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Informed Solutions Defining digital transformation from Altrincham to Australia

Interview with Elizabeth Vega, Group CEO of Informed Solutions and Cabinet Adviser on SMEs to the Cabinet Office.

RRG Lexus

Driving a new solution for the executive fleet market

A look at the latest offering from RRG Lexus in Stockport featuring the launch of the new hybrid Lexus ES.

First Friday Connectworking

City Centre Business Networking with GM Business Connect Magazine and Forever Manchester Charity.

#FirstFridayConnectworking

Entrepreneurial Excellence

A review from Salford University's Business School on their latest initiative engaging local business - Launch@SalfordUni

Trafford is open for Business

Interview with Trafford Council Leader Andrew Western, looking at the borough's support of business both in the area and at businesses looking to locate to Trafford.

Informed Solutions' Group CEO Elizabeth Vega pictured at their Altrincham Headquarters

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editorial

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welcome to the latest edition of GM Business Connect and join the fastest growing business to business forum in Greater Manchester.

GM Business Connect is a dynamic business to business bi-monthly magazine that is crammed full of local and regional news, articles, interviews and regular columnists.

The magazine connects businesses across Greater Manchester, and is completely free.

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news

New IOD Manchester chair vows to fly the flag for local business



Sharon Amesu, IOD Manchester Chair

here to serve the business community in Manchester and promote our city UK-wide and beyond.

"Manchester businesses 'mean business', and with our longstanding industrial heritage, I very much look forward to flying the flag for the great work we're doing here. My commitment to our business community is to listen earnestly, learn quickly and lead fearlessly - lending our collective voice to the shaping of agendas and policies at both local and national levels of Government."

Stretford-based Amesu, who will replace outgoing Chair Paul Battye, is also hoping to use her platform to contribute to key business issues including diversity and inclusion, and the region's skills-shortage. She continued: *"I want to demonstrate that the face of business and entrepreneurship is changing and now is the time to celebrate the amazing people leading the change."*

The Institute of Directors (IoD) North West has announced the appointment of renowned leadership speaker Sharon Amesu as its new Manchester Chair.

Award-winning Amesu is director of SA Consulting and founding fellow and Leadership Facilitator for the Society of Leadership Fellows. A former Barrister, her new role will now see her act as a voice for Manchester business leaders on the national stage; she said: *"I am delighted with my appointment and keen to communicate the message that I'm*

All-new Airbus A350-1000 lands at Manchester for the first time



Launched in the same month as the 4th anniversary of Cathay Pacific's Manchester-Hong Kong non-stop service, this all-new aircraft's deployment also coincides with Manchester Airport's 80th anniversary.

Cathay Pacific's A350-1000 carries a total of 334 passengers across its Business, Premium Economy and Economy Class cabins – 54 more passengers more than the A350-900 that currently serves Manchester.

Cathay Pacific Regional General Manager Europe, James Ginns, commented: *"The launch of this all-new aircraft to our UK market*

reinforces Cathay Pacific's significant commitment to Europe. With more seats and cargo space and a substantially higher payload, the new plane will connect more leisure and businesses to Hong Kong, China and Asia-Pacific.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, added: *"As we look to build a balanced and globally competitive UK economy, our links with high growth markets will be critical.*

"That is why the direct connectivity provided through routes like Cathay Pacific's Manchester-Hong Kong service are so important."

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GM firms unlock over £1million in funding

The Innovation Service, led by GC Business Growth Hub working with MIDAS, has helped Greater Manchester businesses access over £1 million worth of funding for research and development projects, and has supported the creation of more than 300 new jobs in the past two years.

The Innovation Service provides practical hands-on support to enable businesses in the region to overcome the barriers hindering research and innovation. The team delivers this support via a diagnostic process, one-to-one advice and bespoke innovation action planning.

At the core of the service is connecting businesses with academia and large company partners.

As a result, over 117 new products and services have been created, including virtual reality technology, the world's most powerful optical microscope, and a wristband with location services designed to promote independent living for vulnerable people.

Rochdale-based manufacturer, GJD is one of the businesses to have benefited from the service. GC Business Growth Hub facilitated a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University as well as a successful application to Innovate UK for a grant worth £141,750, enabling GJD to develop new advanced technology for its laser security range.



Tim Newns, CEO MIDAS

Mark Tibbenham, Managing Director at GJD explains: "The support we have received from GC Business Growth Hub and their partners has opened new doors for GJD and been the catalyst for further growth of our international business."

Commenting on the success of the Innovation Service, Tim Newns, CEO of MIDAS, added: "The success of this programme is a real marker of the potential increased collaboration offered to businesses in Greater Manchester. The region is a hotbed for research and development, but it is connecting the right businesses, academia and funding bodies that really has the power to accelerate business growth and make major boosts to Greater Manchester's economy."

The Innovation Service is part financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Surge in AEO Applications - UK exporters preparing for life after Brexit

There has been a surge in AEO applications in the UK - a clear indication that the country's exporting businesses are preparing for life after Brexit. A 26% rise in registrations up to January 2019 compared to February 2017 represents the highest percentage increase in registrations across Europe.

The UK has long lagged behind counterpart European nations in terms of its number of AEO applications. Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) status demonstrates a company's role within international supply chains as being secure, indicating that its customs controls and procedures are efficient and compliant.

However, the 26% increase over the last two years signals a gear-change, according to Director General of the Institute of Export & International Trade, Lesley Batchelor. "UK businesses are now realising that they will need to prove their competency in customs procedures when Brexit comes around - whatever form it

may take. This surge in applications is encouraging, but there's much more to be done before we catch up with our European counterparts, who will soon be our competitors.

"Attaining AEO status will be a useful exercise for exporters, whatever our future arrangement with the EU will be. The application process allows businesses to fully examine and ensure that its customs regime is up-to-scratch. Doing this will also put businesses in a strong position for other customs arrangements, including the Trusted Trader scheme."

Holly Tonge, Director of Special Projects at the Institute, also said: "Many of the companies I've worked with in recent times have applied for AEO to safeguard their attractiveness in the supply chain post-Brexit. I would suggest that more companies should look at AEO as a way of ensuring they are operating as efficiently as possible, as post-Brexit the need for customs competency will be greater than ever."



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news

Esprit Warehousing & Docks expand into two new warehouses

Esprit Warehousing & Docks Ltd are continuing to invest in growth, with the opening of two additional large warehouses on a new site in Trafford Park, Manchester.

No.1 Trafford Park provides Esprit with an additional 62,000 sq ft of capacity for ambient food grade and non-food grade products, bulk or palletised.

Managing Director Graham Dixon said the consistent strong demand for space at their nearby Trafford Docks site, which opened in 2015 and has been full for the last 18 months, led to the search for an additional site.

"Economically viable sites, large enough for commercial warehousing in and around Manchester are scarce.

"It took us several months to find this site which has been completely refurbished to an exceptionally high standard. The location, only one minute from our Docks site on the Manchester Ship Canal and two minutes from the motorway, is perfect.

"Our existing customers can expand without feeling their goods are in two different locations, plus inbound or outbound goods via the ship canal can be stored at either site." says Graham.

Esprit have invested £14m in the new site to ensure they can cater for both bulk and palletised goods. *"Flexibility is the key" says Graham "it's a big decision investing*

a significant sum into the site before we have confirmed storage contracts.

"However, customers don't want to wait 3 - 4 months for us to install grain walls and bring in machinery to handle their goods. Demand tends to be almost immediate. We have to be prepared and able to show we have a first class storage solution ready.

"Having 2 warehouses on the same site allows us this flexibility, one ready for bulk goods and the other ready for palletised goods."

Esprit Warehousing & Docks, part of the Esprit Trading Group, continues to push for more businesses to consider using the Ship Canal for moving freight. *"Since reopening Trafford Docks in 2015 we've seen some large project cargo from Europe and beyond using our berth for unloading and onward transport.*

"A lot more can be done though.



This is an amazing asset for Manchester and the UK, allowing us to take thousands of trucks and vans off the roads by moving freight on the canal." says Graham. Yet uptake is disappointingly slow.

"Businesses and leaders still default to road transport when planning. Waste, building materials and many

other goods, often including parcels that tend not to be time sensitive, are bulky, and therefore ideal candidates for canal freight.

"Ships are probably more reliable than trucks. In four years, I've never had a vessel delayed due to congestion.

"They arrive on time, every time."



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pro-manchester partner with Yorkshire Bank to deliver events

pro-manchester has teamed up with Yorkshire Bank, part of CYBG, to deliver events at their new B Works facility on Market Street.

Yorkshire Bank has established a series of new partnerships with leading businesses and Universities in Manchester to enhance its service offering for SMEs at its B Works store.

The flagship store will be home to two events areas, as well as a café, a co-working space and more.

pro-manchester will deliver a programme of activities at the facility, delivering invaluable insights to help SMEs learn better and work better.

pro-manchester and Yorkshire Bank are offering free events at a variety of times, to suit a variety of sectors, in a location where individuals can use co-working spaces, grab a coffee or both before or after attending the seminars.

In the past seven years, pro-manchester's SME Club has provided over 600 articles to more than 12,000 SME professionals, using their vast network of experts.



Sean Williams, Yorkshire Bank said: "We're delighted to be teaming up with pro-manchester, an organisation dedicated to spurring business growth in the North West. Their events in the B Works space will complement the existing support we will be offering to the city's SMEs"

Nicola McCormick, pro-manchester's Chief Operating Officer said: "It was a great pleasure to hear our reputation in delivering slick events had preceded us when Yorkshire Bank contacted us regarding this exciting new opportunity.

"Our SME Club has been something our members have widely enjoyed in the last seven years, and we're delighted that we can now begin to build on the expert advice we have already shared with our SME network."

Manchester business Indigo Lithoprint mourns loss of 'musical MD' Mark Nicholson

Manchester-based design & print business Indigo Lithoprint has sadly announced that its popular managing director, Mark Nicholson has passed away after a short illness, aged 58.

Mark started Indigo with fellow directors Anthony Pearce and Peter Kelly in 1992, after all three were made redundant from their production roles at CEBG due to privatisation. From day one, Indigo was an instant success, garnering work from local private and public sector bodies.

In recent years, Mark became a keen networker in an effort to spread the word about Indigo, so he could reconnect it to the local business fraternity. He did this with great panache, as he came to be known for his positive; witty and sometimes musical presentation spots at local BNI and MBBC networks.

Aside from business, he was a big Manchester United fan and a passionate musician, playing lead guitar in several bands. He



was a champion of entrepreneurs, particularly start-ups (even helping this very publication when it began) and believed all networking opportunities "were full of new friends - waiting to be met."

A celebratory funeral service in Mark's memory was held at Edenfield Parish Church and was attended by family, friends and local businesses paying their respects, in what was deemed Mark's final performance.

Indigo is in its 27th year of trading and will continue in the positive spirit Mark fostered every day.



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New regional chair for FSB

In recent elections Didsbury businessman Chris Manka was elected to the position of FSB Regional Chair for North West England.

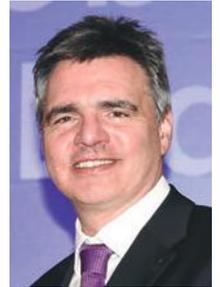
Chris said: "I'm delighted to have been elected to this key role and want to ensure the voice of small businesses across Greater Manchester is heard loud and clear where it matters most."

He added: "2019 is shaping up to be a critical moment in time for the business community, particularly here in GM. We have the second incarnation of the GM Spatial Framework out for consultation right now, also we've got the issue of pollution charging on the agenda – and this will be huge."

"FSB will be lobbying hard to make sure the Combined Authority and TfGM implement this sensibly and in a time frame that is acceptable to small firms."

In other news the FSB has called for more transparency around preparations currently being drawn up

as part of a Clean Air Plan in GM. The plan, currently being finalised by TfGM could see a raft of measures introduced across GM to reduce pollution levels.



This could include pollution charging for older diesel vehicles, but could also combine other measures, from increased parking charges at certain times of the day to reduce peak-hour car travel, and even the introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy - effectively a tax on car parking spaces owned by businesses.

The FSB says it is concerned changes could prove damaging to businesses right across the region, and that most GM based businesses are totally unaware about the plans which would have a significant financial hit for many small firms running older fleets.



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Hub help Informed Solutions reach out to a Global Marketplace

Altrincham-based Informed Solutions - provider of technology services to the private and public sectors - has signed a series of big-name clients following support from GC Business Growth Hub.

The company was already a long-established, successful business with other UK offices in London and Edinburgh, as well as Australian offices in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Such has been the success of its approach, the company won a Queen's Award for Innovation in April, an ICT Excellence Award for Emerging Platforms at the World IT Congress in India in February, having previously also won multiple awards at the Australian itNews Benchmark Awards in recent years.

However, Informed Solutions Group CEO Elizabeth Vega realised that for the business's continued development and to strengthen the company's brand, Informed Solutions needed to reflect this progress in its marketing strategy. At the core of her plans was the launch of a new website that authentically reflected the company's core values while adapting to the different needs of the UK and Australian markets.

Therefore, in early 2017, Elizabeth sought the support of GC Business Growth Hub, part of The Growth Company. After sitting down with the company to identify key areas for improvement, the Hub sent two of the firm's leadership team on the Greater Connected programme,



Group CEO Elizabeth Vega receives Informed Solutions' Queen's Award for Innovation from Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester, Mr. Warren J. Smith

an intensive business accelerator initiative geared towards supporting the start-up and scale-up ambitions of digital, creative and technology SMEs. The programme helped the leadership team to clearly define the scale-up plans for the business and take a more strategic approach to communications.

This resulted in Informed Solutions launching a new global website in October 2017 to coincide with the company's 25th anniversary, which Informed Solutions directly attribute the signing of several new high-profile clients to, including the NHS, Royal Mail and Ofsted in the UK and National Archives Australia. In turn, these new contracts have led to 15 new full-time staff, four one-year student work placements and eleven new contractor roles.

Elizabeth Vega, Group CEO said: "Following the new website launch, we immediately saw an increase in visitors, including a 130 per cent increase in traffic towards our 'platforms and solutions' page and a 110 per cent increase towards our 'industry capabilities' page.



Richard Jeffery, Director of Business Growth, GC Business Growth Hub

"Our upward trend in traffic has also continued across our social media channels. This is reflected in a 100 per cent increase in page views in the space of a month on our company LinkedIn site, and a 190 per cent increase in tweet impressions on Twitter and 34 per cent increase in profile visits."

Richard Jeffery, director of business growth, GC Business Growth Hub,

said: "Informed Solutions already had a long track record of success. Nonetheless, Elizabeth and the rest of the leadership still recognised that the company could achieve new levels of success.

"The Greater Connected programme is geared specifically to businesses in Informed Solutions' sector, and it gives us great pride that Elizabeth and her team credit the changes made after going through the programme to the signing of multiple new clients."

