

THINKING BUSINESS

• OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE • February - March 2023

Capitalising on skills opportunities

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Jo James OBE
Chief executive

Welcome to the latest edition of Thinking Business.

Apprentices are the future generation of the business world and investing in them is crucial to plugging the skills gap.

How employers can fill a skills gap

This National Apprenticeships Week (6-12 February), we take a look at the importance of investing in apprenticeships and how the scheme benefits new career starters by allowing them to earn-as-they-learn and gain recognised qualifications in the process and also how they benefit employers.

BAE Systems is recruiting 2,600 new apprentices and graduates this year, 84 of which are to be taken on at its Rochester site. Read all about their plans in the Big Interview with Dave Banks, who is the business centre director at the Rochester site.

Things are certainly looking bright in Kent. With the Government's renewed focus on education as the way forward for the UK to bounce back to its place among the economic powerhouses of the world following the disruption of the Covid pandemic and

Brexit, this is only good news for the area. In particular, the Skills Development Fund is providing money to EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College to create facilities designed to enhance futureproofing businesses. Find out more about this on p.24-28.

We are delighted to have been chosen by the Department for Education as one of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIPs) across the country following our successful pilot. We will work together with employers to ensure that our voices are heard, and local needs are addressed in Kent & Medway.

The number of businesses complaining of a lack of key personnel has risen from 39% to almost half whilst the number of school leavers going on to university has fallen for the first

time in a decade. Apprenticeships offer a solution to both employers and young people starting out in their careers.

National Apprenticeships Week highlights the vast range of training available. You can find out how businesses around the country are benefiting from hiring an apprentice at <https://nationalapprenticeshipweek.co.uk>

I wish all our readers a very successful 2023.



Jo James OBE,
Chief Executive,
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce



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Photo: andrea pasquato @ pixvels

We need to understand your skills challenges, so we can ensure they form part of a skills system fit for the future of your business

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce is delighted to have been chosen by the Department for Education as one of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIPs) across the country, following our successful trailblazer. We will work with employers and employer representative groups, to identify the local needs and solutions to address them in our key sectors.

There is universal agreement that only through a collaborative and joined up approach we will generate a plan that truly recognises the skills needs, and more importantly, some of the solutions that colleges, universities and independent providers will need to implement to address these.

It is also recognised that we need to build on the intelligence and information that is already

available, and this project will work closely with businesses, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), local authorities and local skills groups to build on the wealth of existing evidence to develop a skills improvement plan that really will make a difference to Kent's productivity and prosperity.

Your Chamber is putting the voice of business at the centre of skills planning in Kent & Medway, what does it mean for you and your business and how can you get involved.

Through its Learning Skills Improvement Plan Programme, the Department for Education (DfE) has recognised the importance of understanding the regional skills needs as well as the key role employers and businesses play in setting out the regional priorities for skills and labour needs.

Kent & Medway was a trailblazer area for the pilot run by DfE and your Chamber has secured the role of Employer Representative Body for the next 3 years. This means that together we can build on that base and ensure that the employer voice in Kent & Medway is heard.

Lucy Druesne, newly appointed Skills Programme Manager at KICC, will be focusing on the employer voice in the skills agenda and taking forward the Kent & Medway Skills Improvement Plan (2022-2025.)

For further information contact us:

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E: Isip@kentinvictachamber.co.uk

Or to take part visit:

www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/skills



Professional Development: Preparing a Robust Workforce

By Tracey Myhill
Girlings Solicitors

“When you stop learning, you start dying”, said the world’s most famous physicist Albert Einstein. He was right, of course, the brain like any other muscle needs to be flexed and challenged in order to function at its best.

In a professional capacity it can be easy to overlook the organisational benefits of professional development. However, the implementation of a robust learning and development policy has multiple benefits for businesses, including higher staff retention, knowledge transfer and, more broadly, it is likely to inspire a culture of confidence and adaptability among employees.

Organisations which implement a robust and well developed strategy offers those responsible for workforce planning the opportunity to identify training gaps which when they are then delivered, strengthens employees by giving them the confidence to perform well within their role.

Girlings has, for many years, embraced a positive approach to learning and development. We recognise the value and the potential learning and development can bring to our Firm. This positive approach, not only enables us to grow and retain our own talent, but it shapes our culture, ensuring our employees are confident in applying the skills they have learnt. This in turn fosters an adaptable and agile approach where our employees are capable when required to respond to a

fast changing or unprecedented market, perhaps most obviously like we witnessed during the pandemic.

I have no doubt that the retention of our trainees, which is particularly strong, is in part a result of our positive approach to learning and development. Indeed, a number of our senior and equity partners trained with Girlings – including our current managing partner!

Albert Einstein’s infamous line is so often cited because it captures the very essence of lifelong learning – that is - if you cease to learn, you cease to grow. Lifelong learning, in both a professional and personal capacity creates healthy, confident and robust individuals which in turn produces a workforce which helps businesses to align and meet their performance goals.

Organisational benefits to embracing lifelong learning:

- Employee retention, job satisfaction and levels of employee engagement
- Helps develop and nurture future talent from within the organisation
- Knowledge creation and knowledge transfer
- Adaptability: Ability to react quickly to a sudden change in market conditions



If you are interested in joining the Girlings' team please visit our website www.girlings.com/careers for current vacancies.

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HR Manager

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Making the most of your **PENSION SAVINGS**

Aaron Brann FPFS
CEO & Chartered Financial Planner

In our experience, many people find retirement planning to be a daunting process. Heading towards retirement marks a significant milestone, and decisions taken with pension savings can have a significant impact on the level of retirement income that will be enjoyed in the future.

The number of options open at the point of retirement can be confusing and this is often compounded when individuals hold a number of different pensions built up through their working life. There are, however, practical steps you can take to achieve clarity and enable you to plan ahead with confidence.

Most individuals move between a number of companies during their working lifetime, and will therefore end up holding multiple pensions by the time they begin considering their retirement options. It is a common problem, which arises as each employer provides a workplace pension through different schemes and providers. In addition, those who are self-employed may well have paid into a personal pension too, adding further complexity into the mix.

Holding multiple plans can lead to difficulties in keeping tabs on the total value and assessing the performance of the accumulated pension funds. It can also lead to higher costs, as a larger single plan could offer better value for money.

Scheme Rules

Pension schemes do not provide a single set of uniform rules. Whilst many modern pensions will have similarities, older schemes can sometimes provide very useful benefits, such as guaranteed growth or annuity rates, and even older pensions can sometimes provide enhanced levels of Tax-Free Cash. These benefits may well be very valuable. Similarly, some pensions will provide a wider range of options as to how an individual can

draw a pension income in retirement. These rules were expanded through the Pension Act in 2015, to provide the freedom to draw pension income by purchasing an annuity, via Flexi-Access Drawdown or a series of lump sums.

Whilst the change of legislation in 2015 was most welcome, the wider range of options can make decisions more complicated for individuals holding multiple pensions, as some plans align with the new rules, whilst others don't. This is where independent financial advice can help in plotting a course through the range of options to find the most appropriate way forward for your individual circumstances and objectives.

Investment Planning

How well the pension investments perform is likely to have the single biggest impact on the level of income available in retirement, and holding multiple pensions makes effective portfolio planning all the more challenging. All pension schemes now need to provide a default investment fund option, into which pension savings will be invested, unless an alternative is selected by the individual. The default option is usually designed to invest pension savings into a range of different assets, from Equities (Company Shares), Property and lower-risk investments, such as Corporate Bonds and Gilts.

Schemes now also offer strategies designed to reduce the level of investment risk within the pension as the employee nears their nominated retirement date, by altering the mix of assets. These strategies can be helpful, but are rigid and inflexible and don't take account of underlying market and economic conditions.

Each default option is designed to produce an average performance, although in our experience returns from default funds tend to be a little disappointing. Making individual investment fund selections can often produce a significantly improved performance, in particular when you consider

pension investments can often be invested for 30 years or more. However, we would always recommend any decision to vary the investment strategy is taken in conjunction with an independent financial adviser and be reviewed regularly.

The power of advice

As an individual nears retirement, thoughts turn to the level of income that can be generated in retirement, and how other factors, such as the Tax-Free Cash (which is usually 25% of the value of the pension) are dealt with. It is at this point when holding a number of pension plans, with different schemes and providers, can make decision making all the more difficult.

Combining pensions into a single plan can aid clarity, help to establish a cohesive strategy across the pension savings and make it easier to determine the level of income that can be derived from pensions, in conjunction with other sources of pension income, such as the State Pension. However, this course of action isn't right for everyone. This is where seeking advice, which takes into account your personal financial circumstances, attitude to risk and objectives, can help you take the right decisions and allow you to plan for retirement with confidence.

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Let us take you in the right direction

When it comes to financial advice, it's important to find someone you can trust.

Celebrating 33 years of providing unbiased holistic financial planning to clients and businesses across Kent. We are proud of our success, our independence, and our reputation of being a friendly, professional practice.

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Connections, suppliers and collaborations sought

A former social worker passionate about giving children in care the help they need to be independent has started her own business to help them - and she's looking to meet other Chamber members to work with her.

Laura Ballantyne co-founded Maslow Residential Support Services in September to provide supported housing for children aged 16-18 transitioning from the care system into independent living.

Laura and business partner Donna Leigh, also a social worker, took on the lease of two houses in Gillingham, where they can support up to eight young people at any time.

The young people they support are referred to them from the local authority having been through trauma, neglect and often, many homes, to begin their journey into independent living, learning how to look after themselves ahead of leaving care.

She said: "Some of these children have come from chaotic homes, with no structure or framework, so they just don't know where to start in organising themselves or structuring a day.

"We are teaching them everything from the very basics, right up to feeling confident in running a home, routines, finances and trust.

