickly, particularly if any ongoing work for a larger organisation is expected to continue.

So many smaller businesses find themselves in a position of not wanting to 'rock the boat', yet needing to do something very quickly in order to pay their own bills.

It's a familiar story. The larger the customer, the bigger the chasm seems to be between procurement and accounts.

By holding back goods or services as a last resort, the perceived damage

to those hard fought relationships can feel like an inevitable result of such a response, particularly when the source of that work has no control over their own company's ability to pay on time.

At this stage though it's possible to mitigate the situation through the services of a professional debt management business.

Debt collection has come a long way from intimidating letters and knocks on the door. A good debt collector exercises empathy, building relationships with all involved to arrive at a sustainable solution that helps everyone move on and concentrate on the important things – doing good business together.

An effective debt management business also has a duty of care to all parties involved. They have 'people' skills that enable both mediation and accommodation, and where there is a disparity between the accounts and procurement sides of a customer's business, they have the skills to find the best way through to an amicable solution, *often whilst business is still being conducted to the benefit of both customer and supplier.*

A skillset of understanding data, keeping accurate records, compliance, and above all communication

expertise, enables a debt collector to avoid expensive court action or long waits for payment, and the majority of businesses both large and small find having a trustworthy and professional debt management business available for both advice and instruction can be just as important as say legal, hr or accountancy services.

Starting your own business and running it can be both invigorating but at the same time exhausting, and it is usually a fair way down the road before a business can build up cash reserves for annoyances like slow payers. Having a strategic partnership with an effective debt management business from the start can offer peace of mind and the reassurance of effective support when that support is needed.



Paul Daine
Managing Director,
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small business news

Fuelling success: the dreams that power small businesses

by **Theo Paphitis**

When it comes to achieving success, I think most people would agree with me in saying that it's never going to be just that one thing that gets you there. Achieving it requires a cocktail of dogged determination, passion, tenacity and common sense at a minimum.

But one thing so often overlooked that underpins success is that initial dream - because without those dreams and the ambitions that stem from them, there would be nothing to spur you on to keep climbing the mountain to success!

When I was growing up, for the most part, because of my dyslexia, I used to struggle in school. It was

like trying to put a square peg in a round hole - never going to work! But, because of this, I was always looking for and thinking about the next opportunity.

I'd often find myself daydreaming at school, gazing out the window, dreaming about the future, visualising a world of possibilities and what-ifs; it's these dreams that I had, and continue to have, to which I owe some of the success I've enjoyed too.

Drawing from my own experiences, I recognised that when you're an entrepreneur launching a business or trying your hand at something new, the dream

is the beginning of it all.

It's a potent visualisation of what you hope to achieve, where you hope to be and who you hope to become - your passion and tenacity stems from that. Without dreams there is no reality.

The road to success isn't simply a straight line from point A to point B. There are all too often potholes and speedbumps along the way.

It's those dreams and ambitions of yours that act as a compass and point you in the right direction in the midst of all that. They give you a purpose and fuel your ambition.

That's not to say that you can sit back, relax and smoke a cigar just because you've had a few dreams and aspirations, far from it. They don't automatically guarantee you a golden ticket to success.

The dream is where you hope to be. It sets out the path you wish to tread, but the journey itself - the process of turning it into a reality - is fraught with challenges, obstacles and turbulence that knocks you right off your feet.

It's in navigating these trials and tribulations that those other crucial elements I spoke about earlier come into play. Dogged determination, passion, tenacity and bucketloads of passion.

Whether you're a small business owner working from your kitchen counter or a leader in a behemoth business already nearing the stratosphere, my advice is the same - never stop dreaming.

Because if you do, you might as well pull the plug on everything.

I still dream, and I've had success and ticked a lot of things off the list. I will also never stop dreaming, because without them, what's the point?

To the business owners out there reading this, keep on dreaming because our dreams truly are the rocket fuel powering not only the UK but also the global economy.

Armed with dreams, a pinch of good fortune, determination and graft to back them up, anyone, and I mean anyone, can turn their dream into a reality!



Theo Paphitis
Theo Paphitis
Retail Group



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If you're a small business then check out Theo's free-to-enter **#SBS** Small Business Sunday competition which runs every Sunday between 5-7.30pm on X and Instagram - a free boost for small businesses with ambitions to grow and a chance to join one of the UK's small business communities. Further information is here: www.theopaphitissbs.com/about/

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TCCN relies heavily on its reputation. Positive experiences with customer service contribute to a positive brand image, while poor service can lead to negative reviews and harm the company's reputation, this is why we make sure that processes are in place to deal with any eventuality. Our experienced control and driver team pride themselves on this ethos.