This and other GC Business Growth Hub projects are part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the GM Business Growth Hub project designed to help ambitious SME businesses achieve growth and increase employment in Greater Manchester.

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Informed So

defining digital tr

from Altrincham

Headquartered at the Old Bank Building in Altrincham's Stamford Quarter, Informed Solutions has been steadily growing a huge reputation as an International tech business both in the UK and across the globe in Australia. As well as being based in Altrincham, the firm currently has offices in London, Edinburgh, Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, and has an impressive set of clients across many areas of Government and the public and private sectors.

Five years ago GM Business Connect caught up with CEO Elizabeth Vega - one of the UK's most insightful thought leaders on both the SME and Tech sector - who showed us around Informed Solutions' impressively refurbished headquarters and shared with us her insights into running a highly successful SME. We were delighted to be invited back for an in-depth interview.

As a Cabinet Office consultant Elizabeth has emerged as an expert on the rapidly changing face of business, and it was a pleasure to go into more depth on a range of topical business subjects and issues, plus find out how Informed Solutions had developed since we last visited.

Charting the highly successful growth of Informed Solutions, please can you give an overview of your company history, and a brief summary of what you do as a business?

"We were founded in 1992 following my exit from big corporate life. My early career was with the corporates which offered a great learning opportunity for me, including how to run a business. I developed a sense of commercial pragmatism and an understanding of operating models, but also I felt that I wanted to develop a company that had serious business aspirations and quite a different workplace environment, a business that attracted really motivated, good people.

"It was tough work, but making sure the business grew in a positive and supportive environment right from the start turned out to be great source of pride and pleasure.

"My background is in computer science and economics, so it's all about transformational change and allowing technology to be an enabler for that transformation or change. Of course, this was not the language in those days. It used to be called 'IT enabled business change', and

although the narrative changes, the key principles stay the same and you use the best tools for the job.

"We started off with corporates - our clients included companies like Oracle. We worked in government and in oil, gas and utilities. Our approach developed over time, translating skills learned in familiar sectors to new sectors. Each sector has its own economic cycle. You take the learning from the ebbs and flows of some sectors and you simplify and make it relevant to new sectors.

"For example, Government. We developed a really good client base across many areas of Government that resulted in many approaches and methodologies becoming more genericised. We created a reputation that helped us gain business in mission and safety critical areas such as policing and the emergency services, also intelligence led services and the nuclear industry. It's this organic growth that I feel marks us as a successful business, and the ability to apply multiple approaches to many different briefs and requirements. I feel that this approach culminated last year in winning a Queen's Award for Innovation - something the entire company has taken pride in.

"It's down to the capability of my colleagues. Smart people with dedication to problem solving."

The application of new technology is an important part of your remit. Please can you share what your role is in applying new technology across the NHS for example - which I believe is a sector you are currently helping?

"We are technologically agnostic. Rather like architects, we are minded to use certain tools but first and foremost we aim to understand what

the client's problems are. We also need to understand from the client's perspective what an ideal solution looks like for them.

"We scan the marketplace to look for the most appropriate technologies. It is also about organisational readiness - where some organisations can move and adopt change more readily than others, or, they have an 'appetite' for change and technology. Some don't, and so we have to calibrate.

"It's easy to be a prima donna and a purist and say 'this is the right tool', but if it's not going to integrate well into a client's business environment and existing infrastructure, then it is the wrong solution - even if technically it ticks every box.

"We need to respect the investment the client already has. We offer a current assessment on what needs to be kept and upgraded perhaps, what needs to be phased out and what is actually working perfectly well. The ability to listen and co-design together providing tailored solutions can be the most effective tool we have.

"The key ingredients are integrity and trust. Our reputation is based on genuinely having our client's best interests as our goal - not being driven by revenue. When we advise or put options in front of a client, they know we have done due diligence and are acting in their best interests, we are transparent (talking through pros and cons) and also keen that the journey is made together through valued and consistent communication.

"Specifically looking at the work for the NHS - they are truly conscientious and committed to patient safety, so everything we do together reflects this. We sat down with them to look at what they had in place and it was a lot of data from a lot of different sources. For example, surgeries, dental clinics, A&E departments, and so on. The question was 'how do you bring that together, analyse it holistically and



Elizabeth Vega, Group CEO
Informed Solutions

Solutions Transformation to Australia



build powerful insights and learnings, that drive a better patient experience and improved confidence and safety?'

"So we looked at what their data assets were and looked at their operating model (which is very complex, distributed and federated) and we came up with a strategic, platform architecture that we co-designed with NHS's design authority people.

"Next stage involved looking at the right tools for the job and building and deploying those in an evolutionary, agile way - using cloud computing techniques, data integration methods, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI). At each step, we managed the key risks of the platform evolution and worked collaboratively to test it very rigorously.

"NHS Improvement's Patient Safety project is now in a great place, in Private Beta and just about to receive real data for the first time, but it is a big beast and there are a lot of stakeholders, experts and moving parts involved. A key success factor has been the willingness of many, many people with diverse roles and viewpoints to collaborate, so part of that transformational change is about winning hearts and minds - not just plugging in technology and data. We are also involved in co-designing training and helping make change sustainable, because people move around and new people join. To do proper sustainable transformational change, it's a matter of looking at the whole picture."

As a champion of diversity in not just the SME sector but in all areas of business, please can you share your thoughts on what the corporate sector should be doing to encourage this?

"It's really interesting when people talk about diversity as it's a very personal experience. It could be based on gender, ethnicity, disability, religion for example, but the reality is that 'diversity' is important in everything - whether it's about the mix of people in the workplace or the practical mix of skills (innovation projects need 360 degree opinion to spark creativity). It's also needed in the marketplace - you need suppliers and start-ups to have initial funding but also ambition to grow and to scale up.

"The UK is a great place to grow a business, not just start a business. 98% of start-ups don't survive so it's about being comfortable with an ambition for growth and success in developing their business through as broad a mix of skillsets as possible. This is why I advocate for diversity in the marketplace.

"It also goes to board level. We need diversity among decision makers and leaders. If everyone has been to the same school, university or golf club then we will get the same thinking. This is not going to help your organisation or culture."

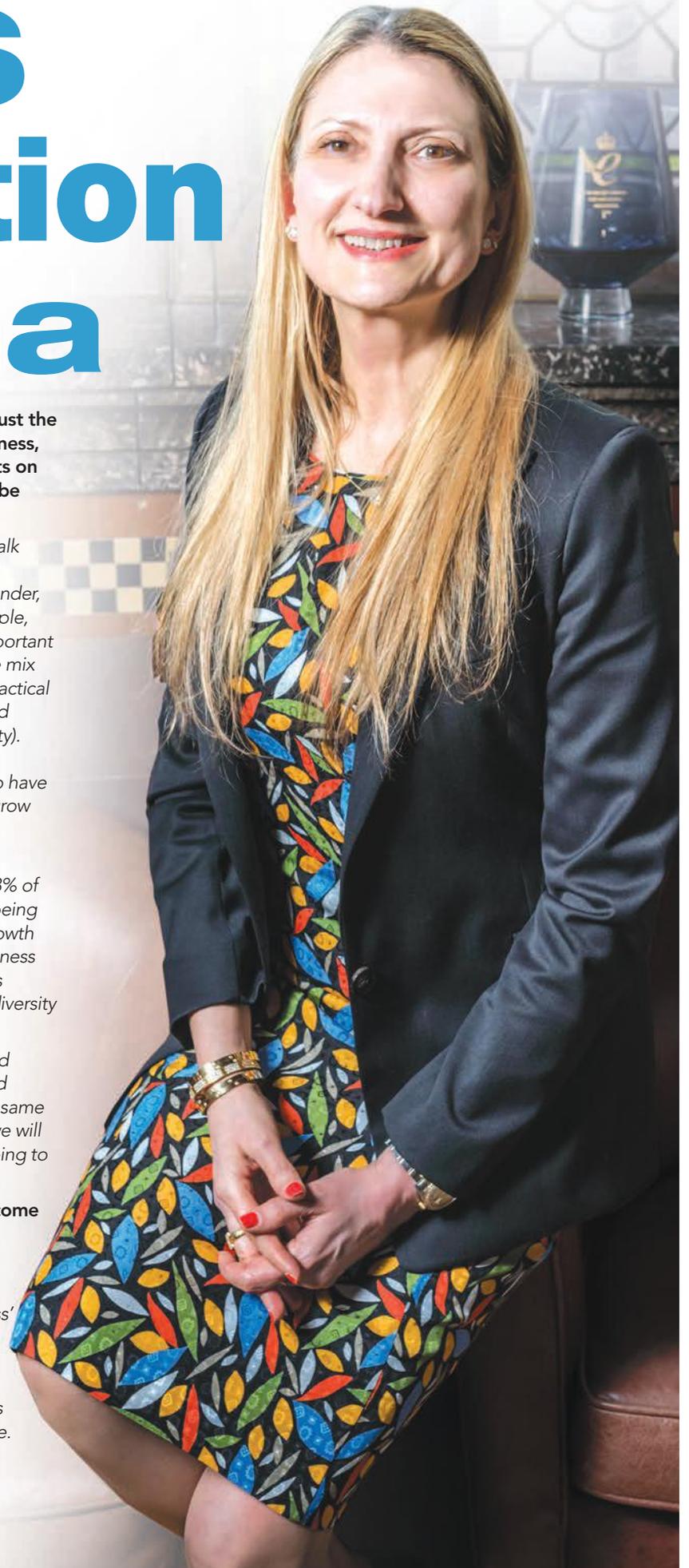
How far do you think the UK has come in promoting diversity across our business landscape?

"I think there is a lot being talked about at the moment and 'awareness' is the second step. First step is recognising it's an issue and the second step is awareness and acknowledgement of that issue - this is where we are on the maturity curve.

"I then think it's actually the action



Article continues
on next page





Continued from previous page

- the following through of this that matters. There is a lot of variability here. Some organisations are already curating their boards and the selection process is a conscious action. Some others are just talking about it.

"Where there is consistency is in the acknowledgement that something needs to be done. Formulating plans that work for each organisation is a very tailored and subjective task, keeping the positive influence of applying diversity without causing issues is a cautious but necessary big step.

"Diversity is disruption. It is challenge. It can be a problem in two areas.

First area is where everyone is comfortable with the status quo, and it is frustrating for those to have to accommodate diversity. Second issue is where emotional intelligence is just not valued - people instead talk in functional transactional language and don't acknowledge the value that emotional intelligence can bring to all levels of an organisation.

"At Informed Solutions we design and engineer processes where people are encouraged to contribute rather than it just being a brain storming session where the most vocally confident are heard. We ensure that a space is created for everyone to be included, regardless of personality types."

We are all aware of the massive need for investment and training in the tech sector. What are your views on this and how does your 'InformedACADEMY' fit into this National need to fill the digital skills gap?

"We have always had investment in training and skills development and that isn't necessarily prescriptive. Initially there are core modules and the concept of foundations. Everyone



that joins the company is given foundation level training so that they are aware of and respect the work of others regardless of specialisms. This way people have a common understanding and way of working.

"After the foundation training - which is a journey of exploring what a colleague is good (and bad) at - there is specialist training available so that they can play to their individual strengths. For example, user research is suggested as a role for those who are analytical, with good engagement with others. However, if they are much more technical and detail oriented, then service design may be more applicable. A learning journey could be doing architecture, data sciences, cyber security - we encourage all individuals to embrace a variety of specialisms to enrich and expand their thinking.

"As a business we had invested in a lot of external training and development. We were finding that cohesion was a problem in terms of skills development - people were being taught in different ways using a different language. Because we are working in innovation and restricted

to time and budget constraint, we wanted to harmonise this and make the training cohesive - to create sustainable development so that each generation of graduates, as they moved along, would demonstrate cohesion.

"Also, when they came back in to the workplace they could be coached and mentored by others who had had similar learning experiences. This is where the original Informed Talent development framework assembled a combination of internal masterclasses and external training. We have redesigned all of this, customising external training where appropriate, to give us the harmonising we seek. For those wishing to advance further in deep specialisms, we are currently sponsoring their progress through masters' degrees."

As a business working successfully for many areas of Government, what do you think of the current method of procurement across public sector contracts?

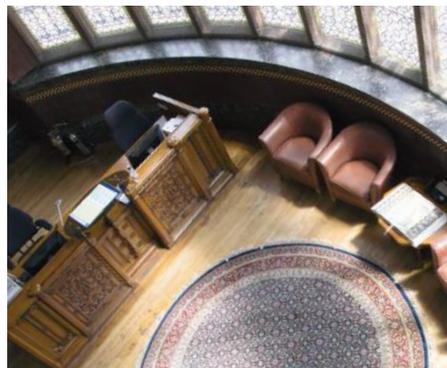
"I'm on the Cabinet Office SME panel and have been for many years. It is an advisory panel that advocates and supports government working better

with the SME marketplace - not just in the tech sector but across all sectors covering the whole of the UK.

"Tendering across Government is a massive enterprise and not harmonised. For example, working with the MoD is very different from working with local authorities. You need to look at the cultural differences and the varying requirements - and also that they have different budgets and procurement processes.

"There has been a huge amount of progress - we have policy in place, structural and business process reforms that were needed. It's a three-way relationship between the procurer (professional procurement function), the buyer (the end customer/client) and of course the supplier. You need to look at how to make those relationships work for everybody and it's partly about training and cultural change. We have all the instruments and what we now need to do is feel confident using those instruments.

"There is a lot more outreach now to let people know that they can approach the government to bid for work. We also need to recognise the legacy that historically there was only ever rhetoric and that SMEs had lost faith in the process. Drawing a line under this shows that the government is being authentic about wanting to follow through



and make sure that SMEs are welcome.

"I would encourage SMEs to take things at face value and explore again the huge possibilities offered through the tendering process for not just Government but many other areas of the public sector."

Informed Solutions have gone from strength to strength, surviving recessions to become what could be described as an International SME. Please can you explain your business culture in more detail and share with us the secrets behind not just running but growing such a successful business?

"I think the culture is at the core - we do serious work, we are not hobbyists and our clients have to trust us with serious problems. We need to also enjoy working with our clients and for our clients to enjoy working with our people. 'Take your job seriously but don't take yourself too seriously'.

"We are all experts, we all have an opinion, so let's collaborate exercising respect. That's the key principle and the other side of it is 'excellence'. No-one at Informed Solutions (and it starts with me as the founder) has any ambition to be 'mediocre'. There are lots of companies that do a good job by being average, and that's fine but that's not us. Whatever resources we have at our control are used creatively and efficiently. We work smart. You can't always work harder, but you can work smarter.

"Regarding how we have grown the company, part of that is internal investment on the corporate infrastructure. We now have a global corporate backbone that allows us to collaborate together.

"We have also matured our model in partnerships - we are working with collaborative business partnerships rather than a traditional supply chain. We treat our subcontractors and suppliers as an alliance and partner with them.