"Our houses are warm, safe and stable; somewhere for our young people to grow and develop in, with staff who offer unconditional warmth, a hot drink and a welcome home at the end of a day

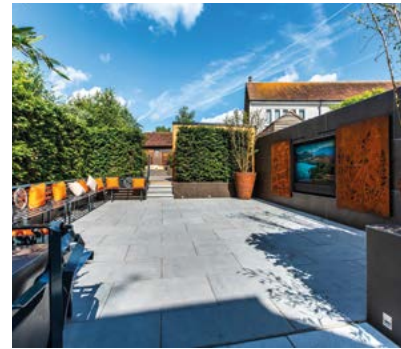
"As social workers, business is new to us, so we are reaching out to the Kent Invicta Chamber for experts who can help us when we need it."

Laura is looking for Chamber members including trades to help maintain the properties, people who can signpost young people to training or work opportunities, plus anyone involved with young people whose organisations offer support.

Contact Laura if you would like to know more by emailing laura@maslowrss.co.uk

Potters Home Digital opens Europe's first smart garden showroom

Potters Home Digital is inspiring homeowners to create a fantastic outdoor space this spring with Europe's first ever smart garden showroom at its award-winning base in Tenterden.



Specialists in designing and fitting smart homes, the 110-year-old business is now building on its expertise by offering homeowners the chance to create an extra room outdoors.

Inspired by the US trend for using the garden as an extra room, The Smart Home Garden has a fully-functioning outdoor kitchen, seating area, smart office/garden room, automated eco lighting and water feature, outdoor cinema, motorised blinds and even a smart irrigation system.

Everything is operated at the touch of a button, via a mobile phone app or voice command.

It's been designed in collaboration with RHS Chelsea award-winning garden designer Laura Anstiss, plus a garden room designer, installer and a sculptor, to create the £500k immersive show garden.

The space is available to all partners to showcase their work to clients, who can see the whole effect that can be created by the collaboration.

Director Alex Jones said: "People are making the most of every inch of their home but there's still so much untapped potential outside.

"We help customers to create something truly unique - even the smallest of gardens can be transformed into an amazing extra room - all controlled with the touch of a button.

"Our garden showroom has been an incredible project. It was really important to us to team up with other amazing businesses to create something we're all proud of."

Book an immersive experience at the showroom or take a 3D tour via our website at home-digital.com

Professional Security Fence and Gate Firm Wins Award

Perimeter Solutions Limited began life in 2011, seeking to provide a professional security fencing and gate service to the construction industry, businesses and schools.



It has grown to become one of the South East's largest specialist fencing firms and now operates nationwide.

2022 saw Perimeter Solutions being nominated for multiple national awards and picked up the Morgan Sindall 'London Supply Chain Innovation of the Year' for the design and installation of the fencing and roof netting on UK's largest rooftop sports games arena at the Shoreditch Britannia Leisure centre.

Perimeter Solutions have become the 'go to' company in the UK for high end specialist fencing installations and have a strong pipeline of future projects of a similar nature.

2023 is set to be another solid year of growth and progress, with investment in new Kent based offices, plant and staff, including apprenticeship schemes for those wishing to enter the security fencing or access control industries.

Although the company has grown to operate nationwide, it still highly values any local work. It can offer free advice, site visits and quotations to Kent based businesses and schools for increasing the physical security of their facilities. Joining the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and the Kent Construction Focus Group will prove to be a great way to network with local businesses and continue the sustainable growth of the company in 2023 and beyond.

www.perimeter-solutions.co.uk

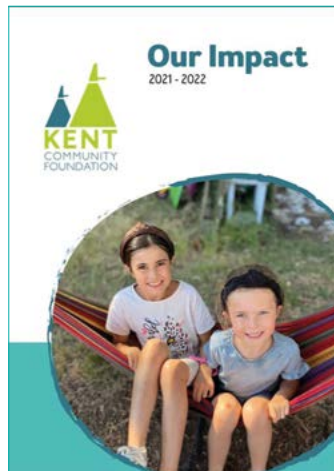
KENT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

awards £4 million

A report from grant makers Kent Community Foundation details the positive impact grants totalling £4 million have made across the county in financial year 2021/2022.

A total of £3.7 million was awarded to 538 organisations and almost £400,000 has helped 500 families and individuals living in Kent.

Kent has some real social challenges which drive where Kent Community Foundation focus their funding. These challenges have been divided into five priority areas: Children, Young People and Families, Elderly and Isolated Adults, Vulnerable Adults, the Environment and Employability, Skills and Enterprise and the report provides case studies for each of this areas of priority.



As well as awarding grants, Kent Community Foundation also offers organisations the opportunity to apply for a combined grant and loan through their Kent Social Enterprise Loan Fund.

Custom Food Lab received a combined loan and grant and their creative director Cherry Trulock said: "The support that Kent Community Foundation offered, not just financially, but also in helping us develop our social impact strategy and apply for the appropriate level of funding, was transformative."

Josephine McCartney, chief executive of Kent Community Foundation, said: "This report highlights how we have been supporting and will continue to support good causes as we move into another year of uncertainty, high fuel and food prices, high inflation and increasing interest rates. Despite all of these challenges, the charitable sector fights on providing even more support to our most vulnerable communities when they need it the most."

Dispute?

Not all businesses run smoothly – disputes inevitably occur. Partners fall out, Directors disagree, and once harmonious relationships can sour, impacting business performance and profits. So it's essential to resolve commercial disputes as quickly as, and as effectively as possible.

Disagree?

Our Dispute Resolution team provides expert advice, short-term tactics and long-term strategies to resolve business disagreements. Ranked in Chambers and Legal 500, we have an enviable track record in achieving mutually acceptable agreements, and preserving future relationships.

Divided?

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Brachers' newly refurbished Maidstone headquarters **will empower staff to excel**



Brachers' Managing Partner, Joanna Worby, (centre left) in the firm's newly refurbished Maidstone headquarters, with longest-serving employee, Shirley Simmons, and newest recruits, Nervin El Sarkaoui and Angela Ruminski (L-R).

Award-winning law firm Brachers, based in Maidstone and Canterbury, unveils its newly refurbished headquarters in Maidstone.

The refreshed offices, based on London Road, have been designed to embrace the firm's hybrid working practices that have evolved since the pandemic.

Brachers has worked with office design specialists, Claremont, to transform the firm's Somerfield House property into a modern and open-plan hybrid office space, after staff expressed a wish to balance working from home and the office.

The revamped two-storey office, described as 'bright and welcoming', comprises over 160 hot desks grouped into 'neighbourhoods' to house the various teams.

Collaborative spaces, equipped with state-of-the-art video conferencing equipment, will allow colleagues from all disciplines to work together on projects, while quiet rooms and sound-proofed furnishings will enable staff to conduct high-focussed or confidential business.

Colleagues can dine and socialise in a modern staff room and kitchen area, fostering the friendly culture

that Brachers is valued for, or take time out in the new Wellbeing Room, which demonstrates the firm's commitment to staff welfare. Clients will be welcomed into an airy and inviting reception area.

The Ashmore House building, situated on the same site, has been similarly refurbished. The renovations have allowed the firm to reduce its office footprint, moving out of its Medway House property (also on London Road), to bring everyone closer together.

The Maidstone offices' interior design reflects that of the firm's Canterbury office, Watling Street, which opened in 2020 to serve a growing East Kent client base.

Joanna Worby, Managing Partner at Brachers, said: "This is a very exciting time for us and the move marks a key milestone in the firm's 127-year history. Having welcoming, open-plan workspaces improves our ability to learn from one another in a warm, collaborative environment, which is particularly important for trainees and new recruits.

"The team at Claremont have helped us to ensure that our spaces support our outstanding workforce, empowering our people to work effectively and efficiently, and continue to excel in serving our clients.

"We felt it was important to invest in our existing buildings - which have rich character - as part of our ongoing commitment to Maidstone and the neighbouring community. We're proud to remain on London Road where we have been for over 40 years."

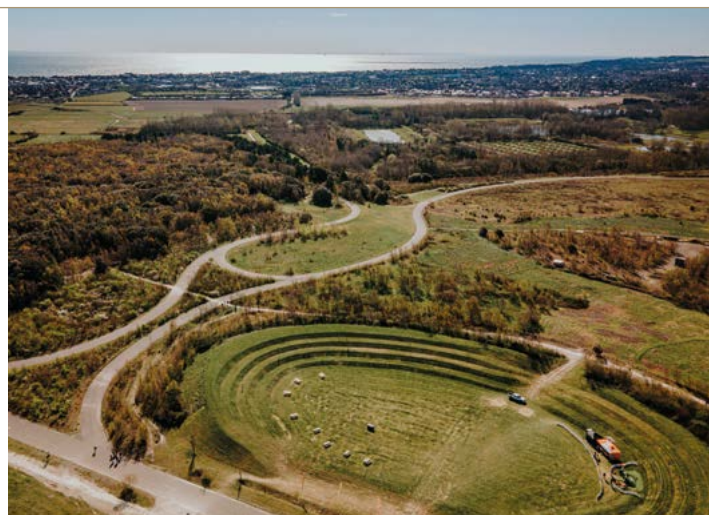
A Hidden Gem

Betteshanger Park is the hidden gem you might not have heard of yet. Nestled between Sandwich and Deal and based on the old Betteshanger Colliery site there is plenty to discover. As well as the 250 acres of diverse landscape including woods and grassland, there is also a state-of-the-art visitors centre, newly opened in Spring 2022.

The Museum tells the story of the Kent Coalfield, it's people, communities and culture from the discovery of coal to the pits' final closure in 1989. The museum is free to enter to ensure it is accessible to all and has a keen focus on learning and engagement for all ages in a fun and interesting way.

If your interest lay more in the outdoors the park activities have something for everyone. There are over 15km of bike trails and over 3km of tarmac track as well as activities such as archery and an obstacle course with challenges for all abilities and excellent for team building. The Country Park is also proud of its forest school and bushcraft offers which help to reconnect participants with nature and how we can work with the land around us in a sustainable way.

Whatever activities you choose to partake in a visit to The Lamp Room is a must, with its stylish interiors, locally sourced food and carefully curated menus it's the perfect location for a relaxed brunch or to impress clients on



a working lunch. At a time when we are looking more towards wellbeing, work life balance and personal and professional development Betteshanger Country Park are

proud to be a site which encourages, promotes and supports accessible wellbeing for all. But the very best way to experience this is to come along and see for yourself.