We realise that our services rely on careful handling of valuable

and time-sensitive items. In cases of lost or damaged shipments, our control team of experts can quickly resolve problems and help track your packages so you know it will get to its destination safely and securely.

Our control team are in constant contact with our customers, supplying tracking updates and delivery notifications, this enhances the overall customer experience. Transparent communication helps manage customer expectations and builds trust.

We have many loyal customers that use us week in and week out, this is due to our exceptional customer service. Many of our customers feel that their concerns are heard and addressed promptly, this is why we have a loyal customer base.

We realise that keeping our customers satisfied in a competitive industry,

where customers have choices, keeps us ahead of the game, this in turn give us repeat businesses where customers use us again, again and again.

We understand that many other companies offer similar services to us, the quality of our customer support makes us stand out from the rest in a very competitive industry.

The team here at TCCN are very efficient at what they do, we resolve issues promptly and accurately giving the customer complete peace of mind allowing them to go about their business trusting us with their goods.

The management team are also constantly improving. We don't sit still, this is why we have interaction with our customers on a regular basis, monitoring customer queries and complaints which in turn helps us improve our processes and services.

In summary, customer service is an **integral part** of TCCN success.

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AI news

The future of work: how Autonomous Agents are transforming SME operations



In an era where technology is a fundamental driver of business evolution, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly leveraging autonomous agents as a catalyst for efficiency and innovation. These agents are not just reshaping operations; they're redefining the very nature of work in the SME sector.

What are Autonomous Agents?

Autonomous agents are AI-driven software systems designed to operate independently, executing tasks without the need for direct human oversight. They embody the convergence of various AI disciplines, ranging from simple automation tools to complex systems capable of learning and adapting.

How do Autonomous Agents work?

The core functionality of an autonomous agent lies in its ability to process extensive data through AI and machine learning.

They are programmed to recognise patterns, predict outcomes, and make decisions autonomously, thereby optimising various business processes.

Expanding technological context

The rise of autonomous agents is part of a broader technological evolution. Advances in AI, machine learning, cloud computing, and data analytics have made it possible for these agents to handle increasingly complex tasks, providing SMEs capabilities that were once the preserve of larger corporations.

Diverse Industry Examples

- In retail, autonomous agents are used for dynamic pricing and personalised customer recommendations.
- Manufacturing industries utilise them for predictive maintenance and optimising production schedules.
- In healthcare, they assist in patient data management and diagnostic procedures.

Expert opinions and predictions

Industry experts predict that the role of autonomous agents will expand beyond operational tasks to more strategic roles, such as participating in decision-making processes.

The integration of AI with other emerging technologies like IoT

is expected to further enhance their capabilities.

Ethical and societal implications

As autonomous agents become more prevalent, ethical considerations such as data privacy, job displacement, and AI bias must be addressed.

Ensuring responsible use of these technologies is essential for maintaining public trust and aligning with societal values.

Practical advice for SMEs

For SMEs looking to adopt autonomous agents, the following steps are crucial:

- Start with an understanding of your business needs and how autonomous agents can address them.
- Engage with technology providers who understand the unique challenges faced by SMEs.
- Invest in employee training to ensure smooth integration and maximise the benefits of these technologies.

Conclusion

The emergence of autonomous agents marks a significant leap in how SMEs operate.

By embracing these technologies, SMEs can enhance their current operations and strategically position themselves for future challenges and opportunities.

The future of work, driven by the transformative power of autonomous agents, is not just a concept; it's a reality unfolding in the SME landscape.



Jonathan Taylor

The Automation Agency

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managed IT

The advantages of Managed IT Services for small businesses

For many small and medium-sized businesses, managing complex IT systems independently can be a real challenge. This is where Managed IT Services could come into your picture, providing a strategic solution for your business to thrive in the digital age.

What are Managed IT Services?

Using Managed IT Services is the practice of outsourcing IT functions to specialised providers, who typically provide a variety of services.

Arranging multiple services through a single provider (an MSP - a 'Multi-Service Provider'), is a sensible and cost-effective approach for many businesses who don't have the resources to manage the many areas of IT internally.