"We reinvented ourselves 10 years ago in the last recession. We developed a model that is 'elastic' - meaning that if we have good opportunities or the market is buoyant we can grow - but when large contracts come to a conclusion for example we can contract back without having to lose staff.

"That massive amount of investment in training would be senseless if we were to be laying people off, so we have multiple tiers: a core team of highly capable leaders (a few hundred of such people); we then have associates who are long term, deep subject experts (nuclear physicists, property specialists, academics for example) and then of course we have contractors (typically at the technical level joining for particular assignments) and

finally a trusted tier of sub-contractors (both overseas and here in the UK). For a medium-sized company it is a sophisticated model."

As a leading Technology-based business what is your view on the recent description of a new era of business currently transforming companies and organisations across all sectors? Business 4.0 seems to be a buzzword for many different business methodologies - what is your take on this? Is this something you embrace?

"I think that for anything that is perceived as new you need to adapt it to who you are and be authentic. You can't ignore your legacy and what has made you successful - if you are using something useful, why change or lose it?"

"In terms of 'Business 4.0' I think every business needs to be a digital business. Firstly, we do what we preach to our clients - we leverage capability off digital. Secondly, that gives you reach, efficiency and consistency. Allows you to onboard and offboard your contractors and subcontractors and retain that knowledge as you develop. I also think if you want to be a model business you need to acknowledge the mobility of workforce and retain corporate knowledge.

"I think consumers are sick of being marketed to - you need to be able to walk the talk. If you say you stand for tech for good, then you have to be able to prove it. People at the top need to be accountable for the authenticity of what the company stands for.

"Businesses need to be both agile and responsive. They need to have a mobile workforce with a big investment. I think Business 4.0 is still at the first step of change, there is recognition of need but not yet the acknowledgement and strategising of the 'so what?'"

In order for a business or organisation to thrive many industry leaders talk about the need for being 'disruptive' across their sectors. What is your view on the role of disruptive technology to improve an organisation's rate of growth and development? Is this something that can enjoy a clear definition when looking at business development?

"I think that disruptive technology is actually only ever an accelerated evolution - where others can't

keep up with it. For example, online shopping. It's been happening and visible for a long time but it's growing rapidly because customers are naturally evolving into online shoppers and it's the traditional businesses who are in denial. They are still stuck in the 'recognising and observing' phase and not responding to the apparent 'disruption'.

"I think disruption is important as you need to stay relevant to changing markets and opportunities, and organisations need to adopt and respond meaningfully at a rate that they can absorb. It's a bit like a building project at home - you can start with a bit of DIY, but then there is a level at which you think you need a professional in and then, there is the bullet-biting decision of actually getting the extension built.

"Each of the steps is painful and more expensive - and it's true of disruption. An organisation needs to assess and decide if they want to do a bit of DIY or do they grit their teeth and find the budget for the big extension?"

"For us growth is based on continual investment and it's clearly prioritising where that investment needs to go - skills, infrastructure, opening up marketing opportunities, repurposing experience, educating clients and bringing your own people along for the journey.

"This is the big challenge for scale-ups - you can do this when you're small and perfectly formed but protecting your culture as you are growing is difficult. As you recruit new people, you have to harmonise with them too - as they have been trained to work elsewhere in a different way which they will bring with them.

"They need to feel welcome, respected and also open to being part of their new team. With new clients too, there can often be a tension until they get to know you - and trust you. So you have to earn that respect.

"When you are accelerating all of this as part of a scale-up strategy it's quite stressful for everyone if it's not done well."

How do you gain new business?

"The type of work we do requires clients to trust us and sometimes we have to tell them things they don't necessarily want to hear but need to hear.

"We always have to put in high quality submissions. If we are invited to bid for a piece of work and we fundamentally

don't agree with the client's approach, we will gauge whether a non-compliant bid will get us anywhere; it won't get us the job but will it get us an opportunity to talk afterwards?"

"We are prepared to offer innovative solutions in ways that weren't prescribed, with the integrity of best interests over winning the contract. Sometimes by representing challenge and authenticity we get the opportunity to be heard."

What is your viewpoint on Brexit in terms of running a business? Are there any measures you are implementing as a business in light of the current uncertainty?

"I stopped trying to predict. I think it's incredibly damaging to business confidence and willingness to invest. We have a very stable and mature board and so we believe in each other and we know there are ups and downs. However, if I was in a typical company where people don't have this level of trust and there is concern that the current atmosphere of uncertainty may have a negative effect on business sentiment, I would be very nervous as a director.

"It puts a lot of people in a very difficult situation. For us we know we have each other's backs and there is a lot of loyalty. I put great value on loyalty.

"I also think that clients are committing to smaller projects with smaller budgets because they just don't know the regulatory environment, investment environment nor how strong the pound is going to be or who the trading partners are going to be, whether there are chances to export or not and so on.

"Everyone is just waiting. We are just getting on with it, making the best choices we think, working within the current environment. Otherwise, it's paralysis by over-analysis."



Find out more

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focus

Local gin-trepreneurs

triumph in the den

Mancunian Craft Gin bags £75,000 of Investment from Jenny Campbell



L-R Liam Manton, Jenny Campbell, Mark Smallwood

Manchester gin-enthusiasts Mark Smallwood and Liam Manton created Didsbury Gin in 2017 and the tippie has already been hailed by Vogue Magazine as 'one of the most exciting new British gins'.

Hot off the heels of redundancy, and a bumper year making gin, Mark from Middlesbrough and Liam from Manchester took on their biggest challenge yet, the Dragons' Den.

The craft gin makers bagged themselves three minutes to pitch their plans for world domination to

the BBC show's five resident multi-millionaires in a bid to convince them to invest their own cash in the craft gin company.

After some initial banter between the multi-millionaires, Liam and Mark hooked in offers from both Jenny Campbell and Tej Lalvani. Ex-career banker turned business turnaround specialist and European cash machine entrepreneur Jenny prides herself on helping young talent realise their potential and the gin-makers felt an instant chemistry with her.

What's more she has a well documented love of gin and her own home gin bar already!

With the promise of help scaling up the business and reducing costs so they could increase production, so enabling them to offer the right price point to take their product to the bigger retailers and restaurant and bar chains, Liam and Mark took Jenny's offer of £75,000 for 33.3%

of their one year old business.

Since the show was recorded in April 2018 Jenny has left the den but has already guided Liam and Mark through a rebrand, an upscale of the business as well as legal and financial advice, and they are now just about to announce a number of listings with some of the UK's biggest bar groups.

Liam Manton, co-founder of Didsbury Gin, said; "It was terrifying especially when minutes before we went in front of the Dragons we realised that our glasses smelled of egg.

Sulphur in the washing machine water had made them disgusting and our

gin would also be disgusting. We had to wash everything very quickly before our chances were ruined."

Mark Smallwood, co-founder of Didsbury Gin, continued; "We loved having the opportunity to appear on the show, and when Jenny offered to invest, everything just seemed like it was coming together.

"Her no-nonsense Northern personality fits well with the brand we are building, and we really liked how straightforward she was with us.

"She has some great ideas, and saw the growth opportunities for Didsbury Gin both nationally and internationally. "

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focus

The small agency getting big results

Altrincham and Sale are creative hotbeds when it comes to PR and marketing communications.

Within a three-mile radius there are more than 20 PR agencies and scores of freelancers who work with clients as big as Warburton's, Asda, Disney and The British Film Institute.

But it's the work of a team of two ex-journalists based in a small office on Victoria Street that has just been recognised by the Altrincham and Sale Chamber of Commerce as the best in town.

jwc pr, which was launched six years ago by former journalist and broadcaster John Warburton, took home the coveted PR/Media Company of the Year gong at the annual Altrincham & Sale Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

John said: "We have never chased awards so we were really pleased to receive this. As a company we tend to fly under the radar and be careful about the clients we work with. Our size means we can be incredibly attentive and agile to a client's needs. Size is no barrier to creativity and we are incredibly proud of the work we do."

The company have also been awarded the MPA Inspiration Award, which saw their work pitched against that of global agencies Weber Shandwick and Havas.

PR campaigns from jwc have been used as case studies in the PR

industry bible PR Week and have led to clients being applauded in the House of Commons and winning national acclaim.

One award-winning campaign saw Gary Barlow and Peter Kay helping to deliver record-breaking sales for a client.

John added: "2018 has helped to cement us as specialists in the homes and interiors sector, after we were asked to handle global communications for Egyptian Cotton. This led to use working closely with John Lewis and Dunelm."

"It is a sector we are planning to grow throughout 2019."

But it's not all plain sailing, as they found out when they were asked to handle PR for a project headed-up by TV interior designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen.

John said: "We were brought in to handle the PR ahead of the launch of a Christmas wonderland designed by Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen called The Magical Journey. It was at The Belfry in Sutton Coldfield and was designed to be an amazing spectacle with trains and elves and reindeer."

"But they opened it too early and there was an enormous outcry in the local and national media. People were claiming to have seen elves smoking, and reindeers biting – one person claimed on social media that



L-R John Warburton, Sue Aldridge (CEO) Altrincham & Sale Chamber, Darren Proctor, host of the Altrincham & Sale Chamber Business Awards

one of the Santas told them to have a **** Christmas.

"We went into full crisis mode, the event had to be closed down and fixed, then we had to bring in TV and radio and the media to tell everyone it was all fine and dandy. We brought in The One Show who filmed a mum who had previously been round - when it was rubbish - talking about how much better it was now. Those were two sleepless weeks."

In addition to big names, jwc work with a host of smaller businesses too.

John said: "We like to work with small companies who we believe in and can get behind. An example of this The Handmade Christmas Co, which was set up by two fantastic lads in 2014 using just credit card debt to fund their first year."

"We fell in love with their products and values and that reflects in how you represent someone. This year is our third year handling their product PR - we are placing their products in the Love Island Christmas special and handling a £1.8m deal they have landed in the US with Target."

Working alongside John at the office on Victoria Street, is former

Manchester Evening News journalist, and former editor of Urban Life, Samantha Massey.

Sam, said: "When we found out we were nominated for PR Agency of the Year we were delighted. We were in great company alongside the likes of RMS PR so to be named winner was absolutely amazing."

"We're proud to be part of Altrincham and Sale's vibrant business communities and have been lucky enough to work with some of the towns' finest, including Sale FC Rugby Club who were also honoured at the event."



John Warburton, Sam Massey

jwc
PR & Communications

To find out more contact
John or Sam on
0161 696 6949
or hello@jwcpr.com
www.jwcpr.com

focus

It's a great time to start **expor**

by **Tony Goodman MBE**

At the time of writing this piece, I have absolutely no idea what is going to happen with Brexit and nor, I suspect, does anyone else, including the Government.

So, I can understand if you are mystified by my headline!

What makes this a great time to start exporting?

"The ongoing, obsessive, Brexit confusion has so dominated the agenda of public discourse that it has absorbed the oxygen of opportunity."

"Whilst Brexit is perhaps the most important constitutional change in a generation, I do not believe that its effect on the general population will be as great as the polemic posited

by both sides of the argument.

"Small business entrepreneurs thrive and grow on opportunity and they will see that these events have created a hiatus, not a roadblock."

"The UK has been underperforming in the export area for many years, and the Brexit process has highlighted this failure and pushed the Government into more concerted action to promote businesses of all size to start or grow their exports."

Why is the opportunity so great?

"If you have seen any of the publicity for the "Britain is Great" campaign you will see a series of success stories from across industries and across the country."

"Small companies as well as large are seeing the significant benefits that can derive from exporting. Of course it will increase your sales but it should also increase profitability and net margins. And why? Simple economics: adding more sales into your business without increasing overheads at the same rate, getting more output from using the same resources, opportunity to buy better. The opportunity to build up broader customer base."

Who would want to buy our products?

"The UK has a great reputation for quality, for innovation and for reliability. Just as we relish wines, cheese, cars or perfumes from around the world, they in turn love the best of British, whether it be

food and drink, engineering or software or many of the other products and services we excel at.

"Don't forget, we remain a major tourist attraction, underpinning this attitude that British goods stand for quality."

"It may also come as surprise, especially if you only get your news locally, that UK companies are widely respected and sought out. There are businesses from across the world actively seeking new British products to sell in their businesses or for clients."

Why haven't I heard about this before?

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Cara Bilner, Logistics Consultant

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"It has never been easier to be in contact with people across the world.

"My grandfather went on an International sales trip over 60 years ago that took months - most of the travel was by ship. Nowadays I can call a contact in the Far East for free, anytime, or have a video conference and be able to look them in the eyes. This is now the way of life for many exporters."

Where should I look?

"The process of looking for new export markets is no different than looking for markets within your own country.

"Prospecting for business is all about finding customers that want your products. There are three key points to consider: right product, right price, right

place. By understanding the basis of your current customer reasons for buying, you can then extrapolate to find similar markets around the world.

"Of course, all this can take time that you may not have. I am often asked to seek out and set up new markets for clients looking to expand their exporting, and my philosophy is always to look for the low hanging fruit. There is help to do this and a surprising number of resources to draw on."

Have I missed the boat?

"It is always tempting to think, when hearing that the time is now for an opportunity, that you are already too late to jump on board.

"That is absolutely not the case. To continue the analogy, this is a none-stop ferry, not a single cruise. The opportunity to export will continue to grow over coming

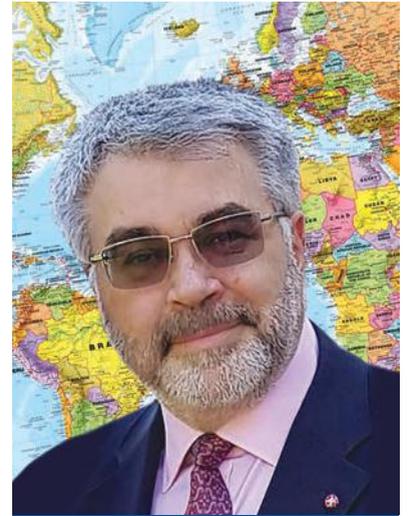
years, but why would you want to wait? If your business is suffering capacity constraints, then it would be understandable that you don't want new customers. If you already have more customers clamouring at your door than you can cope with, then why look further afield.

"However, if you are still looking to grow your business and your customer base, then, for you it is a great time to start exporting - regardless of Brexit or any other uncertainties,

You don't have to take my word for it. Just watch some of those 'If I can, you can' videos promoted by the **Britain is Great** campaign.

"Real people, real businesses, real exports, real successes. And you could be one of them, making a video - very soon!"

Find out for yourself. Look to www.greatbusiness.gov.uk/ for further information.



Tony Goodman MBE is a successful exporter and has been doing so through a variety of different businesses. He has an MBA and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Member of the Institute of Exports, Member of the Institute of Directors and DIT Export Champion.

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

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Creating an **export** plan

Like any business plan preparing your route to selling overseas needs to be thoroughly researched and mapped in advance of any trading. Market research is crucial to preparing an effective route to your overseas marketplace.