Stagecoach South East gives back at Christmas and announces participation in new £2 winter bus fare scheme

Stagecoach South East have been working hard to support their local communities both on and off the roads this winter. The end of 2022 brought with it festive cheer from their seven depots across the South East, with staff across the region taking part in Christmas Jumper Day to raise money for Save the Children.

Supporting Margate's Christmas Fair, Stagecoach was honoured to sponsor the Santa's Grotto at the event for a day of family fun where over 800 children got to meet Father Christmas.

Across East Kent Hospitals, Stagecoach has donated Christmas trees and decorations to the William Harvey, Kent & Canterbury and QEOM, hoping to spread some Christmas cheer. The trees received a great response from staff and patients who said that the display helped them get into the Christmas spirit.

Colleagues at Thanet and Ashford went all out to bring the Santa Bus to the streets of Kent.

With handrails turned into candy canes, pine-scented baubles and chocolates handed to passengers, Santa and Mrs Claus managed to find the time to drive the buses.

Another festive bus featured in Canterbury celebrated the return of the Christmas Eve open air carol concert.

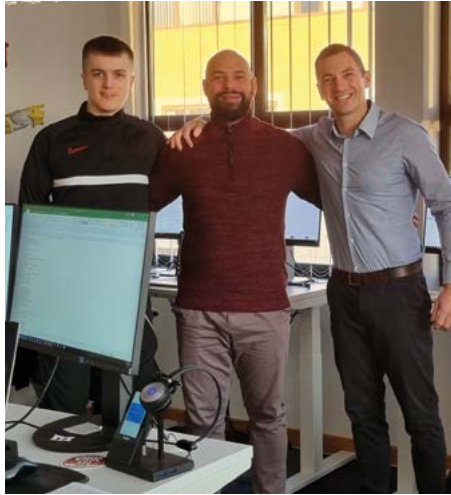


Making a return for the first time since the pandemic, the rear of the bus features the Lord Mayor herself in full regalia to promote the event.

Starting from the 1st January, Stagecoach will be taking part in the Department for Transport's £2 fare scheme. All local bus services in Kent will offer a maximum fare of just £2 for any single journey between 1 January and 31 March 2023. Stagecoach hope that this new fare scheme will help to attract new customers to try the bus over the winter months.

The initiative will help many people at a time where every penny needs to stretch further while at the same time aims to reduce car use and encourage people onto more sustainable public transport.

New dreamers for Dremur – here to take away your sales nightmares and turn them into dreams!



All businesses need to achieve consistent sales results. This has always been the case and, during challenging economic times, it's even more important that businesses continue to bring in sales from new and existing clients – without sales, your business won't exist.

The very important question is how you and your business achieves that. If, for whatever reasons that are important to you and right for your business, you don't want to employ staff to achieve sales then how else can your business get the right results?

Maybe you do have sales staff but not enough of them to achieve your goals so you need some interim support.

Dremur Ltd has recently employed two sales executives, Rob Lindley and Joshua Hall, so that we can provide outsourced sales to businesses. Whether your business needs more new clients, needs to do a better job of keeping existing clients happy or needs its database updating – these are some of the headaches that Dremur Ltd can solve for you and help your business to not just survive but thrive.

If you're not happy with your current sales results and they need improving in 2023, contact Dremur Ltd to start exploring whether we can help you. Results won't happen overnight so don't delay and get in touch today.

www.dremur.co.uk

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT for Kent Charitable Organisations

With major concerns about organisations across Kent being able to continue providing their vital services during the cost-of-living crisis, Kent Community Foundation has taken the decision to initiate an automatic monetary uplift on funding, to give charities and community groups much needed additional funding to cover their costs during these uncertain times.

Josephine McCartney, chief executive of Kent Community Foundation, said: "As a team we discussed the huge impact the cost-of-living crisis would have on the charitable sector and we recognised that we needed to act decisively by providing additional funding to cover rising costs.

"We secured an initial £290,000 at the beginning of November, from which we will be able to automatically add an additional £1,000 to most grant allocations to help with rapidly escalating costs."

To ensure that the vital extra money reaches organisations quickly, the additional £1,000 will apply automatically to most applications without a request for the further funding.

However, there are a couple of exceptions; organisations with an income over £500,000 and those with over nine months reserves will not automatically receive the uplift

and community groups receiving a grant through the Micro Grants Fund will be allocated a proportional uplift of between £300 and £500.



To contact Kent Community Foundation about funding for charities and community groups, visit www.kentcf.org.uk/funding or to view other resources visit www.kentcf.org.uk/apply/noticeboard

LAW FIRM RENEWS SPONSORSHIP for the Furley Page Whitstable 10K

Local law firm Furley Page has renewed its headline sponsorship of the Furley Page Whitstable 10K, which will be held on Early May Bank Holiday (Monday 1 May 2023).

Organised by Canterbury Harriers running club, in partnership with Sporting Events UK, the Whitstable 10K is now in its 23rd year. The popular running race attracts several thousand entries each year and is known for producing fast times and plenty of personal bests along the mainly flat seafront course.

Aaron Spencer, partner at Furley Page, said: "The Whitstable 10K is a uniquely popular seaside event which promotes health and wellbeing, while attracting thousands of visitors to the town over the bank holiday.

"As a regional solicitors' firm with an office in Whitstable, we are delighted that Furley Page will once again be the lead sponsor of the event, following our fantastic experience supporting last year's competition."

Entries for The Furley Page Whitstable 10K are open and prospective competitors can register to take part at <https://www.sportingeventsuk.com/enter-an-event/the-whitstable-10k>

Prizes will be awarded for the top three men and women, the best three-person team, and the best veteran in a variety of age categories, while all finishers will receive a T-shirt and a medal as mementoes.

Melanie Christodoulou is a senior associate at Furley Page and chair of Canterbury Harriers. She said: "Canterbury Harriers is delighted that Furley Page has decided to sponsor the event again in 2023. The race creates such a buzz around Whitstable on the bank holiday Monday and is a great day out for all the family."

For further information, visit: <https://www.whitstable10k.org.uk/>



HOW TO CREATE AN IT BUDGET: 8 tips for planning ahead

1. Look to the past to plan the future

A good start is to look back at previous budgets. This will show how revenue and outgoings vary across months, quarters and years and can be adjusted according to predicted changes.

2. Establish your priorities

Gather everyone's opinions, from end users to team leaders.

If you're not sure where to start, visit the IT Support area at www.airit.co.uk for a free audit.

3. Align with company goals

By integrating all your business reporting in one platform with the ability to cross-reference multiple data sources, business intelligence solutions such as Microsoft Power BI can free up time spent creating manual reports, giving you an accurate, live view of business performance.

4. Identify ongoing expenses

Consider recurring costs e.g.:

- Staff
- Network infrastructure and security (data centre, backups, firewalls, VPN, cyber security, support and maintenance contracts);
- Replacing or upgrading hardware and software (PCs, laptops, servers)
- Subscriptions and cloud services (productivity software e.g. Microsoft 365, data storage, video conferencing)

- Line of business applications (CRM, ERP, finance, marketing and HR systems)
- Telecoms (voice, mobile, internet, data)
- Peripherals (printing spend, keyboards, mouse, headsets, cables etc.)

5. Establish any project expenses

Think about setup costs, licences, training, additional hardware, increased need for IT support, and how much time it will take.

6. Keep security in mind

Some of the main causes of data breaches are:

- Criminal hacking
- Human error
- Social engineering – where fraudsters pose as a colleague, supplier or director of the company and contact their victims with what looks like a legitimate request for money or financial details

Your IT budget proposal must address protection from cybercrime.

7. Don't cut corners to cut costs

Skipping things like user awareness training may seem like a quick fix but can ultimately cost your business more money.

8. Use data to make decisions

When you present your IT budget proposal, you need to be able to show your reasoning behind each decision and demonstrate the benefits.

Outsourcing IT services can help you manage your budget

Our fixed monthly fees include 24/7 proactive monitoring and maintenance of your network as well as remote and onsite IT support.

Air IT is an award-winning managed service provider offering IT support and consultation as well as fully managed communications, business intelligence and cyber security services.

You can also download a free IT budget template at <https://info.airit.co.uk/it-budget-template>



Building a career in branding

Oak Creative believes that at the heart of every business is a brand. It's the purpose, the intangible driver and the reason a business does what it does. But who are the people behind building these brands? And how exactly do they do it?

Oak Creative team member Millie Grove-Quinn was invited by BBC Bitesize to talk about her creative career. Designed to inspire and educate teenagers, BBC Bitesize hosts career workshops all over the country to discuss career options and the ways to get there.

Creative Designer, Millie, joined the Kent branding agency at the end of 2022. After studying Visual Arts at University, here's what she shared about her branding career so far:

"I always knew I wanted to work in the creative sector - but had no idea what career path to take. I agreed to take part in the BBC Bitesize programme to help other young people find their own route into the world of creative careers.

I believe a creative career is centred around the brand as a foundation. Everything I work on day to day always comes down to building a brand - it's like a jigsaw puzzle. Sometimes it's telling a story, changing perceptions or educating customers, all of it shapes the brand.

Building a brand is also a very collaborative process. I love working with different teams, businesses and people to generate ideas which then get translated into a design. Ultimately the brand is coming alive through all the creative mediums."





Spring programme for 2023 announced for University of Kent's Lunchtime Concert series

The University of Kent's Lunchtime Concert series continues on 8 February, offering an exciting range of musical performances that are once again sponsored by Canterbury law firm Furley Page.

The Spring concert programme gets underway on Wednesday 8 February with a performance by the acclaimed Delta Sax Quartet. Launching the quartet's fortieth anniversary celebrations, concert-goers will be treated to a typically eclectic programme, including works by Steve Martland, Joy Division, Purcell and Soft Machine.

The concert series continues on Wednesday 5 April, when the University Camerata and music scholars will perform A Baroque Miscellany, exploring instrumental and vocal music from the Baroque period, including Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Oboes.