Engaging an MSP provides a 'one stop shop', aligning technology with business objectives and helping IT become an asset instead of a liability.

Research from the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) delves into the integral

role of technology for SMEs, revealing that 64% prioritise technology as a primary factor in achieving business objectives.

Why SMEs benefit from managed IT

Small and medium-sized businesses often face resource constraints, both in terms of budget and IT expertise. Managed IT Services offer a lifeline to these businesses, providing access to a broad spectrum of expertise that might otherwise be financially unattainable.

The inherent proactive nature of managed services helps prevent IT issues, allowing SMEs to focus on core business functions rather than firefighting technical problems.

Some of the specific benefits include:

Budget-friendly solutions

– Cherry picking specific services from an MSP offers the potential for professional solutions at cost-effective prices.

Predictable costs – Financial

planning is crucial to any business in the initial stages of growth. Fixed price ongoing support can absorb any unexpected and expensive IT issues.

On-demand expertise – Easy access to a diverse pool of IT experts. Partnering with a single MSP offers the opportunity to work with experts in many different areas of IT.

Reduced downtime – a proactive provider will address issues before they escalate, reducing potential associated costs with disaster recovery.

Disaster recovery can be implemented quickly and efficiently if set up in advance through an MSP.

Strategic IT planning – Align the IT services you need with your business goals. Flexibility with this approach can be facilitated with ongoing reviews of your business needs.

Cyber security measures – Fortify your business for your peace of mind. Partnering with an MSP will always guarantee the most recent cyber threat strategies and technologies are being utilised.

Preparedness for data loss and business interruptions becomes a competitive advantage for any size business.

Data back-ups and management – Robust data archiving and real time back-ups, documentation, network and server monitoring are essential for running any business at optimum effectiveness.

These are just a few of the reasons partnering with the right MSP can offer rock-solid foundations from which your business can grow and thrive.

The smaller your business, the more an owner/manager tends to take on these roles personally.

Time is money, and the less time you need to google and guess an IT answer to an unexpected problem, the more time that can be invested on maintaining and growing your business.

How to evaluate your need for managed IT

This involves asking crucial questions about the current state of your IT operations:

Is IT a Concern?

Consider whether IT poses challenges or concerns in your business.

Value for Money?

Evaluate if your current IT setup provides value for the money invested.

Constant Issues?

Determine if your business faces recurrent IT problems.

Calculating IT Costs?

Assess if you can accurately calculate the actual cost of your IT.

It's also important to consider worst-case scenarios when choosing an IT provider. Try to identify potential IT problems that could cause catastrophic harm to your business, such as data breaches or communication stream failures.

Ensure that your provider has the necessary expertise to handle these situations appropriately.

If the answers point towards operational inefficiencies or challenges, **it may be time to explore the benefits of Managed IT Services.**

In conclusion, Managed IT Services are the gateway to unlocking the true potential of your businesses, and with Nybble as a trusted partner, you can navigate the digital landscape with confidence and efficiency.

For businesses considering the advantages of **Managed IT Services**, the next steps involve:

1 IT Review

Initiate an IT review or audit to identify existing issues and pave the way for proactive management. Nybble offer a **FREE** audit and consultation.

2 IT Plan

Develop a comprehensive IT plan that aligns with business goals, emphasising regular planning for efficiency.

3 IT Security

Implement robust cybersecurity measures, training teams, and staying informed about evolving threats.

4 IT Management

Understand compliance requirements, regularly review IT strategies, and embrace robust asset management practices.

Partner with Nybble: Contact us at **Enquiries@nybble.co.uk** or call **0330 0020886** to explore how Managed IT Services can transform your business.



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Ram Gupta
Nybble
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wellbeing



The dangers of over confidence at work

When we're looking to make an important purchase or business decision it can be a source of reassurance to have someone on hand who's confident and knowledgeable enough to advise us, who's able to demonstrate an understanding of our requirements and deliver a clear insight about what we're looking for, someone who's able to explain and communicate well and who comes across as informed.

It's a relief to have our decisions confirmed by someone who's authoritative and positive about their answers to our questions.

A person who appears highly confident is in a position to inspire trust in others, so ensuring there's a good feeling about following their lead.