Your plan must always start with your objectives, and once identifying those objectives a clear set of processes can be established to achieve them.

A well structured plan will also ensure you've considered all possibilities around those objectives, and will guide you to a logical path in not just achieving them, but making sure you keep on track.

Your plan will also serve as a tool to show banks, investors or partners that you're serious and have achievable and realistic goals.

What to include

Every plan is custom designed to serve the specific objectives of your business, however, there are a number of common themes to consider that cover many plans:

- Explanation of why you want to export including the benefits
- Product or service offering and what makes you different from the competition
- Target markets and the reasons for choosing them
- Any changes you need to make to your existing product or service for the new market/s
- How you intend to protect your intellectual property
- How you'll market your product
- Resourcing your plan - including staffing and finance

- Operating model/route to market
- Operational information including transport, distribution, customs and licences
- Targets and how you will measure them

Planning for risk prevention

An area of concern for any exporting activity is how to manage risks of unethical and illegal practices within your own organisation and throughout your supply chain. This includes corruption, bribery or fraud, also any issues involving human rights, child labour or modern slavery.

The result of conducting your business with integrity enables you to mitigate the risk of criminal activity and ensure trust is built.

This in turn reassures your partners, investors, plus your own

organisation and supply chain, that you meet compliance standards.

In order to achieve this your working practices would benefit from the introduction of a set of policies and procedures that form a rigorous corporate governance framework.

These include a code of conduct, the exercising of due diligence, a whistleblowing mechanism, internal auditing and full training for colleagues.

Specialist risk analysts and lawyers can help compile many of these documents.

The **Department for International Trade** offers some excellent advice on exporting. The information here can be found on their website along with many other subjects specifically to help your business trade abroad. To find out more visit www.great.gov.uk/advice/

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Where: Manchester Central, Windmill St, Manchester, England, M2 3GX

When: Tuesday 12 & Wednesday 13 March 2019, 10am - 4pm daily

Tickets: Free online – Search Northern Business Expo

Often the thing we need help with the most in business is identifying our weaknesses and finding solutions to take us on to the next level, that's what this event is all about – providing advice, inspiration, motivation and a chance to network. In uncertain economic times, it'll help you find ways for you to stand out

and stay competitive!

This show is the best event to meet other like-minded business people, and who knows, this could be the start of a whole new venture! Whether you are a new start-up business, an SME or a business professional, if you want to know what is happening at the forefront of media, marketing and technology you need to be at NBE19!

With over 80 seminars and workshops, 1-2-1 advice from impartial specialists, an interactive exhibition and some of the best speakers from around the world; spending a day at the Northern Business Exhibition can really help put your business on track to achieve this year's business plan, and all this is absolutely free!

Seminars and workshops include:

- Access to Alternative Finance - Meet Local Experts from the British Business Bank, Maven Capital & Business Growth Hub
- Update on the UK and World Economy post Brexit from Dr. John Ashcroft of The Saturday Economist Strategy Team
- Writing for Social Media, Build a Digital Marketing Plan, Answer Questions with Data, and lots more with Google Digital Garage

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- Mental Health: A Whole Organisation Approach with Dr Libby Artingstall
- How To Start a Successful Blog Business with Emma Campbell from What Emma Did
- The Key To Business Success In 2019 with renowned business coach, Ben Kench
- And 70+ more!

What else will you find?

- 1-2-1 personalised and impartial advice appointments
- 4 dedicated networking partners
- Google Digital Garage
- The £5K Pitch
- The Small Business Advice Clinic
- More than 100 cost-effective suppliers and support networks exhibiting
- Funding clinics – get the right finance to grow
- Huge savings from exhibitors/sponsors
- Expert analysis on the industry and how to stay competitive

Join us for 2 days packed with useful tips, valuable insight from top entrepreneurs and a chance to meet and speak with some of the leading companies providing the products and services to support your business and leave the event better informed, better connected, better equipped and ready to achieve your goals.

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focus

A hybrid road



Lexus ES 300h Hybrid Saloon

GM Business Connect recently took up the challenge to write a review of the new Lexus ES 300h Hybrid Saloon, kindly supplied by Lexus Stockport, part of the RRG Group.

After driving the car for a week, Paul Mirage reported on the experience of owning the latest Lexus luxury saloon.

About the Car

"When I was asked to test drive the next generation Lexus ES 300h Hybrid Saloon, I wasn't sure what to expect. On the one hand Hybrid vehicles tend to have a reputation for a distinct lack of performance, yet the latest offering from Lexus was very much what you'd expect in terms of speed and power from a luxury saloon. As a large saloon the front wheel drive ES feels comfortably agile with nicely responsive steering and excellent handling.

"The range has only one engine

derivative available – a 218hp 2.5litre hybrid with a declared fuel economy of just over 60mpg. The performance is not sluggish but neither does it rival the competition, instead, the impressive fuel consumption mixed with the low emissions mark this as a favourite with cost conscious drivers and fleet owners alike. In fact, the respectively low starting price coupled with an impressive set of standard extras will rank this as offering exceptional value for money in the executive saloon market.

"The hybrid system itself offers an efficient and remarkably smooth driving experience, and the Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMh) batteries enjoy a 15 year guarantee when the relevant parts are regularly serviced and maintained.

"My experience driving the ES was of a smooth, quiet and very well equipped cruiser. The external styling

enjoyed the distinctive sweeping grill of recent Lexus models, and internally the cabin was busy with well-styled options, many of which are standard. There was plenty of room for passengers although the headroom in the back may be a little confined for some. My other observation was that unfortunately the rear seats didn't fold down due to the position of the batteries."

The drive

"The road handling and agility for a large saloon was excellent, especially as the car felt quite heavy on the road. I particularly liked the choice of driving modes - Normal, Eco and Sports – operated easily from bolt controls positioned above the steering column.

"Normal mode I called this the 'safe mode'. It dips from battery to petrol as suits your driving requirements

but still ensures there is plenty of power available for acceleration when required. This is where Hybrids really come into their own, offering instant responses to different driving styles.

"**Eco mode** This is just what you need when driving around town in heavier traffic. If you constantly keep looking at the fancy energy monitor in the centre of the dashboard as I did, it's easy to feel somewhat psychologically tight fisted trying to get the best out of your petrol consumption. This mode is perfect for everyday commuting in around Manchester including the car parks I call the M60 and M56 - not forgetting Regent Road!

"**Sports mode** As expected this is for appreciating the excellent agility and handling of the ES. Paddle controls were also available for making the driving experience more personal, and when activated the display counter automatically turns red letting you know in no uncertain terms you were driving in a more exciting manner."

Practical motoring

"The boot space on the ES was in line with most executive saloons, and I was told you can easily get a set of golf clubs in as well as suitcases. You can open the boot remotely which is great when your hands are full, which for me they usually are, and it's this sort of small attention to detail that marks the ES as excellent value.

"With so many features the dashboard and steering column were very busy with controls, however, the finish of the cabin was very plush, and although there was a lot that needed identifying, all the buttons and controls were finished to a very high standard. The feeling inside the ES was definitely that of luxury motoring.

"I quite liked the control panel in the centre of the car next to the automatic gear control, and the Sat Nav was



trip

easy to use and follow.

"There were also blind spot monitors on the wing mirrors were extremely useful, they warn you of traffic approaching you from behind and either side of you, which I personally think should be mandatory on any new vehicle as a necessary safety feature.

"As mentioned the specifications that are standard really make a huge difference to the value for money the ES offers, and I really liked all the gadgets including the heated steering wheel - especially on the recent cold winter mornings.

"I picked up the car with a ¼ of a tank of fuel and filled up a few days later costing £45. Then did over 400 miles with just under ¼ of a tank spare, which I think is pretty good, especially considering the time I spent in Sports mode!"

Lexus Stockport

Lexus Stockport is a purpose-built premium brand dealership that provides a luxurious yet comfortable environment for the customer to experience the Lexus brand and latest range of Self-Charging Hybrid models.

Situated on Rooth Street, Stockport since 2000, this state-of-the-art facility provides the very best levels of customer service and easy access from the M60 motorway.

The 2019 model line-up for Lexus showcases a truly unique range of cars; all offering industry-leading hybrid technology to deliver lower emissions and running costs.

Further to this, with the introduction in 2018 of the Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP) which provides more accurate testing and regulations for new car emissions and 'real-world' fuel consumption, Lexus Self-Charging Hybrid technology seamlessly combines petrol and electric



STOCKPORT

power to offer high efficiency with no compromise on power.

For 2019, the latest hybrid cars to join the range are the UX Compact SUV and the ES Luxury Saloon.

The new UX challenges everything that has gone before. Its bold design expresses unmistakable strength, yet its elegantly sculpted surfaces suggest a character that is both stylish and dynamic; offering a world of no compromise and smooth, responsive driving.

Innovative technology in the UX includes the Panoramic View Monitor which gives an amazing 360° birds-eye view of the car and its surroundings through an unprecedented 10.3" screen. There's no need to worry about troublesome cables as well with the availability of a Qi-compatible wireless charger, allowing you to charge a device such as a smartphone simply by placing it on the charger.

The exciting new Lexus ES shatters preconceptions about executive saloons. Benefitting from a brave new approach to design, this made it lower, wider and sleeker. Combining a stunning coupé-like silhouette with the space and refinement of a flagship saloon, the ES delivers elegance and comfort in one exceptional vehicle.

Furthermore, the Lexus 'Takumi' master craftspeople oversee all of the exquisite detailing, from the stitching on the seats to the sharp and seductive Aluminium cabin trim. All new ES models are equipped as standard with the very latest second generation Lexus Safety System+ comprising advanced technologies, resulting in the safest premium



Lexus UX Compact Hybrid SUV

saloon ever tested by Euro NCAP.

A Lexus Self-Charging Hybrid vehicle also charges itself as you drive. No plugging in, no compromise. Whether a compact hatchback, an SUV crossover, a saloon or high-performance sports coupe, the Hybrid system adapts to your needs and your lifestyle. With unrivalled expertise, over 1.3 million sold worldwide and counting, Lexus is bringing hybrid luxury firmly into the present.

Every Lexus delivers legendary craftsmanship and build quality and the highest attention to detail with engineering expertise. With this in mind, the combination of luxury, performance, advanced hybrid technology and low CO2 emissions deliver reduced benefit-in-kind bills

and competitive whole life running costs.

Whether it be new or used car sales, servicing or accessories, the experienced team at Lexus Stockport are well placed to create amazing for every customer. Centre Principal, Fred Goodwin, and the team look forward to giving you their unique expertise and a warm welcome.

For more information or to get in touch, call

0161 475 3631

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www.rrgcontracthire.com

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www.lexus.co.uk/stockport



interview

Trafford is open for business



GM Business Connect are keen to work with many organisations supporting business engagement and Trafford Borough Council have always been exceptional in their support of businesses both within the area and those looking to move there.

We have partnered with Trafford's Strategic Growth Team over many years on a variety of different events, and are currently supporting the regular Trafford Park Business Network run by the team plus the GM Chamber.

We caught up with Councillor Andrew Western at Trafford Town Hall and asked him to share some insight on current thinking by Trafford Council on business support and engagement in the borough:

Why should businesses move to the Trafford area?

"Not taking into account the support that councils can offer in the form of town centre loan schemes and other such incentives, it's about connectivity, It's about the success local businesses have had here, so close to both City Centre Manchester and Manchester Airport. We also enjoy great digital connectivity, and have a very highly skilled workforce here including the best educated

people in Greater Manchester. As a result of this I think access to skills is a huge bonus for potential employers too."

I know you are involved with lots of businesses in Trafford Park but are you engaged with enough businesses there?

"The honest answer to that is 'no'. It is an isolated area. There are business breakfast events and other ways of engaging with businesses there but it is a huge, huge area with 30,000 people going to work there every day. Although we can't know every business personally, we want to ensure those strong relationships are there, where possible, and it is our role as a Council to be available for businesses to access our help and support."

"Trafford is a huge place and has many different hubs where business growth is happening and we are keen to engage with all those areas. Getting round the table together and establishing crucial working relationships with businesses is so important to the borough, and that's why the work of the Economic Growth Team is so important."

Tell us a bit more about the Economic Growth Team and how they engage with business?

"I think that they are a fantastic team - from top to bottom. We have been growing the team and have recently placed a graduate in there on a local government training scheme who has done really well. The team work very hard building relationships right across the borough, not just in Trafford Park, and we've got people like Steven James who are making a real difference in terms of the way that Trafford encourage business and ultimately grow as a crucial part of Greater Manchester."

"One of the things they do primarily is to promote the town centre loan scheme. This supports businesses

with training or marketing development needs but also particularly to deal with the issue of town centre vacancies where we offer up to £20,000 for businesses who are looking to get off the ground and are willing to fill vacant units. The interest rate on the scheme is extremely competitive as we see an opportunity to drive growth and prosperity through the development of small businesses and start-ups that would be looking to take a next step from working at home."

"What the team do is absolutely amazing and that project alone has leveraged in over a million pounds worth of private investment to Trafford in the past 5 years, equating to about 118 jobs. So it's really important - not just in terms of the



positive perception that residents have of our town centres but because of the jobs and economic growth created in the areas as well."

What sort of businesses take up the scheme – are they mainly retail based?

"Not necessarily, although with the vacant units it is often the case for retail or food and beverage businesses as they are very forward facing directly to passing trade. We provide up to £20,000 on the vacant unit scheme and up to £5,000 for marketing and promotion requirements, and up to £1,000 for specific training and development needs. It's quite wide ranging, and it means that businesses can have a holistic offer including online and social media needs, enabling them to compete with neighbouring businesses and also particularly in an age of social media stand out in a much wider area."

How much money has been allocated to repairing potholes in Trafford. Do you have a target to reach?

"There are set criteria as to what is designated a pothole. Something like 'anything over 40 millimeters' constitutes a pothole. One of my greatest frustrations is situations where something is described as 'not an actionable pothole' e.g. because it is a pothole on a pothole! The total funding that is going in between April last year and 2022 is around £30m.

"We all know it's a major bugbear for everyone – residents and businesses alike. It also has an effect on visitor experience coming in and out of the borough, and I think it's right that we are investing this sum.

"There has been some significant work done in recent years such as the A56. There were some terrible potholes, and actual disintegration of the road through Carrington on the A6144. When I came in to office I applied some contingency funding for that particular route, as well as intervening to sort further problems on the A6144 through Warburton. Where there has been some flexibility, I've been able to address issues that had yet to be allocated. One of the main ones at the minute is the far end of Norris Road and we will look again to contingency funding to get this done this financial year.

"There are still problems but with the help of this extra funding over the next 3 years we will be able to manage the problems better."

If anyone still hasn't applied for assistance with their business rates,

who should they get help from?

"If businesses need help with their rates and need guidance as to what is available, also, generally to see what else is available to help their businesses grow, the Economic Growth Team have access to the latest information and support routes – including assistance with business rates."