The lunchtime concerts will take place in the Colyer-Fergusson Hall at 1.10pm and admission is free, with a suggested donation of £3.

To find out more and book visit University of Kent, Music, www.kent.ac.uk/music/whatson

Calibre cleans up with Wealden District Council contract win

Professional commercial cleaners, **Calibre Cleaning**, is celebrating winning a major new contract with **Wealden District Council**.

The Ashford-based company will provide cleaning services to more than 100 council-owned social housing and independent living properties across the district, which stretches from the north of Crowborough to the South Coast.

Calibre's duties will include ensuring that the shared spaces are kept clean and hygienic. Residents living in social housing will come home to clean and sanitised entrance halls, stairs and landings that have been vacuumed and mopped, sanitised handles and rails and clean glass in doors.

Skirting boards will be dust-free and cleaned and any maintenance issues reported

for action. The council's independent living residents will be able to welcome friends and family into well-kept, fresh, clean, vacuumed lounges, make refreshments in clean and sanitised kitchens, and know that the shared, communal areas such as corridors and guest toilets are being looked after.

The team will also act as 'honorary visiting facilities managers' by reporting any maintenance issues such as broken lights, leaks, pest issues or hazards.

Established in 1997, Calibre works with clients across a range of industries and sectors across Kent and the South East, cleaning Kent's offices, showrooms, and various tourist spots.



Managing director Karen Thomas, says: "We always take the utmost pride in leaving all of our clients' premises immaculately clean and hygienic but this is especially important when working in residential properties.

"Ensuring that shared areas are as clean as an occupant's own home helps create a welcoming and homely feel throughout.

"We look forward to working with Wealden District Council and providing a spotless, fresh living environment that residents feel comfortable in."

Karen Thomas
calibrecleaning.co.uk

Why customer segmentation leads to better marketing results

Each of your customers is different – but how do you create effective marketing communications for them?

Customer segmentation helps you to group customers by many different things but one of our focus areas is behaviour.

Reaching into your transactional data to understand behaviour requires an experienced and expert eye which is what The Insight House offers to their clients.

Director Angela Hall gives her advice to Chamber businesses looking to increase ROI from marketing in 2023.

Differentiating customers

Customers differ depending on why, when, where and how they buy products, and which they choose, as well as whether they're first-time, lapsed or frequent buyers. Every interaction creates a breadcrumb trail that

gives valuable insights into patterns and indicators of future behaviour.

It's not just about sales

We look at all interactions, from engagement, to communication, and feedback. We bring the data together into a Single Customer View providing a full picture to start customer profiling and segmentation.

The right message at the right time

What you say and when you say it contributes to a more effective campaign. For example, sending every customer details of a fantastic product discount risks annoying those who recently bought it at full price, or who are just not interested. You could lose both customers and the opportunity to build trust, confidence, potential brand ambassadors and lifelong customers.

Identify buying motivation

People buy the same product for different reasons. Talk to each customer segment differently – identify why they use the product, and tailor communications to address this, answer their questions, share useful information (product benefits, credentials or testimonials etc) and keep it relevant.

The Insight House insighthouse.co.uk





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BAE Systems' drive for new intake of apprentices

Nurturing a new generation of a skilled workforce is key to any large, successful business and BAE Systems is looking for its next intake of high calibre apprentices.

DAVE BANKS of BAE Systems *explains who makes a good apprentice and how to apply.*

Apprenticeships are vital to the future of business and provide an opportunity to earn, learn and gain valuable industry experience and qualifications.

BAE Systems, which has more than 90,000 employees across the world, is Medway's largest private employer with more than 1,400 people at its Rochester site, a figure that is set to grow to between 1,700 and 2,000 over the next five years.

At Rochester, employees design, develop and manufacture some of the most advanced technology in the world for the commercial and defence aerospace sectors, including digital helmets, head-up displays, active control sticks and flight control computers for aircraft. They are also developing the new control system for the Dreadnought submarine programme, as well as maintaining battery electric systems for buses.

Across the business, more than 2,600 new apprentices and graduates will be hired this year with 84 being taken on in Rochester.

"It's absolutely essential for us to plan for the future and create a workforce that can deliver on our objectives for years to come," said Dave Banks, Business Centre Director.

"We've got a proud history of not only developing talent but maintaining it too."

Some of the firm's senior leaders and most experienced employees started on the apprenticeship scheme with some joining between 30 and 40 years ago. In engineering alone, for example, there are currently 45 people who successfully completed their apprenticeship at Rochester and are still based there, with some of those starting back in 1999.

"Providing high quality early careers programmes gives young people a route into long-term employment," added Dave.

Starting salaries for apprenticeships range between £15,842 and £24,000 a year and gives new starters the chance to learn, earn and gain valuable industry experience and a nationally recognised qualification.

At Rochester, the apprenticeships on offer are for technical, software and finance positions. The software engineering apprenticeship leads to a BSc (Hons) in digital and technology solutions, the technical apprenticeship leads to Level 2 and 3 diplomas in advanced manufacturing engineering, and the finance apprenticeship leads to a Level 4 diploma in professional accounting. The apprenticeships range from those starting at age 16 to 18 plus and run between two and four years.



“Providing high quality early careers programmes gives young people a route into long-term employment.”



At BAE Systems, around 95% of apprentice trainees complete their apprenticeship and go on to secure full-time employment with the company.

“It’s a great opportunity to learn and earn,” added Dave, who started his career at BAE Systems as a junior clerk.

“It is also a great opportunity to come into the business, as they don’t come around very often. We have an ageing demographic and we want to nurture future talent.

“We are looking for anyone with the ability to adapt, learn, think outside the box and be committed to contributing to the success of the business. This is a team sport so being a team player is key.”

The company is keen to employ more females and has pledged its aim that by 2030, women will make up at least 50% of the executive committee and 30% of the workforce.

Previous apprenticeship applications have been submitted by approximately 85% males and 15% females. Promoting STEM to girls in schools is one of the ways the company is encouraging more women into the industry.

“We want to inspire and invest in the next generation of female engineers, so through our work with Stemettes we are going to be welcoming 40 pupils from local schools to hear from some of our amazing female role models in science, technology, engineering and maths about a career in STEM,” said Dave.

The event, which is on 23rd March, will give girls the opportunity to tour the site and hear from the Rochester team about a career at BAE Systems. Stemettes is an award-winning social enterprise working to inspire and support young women and non-binary people into STEM careers.

The Rochester site is also undergoing a multi-million pound rebuild over the next five to ten years.

“For people who have a love of electronics and innovation, Rochester can sometimes

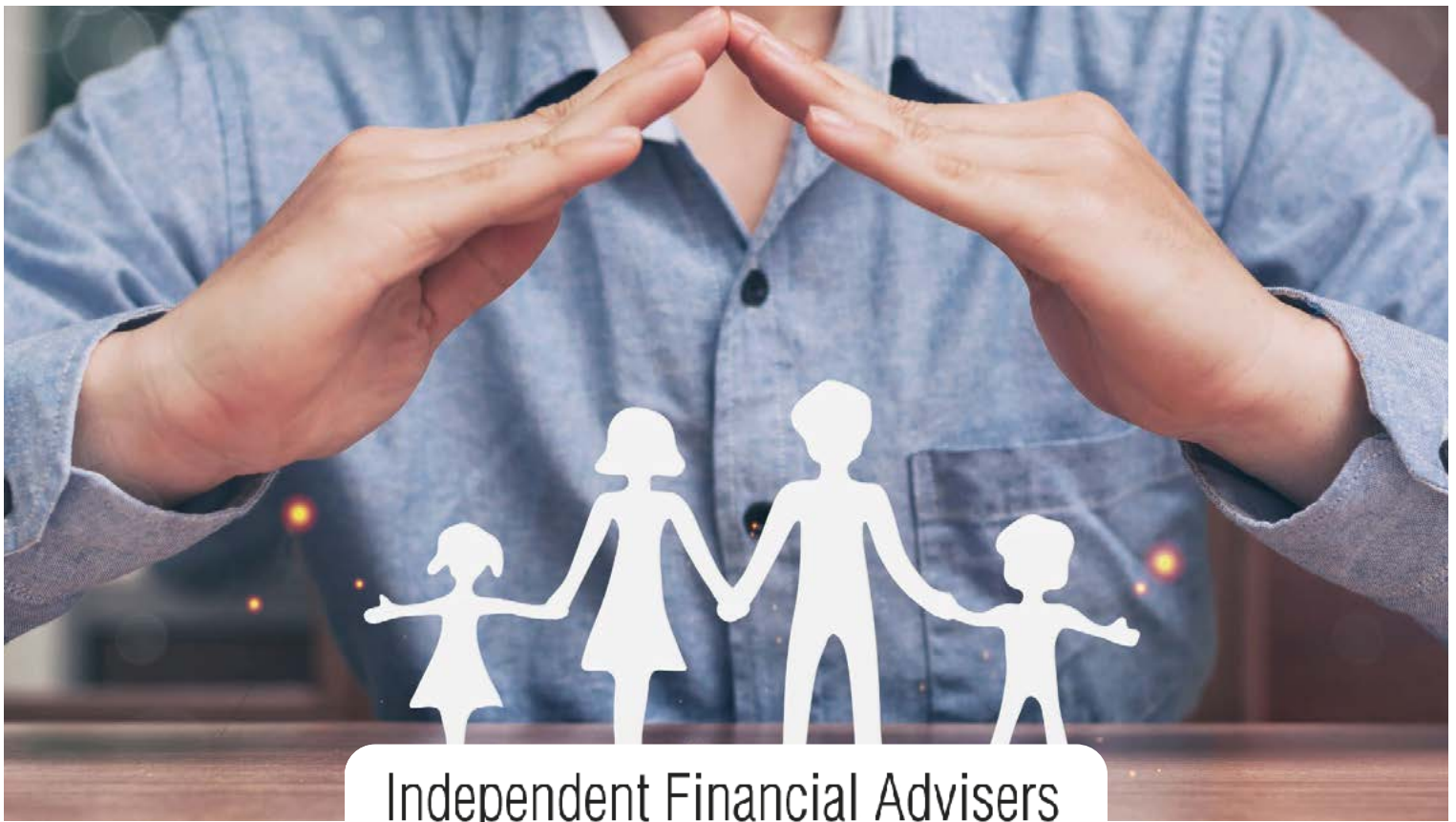
feel like a technology theme park because of the variety of things that we work on here,” said Dave.