But the downside may be that this strong persona dissuades others involved in the process from thinking for themselves and becoming more engaged, even when they have valid questions about what's being said or are doubtful of its veracity. This can occur when the other person is especially forceful or is firmly opinionated and committed to their views.

Someone who is extremely confident and self-assured may even be oblivious to other people's suggestions, feedback and input, and, in a work environment, this could ultimately result in co-workers becoming disinterested and demotivated.

They may become afraid to speak up

out of concern that they'll look foolish, fear that they have nothing of value to contribute, or even find themselves feeling unsure about topics that they're usually confident about, that they're familiar and experienced in.

Errors may be overlooked or mistakes minimised when someone's over-confident and blasé.

They may even be disinclined to proof read or check over their work; there's no need, they're so confident that it will be correct! They may even tread roughshod over the initial work brief, so convinced are they that they know far better than the client what's wanted.

This behaviour could succeed in disrespecting and perhaps even losing clients, whilst also disillusioning other staff members, causing them to feel there's no point in engaging or working on ideas, innovations or solutions.

Why bother when no one's prepared to listen or appear interested if they speak out or attempt to get involved.

This can eventually result in a 9-5 approach to work, almost a work-to-rule, quiet quitting mindset, where staff do just enough of what's required to get through each day.

An over-confident colleague can cause a convivial, co-operative work environment to become competitive and less friendly, where everyone becomes cautious and guarded, perhaps even appearing rude or abrasive. The work atmosphere can

turn into one filled with suspicion as tensions increase, with others even questioning if their ideas or suggestions will be stolen and claimed by someone else.

Someone who's over confident can appear arrogant and unapproachable.

This discourages a sharing, close connection with others, in both personal and work-related relationships. It's a detached and unfriendly way to interact, which often results in others stepping back to protect themselves and their space, so careful are they to avoid being hurt or offended by things that are said or done.

However, the confidence that often inspires others is the calm, easy awareness that comes from someone who really knows 'their stuff', but doesn't need to shout about it.

There's a relaxed energy which comes from someone who's comfortable and familiar with what's happening, with what's needed, who is clear about which next steps to take and knows they can cope efficiently with any mishaps or if things don't go to plan.

A positive, supportive environment doesn't require points to be scored or for someone to have to continually prove that they're better than others.

There's a pleasure in sharing knowledge, in teaching and training others to be good whilst all 'winning' together.

Equally, 'good', positive levels of

confidence can be evidenced when someone volunteers that they don't feel they've the relevant skills to satisfactorily perform a task or perhaps need a little more training. Or when they admit that they don't feel they're the right person for the job and intend to pass it on to someone else, maybe making a referral to a third party. Or even when they admit to having made a mistake, which they're committed to putting right.

Those actions demonstrate honesty and integrity and may even succeed in establishing better relationships with customers, becoming the 'go to guy' and point for referrals when something's needed in their specific sector.

Others can relax when they know that they can trust the other person to do the right thing. They can feel safe being in their hands.

It's possible to be both humble and confident at the same time, at ease in your own abilities, expertise and reputation. And how much more attractive is it when other people make a recommendation and sing your praises.

It's far more plausible and convincing.

Why not let someone else be confident on your behalf!



Susan Leigh MNCH (ACC)

South Manchester counsellor, hypnotherapist, relationship counsellor, writer and media contributor offers help with relationship issues, stress management, assertiveness and confidence. She works with individual clients, couples and provides corporate workshops and support.

She's author of 3 books, 'Dealing with Stress, Managing its Impact', '101 Days of Inspiration #tipoftheday' and 'Dealing with Death, Coping with the Pain', all on Amazon and with easy to read sections, tips and ideas to help you feel more positive about your life.

To order a copy or for more information, help and free articles please call

0161 928 7880 or visit **www.lifestyletherapy.net**

Could we save **£50billion** by tackling **worker fatigue?**

We could if we can help improve mental and physical wellbeing for everyone.

SMEs create many new job opportunities and drive innovation. They contribute heavily to the growth and development of various public and private sectors such as government, health, energy, financial services, manufacturing, agriculture, retail, telecoms and other service sectors.

SMEs depend on innovation and business continuity in order to survive.

SMEs play a very crucial role in economic development with innovation, ideas and skills, as well as driving employment creation and, when big industries downsize and cut down jobs, SMEs keep developing and creating more jobs.

However, the continuous pressure to innovate and develop new products and services can result in pressure on the workforce, both at home and at work, resulting in disruption, mental stress and fatigue.