Do you see Brexit affecting Trafford?

"Oh yes. The situation as we are looking at it means that there is no way that any Brexit deal can be good for Greater Manchester's economy. Given Trafford's contribution (and thinking of the size of some of the businesses operating in Trafford Park), including European and Global firms based here too, we have to be really concerned for what the future looks like for them. This current deal is not something I would support, it shows a contraction of about £0.4 billion pounds in the economy, no-deal could be up toward £10 billion. Even looking at the lower figure, it means that there would be no growth in Greater Manchester for 15 years. If we set that against our ambitions as a city region on digital, on the Greater Manchester Spacial Framework, transport and so on, there is a real risk to what we are trying to achieve with a policy that can only make us poorer."

Looking at Transport, is there still talk of an 'orbital' of trams around Greater Manchester?

"I like to call it the 'spider flow' but I'm in favour of this. I worked on the metrolink network and I personally think it's a great service. It can be expensive but when you look at what's going on with the train systems (Northern Rail and Trans Pennine) at the moment the metrolink is one of the more reliable public transport systems for residents and workers.

"I'd like to see for instance, a link from Altrincham to the airport. It is ridiculous that you have to go to Cornbrook or Trafford Bar to change to get airport links. It's not a quick service.

"There is a real opportunity by linking Stretford and the Trafford

Centre via Urmston – there is a big gap in provision at the moment. Also, that new line out to Trafford Centre and Trafford Park may mean we can take the line out to Carrington and Partington; Carrington where we have so much growth earmarked for the next few years and of course Partington, which is currently a really isolated community and we want the residents there to feel they can access these employment opportunities.

"So I'd like to see an orbital route. There are still patches in Greater Manchester

that don't have any trams at the moment – Bolton, Wigan, Stockport – and when you think of the proximity especially from Stockport to the city centre, it's crazy there are no links.

"I'd like to see the grid system similar to the way the underground works but also being slightly parochial about it, I'd like to see a long term way of accessing the airport that allows people to get there without going through the city centre, which is counterproductive and only forces people in to cars and taxis and is ultimately bad for the environment."



Councillor Andrew Western,
Leader of
Trafford Council

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Entrepreneurial Excellence

At the University of Salford, enterprise excellence and industry engagement are at the core of our strategy. We evolve every year so our graduates gain the skills they need to succeed in the 21st Century global economy.

Launch a business at Launch@SalfordUni

Entrepreneurial students and graduates from the University of Salford are being given support to take on the world with their ideas, thanks to a new business incubator.

Just opened in the University's Peel Park campus, Launch@SalfordUni hosts 20 businesses at a time, which all benefit from six months of advice and space to grow their ideas into fully fledged businesses.

It's about helping Greater Manchester become the best place to start and grow a new business and is supported by The GC Business Growth Hub and Santander Universities.

Launch@SalfordUni provides a location to generate ideas and work with leading business figures. Support includes subject specific Q&A sessions, facilitated by academic staff from Salford Business School, networking showcase events and access to a seed funding pot made available through the University and partners Santander.

Among the businesses being supported are a company specialising in Virtual Reality experiences, a vegan food delivery system, a waste chemical recycler and an events company.

Piotr Kotlarek has set up a business showcasing the power and immersion of Virtual Reality. His VR Den is one of the first to receive support from Launch@Salford Uni. He said: "The best advice I have had so far is to focus on one niche and make that work, rather than spread myself too thin in too many areas.

"As I build the business my ultimate aim is to create experiences that professional athletes could use. For example you could recreate a track or a course in the VR environment and then the athlete could practice in as real a situation as possible to

prepare themselves for what the final environment will be like."

Backing from the Mayor

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham helped open the new facility.

Mr Burnham said: "This answers a real need in the regional economy, that is start up space for young entrepreneurs. It is often difficult when you are trying to launch a new business, you need funding and accommodation. This sends a message that students can aspire to run their own business when they graduate."

Professor David Spicer, Dean of the Business School at the University of Salford said: "Launch@SalfordUni is key to how we see our mission at the University. Providing the best experience possible for our students and supporting them to achieve their full potential."

Enterprise Stars

To further strengthen our entrepreneurship offer we launched our national Enterprise Stars initiative in conjunction with University Alliance. Our aim is to give students an opportunity to make connections across the sector.

The finals are held as a Dragon's Den style event at our MediaCityUK campus. Students are able to interact with multiple companies, pitch their ideas and meet other innovative students.

We have an innovation competition embedded in the curriculum in each semester, which focuses on learning through developing and pitching ideas to potential investors. We allocate £10,000 of Santander-backed funding towards start-up ideas. Through this process, entrants are supported with business mentoring and feedback.

Once budding entrepreneurs have won funding, we ensure we support them with further mentoring. They are supported through local incubators, our commercialisation team and benefit from our strong connections to industry partners and business support schemes.

Every year we run the Creative Entrepreneur conference showcasing

the best in innovation, allowing our students and the wider public access to some of the most creative talent around.

Best practice and dissemination has been shared internationally by the creation of QAA case studies, social media, live streaming, video, creation of teaching materials and blog posts.

Student Lavinia Goddard earned the opportunity to present a television show thanks to her business idea Vinejuice, an urban culture promotions company which won the Creative Entrepreneur competition.

The judges were so impressed with her that they decided to further back her and support her project.

New Courses

Two new courses will further embed entrepreneurialism in our curriculum; MSc Entrepreneurship will start in September 2019 and the BSc Entrepreneurship in 2020.

Both courses focus on experiential learning rather than solely classroom-based learning. Successful entrepreneurs will give masterclasses and the courses will teach skills which are highly sought after by employers.

Find out more about how Salford Business School works with industry www.salford.ac.uk/business-school/business-and-partnerships or contact **Sam Wood** on **0161 295 5361**, email s.e.wood@salford.ac.uk

For more information about how the University of Salford supports enterprise www.salford.ac.uk/askus/work-and-careers/enterprise

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Manchester Airport Group celebrate 80 supersonic years



Last year was a significant one for the airport. It celebrated its 80th birthday in June in which they looked back on what had been achieved and also forwards to the future.

As part of the celebrations The Concorde Conference Centre at Manchester Airport's Runway Visitor Park recently played host to over 180 corporate guests as they celebrated the Airport's milestone birthday.

To mark the occasion, there was an aviation fun filled evening with guests checking in on arrival issued with boarding passes before dining under the wings of the iconic Concorde. The menu was inspired by the destinations Concorde flew to.

Guests were given access to the supersonic aircraft before watching a video celebrating the airport's birthday created in conjunction with the poet, Tony Walsh. They also learnt about the airport's £1bn transformation programme that will see Terminal 2 more than double in size.

A raffle on the evening raised £1,460 for Manchester Airport's chosen charity, CLIC Sargent and Flying

Start, British Airways' charity.

If you'd like to book the Concorde Hangar at the Runway Visitor Park for your event contact our dedicated Events Team on **0161 489 8299** or email Cheryl Garnett, Conference Sales and Events Manager on **Cheryl.Garnett@manairport.co.uk**

A key part of the celebrations was the release of a poem and film called "Time Flies," created by Tony Walsh. The film tells the story of Manchester's evolution from a single wooden hut in 1938 to the UK's third largest airport and a key driver of global trade and tourism for the whole of the North.

It featured poignant memories from passengers, businesses and airport workers past and present, with the words used to narrate the footage penned by famous Mancunian wordsmith Tony.

Since June the airport has been busy with lots of other activity to celebrate the occasion. This has included planting 80 oak trees (the official gift for an 80th) with various community groups across the North of England, opening up its archives, tea parties for the local community and working with KLM, who had the first

commercial flight from Manchester.

Manchester was the first city in Great Britain to establish a municipal aerodrome when an Air Ministry licence was granted to the Corporation on 22 April 1929.

In January 1934, an airline's senior pilot claimed that the existing Barton site for Manchester was unsuitable, and by July 1934 the City Council had chosen Ringway, as Manchester Airport used to be known, as a new home.

The original 1938 route network included the exotic hotspots of Western Super-Mare, Croydon and Doncaster whereas Manchester

now serves more than 220 international destinations worldwide including Beijing, Houston, Mumbai, San Francisco, Singapore and Boston.

In less than three months, Manchester Airport, the third largest in the UK, will open the first stage of its £1bn transformation programme.

The programme will provide the millions of customers that use the airport every year with facilities that combine a contemporary look and feel with state of the art services. The key element is the expansion and reconfiguration of Terminal Two, to become the airport's primary terminal building.

The first pier and multi storey



car park will open in April.

As part of the programme, all passengers will see significant improvements including the latest self-service check-in terminals, improved security processing, more e-gates and new lounges and stands. It will allow us to introduce the latest technology and systems to improve customers' experience and make it easier to travel through the airport. New stands and piers will also be introduced, offering better departure gate facilities.

It's not just the terminal that is being enhanced. To maximise the benefits of the redeveloped Terminal 2, a lot of work is needed out on the airfield and work is progressing well on a new dual taxiway that will maximise the use of the two runways we have at Manchester.

The works will see 80,000m² of new

taxiway and apron, 40,000m³ of concrete poured and sixteen miles of cabling installed with the aim of all excavated material being diverted from landfill throughout. The work is due to be completed by July 2020.

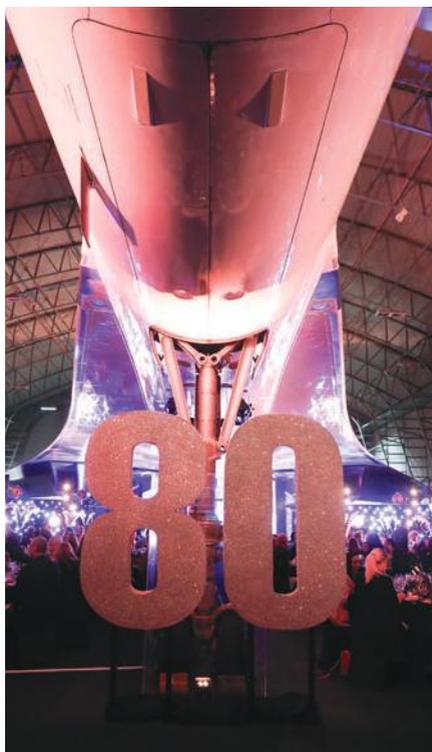
Once finished, it will improve aircraft access between the runways and new terminal, leading to reduced taxi times and minimising fuel burn. The works are the biggest changes to the airfield since Runway 2 came into operation in 2001.

To maximise benefits to the local community the airport has worked with its construction partners and suppliers to ensure that where possible money is being spent in local supply chain.

As one of the biggest construction projects in the North of England there are currently more than 1,300 people working on site – including 93 apprentices in various trades. As the project reaches its peak at the beginning of next year that number is expected to raise to nearly 1,500 people working on site with a target of 150 apprentices.

The scheme is also benefiting local suppliers and SMEs across the North West. Since the first spade went in the ground £220m has been spent with the supply chain within a 35 mile radius of the airport, many of whom are SMEs.

Looking further ahead in the scheme after work on the terminal extension is complete work will begin on refurbishing the existing Terminal 2 building to bring it up to standard, this is set to open in 2022. Whilst a further two piers will also be constructed with the second pier delivered in 2022 and the third in 2024.



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review



pro-manchester

The pro-manchester Property & Regeneration lunch



by Mel Hill

pro-manchester's Property & Regeneration Lunch welcomed the sector's movers and shakers to Manchester Central to discuss the current economic boom our region is benefitting from.

The event, which was hosted by Property and Regeneration committee co-chair, Heather Gray - business development manager at Bruntwood, brought together two panels. The first of which discussed placemaking in Greater Manchester with Jon Sawyer, Manchester City Council; Suzanne Benson, Trowers & Hamlin's Manchester office discussed the company's recent 'Real Value Report', which looked at what people actually value in communities. "The report found that there was strong evidence that developments that create societal value can produce higher levels of financial return. These values need to be discussed at the early stages of the development process in order to create stronger, cleaner communities."

This community aspect of property development sparked a conversation about Manchester city centre's lack of green spaces. Will developers start to prioritise this? As Director of Housing and Residential Growth, Jon Sawyer has Manchester becoming a zero-carbon city by 2038 high on his agenda. Jon discussed having an open door for businesses on this subject, asking delegates to come forward with ideas on how the Council and businesses can work together to achieve this hugely important target. "The Northern Gateway Development is set to create

creating residential and commercial buildings. You can have amazing spaces that look great and have all the technology you'd ever want, but they're still soulless."

15,000 homes," says Jon. "It's a large-scale project where we are pushing sustainability at the forefront of everything we're doing in the development process. "Affordability is also high on our agenda and hugely important, but if we aren't creating these green spaces when we create these developments, then there isn't that same sense of community."

It would seem that developers are starting to listen to experts about the importance of implementing green spaces into large developments. Reducing our carbon footprint also means trying to reduce the amount of energy that is consumed when creating these new developments. With this, we are seeing more and more buildings being repurposed and given new life.

Andrew Coles is a retail and leisure focused Senior Asset Manager at Aviva Investors. "Manchester is still a growing city, with the living and working population increasing year-on-year. Retail vacancies will come up, but this gives us great opportunities to change those buildings' usage.

"A great example of this is The Corn Exchange. While the Triangle value was falling off a cliff, by repositioning it, it's a busy, thriving hub. I believe Manchester will fare better than the vast majority of the country in the coming years."

Panel two, discussing commercial real estate, consisted of Chris Oglesby, CEO - Bruntwood; Chris Baguley, Commercial Director - Together and Steve Gillingham, Partner & National Head of Public Sector at Rider Levett Bucknall.

Chris Oglesby shared some fascinating insights, discussing

how Bruntwood has shifted from its traditional refurb schemes: "The market has got very heated, so we don't see any value in acquisitions at present.

"We're repurposing a lot of our already existing buildings, seeing a huge trend in co-working spaces."

Chris Baguley, commercial director at Together sees huge excitement in his clients' projects at present. A multitude of them are currently repurposing their assets: "For many years now, I have worked on the funding of office blocks, but it's exciting to see how people are taking a previously tired building and converting it into something quite special. There are people on a much smaller scale than Bruntwood that we're funding and it's an area that's really exciting at the moment."

So, what has driven the economic boom Manchester is currently benefitting from?

Steve Gillingham has over 25 years' experience as a chartered surveyor and believes it's the injection of inward investment: "As a city, Manchester has an environment that welcomes inward investment ahead of anyone in the UK. It's has grabbed more than its market share for a regional city and that has to be down to the huge benefits of being in the north, which comes down to cost and talent."

Steve also added: "The organisations that fund infrastructure need to ensure we can get transport connections right.

"Between seven and ten million people work within 45 mins of the city and they're really hard to reach. We need to improve this, so we can do business and improve the economy for the whole region."