“With so much investment and changes coming over the next 10 years, it is a great time to join the business.”

The company invests approximately £100 million in education, skills and early careers activities in the UK annually. Its apprenticeship programme is rated Outstanding by Ofsted and the company recently ranked in the Top 10 of the Department for Education’s apprenticeship employers and Top 25 for The Times’ graduate employers.

- **The deadline for applications for the apprenticeships is 28th February. Apply via the website www.baesystems.com/apprenticeships**





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Talis Independent Financial Advisers operate throughout the South of England, supported by the head office team in Ashford.

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SUPPORTING KENT BUSINESSES with data, print and mail campaigns

During difficult market conditions, creating print that makes consumers sit up and take note is a key component of any multichannel campaign. And it's essential to keep your business in view, ahead of the competition.

That's how new members Marian Lively and Steve Morton of KPM Group can help. Joining Kent Invicta Chamber signals the next step in KPM's commitment to supporting Kent businesses and helping them to thrive.

Celebrating 21 years in business, the company was founded by Nigel Copp in 2001. It now operates from a 22,000 sq ft factory in Sevenoaks, Kent and employs more than 40 people. KPM, which incorporates TMB Mailing, is known for their work across industries including financial services, local government, charities, arts and leisure, and education.

As a proud Kent-based company, KPM Group recognises the importance of local connections.

Steve Morton, sales director, said: "We're delighted to join the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. From conversations so far, it's clear that we can support businesses with things like lookalike data, cold acquisition mailings, print and fulfilment, which can make a huge difference to business growth. I'm looking forward to networking and meeting other members."

In addition, KPM recently invested in new presses at their Sevenoaks base. This expands colour digital and mono laser print personalisation capabilities using the latest Xerox technology.

Managing director Marian Lively said: "KPM will continue with an ambitious investment programme in print and mailing technology. This will ensure we meet our customers' needs today, tomorrow, and in the future."

Steve regularly attends KICC networking events so do look out for him and say hello.

www.kpmgroup.co.uk



Why your privacy policy is vital as GDPR changes

Since leaving the EU, GDPR has been taken within UK law. However, the recently proposed data reform bill has been paused, leading to confusion, and the misconception that GDPR will be scrapped altogether.

Judith Andrews, from Business Tamer, explains why a privacy notice is a fundamental aspect of data protection and a great place to start to ensure you're using data legally.

1. Why do I need a privacy policy?

Data is your business's secret weapon. It allows you to contact clients in a targeted way, helping to focus your marketing and add the personal touch.

2. What should it include?

Up-to-date contact details are essential, so it's clear who will hold any data. Outline what information will be collected, and how it will be used and shared.

3. Where do I get a privacy policy from?

The ICO website has free information, including a privacy policy template, to help you draft it yourself. Always consult a professional if you're unsure.

4. How do you share it with customers?

Display it at the point of data collection. For websites, this is usually the front page. If you're collecting contact information at an event, it should be printed and available to anybody who requests it. Directing people to your website is not sufficient.

5. If you want people's details, tell them why

Be clear about how you'll use information; gathered properly, it will allow you to personalise communications so that they have a higher ROI.

Judith Andrews
businessstamer.co.uk

NON-TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTANTS set up Challenging Times Support Hub

A4G has experienced over 27 years of consistent growth bolstered by a positive working environment and our capacity to achieve consistent results for our client base through maintaining our focus on the mantra of being 'all about the advice, not just the numbers'.

We're a little bit different to your traditional accountants. For starters, our office isn't the usual 'corporate' setting you'd expect. Our head office was once a bikers' café in the 60s, turned nightclub (hosting the one and only Pete Tong) in the 80s. Memorabilia still hangs in our office today.

We also don't believe in just doing the standard 'compliance' work you'd expect of accountants. We specialise in bespoke actionable business advice, and that's what has helped us, and our clients, grow for the last 27 years.

"A lot of accountancy practices are run by people who are accountancy minded and that means they're very risk averse. I don't think we're entrepreneurs, but I do think we're entrepreneurial," said managing partner Malcolm Palmer.

As a practice, we are dedicated to helping our clients navigate the troubled waters in which we currently find ourselves as a nation. Given that we are an owner-managed business ourselves, we are in a prime position to understand the challenges currently facing other owner-managed businesses.

In pursuit of this objective, we have set up a 'Challenging Times Support Hub' complete with free resources and tools to help owner-managed businesses. This hub is the amalgamation of our extensive experience with a considerable variety of businesses and industries.

Is your New Year's resolution to stop procrastinating?



Like all business owners, there are not enough hours in the day to get all my tasks done, but I know that I also put off those things I don't want to do.

I make some great excuses:
"There are other things which have priority"
"It doesn't matter at the moment"
"It's going to cost too much money"

But if I am honest with myself, none of these excuses are why I am not doing these jobs. My procrastination comes down to the task being unpleasant and I don't want to do it, or I have no idea where to start.

And for some business owners this might be how you feel about increasing your business's cyber resilience; you don't know where to start, which is why the ECRC was set up.

As a police-led, not-for-profit, we understand the risk of cyber crime to businesses but also the pressures of being a business owner and we've tried to lessen those pressures.

Cost? The ECRC is free to join, forever.

Unsure of where to start? The ECRC has a free bite-sized course explaining fundamental cyber resilience concepts and how to implement them.

Time? It takes one minute to sign up – www.ecrcentre.co.uk.

When I finally get around to doing the job I have put off, it is never as bad I think it will be, so why don't you sign up now and start your New Year with one less thing to put off?

We are Ginger Black

Our Story

We are a team of likeminded people, that live for data and the thrill of insight. We each come from different industries and backgrounds, and each are highly successful in our own right. Ginger Black was formed through our common goal, to apply our past experiences and future aspirations into something that delivers unsurpassed data science, that drives our clients' business growth beyond expectation. We are Ginger Black.

The Team

Our dynamic and agile, expert teams can be parachuted in at any point and at any scale, to confidently address our client's needs as they navigate the rapidly changing nature of society and business. Alternatively, combine the proficiency of all Ginger Black has to offer, with our fully managed support service. Each of our teams has traversed a huge variety of projects across an ever-growing field of sectors, offering an unrivalled level of knowledge and experience.

To find out more visit www.gingerblack.com



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Divorce lawyer shares top tips to help separating couples protect themselves online



Naomi Hayward, partner and collaborative lawyer in Furley Page's family law team, said: "2022 was a year of great technological change for the divorce courts in England and Wales with the move to online divorce proceedings through the court's new online portal. Yet, while technology is helping to modernise the process of divorcing, it can also present challenges.

A lawyer specialising in relationship breakdown has urged couples seeking a divorce to take action to protect themselves online while navigating their separation.

January has long held the unofficial moniker of 'Divorce Month' due to the customary influx of new divorce enquiries following Christmas.

"With most of us now heavily reliant on technology in our everyday lives, it's no surprise that couples become digitally linked in all sorts of ways, yet I often advise clients who have not considered the various ways their digital lives are intertwined with their ex-partner, or how this information could be used against them during the divorce, or afterwards."

Naomi's top technology tips when navigating a separation:

1. **Change your passwords**
2. **Create a new email address for legal correspondence**
3. **Auto syncing of devices should be turned off**
4. **Remove personal documents and files from shared devices**
5. **Disable 'find my phone' apps**
6. **Delete any unfamiliar apps and software**
7. **Change passwords to any doorbell cameras and CCTV**
8. **Change the password to your Wi-Fi router**
9. **Review all your social media privacy settings**
10. **Don't post anything about your separation or any legal proceedings on social media**
11. **Try to agree ground rules with your ex**

What goes up..... shouldn't always do so!



By **Peter Colechin**
at **Advanta Wealth**

Average weekly earnings have shown a steady increase year on year since 2000 having grown from £307 per week to £617 per week (source: ONS). Having lived through a rising earnings and low inflationary period, we are now coming to terms with inflation increasing at a faster rate than salary settlements.

Peter Colechin FPFs, Chartered Financial Planner at Advanta Wealth, explains that whilst the cost of goods and services are rising, the amount of life insurance you need, by the same logic, is as well. However there are a couple of points you need to consider.

"Let's take the example of a £100,000 life insurance policy taken out 20 years ago. The person who took the policy out did so having specifically calculated that in the event of their death, their spouse would need £100,000 to have sufficient capital to top up their income and have cash to pay for lifestyle items such as family holidays. But that was 20 years ago. Today, to have the same purchasing power as in 2002, you would need £169,357 according to the Bank of England."

To deal with this issue, many insurance companies design inflation linked policies both for lump sum death benefits and for income payments in the event of illness and incapacity.

However, there is a twist to this otherwise sensible approach and that is the impact of inflation on both the premium and the sum assured.

The premium issue

If you have a policy where the increase in the premium is linked to inflation, there is an anomaly where if the increase in the inflation rate is higher than the increased rate of mortality (the risk of you dying during the policy term) then you may find you are overpaying for your insurance and could obtain the same level of cover at a lower cost.

The sum assured issue

The same can be true of income protection policies but they have a further twist. Income protection policies are usually limited to a pay out of 75% of your earnings so if the level of cover and premium have gone up at a rate higher than your salary increase, you may find that your policy won't pay out the increased sum insured but will limit a claim to 75% of your salary and provide you with a refund of the overpaid premium.

If you would like to discuss how we can help you or your business check that your life insurance policies are covering you for the correct amount please call us on 020 3668 7480.

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pcolechin@theadvantagroup.co.uk



Guide to Cyber Insurance

My name is Jon Neal, I am a relatively new member working for Consort Insurance and would like to talk to you about Cyber Insurance.