So, to maintain a healthy and productive

workforce all round means addressing occupational health and safety, managing the physical and mental hazards of the workplace and, understanding when people need help when fatigued and under external pressures.

Is worker fatigue a hidden danger to innovation and growth.

Yes, because anyone turning up for work and not being able to perform at full capacity costs the UK economy an estimated £50 billion in lost production and approximately 200,000 lost working days annually.

69% of workers report feeling "tired" at work, according to a report focusing on "safety-critical industries" while 13% of injuries sustained in the workplace can be attributed to worker fatigue, according to research.

Fatigue is a hidden danger for employers and their employees. Anyone who is fatigued and is less focused at work, could make costly mistakes and possibly create latent and active errors.

Latent errors are the missed ones

inherent in the system e.g. system design, administrative decisions, quality of equipment and supplies that may take time to materialise, making it be costly and highly disruptive to rectify.

Active error is the actual event at the time that results in mistakes that could seriously harm, cause a catastrophe or significant financial loss and interrupt business continuity.

However, initiative-taking employers can reduce the impact of fatigue on their workplace.

Anyone who has physically demanding, or mentally taxing profession should have the opportunity to gain more experience and learn about the effects of fatigue.

They should be provided with training and education by businesses to understand and grasp more about worker fatigue both remote and on site, and how it impacts on their own personal wellbeing as well as others.

Information should be accessible 24/7 for new training and any updated refresher training.

This is part of the employer's duty of care to keep their workers safe by ensuring they can access the learning materials to help them understand and continue to learn more about how to manage worker fatigue.

This will enable everyone to learn how fatigue can impact on their mental wellbeing, health, safety and performance at work.

It is important to educate and engage.

It is important that SMEs identify and meet individual learner needs.

This is because it allows them to be supportive and considerate. In this way, the employees will be motivated, supported, empowered, and developed because they feel supported by the employer to develop their understanding of fatigue rather than lose interest in learning how they can manage it.

'Worker Fatigue' is an online learning course being developed by e-Aspire and explores the critical issue of worker fatigue and its far-reaching impact on individuals, organisations, and society as a whole.

Worker Fatigue examines the causes of fatigue, its symptoms, and its consequences for both individuals and workplaces.

It will help participants to be better equipped to identify and mitigate worker fatigue leading to safer and more productive working environments.



Mike Mulvihill
e-Aspire
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out & about...

Property Catalyst Club



Nick Thorpe, Antonia Kershaw, Graham Shiers



Nick Thorpe, Graham Shiers

The Property Catalyst Club held its January 2024 Lunch in Leeds, hosting over 80 commercial and residential investors, landlords, developers, and deal makers together with professional service providers.

The event featured a number of speakers and highlighted current deals and opportunities available to members and guests. Rounding off the day, the Charity Draw raised £510 which was donated to the Social Care & Health Charity, Change Grow Live which was nominated by the draw winner, Antonia Kershaw, MD of National Facilities Management 247 Ltd.

The next Property Catalyst Club Lunch is in Leeds on Thursday 18 April – for more information visit propertycatalystclub.co.uk



Paul Mirage, Helen Laycock, James Mawbey-Shaw



Helen Laycock, Harvey Harding



For more information regarding The Property Catalyst Club email info@propertycatalystclub.co.uk or visit propertycatalystclub.co.uk



Marc Edwards, Belinda Daniels, Paul Mirage



Find out more contact **Simon Edmondson** on **07766 493428**, email: Simon.Edmondson@business-network.co.uk visit: business-network-south-manchester.co.uk



Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce



Kevin Byrne MBE, Noel Byrne, Lisa Bartley, Paul Mirage



Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce: gmchamber.co.uk



Andy Thompson, George Mensah, Elizabeth Smith, Ian Perton, Paul Mirage

Join the FM North LinkedIn group [linkedin.com/groups/8348707/](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8348707/) or contact ian@fmnorth.co.uk or danny.cross@tenantco.com



Ross Brown, Ben Schmidt



Paul Mirage, Russell Silverman



For more information please contact Graham Shiers at graham@BusinessCatalystClub.co.uk or visit BusinessCatalystClub.co.uk

places to meet

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Meeting and Conference Facilities,
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**Elliot House, 151 Deansgate,
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gmchamber.co.uk/chamber-space