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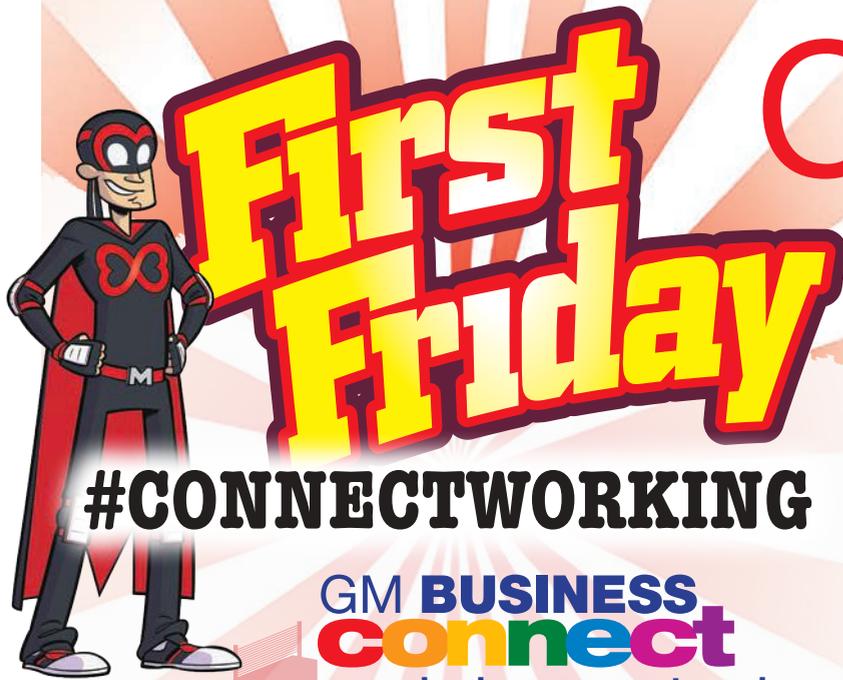
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City Centre Business Networking



December and January saw two brand new venues hosting the GM Business Connect First Friday Connectworking event.

The December event was hosted by Barclay's Eagle Lab at Bruntwood's Union building overlooking Albert Square and the Town Hall.

January saw us welcomed at Manchester Hall on Bridge Street, at their sumptuous Library.

December was great to see the facilities Barclays were offering the Manchester business community. We were shown around by Matthew Priestley, Ecosystem Manager, and the tour included co-working spaces, private offices, and a very hospitable event space.

January was also a great success, with a visit to Manchester Hall on Bridge Street. Frankie Garvey, Corporate Sales Manager, welcomed us to enjoy the wonderful architecture, and drinks were also

kindly provided by Jeffrey's Tonic, who supplied free Gin and Organic Tonic syrup especially for the event. You can see more at

www.jeffreystonic.com

The next First Friday Connectworking will be on Friday 1 March at Atlas Bar on Deansgate.

Tickets are available through EventBrite and cost £15. The entry cost includes a tombola ticket for Forever Manchester's regular prize draws.

Forever Manchester work with local communities across Greater Manchester to inspire and encourage projects that the communities want to see, to make their neighbourhoods happier and healthier.

To see how your business can work with Forever Manchester contact **Jean Mills** on **0161 214 0940** jean@forevermanchester.com www.forevermanchester.com



Frankie Garvey,
Corporate
Sales Manager,
Manchester Hall



Matthew Priestley,
Ecosystem Manager,
Barclays Eagle Lab

review

Customer Service Champions

Late November brought two great speakers to K-Club's regular Salford networking event - Steve Byrne, CEO at Travel Counsellors, and Chris Brindley MBE, Former MD of Metro Bank and Natwest.

Steve was first to speak, and his talk highlighted the positive impact of building caring and trusting relationships with customers - and how this affects the top and bottom lines of business. He began with a little background in that his business had been going for 24 years and grown on average 16% per year for the past 15 years and 20% for the past 3, with a recent buyout of £250m in May.

But what makes Travel Counsellors different? "Business is all about relationships." Where many businesses focus on the 'what' and the 'how', there is also the 'why', he explained - that having a visible ethos is key. Knowing what you stand for creates legacy and the best businesses are those who are delivering sustainable long-term growth because they are disruptive and yet can also cope with disruption.

In differentiating the who, what and why further, Steve expanded that businesses need to be able to articulate their central sense of purpose. The way to articulate can be very personal and powerful. Reflecting on his own potential he pondered that knowing your personal 'whys' is fundamental because 'trust is the glue of life'.

Community, he explained is essential to disruptive business, and you cannot have community without trust. Furthermore, he stated that Travel Counsellors did not 'spend a penny' on advertising and that all business was from word of mouth - a strong testimony to his assertion about personal ethos and trust among people. A £600m pound business without high street presence, and aiming to be a £1billion pound business, the priority is actually about

garnishing the voice of each of the 2,000 people in the business.

Other travel companies spend the time, effort and money on acquiring new customers rather than retaining their existing ones, so Travel Counsellors have centred the 'why' on care. They care for 3 groups of people - customers, colleagues (those who are part of the company) and the community that they interact with. Their ethos is to maintain a positive impact across all three groups.

The success of Travel Counsellors emphasised that although the business is human to human selling they have demonstrated that scale can be achieved through intimacy. Where people really need to put their trust in companies for their precious holiday time - because that experience must be valued and cared for by ourselves - people work hard and absolutely deserve exceptional customer care.

Steve went on to describe the role of disruption within business sectors, with particular emphasis on Travel Counsellors. "There are 3 points to consider. Firstly, disruptive businesses tend to devolve power away from leadership and toward those closest to the customer - because they are on the ground working with the reality of people's feelings and experiences. Secondly, They trust and empower their people. We found that a 'brutal' pace of information flow is essential from customer back to those in charge - to improve and take on real opinion from those who can help you improve. Lastly, there is a core sense of community. In the example of ourselves, community is extended through the Travel Counsellors and on to their families too. That as a business supporting a community, we are a force for good - there for the good and the bad times."

Summing up, Steve concluded that ultimately, people buy from those they trust and that for entrepreneurs, they must focus on their 'why' and

remain passionate about that ethos whilst 'disrupting' for the good of community.

Chris Brindley MBE was next to speak. Chris's theme was customer experience - the myth of customer service and why behaviours betray values.

This is an area he felt was very relevant to Metro Bank - which was set up with the intention to disrupt the banking industry.

He began by stating that they were the first bank in 170 years to be given a licence. "In 2008 the regulators awarded the licence due to outstanding customer service. The truth behind this was that instead of decisions being made in a boardroom where those in power do not have customers' best interests in mind, we were different."

Sharing his insight into creating positive business models Chris urged us to "keep looking beneath the surfaces. In being challenging to the status quo, we can take action for change - looking at the smallest details can be exceptionally rewarding."

What is important he expounded, was what the future would hold - past glory is firmly in the past. Businesses trade on their current glory but must look to the future to survive, and as such change must be embraced to become successful.

He continued with the insight that there is a consumer revolution that must be understood, particularly on the high street as it continues to change and the only way to do so is to understand consumer behaviour and care about customers.

Rounding up, Chris stated that Metro Bank was inspired out of this change, based on referrals where customers were also fans. The model they created was where customers wanted a different banking experience and that they wanted a value proposition based on service over rates.

It is the behaviours that count, he said - behaviours based on trust and how people feel. "We are transparent in name and nature and for example, by offering a drive-through banking experience, we help customers get around mobility, time and childcare difficulties.

Steve Byrne,
CEO,
Travel
Counsellors



Chris Brindley MBE,
Former MD of
Metro Bank
and Natwest,

Longer hours, being open 7 days a week, including bank holidays, allows people to do their banking around their own work schedules and not those of the banking traditions. Easy access without steps and dog friendly. Baby change facilities, accounts opened and a card in the customer's hand within 15 minutes is the way we look after our customers - unchained pens you can take home too! These are the needs and reflections of real people. Real customers. Businesses must be disruptive in culture and put the customers at the heart of the operating model where the job of the leaders is to nurture. Transaction by transaction we want to be outstanding. We think differently, attending to detail. We choose to disrupt - and have fun."

GM Business Connect have been partnering K-Club's regular networking events for many years now, and it this was a bittersweet event in that Fred Stone, Founder of K-Club, was stepping down from regular events.

Fred was handing the reins to the very capable hands of directors Brian Wood, Matt Townsend and Sue Weighell, plus the K-Club Associates who keep this unique private business network thriving.

The next event is on 28 March.



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For further information please
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Events Organiser on
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apprenticeships

Apprenticeships at Salford City College and Marks & Spencer team up to provide opportunities to help local people shine

MediaCityUK and the surrounding Salford Quays is fortunate to house some of the biggest and best companies from across the UK, many with global reputations. None are better known than retail giant Marks and Spencer.

Founded in 1884 in the North of England, the organisation is now recognised across the globe for its clothing, home and food products. Though its headquarters are based in the City of London, Marks and Spencer have specialist business centres across the UK, housing many of their key functions. It is the National Human Resource Business Centre (People Services) that is based in the Quays, employing over 200 people to provide the company with the best possible services.

Nicola Ferraby, Head of Colleague Services, describes the location

as a "fantastic place to work" with "talented and brilliant colleagues that provide an incredible service across the Marks and Spencer organisation".

Nicola and her colleagues in Salford have recognised apprenticeships as being a way of supporting talent development, and Apprenticeships at Salford City College are delighted to have been appointed as their apprenticeship provider.

Nicola said: "Continued development of colleagues is critical to the success of the business. This includes both new recruits and



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current staff seeking to grow within the organisation.

"We can support current colleagues with skills and knowledge development training which we are doing with our Team Leader Development Programme which Ian Smith and Dawn Navarro are currently completing."

Dawn Navarro, one of the apprentices completing the programme, said: "I feel I'm benefitting from my apprenticeship as I'm finding it interesting learning new techniques and tools to use within my team to help bring them out of themselves and make us all better as a team."

Ian Smith added: "I'm enjoying building on skills I already have and developing new ways of working to bring out the best of my team and myself, so we can do our utmost for the business."

Nicola continued: "We can also recruit new people into our business and provide them with a structured and well-developed growth programme, as we have done with Olivia Johnson and Megan Jewel Ross who are employed in a customer service capacity. Both are from the local community and we are delighted to have them on board."

Karen Kenny, Apprenticeship Delivery Leader for Apprenticeships at Salford City College said: "From early discussions, it was very clear that Nicola and the team were seeking to invest in apprenticeship provision for all the right reasons. We have worked hard together to ensure the apprenticeship programmes fit the values of the company and we look forward to working with them over a long period of time to help them achieve their goals."

The company, along with Apprenticeships at Salford City College and Salford City Council have shown their determination to provide opportunities for local people, specifically the immediate community around Salford Quays.

To achieve this, a partnership with the local school Oasis Academy has been established with the view to recruit a cohort of student leavers annually.

If you are an employer wondering how you can utilise your apprenticeship levy, or perhaps you are thinking of an apprenticeship yourself, give the Apprenticeships at Salford City College Team a call on **0161 631 5555**.

finance

Making Tax Digital (MTD) – time is running out to comply!



HM Revenue
& Customs

Making Tax Digital

Making Tax Digital (MTD) is the government requirement for businesses with an annual turnover above the VAT threshold (£85k) to submit their accounting information digitally every quarter, and from 1 April 2019 this means all VAT returns, and the digital records of the VAT return, should be submitted via MTD.

If you have a VAT quarter that begins in Feb 2019 and ends in April 2019, you don't need to submit the April return via MTD. It is after April 1 that MTD will come into effect, so it will be your next quarter ending in July 2019 that requires digital information.

If your turnover is currently less than £85k but surpasses this amount at any point during the tax year, you will be bound by the MTD rules from that point, even if your turnover reduces again below the VAT threshold.

However, if your year-end is approaching or you're approaching the end of a VAT period and you're not already using a digital or cloud-based bookkeeping system, now could be the time to get prepared, and at LWA, we've collated some easy pointers for you below.

How will existing third-party bookkeeping software users be affected?

If you use:

Xero: Software within Xero allows you to submit MTD compatible VAT returns, so nothing will need to change before 1 April 2019. For more information, please visit Xero's website here www.xero.com/uk/

Receipt Bank: This software is compatible with Xero and provides even smoother processes, making digital bookkeeping smarter, easier and quicker.

Including the option to take a photo of your receipts with your smartphone so that you can keep accurate bookkeeping on the go:

www.receipt-bank.com

Sage 50: It is now necessary to be on a Sage subscription package to be MTD compliant such as version 24c or 25c, or users not on these versions can purchase an additional MTD add on that Sage will charge for.

If you are currently using an earlier version of Sage and pay a subscription to get the latest version,

you will need to upgrade as soon as possible as it is not permissible to submit digital VAT returns in older versions of Sage. To find out more please go to the Sage 50 website here: www.sage.com

Can spreadsheet users comply with MTD?

HMRC will not be providing additional software for spreadsheet users so bridging software with MTD APIs will need to be bought if you are a spreadsheet user.

At LWA we do not recommend this as it will be extremely time-consuming, and we aren't aware of any parties providing the bridging software yet, meaning it is highly likely to be unreliable.

How do I get prepared?

At LWA we highly recommend upgrading your bookkeeping software, so it includes Sage or Xero, to be ready for you to submit your VAT returns before 1 April 2019.

Due to the growing popularity there are plenty of good quality, time-saving and easy-to-use bookkeeping software systems at a relatively low-

cost. At LWA, we are Gold Accredited Xero Partners which means we can help you get set up.

The ideal time to change to Xero would be at your year-end or at the end of a VAT period.

Scoring a penalty won't be a good thing!

HMRC will be implementing a points-based penalty system, so that every time a client fails to submit a return correctly or by the deadline, they will receive a point.

A penalty will be charged at a certain threshold and for making specific errors to help highlight where corrections need to be made for future submissions.

Whilst details on the penalty points system are not yet confirmed, it is anticipated that the model will first be implemented for VAT in 2021, allowing time for MTD taxpayers to become familiar with their new obligations; just be aware and plan ahead with our user advice above, as the current Default Surcharge will be staying in place until then.

Should you wish to know more about **MTD** or bookkeeping software then please get in touch with Accounts Manager **Amy Daniels** or Audit & Accounts Senior **Matt Jones** at **Leavitt Walmsley Associates** in Sale on **0161 905 1801**, or you can visit www.gov.uk



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debt recovery

Is personal insolvency a headache for fleet managers?

Personal insolvency has consequences that can be far reaching in its impact on employers, leaving them facing difficult, unexpected issues.

One such issue involves cars used for business purposes and their recovery.

Here we talk about how insolvency can have a knock-on effect for business fleets and fleet management.

Who's car is it anyway?

Who owns a company car? There are certain pros and cons to do with whether the business or the employee owns it.

"Where the business owns the car, it can deduct depreciation and general expenses incurred from business use of the vehicle. Essentially, the car is a business asset."