Guide to Cyber Insurance

Arranging insurance can be challenging and it is never easy to know what you are getting. This is particularly true of cyber insurance, a relatively new insurance that has many cover variations, making it hard to know what benefit you are actually receiving for your premium.

One very important aspect of the protection is the incident response support you receive under a policy. Through a policy you have access to blue chip companies who manage the incident on behalf of the policyholder in respect of forensic investigation to unlocking data to PR and legal services. Cynically operators will take advantage of firms

when they are literally on their knees and knowing you have the cavalry up your sleeve to resolve issues is worth as much as the cover itself, whilst reputations are on the line.

Costs of Cyber Incidents

The UK has taken longer than most to see the requirement of cyber insurance. The retail sector was the first to see the importance and understand the detrimental effect a cyber loss could have on online sales and the damage to reputations should personal data or credit card information be lost.

The primary cause of cyber losses comes from human error, and this is particularly true of own employees. Phishing incidents continue to rise, and it appears no matter how much eLearning takes place, the number of incidents still increases.

To find out more please visit www.consortinsurance.com

Commercial locking systems made to measure

Products with the CES logo are recognised globally for their high precision, security and quality.

From individual property requirements, to the implementation of hierarchically structured access authorisations, CES design locking systems around the user, not around their products.

CES' service doesn't begin and end with the manufacturing of locking systems. They work in collaboration with architects, design teams and the end-user, to plan locking systems specific to the building's requirements.

For existing buildings, they bring expert guidance as to how to overcome issues with locking systems being out of patent, if they've lost control of

the system over time, or have too many keys, or broken keys.

Each and every CES lock case and cylinder sold in the UK is hand assembled, and every key cut to code from their workshop in Rochester, Kent. The precision and accuracy the team work to, and the thorough testing of each and every lock before it leaves them, is what makes CES locking systems world renowned.

Testing, and attention to the highest levels of detail and quality are a core part of CES' 182-year history. Unlike many locking system manufacturers, all CES products are manufactured and finished in-house, offering flexibility and bespoke solutions, in an industry leading range of sizes and finishes.

For more information visit www.cessecurity.co.uk

How to get your brand messaging right

Consumers are bombarded with brand messages, so spending time crafting yours is vital to helping your business resonate with your audience.



Here's how to ensure your messaging hits the spot:

1. Define your target market

Even if you sell a product that's used by most people, you still need to give a different message to each segment of your audience, because they won't all use it for the same reason.

Identify their reasons and add this into your messaging – blanket marketing isn't effective.

2. What's your USP?

Highlight what's different about your business and don't be afraid to be niche. An unusual or unique offering means you've carefully considered your customers' needs and have taken time to produce something special or useful to them.

3. Learn from others

What is it about brands you like that resonates with you? How could you avoid the mistakes of those that don't get their messaging right?

Think about your competitors' messaging strengths and weaknesses to help improve yours.

4. Use your messaging in all your communications

Repeat your messaging anywhere that you talk about your brand – verbally, digitally and in print. Being consistent demonstrates that you know what your business stands for.

5. Segment your audience

Adapt your communication so it's appropriate to customers at different buying stages.

'Have you tried our new luxury vegan handmade chocolates?' is a perfect pop-up message for prospective buyers browsing your website but not for direct marketing to customers who have recently purchased the product.

Izzy PR
izzypr.co.uk



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN

No matter your age, we believe high quality learning should be available to everyone.

Whether you are looking to change your career, get new skills to achieve a promotion, or simply start a new hobby, you can find the perfect option for you at EKC Group.

Anyone aged 19 and over can enjoy the wide range of short-term and part-time courses on offer across our six Colleges, taught in adult-only classes that offer the opportunity to boost your social circle and become more proficient in your area of interest.

Designed with adults in mind, our programmes are perfectly tailored to those with time constraints due to work and family. By coming into College for just one evening per week, within a few months you will walk away with a recognised qualification which you can use to find a new job or go up a rung in your company.

Part-time courses are available for people of all abilities, whether you're a complete

beginner in a subject, preparing to enter university or advancing your current career. If you have a couple of gaps in your CV, we also offer evening classes to secure GCSEs in English and Maths which are vital in securing employment.

As well as part-time courses, EKC Group offers Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas which can help you specialise in your field. These Higher Education qualifications act in place of your first and second year at university respectively, and can be topped up to achieve a full degree.

So if you want to resume your education journey, EKC Group has an option for you. Search ekcgroup.ac.uk today to find your future.

EKC
GROUP



Capitalising on skills opportunities

After the disruption of the Covid pandemic, as well as the ongoing transition as Britain leaves the European Union, the Government has renewed its focus on education as the way for the UK to bounce back to its place among the economic powerhouses of the world.

This is already being felt in Kent, with exciting new facilities being created to help learners of all ages achieve growth in their knowledge and skills.

Businesses can take advantage of this educational boom by collaborating with Further and Higher Education providers across the county, which have benefitted from a number of new funds opened up by the Government. Among those is the Skills Development Fund, which is providing money to EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College to create facilities designed to enhance business' futureproofing. The joint project will give companies access to physical 'decarbonisation learning zones' across Kent, where employers can learn how to go 'carbon net zero' and how to benefit from future technologies such as AI and electric vehicles.

Aside from new initiatives, there are many training and recruitment avenues which employers may not have considered. One such route are apprenticeships, which are becoming increasingly popular among EKC Group's provision as a way of securing early footholds in a career. These are completed not just by young people, but also existing staff to improve their skills and knowledge to progress into senior roles.

Apprenticeships align well with the Government's Levelling Up programme and are widely seen as being "key" to creating a valuable foundation upon which regional economies can grow. City & Guilds Managing Director, David Phillips, said last year that "if they are more widely adopted, apprenticeships can help employers of all sizes to capitalise on the opportunities that the levelling-up agenda presents, by allowing them access to the skilled workers they need."

To encourage more companies to create apprentice schemes, an Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in 2017 which gives companies a lump sum for getting involved. A 2021 report by The Centre for Vocational Education Research found the initiative had caused a marked rise in the number of successful apprentice starters, adding that already-qualified workers are increasingly using them to get higher-level qualifications. Apprenticeship schemes are offered by Further Education groups across Kent, with each boasting a team which will provide comprehensive support for prospective candidates and companies considering taking one on.



“Apprenticeship schemes are offered by Further Education groups across Kent, with each boasting a team which will provide comprehensive support for prospective candidates and companies considering taking one on.”

HTQs are being launched across Kent within the next couple of years, with employers encouraged to keep an eye out for more information relating to these Higher Education-level apprenticeships.

All of these opportunities to access and enhance education in the county are vital in creating a strong Kent economy for both the present and future. Every Further and Higher Education provider have options they can offer to boost your company, and will happily advise you on how your business can take full advantage of them. With an increased focus on promoting skills required by businesses to ensure future economic growth, engaging with local industries is essential for both education providers and students in Kent. In order to strengthen the specialist skills and experience offered to the next generation of your sector, employer input of any kind assists the future generation entering your sector while also having a reciprocal benefit to you and your staff.

Fresh ideas, cutting-edge knowledge and skills, modern ways of working, increased digital skills – these opportunities to boost your organisation are all available for you to take advantage of thanks to the education providers across Kent.



“There are many training and recruitment avenues which employers may not have considered.”



Taking on T Level students for work experience allows companies to shape the education of the next generation, as well as placing themselves at the forefront of graduates' minds. It also benefits your existing workforce through mentoring and supervisory duties, which would make them feel valued and improve their promotion viability.

The good news is that T Levels are becoming more common each year, with more pathways being rolled out each year. Across EKC Group for the next academic year, for example, 20 separate courses will be running, all of which can provide opportunities for employees to grow their skills while enhancing the talent pipeline entering your industry.

Revolutions in business-minded education continue to be made, and preparations are already underway to roll out a higher-level educational route for students and employees alike. Higher Technical Qualifications (or HTQs) comprise existing Level 4 and Level 5 courses with new curriculums designed by employers and awarding bodies. Their aim is to ensure graduates meet an industry standard that equips them with the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to seamlessly enter the workplace. HTQs are seen as an important boost to the talent pipeline of technical industries such as Digital, Health and Science, and Construction.

Once rolled out, HTQ learners will be able to access student finances which means they can study these degree-level qualifications alongside full- or part-time employment while being financially buoyed.

Another way education and business can work together symbiotically is through the Government's new T Level qualifications. Comprising two years of study with 45 days of mandatory work experience, one T Level is the equivalent of three A Levels. The courses have been designed with industry leaders, meaning each graduate will have the knowledge and skills needed to immediately enter the workplace. However, to reach that point, they require an industry placement, which is where businesses can assist.



How employers can fill a skills gap

National Apprenticeships Week 6-12 February 2023

With the CBI warning the number of companies citing a shortage of skilled labour has reached the highest level in nearly five decades, there has never been a better time for employers to engage with apprenticeships. The number of businesses complaining of a lack of key personnel soared from 39% to 49% in the last half of last year. At the same time, the percentage of school leavers choosing university has fallen for the first time in a decade.

It is now that Further Education Colleges who have focussed on providing these essential earn-while-you-learn courses can really show businesses how to make the most of this opportunity to fill their skills gaps.



Jane Burtenshaw, Director of Employer Relations at MidKent College which offers apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and higher levels, says: "We have skilled teachers

and trainers passing on knowledge and experience of their workplace to a new generation of apprentices. The traditional idea of an apprentice has changed beyond recognition, and it is the employers who see the potential of these schemes who are reaping the benefits. The vocational route to a rewarding and satisfying work life has never been more accessible for both the apprentice and the employer. I would urge anyone in business to contact us to see how we

can meet their need for better and higher skilled staff."

Last year the Learning and Work Institute was commissioned to research why apprentices drop out of their courses. Lack of support from their employer was the most common reason for not completing, and the Department for Education is now being urged to incentivise employers to support their staff who want to extend and improve their qualifications through apprenticeships.