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www.hilton.com/manchesterairport

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**2 Mount Street, Manchester
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07717 191851
incspaces.co.uk

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Marriott Manchester Victoria and Albert Hotel

148 bedrooms and suites,
9 meeting and event rooms
with capacity for 240 people
theatre style, Restaurant and bar,
South facing terrace,
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**Water Street, St John's,
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www.marriott.com/manva

Marriott Hotel Liverpool City Centre

Brew Bar (food and drinks),
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capacities)

**One Queen Square,
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Orega Arkwright House

Crompton (seats 10) and Hargreaves
(seats 8) meeting rooms,
both come with Free WiFi,
Clevertouch screens,
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**Parsonage Gardens,
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reception.arkwright@orega.com
0161 667 8100
orega.com/manchester-arkwright-house

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Meeting rooms of various sizes,
Free hi-speed WiFi, Central location,
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**1 Lowry Plaza, The Quays,
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Business Connect Magazine available at your
venue and you'd like to feature in our Places to
Meet section please contact Paul Mirage at
paul@businessconnectpublishing.co.uk

If you'd like to host our magazine at your site
and feature on this page please contact Paul.

diary dates

Don't
forget your
business
cards!

BITA (British and Irish Trading Alliance)

BITA Northern Built Environment Lunch

16 Feb 11.30am - 5.00pm
Venue Old Trafford Cricket Ground,
Talbot Road, Old Trafford,
Manchester M16 0PX
Cost £95 (discount for members)

BITA London Monthly Social Networking

14 Feb 6.00pm - 8.00pm, every 2nd Thurs
Venue The Rising Sun, 61 Carter Lane,
Fleet Street, London EC4V 5DY
Cost FREE

BITA Liverpool Monthly Social Networking

14 Mar 5.00pm - 7.00pm, every 2nd Thurs
Venue Gaucho, 7 Water Street,
Liverpool L2 0RD
Cost FREE

BITA Leeds Monthly Social Networking

21 Feb 5.00pm - 7.00pm
Venue Park Plaza Hotel, Boar Lane LS1 5NS
Cost FREE

BITA Manchester Monthly Social Networking

15 Feb 5.00pm - 7.00pm, every 3rd Thurs
Venue Clayton Hotel Manchester
City Centre, 55 Portland Street,
Manchester M1 3HP
Cost FREE

BNI Vision Stockport

Weekly every Weds 9.15am

Venue Bramhall Park Golf Club,
20 Manor Road, Bramhall
Stockport SK7 3LY
Cost Please enquire

Contact Stephen Gomes 0161 956 2656

BUSINESS FAIRS 2024

Annual business fairs across Northern venues.

Free to visit, all sectors welcome to exhibit

Business Connect Magazine are media partners.

Liverpool Business Fair

21 Mar 10.30am - 3.00pm
Venue Anfield, Liverpool L4 0TH

Greater Manchester Business Fair

4 July 10.30am - 3.00pm
Venue AJ Bell Stadium, 1 Stadium Way, Eccles,
Manchester M30 7EY

Wirral & Chester Business Fair

26 Sept 10.30am - 3.00pm
Venue New Brighton Floral Pavillion,
Marine Promenade, New Brighton,
Wallasey CH45 2JS

Halton & Warrington Business Fair

14 Nov 10.30am - 3.00pm
Venue DCBL Stadium Halton, Lower House
Lane, Widnes WA8 7DZ

Cost FREE to visit (pre-registration required)

Contact for all events:
Tony Haines tony@liverpoolba.com
0151 709 8932

Business Catalyst Club

Manchester and Leeds Networking Lunches
Invitation only. Contact host for details.

Manchester - 2 May, 11 July, 24 Oct

Leeds - 23 May, 19 Sep, 28 Nov

Costs, Timings, Venues and booking details -
contact organisers below:

Contact Graham Shiers 07818 675 310
www.businesscatalystclub.co.uk

Carlisle Ambassadors

Regular showcase and networking events

Venue Carlisle Racecourse, Durdar Road,
Carlisle CA2 4TS
Cost FREE (pre-reg on Eventbrite required).
Contact Michelle Masters 07810 224 735
carlisleambassadors.co.uk

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DTX Digital Transformation Expo

2 Day Expos in Manchester and London

22 May 9.30am - 5.30pm
23 May 9.30am - 4.30pm
Venue Manchester Central, Windmill Street
Manchester M2 3GX

2 Oct 9.30am - 5.30pm
3 Oct 9.30am - 4.30pm
Venue ExCeL London, Royal Victoria Dock,
1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL

Cost FREE (pre-registration required).