"Because the car is a business asset, this can then cause problems when you throw insolvency into the mix, with employees hanging on to their cars, if they can, even if they are company vehicles."

In insolvency situations, car ownership can become a contentious issue. Motor vehicles can be the cause of possible

liability, and it is important that the official receiver establishes who owns the vehicle.

"This, though, is the source of the problem when it comes to company cars. If you don't own the vehicle, then it's not an asset for you to lose, but you might be tempted to try and hang on to it."

Similarly, if a business declares insolvency, it will need to account for its assets, including company vehicles, but what if staff who the business can no longer afford to employ, are reluctant to return them?

Why are these situations likely to occur?

Perceived Necessity.

"If you're insolvent, or find yourself suddenly out of a job due to someone else's insolvency, you need all the help you can get to find employment, and function as normally as possible."

"Should you consider public transport options, even though the UK's problems with its rail network are well-documented?"

"Furthermore, analysis by the BBC has revealed that bus networks in Britain have reached a 28-year low."

"There has been a loss of over 134 miles of bus coverage in the past decade."

Why does this matter for fleet managers?

"For those people hanging onto their company vehicles, they may feel this is their best option for finding new opportunities, or just for maintaining some sense of balance."

"It's not the right thing to do, when insolvency strikes, but you can see why it happens. Many people perceive a car as a necessity."

Fleet managers may then find that they have the additional burden of vehicle recovery as an unforeseen consequence of personal insolvency.

"Understandably, this is likely to be something outside their usual remit, requiring specialist insight, knowledge and practical recovery solutions."

The tools of the trade

Company cars can become areas of complexity when it comes to insolvency.

An appeal court ruling recently called into question of whether

someone declared insolvent holding a vehicle under a hire purchase agreement could classify it as a tool of the trade.

In the Mikki v Duncan case, the Court dismissed an appeal from a bankrupt against a decision not to let him purchase his car back from a hire purchase company as a tool of the trade.

"With insolvency and vehicles, the stakes can be high," Paul concludes. "This is why vehicle recovery is a vital part of commercial debt recovery, helping secure a company's assets when they are threatened."

To discover more about your vehicle recovery options, please call **Premium Collections** on **0161 962 4695** or visit premiumcollections.co.uk



Paul Daine

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employment law

Action points for 2019

It is traditionally the time where we all like to make resolutions to make ourselves better people by the end of the year. What about your business? As business owners we should consider what arrangements we currently have in place and how we could make them (even) better over the year as well as what challenges our businesses might face over the next 12 months.

Here are 4 key areas which should be reviewed this month:

1. Review your contracts of employment

It is important to check that all of your employees have a signed contract of employment. Employees are currently entitled to a main statement of terms and conditions (which is the bare minimum) after 2 months continuous employment. Whilst this may be legally compliant, it will not protect your business if you have any concerns surrounding confidentiality of information, or post termination restrictions.

If you have recently promoted a member of staff, the contract that they were previously working under may no longer be suitable. In that case, it would be sensible to consider what further provisions are needed in the new contract; for example, a longer notice period or stronger confidentiality clauses.

2. Make sure your staff handbook is up to date

A staff handbook is essential when running a business and if you do not have one it should be on your 'to do' list for 2019. The handbook should

contain all of your policies and procedures where employees can be directed to as and when necessary. Do your policies reflect the current legislation? Are you confident that your handbook properly sets out key policies such as a disciplinary procedure?

Importantly, it can also help to protect the business should it face certain claims by employees such as discrimination if it clearly sets out what is not acceptable in the organisation.

The size of the handbook is largely dependent on the number of employees you have; as a bare minimum you should include the following: disciplinary and grievance procedure, absence policy, anti bribery and corruption policy, equal opportunity policy, Data Protection Policy (incorporating GDPR obligations), whistleblowing and a health and safety policy.

3. Consider how Brexit will affect your staff

Like it or not, at the time of writing, the UK will leave the EU in March either with or without a deal. What does this mean for your business? It is very hard to know what will happen post March and businesses should prepare for all eventualities. If you are facing uncertainty you may need to scale back on the number of permanent staff you have; this may include checking whether you have any lay off provision in your contracts of employment.

There are strict legal obligations should you be considering making

more than 20 redundancies in the space of 90 days or less; this includes a criminal penalty if you do not inform the Secretary of State of your intentions in time.

On a more positive note, if you have EU employees that you wish to retain post Brexit, the government has announced this month that it will be scrapping the proposed application fee for each individual to stay in the UK post Brexit. A transition period will be in place until December 2020 but employers who wish to retain EU workers should be reassuring staff now that they will be supported if they wish to remain in the UK.

4. Consider your use of consultants/contractors

There has been a great deal of uncertainty regarding increasing number of people working in the 'gig economy'.

2018 saw a number of judgements which ruled that those working for companies such as Uber, Deliveroo and Pimlico Plumbers should be considered as 'workers' rather than self employed individuals and therefore entitled to the associated rights such as holiday pay and national minimum wage.

2019 is likely to hail improved rights for workers; the government's Good Work Plan, which was published towards the end of 2018, details commitments to enact several of the Taylor Review's recommendations, designed to improve working conditions for agency workers, zero-hour workers and other atypical workers, although many of

these reforms do not have specific timescales.

As the year progresses, we can expect to see more draft legislation implementing aspects of the plan, but it is likely that most of the changes will take effect in 2020.

If you use consultants or self employed contractors in your business, now is the time to review those arrangements and to take advice as to whether there is a risk that these individuals may meet the 'worker' threshold.

The government has also stated that there should be clarity around holiday entitlement.

There have been a number of cases regarding entitlement to holiday pay, especially affecting workers. If you engage workers you should carry out an audit regarding their potential entitlement to holiday pay and the likely costs to your business.

So while 2019 may present a great deal of uncertainty, there are steps that we can take to minimise any unexpected surprises.



Chloë Leyland

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Change is **inevitable,** but **how** do you **cope?**

I was having a conversation with a friend who'd worked for many years in a small family run business.

She'd started her working life there, had worked in every area of the business and as such had acquired many skills throughout that time.

Now the family was closing the business and she was really struggling to cope with the inevitability of the change that was coming.

She was feeling insecure, lost, fearful about the future and concerned as to how she would cope.

This is not unusual when we're faced with our world suddenly changing; a longterm relationship ends, our health unexpectedly suffers, the children leave home or we reach a significant birthday and life can seem quite scary and uncertain.

Some of us glide effortlessly through, whilst others feel rather differently and are hurt, unnerved, struggling to compute what's happened. It can be a massive blow to our identity, confidence and sense of who we are.

Our life path, once so very clearly mapped out has now become unrecognisable.

How do you cope when you know that change is inevitable?

Grieve for the loss of the familiar. Allow some time to adjust to the loss of the life you once knew, it was so much a part of your reality.

Yes those automatic, everyday routines are now gone; the route to work, knowing where everything is, what's expected of you, the relationships, security and expectations.

Accept that it's a lot to cope with and allow a period of time to heal and come to terms with the ending of that part of your life.

Take time to reflect and acknowledge all that you've received, the lessons learned, the character-building experiences you've been through as a consequence.

They've all contributed to you becoming the person you are today, and can be viewed as stepping-stones to your future, to who you'll eventually become.

Relax and determine to continue evolving, growing and improving.

Do some research. If you have dates and information about forthcoming planned changes use the time to investigate, learn and understand what's being mooted.

You can then prepare mentally and perhaps even physically. Being healthy and informed gives you better control, and allows you to make positive decisions about the part, if any, you may wish to play in future changes.

Start to plan ahead. Impending change can prompt you to query if you want to stay in the same location or line of work.

You will no doubt have made contacts within other businesses in your field. You could introduce yourself, maybe form liaisons with people with complementary talents, or even set up something on your own.

Might it be a good time to explore what's available and transfer some of your skills to another employer or business?

Life's not all work. Explore groups where you could make new friends, interests and enhance your skills. Treat this time as a great opportunity to enrich your life.

Many people will be in the same position as you, starting out again for a variety of reasons. Make yourself available and support each other.

You've made new starts before!

There will have been many times when you've had to adapt and accommodate change throughout your life; change is inevitable, with new schools, teachers, friends, homes, colleagues and ways of doing things often having to be absorbed into your daily life at different points.

Look forward to bringing your knowledge and experience into this next stage of your life and moving a little out of your comfort zone.

Don't assume change is going to be difficult, awkward or unpleasant. Be positive and anticipate the chance to grow and improve, to maybe update your skills.

Resist prejudging new opportunities as being too different, difficult or alien to you. You were new in your old role once and learned to become the competent, proficient person you are today.

Hold onto that knowledge and enthusiasm. It's time to direct it to a new home!

Be proactive. Your old employer doesn't owe you anything; yes you've successfully worked together for many years, but they paid you for your services, respected and trained you, supported you on occasion.

Life moves on and now it's their time to move on. You also need to, so start accepting invitations to network, make new connections, get online and join groups. Then you can explore what's out there and discover what might be of interest or suit you.

Would updating your image be a valuable step to take? Often when we freshen up our look with a new hairdo, new way of dressing, toning up a bit, losing a few pounds, we feel better able to cope and ready

to take on the world.

Yes, change can rock our foundations, but sometimes that's not such a bad thing. Embrace the inevitability of what's happened or is happening to you.

Allow even health-related issues to push you to look at life differently, learn to value your genuine relationships, prompt you to start volunteering, make you adopt a different pace.

Accept what you can't change and determine to enjoy those new doors as they open.



Susan Leigh MNCH (ACC)

Altrincham, Cheshire and 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.

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diary dates

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Breakfast Matters - Monthly breakfast networking on thursdays

7 Feb, 7 Mar, 4 Apr, 2 May

Venue 8.30am - 10.00am
Cresta Court Hotel,
Altrincham WA14 4DP

Cost £15
Contact 0161 941 3250

Lorraine Deeny, Office Manager,

4 Networking

Fortnightly breakfasts, lunches and evening networking

Manchester City Centre, Salford Quays, Didsbury, Ashton, Stockport, Cheadle, Knutsford & Wilmslow, Macclesfield, Bolton, Warrington

Full listings can be found on:
www.4networking.biz

Bowdon Business Club

Weekly every Friday - includes full breakfast

6.45am - 8.30am

Venue Mercure Bowdon Hotel,
Langham Road, Bowdon WA14 2HT

Cost £10
Contact Members@BowdonBusinessClub.co.uk

Business for Breakfast

Networking - Fortnightly

Venues Events are held at Bolton, Bury, Stockport, Heaton Park, Didsbury, Littleborough, Manchester, Oldham, Stockport and Whitefield

Cost £10
Contact www.bforb.co.uk or email
centralservices@bforb.co.uk

Business over Breakfast

Networking - fortnightly

Venues Meetings held all over the Northwest, Greater Manchester and Manchester City Centre

Cost £15
Contact www.bobclubs.com
Tracy Heatley 07812 076946

Carrington Business Park

Business Networking in the Park

Monthly 9.30 - 11.30am

Venue Pembroke House,
Carrington Business Park,
Manchester M31 4DD

Contact 0161 776 4000
info@cbpl.co.uk

DataCentres North

2 Day Exhibition and Conference

30 April + 1 May

Venue 9.00am - 5.00pm (4.00pm on 1 May)
Emirates Old Trafford,
Old Trafford, Manchester M16 OPX

Cost FREE
Contact 01892 518 877
datacentres@stepex.com
www.datacentresnorth.com

Dynamic Networking

Free Business Networking

Sale - 3rd Tuesday monthly

19 Feb

5.30pm - 7.30pm

Venue The Boathouse, Sale Water Park,
Rifle Road, Sale M33 2LX

Cost Donation to charity
Contact Natalie Lewis
natalie@dynamicnetworking.biz
www.dynamicnetworking.biz

Federation of Small Businesses

Networking Altrincham

18 Feb, 18 Mar, 15 Apr

6.00pm - 8.00pm

Venue altospace, Kennedy House,
31 Stamford Street, Altrincham
WA14 1ES

Cost FREE

Network Bolton

26 Feb, 26 Mar, 23 Apr 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Venue Last Drop Village, Hospital Road,
Bromley Cross, Bolton BL7 9PZ

Cost FREE

Network Media City

4 Mar, 1 Apr, 13 May 6.00pm - 8.00pm

Venue Orega Serviced Offices, The Blue
Tower, Media City, Salford M50 2ST

Cost FREE

Contact Simon Edmondson 07766 493428

Simon.Edmondson@fsb.org.uk

Forward Ladies

Women's Networking Power Business

Breakfast Club - Monthly

13 Feb, 6 Mar

Venue 9.30am - 11.00am
Executive Education Centre,
Alliance Manchester Business School
Booth Street West, Manchester
M15 6PB

Cost £15

Contact 0845 6434 940
enquiries@forwardladies.com

First Friday Connectworking

City Centre Business Networking with GM Business Connect Magazine in association and in support of Forever Manchester Charity

1 Mar 4.00pm - 6.00pm

Venue 376 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LY

Cost £15

5 Apr 4.00pm - 6.00pm

Venue TBC

Cost £15

Tickets on Eventbrite: **First Friday Connectworking**

Contact Paul Mirage 07708 987518

paul@businessconnectpublishing.co.uk

Greater Manchester Business Awards 2019

8 Feb 2019

7.00pm - late

Venue Imperial War Museum North
Trafford Wharf Road, Stretford,
Manchester M17 1TZ

Cost £100

Contact innov8 Conference Services
0161 300 6396
greatermanchesterawards.co.uk

Greater Manchester Business Expo 2019

17 May 2019

9.00am - 3.00pm

Venue USN Bolton Arena, Arena Approach,
Horwich, Bolton BL6 6LB

Cost FREE

Contact shoutexpo.com/manchester/
Exhibitor or Partner Opportunities:
Jordan Conlin - 01772 642830

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Action4Business Networking, Sector lunches, Economic Updates