In February, National Apprenticeships Week will highlight the vast range of training available and how to access it. Follow #NAW2023 to see how businesses around the country are benefitting from hiring an apprentice.

<https://www.midkent.ac.uk/apprenticeships/>

<https://www.nationalapprenticeshipweek.co.uk>

<https://feweek.co.uk/why-do-so-many-apprentices-drop-out-new-research-offers-answers/>



Becca Balch is studying the HNC apprenticeship in Civil Engineering and was recently recognised as MidKent College's apprentice of the month

Congratulating Becca, her line manager at calfordseaden in Orpington Bob Terry, Head of Structural Engineering, said: "We are incredibly proud of Becca's commitment to promoting women in engineering and how she has embraced College and her working life. Becca started at calfordseaden almost three years ago as a secretary for the Structural and Civil Engineering team. It became clear that she wanted to be more involved with projects, gain more technical knowledge of our industry and to work alongside our engineers. After discussing her options, we found an apprenticeship with MidKent College to support her new role as an engineering technician. We look forward to what the future holds for Becca as an engineer!"

Her lecturer, Charlotte Brown said: "Becca spent her first year on a skill build course to increase her knowledge, skills and behaviours ready for the HNC in Civil Engineering. She has always stood out from her peers due to her enthusiasm for civil engineering and her willingness to learn. Becca also represented MidKent College at the CIOB student challenge. It was remarkable that she not only had the confidence to work with students from the College that she had not met before but also to present confidently to a room full of senior directors from Tier 1 construction and civil engineering companies.

Becca is relishing the challenges her course brings her alongside her day-to-day responsibilities in the workplace. It has been a complete pleasure to complete a reference for her to apply for a QUEST scholarship

through the Institution of Civil Engineers. I look forward to working with Becca over the next two years and following her career development."

Becca told us: "Coming back to College has been a shock to the system because the last time I was in education was 2005, but the lecturers were great and helpful. They really push you forward in your course. To start with I was the only woman but now there are three. My employers have been brilliant too and my team has been very supportive and willing to help me with questions and queries."

Becca was also a finalist for the College's prestigious annual Student Awards ceremony in June, and was a finalist in both The Green Award and The Digital Excellent Award!



KENT FE COLLEGES invite businesses to invest in net zero as new skills centres open county-wide

An ambitious skills accelerator programme will not only help businesses of all sizes recruit future talent and retrain existing staff – but develop or test new products and services too.

New learning zones have been equipped with the latest decarbonisation linked technologies complementing a suite of new training courses and qualifications. Together they represent the latest stage of a government backed partnership launched in October 2021 by EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College.

- **EKC Group** has used its share of £5.6 million from the Government's Skills Development Fund to invest in cutting edge robotic, virtual and augmented reality technology and hi-tech 3-D scanners. The new green engineering centres at its Ashford and Canterbury campuses, will boost skills in engineering and advanced manufacturing – from self-driving cars to automated production lines.
- **MidKent College** has used its allocation to open a Green Construction and Design Centre as well as a Home Energy Centre at its Maidstone campus providing hands on experience of renewable technologies and low energy solutions plus a simulator that will re-create different scenarios for training purposes, including wind turbines and energy storage.
- **Hadlow College**, part of North Kent College, meanwhile will be the location of a Green Horticultural Centre, a new state-of-the-art facility focused on promoting sustainability. As part of the project a new 'robotic orchard' that students will use to learn about automated spraying, robotic harvesting and drones has been planted.



Simon Cook, Principal and Chief Executive, MidKent College and Chair of Kent Further Education (KFE), which champions the FE sector across Kent and Medway, said: "The launch of these new learning centres, and the partnerships with industry

specialists that will design the training and development offered, will ensure that local employers can call upon the skills and best practice needed to transition to Net Zero as well as putting down a marker for Kent as a leading hub for the green economy.

"A third of UK businesses do not believe their workforce is currently equipped with the skills necessary to achieve net zero. By coming together as one, Kent's FE colleges are seeking to ensure that changes."

Graham Razey, Chief Executive Officer for EKC Group, said:

"FE colleges have always been at the forefront of societally transformational leadership projects, and to be kickstarting a green revolution for businesses across the county is absolutely wonderful. Our new engineering centres at Ashford College and Canterbury College will help to develop the skills of the future for our students, whilst simultaneously ensuring employers have the opportunity to test their own decarbonisation plans in a sector leading environment."



David Gleed, Chief Executive and Executive Principal: "We are thrilled to be a part of this sustainability project within Kent and as we progress, we will be looking to engage with as many businesses as

we can and invite them to join us and our FE sector partners in devising new skills solutions that will support career opportunities now and in the future. The opening of our new Green Agriculture Centre at Hadlow College is just the start."

Find how Kent's new green learning centres can power your business - from product testing and development to retraining and recruitment, book your visit:

www.hadlow.ac.uk
www.ekcgroup.ac.uk
www.midkent.ac.uk

"A third of UK businesses do not believe their workforce is currently equipped with the skills necessary to achieve net zero. By coming together as one, Kent's FE colleges are seeking to ensure that changes."

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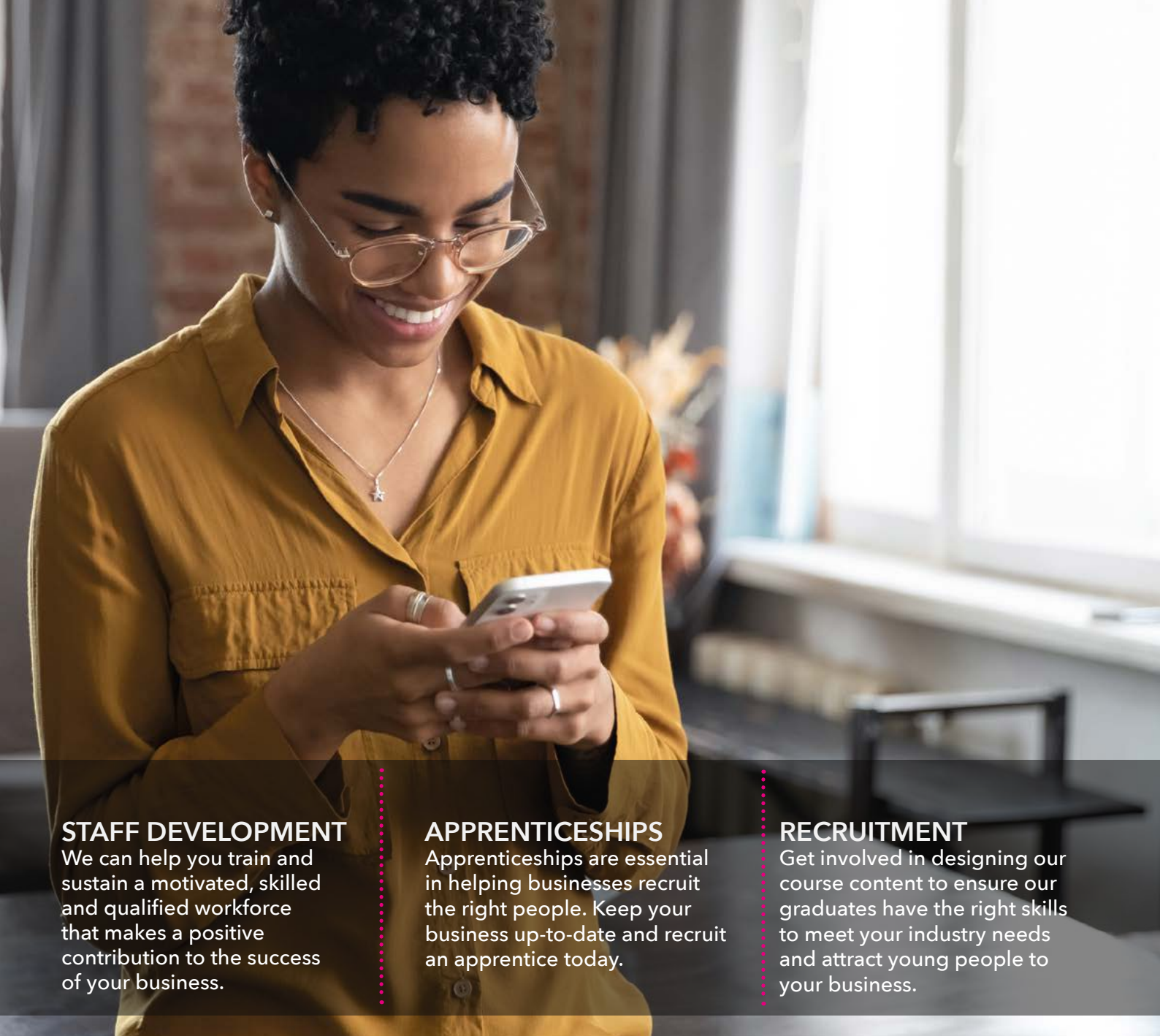
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Ask the Digital Expert

**MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS
IN A WAY THAT ATTRACTS
THE BEST EMPLOYEES.**

By Connor Styche



Everyone knows it costs a lot to recruit new people. It's a cost that most business owners can stomach when the recruitment is required because they're growing. But, when the recruitment need is to replace someone who's decided to leave your business, then it's a bitter pill to swallow. Just think how much more it's costing you to recruit, than it would've been to retain...

Last issue we wrote about company culture and investing in your workplace to provide more than just the required minimum for your people: to make it a working environment they want to get out of bed for. But how do we attract the best employees in the first place?

First impressions count. No one would dispute this fact. So, if you want to attract the right applicants, you need to think about how your business 'looks' online. Because no one ever scouted out a potential employer by driving past their offices (or at least, not until after they'd already scouted out their website, their socials, and their people).

If your website looks tired and hasn't been updated in a long time, guess what a

potential employee is going to think about your company? If your 'About Us' page doesn't feature real people, or it does, but no one's smiling in their pictures, you're giving out a message that you're not a very welcoming bunch. Can you blame them for not wanting to apply?

The good news? All these things can quite easily be rectified, with a photoshoot and some back-end web development.