Contact dtxevents.io/europe/en/
page/dtx-europe

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FM North

Networking event for professionals in the

FM, Cleaning and Construction Sector

4th Weds of each month

28 Feb 4.00pm - 9.00pm
Venue The Lawn Club, Hardman Square,
Spinningfields, Manchester M3 3HG
Cost FREE

Contact danny.cross@tennantco.com
Tickets through allevents.in

GC Business Growth Hub

Events and Networking - BGH Match

22 Feb Tameside

29 Feb Oldham

25 Mar Trafford

Venues and times TBC

Cost all events and networking FREE

Contact nick.shepherd@growthco.uk
businessgrowthhub.com/match

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Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Events, support, updates, revues, networking

Leaders Networking Lunch

28 Feb 12noon - 2.30pm
Venue Social Refuge, 27 Great Ancoats Street
Manchester M4 5AJ
Cost £50 (£39 for members)

Property and Construction

Awards Dinner 2024

29 Feb 7.00pm - 11.00pm
Venue Imperial War Museum North,
The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road,
Manchester M17 1TZ
Cost £150 (£120 for members)

Wigan, Bolton, Bury Construction Club

7 Mar 8.30am - 10.30am
Venue Village Hotel Bury,
Waterfold Business Park,
Rochdale Road, Bury BL9 7BQ
Cost £40 (£20 for members)

Salford & Trafford Construction Club

13 Mar 8.30am - 10.30am
Venue The Lowry Theatre, Pier 8,
Salford Quays M50 3AZ
Cost £40 (£20 for members)

Contact Diane Elebert-Morgan 07740 196476

Diane.ElebertMorgan@gmchamber.co.uk
gmchamber.co.uk

High Peak Business Club

Regular monthly breakfast networking

All meetings - Fridays 7.30am - 10.00am

Venue Chapel en le Frith Golf Club,
Manchester Road, Chapel en le Frith,
High Peak SK23 9UH

Cost £25

23 Feb Hotels! Richard Short -
VC, Accor Hotel Group

22 Mar Cranes! Will Street from Street Cranes

Share Club meets monthly on Thursdays: 14 Dec

Contact edwinacurrie@sky.com
highpeakbusinessclub.co.uk

K-Club

Networking for Entrepreneurs

Venue Manchester based
Contact Amanda Manson 07754 069 829
k-club.co.uk

MBH Business Networking

Business networking

Venue Manchester based

Cost FREE

Contact kyle@mpostcode.co.uk
manchesterevents.mpostcode.co.uk

pro-manchester

Hot topic breakfasts, Sector lunches,
Economic updates, Panel debates
Full programme of events available online

Contact Nicola McCormick 07929 671755
nicola.mccormick@pro-manchester.co.uk
pro-manchester.co.uk

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SHOUT BUSINESS EXPOS

Annual business fairs across Northern venues.

Free to visit, all sectors welcome to exhibit

Business Connect Magazine are media
partners and supporters.

Lancashire Business Expo

22 Mar 9.00am - 3.00pm
Venue Sir Tom Finney Sports Centre,
Preston PR1 2HE

Liverpool City Region Business Expo

14 Jun 9.00am - 3.00pm
Venue Exhibition Centre Liverpool, King's Dock,
Port of Liverpool, Liverpool L3 4FP

Cumbria Business Expo

20 Sep 9.00am - 3.00pm
Venue Carlisle Racecourse, Durdar Road,
Carlisle CA2 4TS

North West Business Expo

18 Oct 9.00am - 3.00pm
Venue Bolton Stadium Hotel,
De Havilland Way, Bolton BL6 6SF

Cost FREE to visit (pre-registration required)

Contact shoutexpo.com

Shout Network

Fortnightly networking. Breakfast included.

Venues across Lancashire, Greater Manchester
and Liverpool.