Full listings can be found on:
www.gmchamber.co.uk

Contact 0161 393 4321

High Peak Business Club

Regular monthly breakfast networking with high calibre speakers

14 Feb, 22 Mar, 18 Apr 7.30am - 9.30am

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

Cost £25

Contact edwinacurrie@sky.com
www.highpeakbusinessclub.co.uk

K-Club

Entrepreneur's networking breakfast

2 Speakers + Full English Breakfast

28 Mar 7.30am - 10.00am

Venue AJ Bell Stadium, Barton-Upon-Irwell,
Salford M30 7EY

Cost £38.03

Women's Business Lunch + Speaker

26 Feb 12.30pm - 2.00pm

Venue Barclays Eagle Lab, Union,
Albert Square, Manchester M2 6LWG

Cost £31.79

Contact Amanda Manson 07754 069 829
www.k-club.co.uk

Leadership and Management Training

Individual training days available in City Centre Manchester from Delphinium

15 Feb **Understanding the Communication Process in the Workplace**

15 Mar **Understanding Customer Service Standards and Requirements**

Venue Kuits Solicitors, Blackfriars House,
Parsonage, Manchester, M3 2JA

Cost £299+VAT

Time 9.30am - 4.30pm

Contact Gemma Rolstone 0161 949 9736
www.delphiniumbusinesscoaching.co.uk

Manchester Business Breakfast Club

Weekly Networking every Friday

- includes breakfast 7.00 - 8.30am

Venue Manchester Tennis & Racquet Club,
33 Blackfriars Road, Salford M3 7AQ

Cost Visitors free for 2 visits

Contact 0161 820 1135

info@manchester-bbc.co.uk

M62 Connections

PAYG Networking Wednesdays Fortnightly

20 Feb, 6 Mar, 20 Mar, 3 Apr... 9.30am -

11.30am

Venue The Coach House, Wilderspool
Wood, Trafford Centre M17 8WW

Cost £10

Thursdays Fortnightly

14 Feb, 28 Feb, 14 Mar, 28 Mar... 9.30am -

11.30am

Venue The Sandbrook, Sandbrook Way,
Rochdale, OL11 1RY

Cost £10

Contact Bill Dove 07932 044 743

m62connections.co.uk

pro-manchester

Hot topic breakfasts, Sector lunches, Economic Updates

Full listings can be found on:
www.pro-manchester.co.uk

Contact Nicola McCormick 0161 817 3483

nicola.mccormick@pro-manchester.co.uk

Shout! Network

Bolton Networking Group

Tuesdays Fortnightly. Breakfast Included

19 Feb, 5 Mar, 19 Mar ...

9.30am - 11.30am

Venue Dunsar Golf Club
Egerton BL7 9QY

Cost £10

Contact Richard Singleton
richard@shoutnetwork.co.uk

Bury Networking Group

Tuesdays Fortnightly. Breakfast Included

12 Feb, 26 Feb, 12 Mar, 26 Mar...

9.30am - 11.30am

Venue Old Mill Hotel and Leisure Club
Springwood Street
Ramsbottom BL0 9DT

Cost £10

Contact Richard Singleton
richard@shoutnetwork.co.uk

Manchester Networking Group

Wednesdays Fortnightly. Lunch included

6 Mar, 20 Mar, 3 Apr, 17 Apr... 12.00noon -

2.00pm

Venue ABode Hotel, 107 Piccadilly,
Manchester M1 2DB

Cost £10

Contact Andy Skelding
andy@shoutnetwork.co.uk

Leigh Networking Group

Wednesdays Fortnightly. Lunch included

27 Feb, 13 Mar, 27 Mar... 12.00noon - 2.00pm

Venue Leigh Sports Village, Sale Way
Leigh WN7 4JY

Cost £10

Contact Andy Skelding
andy@shoutnetwork.co.uk

SK8 Networking

Fortnightly early networking

every first and third Wednesday

7.30am

Venue Café Unity, 228 Finney Lane
Heald Green, SK8 3QA and
Cheadle Royal Table Table,
Royal Crescent, Cheadle SK8 3FE

Cost £5

Contact Chris Jones
0161 437 5999 / 07757 710199

The South Manchester Business Association

Weekly networking breakfast

every Wednesday

6.45am - 8.15am

Venue Mercure Bowdon Hotel,
Langham Road, Bowdon WA14 2HT

Cost FREE

Contact 0161 962 5195 smba.org.uk

The Business Network Manchester

Business Lunch 28 Feb, 21 Mar, 25 Apr, 22 May

12noon - 2.00pm

Venue The Lowry Hotel, 50 Dearmans Place,
Chapel Wharf, Manchester M3 5LH

Cost £42.50

Contact Helen Bennett 0870 751 7523
helen@business-network.co.uk

The Business Network South Manchester

Business Lunch

14 Feb, 7 Mar, 4 Apr 2019

12noon - 2.00pm

Venue Best Western Plus Pinewood on Wilmslow
180 Wilmslow Road, Handforth,
Wilmslow SK9 3LF

Cost £32.00+VAT

Contact Simon Coy 07860 121773
simon@business-network.co.uk

The Northern Business Exhibition 2019

2 Day business Expo

12+13 March 2019

10.00am - 4.00pm

Venue Manchester Central, Windmill Street,
Manchester M2 3GX

Cost FREE (pre-registration required)

Contact www.northernbusinessexpo.com
0330 1222 049

GM Business Connect are media partners and will be exhibiting - **visit us!**

Trafford Business Club

Weekly Networking every Friday

- early networking includes breakfast

6.30 - 8.30am

Venue Sale FC, Heywood Road, Sale M33 3WB

Cost £5 for guests

Contact David Lawton 07973 502595

Women's 20/20

Women's networking - second Wednesday

13 Feb, 13 Mar, 10 Apr, 8 May

12.15 - 2.30pm

Venue Mercure Bowdon Hotel,
Langham Road, Bowdon WA14 2HT

Cost £20 for non-members

Contact Catherine Sandland
enquiries@2020network.co.uk

Don't forget your Business Cards!

Please note If you plan to visit 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.

places to meet

All Star Lanes

Address The Great Northern, 235 Deansgate
Manchester M3 4EN
Contact 0161 871 3600
Facilities Private Bowling Room

Altospace Altrincham

Address First Floor, Kennedy House,
31 Stamford Street,
Altrincham WA14 1ES
Contact 07946 728 863
Facilities Co-working office space

Albert Square Chop House

Address Memorial Hall, 14 Albert Square,
Manchester M2 5PF
Contact 0161 834 1866
Facilities Function Room, Restaurant, Pub

Barclays Eagle Labs

Address Union, Albert Square,
Manchester M2 6LW
Contact eaglelabs@barclays.com
<https://labs.uk.barclays/>
Facilities Co-working and office space

Bizspace

Atlantic Business Centre
Address Atlantic Street, Altrincham WA14 5NQ
Contact 0161 926 3600
Facilities Conference Rooms, Café

Bizspace

Empress Business Centre
Address 380 Chester Road,
Manchester M16 9EA
Contact 0161 877 5579
Facilities Meeting Rooms, Offices

Bizspace

Hollinwood Business Centre
Address Albert Sreet, Failsworth,
Oldham OL8 3QL
Contact 0161 684 2319
Facilities Meeting Rooms, Offices

Bowdon Rooms *The Cinnamon Club*

Address The Firs, Bowdon,
Altrincham WA14 2TQ
Contact 0161 282 0011
Facilities Conferences, Boardroom, Live Music

Café Gourmand

Address 221 Ashley Road, Hale WA15 9SZ
Contact 0161 929 6050
Facilities Coffee and Patisserie Shop

Carrington Business Park

Address Carrington Lane, Carrington,
Manchester M31 4DD
Contact 0161 776 4000
Facilities Café, Conference Rooms

Citibase

Salford
Address Merchants Quay, Salford M50 3SG
Contact 0161 660 6204

Trafford

Address Oakland House, 76 Talbot Road,
Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0PQ
Contact 0161 464 7287 / 07920 763 889

Warrington

Address The Genesis Centre, Garrett Field,
Birchwood, Warrington WA3 7BH
Contact 01925 396 800
Facilities Serviced Offices, Meeting Rooms

Clayton Hotel Manchester Airport

Address Manchester Airport, Outwood Lane,
Manchester M90 4HL
Contact 0161 498 0333
Facilities Events and Conferences

Costa Coffee

Address 33-35 George Street,
Altrincham WA14 1RN
Contact 0161 929 0382
Address Century House, Ashley Road,
Hale WA15 9SF
Contact 0161 926 9913
Address Golden Way, Urmston,
Manchester M41 0NA
Contact 0161 926 7707
Facilities Coffee, Snacks

Cresta Court Hotel

Address Church Street,
Altrincham WA14 4DP
Contact 0161 927 7272
Facilities Snack, Rest, Hotel, Free Parking

DeVere Venues

Address Cheadle House, Cheadle Royal
Business Park, Cheadle SK8 3FS
Contact 0161 492 100
Facilities Conference, Leisure, Restaurant

Emirates Old Trafford

Home of LCCC - Event Space
Address Talbot Road, Manchester M16 0PX
Contact 0161 282 4020
Facilities Conference, Meeting Rooms, Events

Hilton Manchester

Address Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LQ
Contact 0161 870 1600
Facilities Hotel, Meeting Rooms, Conferences

Hilton Manchester Airport

Address Outwood Lane, Manchester
M90 4WP
Contact 0161 435 3000
Facilities Hotel, Meeting Rooms, Conferences

Holiday Inn Express Trafford City

Address 2 Mercury Way, Urmston,
Manchester M41 7PA
Contact 0333 003 0050
Facilities Meeting Rooms, Events

Holiday Inn Manchester Central Park

Address 888 Oldham Road, Manchester,
M40 2BS
Contact 0161 277 6910
Facilities Starbucks, Meeting Rooms
Free WiFi, Free Parking

Houldsworth Mill

Address Houldsworth Street, Reddish,
Stockport SK5 6DA
Contact 0161 975 6000
Facilities Meeting Rooms, Conferences

iFLY

Address Trafford Quays Leisure Village,
9 Trafford Way, Stretford,
Manchester M41 7JA
Contact 0845 331 6549
Facilities Indoor Skydiving,
Corporate packages

La Famiglia

Address 12-14 Victoria Road, Hale,
Altrincham WA15 9AD
Contact 0161 929 9626
Facilities Italian Restaurant

Macdonald Manchester Hotel

Address London road, Manchester M1 2PG
Contact 0344 879 9088
Facilities Leisure Club, Spa,
Conference Centre, Restaurant

Manchester Airport Marriott Hotel

Address Hale Road, Hale Barns,
Cheshire WA15 8XW
Contact 0161 904 0301
Facilities Leisure Club, Spa,
Conference Centre, Restaurant

Manchester Escalator

Address 233 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4EN
Contact 07711 556913
Facilities Coffee, Food, Meeting Rooms

Mercure Bowdon Hotel

Address Langham Road, Bowdon WA14 2HT
Contact 0161 928 7121
Facilities Hotel and Leisure, Free Parking

Midland Hotel

Address 16 Peter St, Manchester M60 2DS
Contact 0161 236 3333
Facilities Function Rooms, Hotel

Mr Thomas's Chop House

Address 52 Cross Street, Manchester M2 7AR
Contact 0161 832 2245
Facilities Restaurant, Pub

Orega Offices

Address 3 Piccadilly Place, Manchester M1 3BN

76 King Street, Manchester M2 4NH

Blue Tower, MediaCityUK M50 2ST

Radisson Blu

Contact 0800 840 5509

Facilities Meeting Rooms, Serviced Offices

Radisson Blu

Address Chicago Avenue, M90 3RA
Contact 0161 490 5000
Facilities Hotel, Meeting Rooms

Red Rooms Meeting rooms in Bruntwood

Address Station House, Stamford New Road,
Altrincham WA14 1EP

Landmark House, Station Road,
Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire SK8 7BS

111 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2HY

Regus

Contact 0843 504 4753

Facilities Offices, Meeting Rooms

Regus Meeting rooms for hire across a range of Regus properties

Address Adamson House,
Towers Business Park,
Wilmslow Road, Didsbury M20 2YY
Contact 0161 955 4200

Address Regus Express Hilton
Manchester Airport, Outwood Lane,
Manchester M90 4WP
Contact 0161 261 1440 / 07785 253 488

Address 5300 Lakeside, Cheadle Royal
Business Park, Cheadle SK8 3GP
Contact 0161 246 6000

Address Manchester Business Park,
3000 Aviator Way,
Manchester M22 5TG
Contact 0845 300 3585

Facilities Business Lounges, Offices, Day Office
Reserved Co-working, Meeting Rooms

Runway Visitor Park

Address Sunbank Lane, Altrincham
WA15 8XQ
Contact 0161 489 3932
Facilities Conference Room, Conference area
underneath Concorde, Restaurant,
Concorde Experience and Tours,
Meeting Rooms

Sam's Chop House

Address Back Pool Fold (off Cross Street),
Manchester M2 1HN
Contact 0161 834 3210
Facilities Restaurant, Pub

St Anthony's Centre

Address Eleventh Street, Trafford Park,
Manchester M17 1JF
Contact 0161 848 9173
Facilities Conference Rooms

St James Club Manchester

Address 45 Spring Gardens,
Manchester M2 2BG
Contact 0161 829 3000
Facilities Private Members' Club,
Function Rooms, Business Suite

San Carlo Fiorentina

Address Manchester Airport, Marriott Hotel,
Hale Road, Hale Barns,
Cheshire WA15 8XW
Contact 0161 904 5043
Facilities Bar & Restaurant

The Coffee House

Address Warburton House, 14 Eagle Brow,
Lymm WA13 0LJ also at
102 School Road, Sale M33 7XB
Contact 01925 551797
Facilities Coffee, Snacks

The FUSE

Address Warburton Lane, Partington M31 4BU
Contact 0161 393 4511
Facilities Conferences, Meeting Rooms, Events

The LifeCentre

Address 235 Washway Road, Sale M33 4BP
Contact 0161 850 0770
Facilities Meeting Rooms, Café

The Lowry Hotel

Address 50 Dearmans Place, Chapel Wharf
Manchester M3 5LH
Contact 0161 827 4000
Facilities Conference, Leisure, Hotel

The Mere Golf Resort & Spa

Address Chester Road, Mere,
Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6LJ
Contact 01565 830 155
Facilities Meeting Rooms, Conferences

The Offices

Address 53 King Street, Manchester M2 4LQ

Address 46 Barton Arcade, Deansgate,
Manchester M3 2BW

Contact 0161 835 9560
Facilities Meeting Rooms, Hot Desks,
Business Lounge, 1GB Wi-fi, Gym

Victoria Warehouse

Address Trafford Wharf Road, Stretford,
Manchester M17 1AB
Contact 0161 660 7000
Facilities Conference, Leisure, Hotel

Village Café

Address 221 Ashley Road, Hale,
Altrincham WA15 9SZ
Contact 0161 929 6050
Facilities Café

Warren Bruce Court

Address Warren Bruce Road, Trafford Park,
Manchester M17 1LB
Contact 0845 602 5047
Facilities Meeting Rooms



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First Friday



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#CONNECTWORKING

First Friday City Centre business networking!

Join Manchester's business community for our regular monthly networking event, in association and in support of **Forever Manchester Charity**.

Entry includes Forever Manchester Tombola ticket plus bring your business cards for our **FREE DRAWS** to win some **FANTASTIC PRIZES!**

Friday 1 March • 4pm - 6pm • Atlas Bar, 376 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4LY

Please check on our website for further details.

Also on 5 April, 3 May, 7 June...onwards!

Please see www.gmbusinessconnect.co.uk for ongoing details.

Tickets **only £15** from Eventbrite: **First Friday Connectworking**

Don't forget your
business cards!



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www.gmbusinessconnect.co.uk

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