Accrington Wednesday at 9.30am
Accrington Stanley Community Trust BB5 6BD

Blackburn Friday at 8.00am
Blackburn Rovers Football Club BB2 4JF

Blackpool Friday at 12.00noon
Hampton by Hilton, Blackpool FY4 1NG

Bolton Tuesday at 9.30am
Dunscar Golf Club BL7 9QY

Bolton Wednesday at 8.00am
Bolton Stadium Hotel BL6 6SF

Burnley Thursday at 9.30am
Burnley Football Club BB10 4BX

Bury Tuesday 9.30am
Red Hall Hotel BL9 5NA

Chorley Thursday at 9.30am
Oak Royal Golf Club PR6 8SW

Clietheroe Tuesday at 9.30am
Holmes Mill BB7 1EB

Leyland Thursday at 9.30am
Leyland Golf Club PR25 5UD

Liverpool Friday at 12.00noon
Delta Hotels Liverpool City Centre Marriott L8 5XJ

Manchester Wednesday at 12.00noon
Worsley Park Marriott Hotel M28 2QT

Manchester Friday at 12.00noon
BizSpace M40 8WN

Manchester Friday at 12.00noon
Impossible Restaurant, Manchester M2 5QR

Preston Tuesday at 9.30am
Shout Connect HQ PR2 2YF

Preston Wednesday at 9.00am
Shout Connect HQ PR2 2YF

Preston Friday at 12.00noon
Shout Connect HQ PR2 2YF

Rossendale Friday at 9.30am
Rossendale Golf Club BB4 6LH

Southport Tuesday at 9.30am
The Grand, Southport PR9 0QG

South Ribble Tuesday at 9.30am
Civic Centre Leyland PR25 1NS

Wigan Wednesday at 12.00noon
DW Stadium WN5 0UH

Wrea Green Friday at 8.00am
The Villa Wrea Green PR4 2PE

Fortnightly networking is on a sector
lock-out basis. Please contact Shout for further
information. Costs also vary.

Contact 01772 935930
info@shoutnetwork.co.uk
shoutnetwork.co.uk

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Small Business Sunday #SBS

Competition every Sunday for Small
Businesses to raise their profiles on X
and Instagram 5.00pm - 7.30pm

Info www.theopaphitissbs.com/about/

The Business Network Manchester

Business networking lunch - inc seminars.

29 Feb 11.50am - 2.00pm
(Optional seminar 10.00am start)
Venue Hyatt Regency, 55 Booth Street West,
Manchester M15 6PQ

31 Mar + 23 Apr 11.50am - 2.00pm
(Optional seminar 10.00am start)
Venue Clayton Hotel Manchester
City Centre, 55 Portland Street,
Manchester M1 3HP

22 May 11.50am - 2.00pm
(Optional seminar 10.00am start)
Venue Lowry Hotel, 50 Dearmans Place,
Salford M3 5LH

Cost for all events £49.95

Contact Helen Bennett 0161 823 1384
helen@business-network.co.uk
business-network.co.uk

The Business Network

South Humberside

Business networking lunch
- inc seminars (please inquire start time).

6 Mar 11.50am - 2.00pm
Venue Abbys Bistro, 12-16 Abbeygate,
Grimsby DN31 1JY

3 Apr 11.50am - 2.00pm
Venue Forest Pines Hotel, Ermine Street,
Broughton, Brigg DN20 0AQ

Cost for all events £38.00

Contact Amy Heward 07908 258 354
amy@business-network.co.uk
business-network-south-humberside.co.uk

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The Business Network

South Manchester + Chester

Business networking lunch

- inc seminars (all optional 10.30am start).

South Manchester

7 Mar 11.30am - 2.00pm
Venue The Alderley Edge Hotel & Restaurant,
Macclesfield Road, Alderley Edge
SK9 7BJ

Chester

13 Mar + 15 May 11.30am - 2.00pm
Venue Rossett Hall, Chester Road, Rossett,
Wrexham LL12 0DE

Cost for all events £55.00

Contact Simon Edmondson 07766 493428
Simon.Edmondson@business-network.co.uk
business-network-south-manchester.co.uk

The Original Manchester Curry Club

Monthly Informal Networking for SMEs

28 Feb 1.00pm - 3.00pm, every 4th Weds

Venue Rajdoot Tandoori, Carlton House,
Albert Square, Manchester M2 5PE

Cost £20 for 3 courses

Contact Kerry Bland 07966 275454

Please note

If you plan to attend any of the above events please
ensure all details are correct in advance.

Whilst every effort has been made to confirm
accuracy, some details may be subject to change.

RANDOX



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Randox Grand National Festival
11–13 April



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