Next, think on to how you promote your vacancies. A job ad can be a list of requirements, responsibilities and qualifications required for the role. But is that all you want? Someone with no personality, as long as they can get the job done? A job ad is a piece of marketing. It should be written to attract the right audience by promoting your business culture, your company values, and your workplace. The right audience is a person who fits with your company. If you get applicants with the right personality, as well as the experience/skillset you need, you won't be wasting time carrying out as many 'bad' interviews or inducting someone into your business who isn't going to work out because they don't 'fit in'.

So, inject some personality into your job ad! We don't mean make it jokey and fun. We mean make it 'sound like' your business. Is your business, and therefore your workplace 'professional', 'relaxed', 'upbeat' or something else? The more you can get across your company personality and workplace culture in your job ad, the better chance you'll have of receiving applications from those people who will be a 'fit'.

Talk about what kind of personality you're looking for, other than just seeking out experience and skillset. Talk about what will and won't wash in your company. Talk about what makes your company different.

Don't know where to start? Guess what? This is all marketing. Being aware of your company brand and your identity, is where you start.

Lastly, in the interview, make sure you get to know them, as best you can. Find out who they are and what they want. It's a relationship you're looking to build here, so look for their personality to confirm that all-important fit. As long as they've got the personality for your business, and the right attitude, you can teach the rest.

**YOU CAN TEACH ANYTHING,
EXCEPT PERSONALITY.**



thedigitallookout.co.uk

LOOKING for a new IT supplier?

Make sure you're asking the right questions on your search for the perfect partner.

There are few reasons why you might be looking for an IT provider:

- You're not happy with your current IT support. Maybe you don't feel like your business is getting enough value for money, or the relationship has broken down.
- If you're a start-up or fast-growing business that is in sudden need of an IT company to help you align technology and support your team.
- Or perhaps your business has outgrown the capabilities of your current IT provider.

Whatever the reason for your search, there are a few key questions we would suggest asking so you know you are getting the best possible service:

Is onsite support included?

Onsite support means that your IT support provider will come out and fix IT issues that can't be done remotely with no extra charge. If it's not included, it's a cost for you, and means they don't have your best interests at heart.

How quickly will an issue be responded to by a person?

You log a ticket - how quickly do they say it will be responded to if it's a business impacting issue? Just one person not being able to work reduces your business productivity and frustrates your team.

What can you expect from the Service Desk?

You want a knowledgeable team of geeks who know the tech inside-out. However, you want them to be able to talk to you in a helpful, friendly, and non-techy way.

Do they measure customer satisfaction?

How is the IT support company checking that they are providing a decent service to their clients? Do they ask for feedback on every ticket? Or are they not doing much to monitor this?

Will your account manager meet with you monthly?

It's important that your main contact is on the pulse with what is happening in your business and meeting with them regularly ensures that everything is going the way you expect it to.

How do they keep your business secure?

Does the service include anti-virus, DNS filtering, security awareness training, dark web monitoring and patch management as standard? Great security included in your Managed Service contract helps to give you a solid foundation to keep protected.

Do they have Cyber Essentials or any other compliance accreditations?

Your provider could put you at risk, they should be able to demonstrate they are safe and compliant with key accreditations so you can trust that they will be able to look after your organisation and data because they have their house in order.

Is IT strategy available?

Access to an IT consultant provides you the opportunity to have fresh eyes on your technology and your business processes. A consultant can bring new ideas, challenge the status quo, and support you to improve productivity, efficiency and help you to achieve your business goals.

Once you are satisfied that these questions are being 'answered', and you feel like it's a great cultural fit, then we'd safely say that's the right IT partner for your business.

What do **you** expect from your IT partner?



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Hybrid flexible working is needed to rebuild our economy

The new hybrid working guidance from the **Flexible Working Taskforce** has been welcomed by the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC).

As part of its involvement in the Flexible Working Taskforce, the CIPD has jointly produced practical guidance to support effective hybrid working.

The guidance focuses on people management; recruitment and induction; inclusion and fairness; and health, safety and wellbeing. It looks at providing training to managers on how to manage hybrid teams effectively, reviewing HR processes, keeping any hybrid working policies and principles under ongoing review – including the impact on workers with protected characteristics.

Commenting on the new guidance from the Flexible Working Taskforce, Jane Gratton, BCC head of people policy,

said: “Many businesses have experienced the benefits of staff working from home over the past 18 months and our research indicates three quarters of employers will continue to offer hybrid working going forward.

“This new guidance will help all employers to confidently implement and roll out hybrid working in a way that is fair and accessible to their workforce.

“Flexible working makes good business sense and is increasingly becoming a standard part of staff benefit packages. While remote working may not be practical for all job types, the wide range of other flexible working options that firms can consider opens the doors to new talent to fuel growth and rebuild our economy.”

Hybrid working has created a new set of challenges

Says Reg Groombridge, CEO, WhosOff.com

Employee expectations have changed. 72% of professionals now rate long-term flexibility as a better perk than a high salary, while two-thirds of people will only apply for roles that offer hybrid working.

Increasing flexibility has been great for people’s work/life balance, but it’s created new challenges for companies – like managing staff whereabouts. Today, it’s difficult to keep track of who is working from home versus who’s on leave or off sick.

To be truly flexible, businesses need a smarter way to manage staff logistics – and leave management software is providing the solution.

Most tools that companies currently use can’t run a hybrid workforce. Leave management software enables firms to record every type of office

absence – from holiday and time off in lieu to working from home and sick leave – for a complete record of who’s off. The leading leave management platforms are designed for the demands of hybrid working. Staff can use their web browser or smartphone app to check absences and book leave. This keeps the whole team on the same page.

At WhosOff, we’ve seen how leave management software gives firms greater visibility and control. Employees are happier and more motivated when their working structure fits their lives. And companies benefit from greater insight into their team’s daily movements.

WhosOff is offering readers the chance to try its leave management software free of charge. Visit whosoff.com to get the rest of this month and all of next month free.

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Photo by Ethan Wilkinson on Unsplash

Port and fruit prove a festive win for Dover

From melons from Brazil to grapes from South Africa, the Port of Dover's cargo business handled a huge supply of perishable fruit in December.

The produce was transported through the Terminal ensuring supermarket shelves were well stocked and consumers had their fresh fruit in time for Christmas and the New Year.

The Port's state-of-the-art temperature-controlled terminal can handle temperatures between 1 and 15 degrees and has refrigerated storage for over 5,500 pallets – ideal for handling and distributing fruit and other perishables between the UK and Europe.

Seatrade's Cold Stream arrived in Dover with 2,000 pallets of South African table

grapes as refrigerated breakbulk and containerised to support a strong supply of fresh grapes over the festive period.

Gina Smith, UK commercial director at Seatrade, said: "The Port has shown once again that its modern, flexible facility, combined with a professional and dedicated team can deliver a seamless service to our customers over busy periods."

Alison Hall, head of business development at the Port of Dover, said: "I'm proud to have such committed and specialised staff, who can work so well with our customers to share their expertise and together, provide an excellent operation, which in turn puts fresh food on people's tables during some of the busiest times for the industry."

The Port of Dover is the UK's busiest international ferry port, handling more lorries than all other UK ports.

"The Port has shown once again that its modern, flexible facility, combined with a professional and dedicated team can deliver a seamless service to our customers over busy periods."



Rise in demand for good imports boosts UK trade

The UK trade performance improved in November with a 6.1% increase in goods imports (after removing effects of inflation).

Reacting to the ONS Trade figures for November, William Bain, head of trade policy at the BCC, said: “UK trade performance improved in November led by a 6.1% increase in goods imports (adjusted for inflation).”

"Goods exports also picked up, rising by 1.7%, but concerns about the impact of the Brexit deal continue due to a 1.2% fall in goods exports to the EU.

"Early estimates of trade in services showed a flat picture – with exports down by 0.2%, and imports by 0.6%, adjusted for inflation.

"Looking at a comparison over the three months to the end of November with the three months to the end of August, goods exports to the EU were 4.9% lower over that period.

"While the UK did better than its peers in overall trade in November, the Export Strategy needs to deliver in 2023 given the global economic headwinds UK goods and services exports are currently facing."

Goods Imports

In November 2022, UK goods imports rose by 6.1% after removing effects of inflation (values were 3.5% less before this removal). The rise in goods imports from the EU was led by higher machinery and transport equipment imports (ship imports from Finland were particularly noteworthy). Non-EU goods imports were boosted by higher sales of cars from China and aircraft from the US. Fuel imports from Qatar and Norway continued to fall in November.

Goods Exports

Falls in EU goods exports values were driven by lower sales of fuels for the fourth consecutive month. The rise in non-EU goods exports values was largely down to increases in machinery and transport equipment sales, including aircraft to Qatar and motor vehicles to the US and China.

Services

On services, excluding inflation, imports fell to £17.8bn in November and exports to £29.5bn – a reduction of 0.6% and 0.2% respectively from October.

Three-month trend

Looking at the three months to the end of November, total UK goods imports from both the EU and outside the EU fell by 3.2%, compared with the three months to the end of August. The fall in EU goods exports over that period was 4.9%. Over the same timescale overall goods exports fell by 1.5%.

The services picture was better with a rise of 2.0% in exports over that period offset by a 1.2% decline in imports. Total trade values over that period increased by 0.3% in exports but were 2.6% lower in imports.

Trade Deficit

Excluding inflationary factors, the total trade deficit narrowed by £3.8bn in the three months to the end of November.

Brexit Trade Deal Not Delivering

- **More than three quarters (77%) of firms, for which the Brexit deal is applicable, say it is not helping them increase sales or grow their business**
- **More than half (56%) of firms face difficulties adapting to the new rules for trading goods**
- **Almost half (45%) face difficulties adapting to the new rules for trading services, and a similar number (44%) report difficulties obtaining visas for staff**
- **The BCC has sent the Government a report setting out solutions to many of the issues**

New data released today from a survey of more than 1,168 businesses (92% SMEs) shows significant challenges for UK firms trying to use the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA).

The TCA was agreed on Christmas Eve in 2020 to allow tariff-free trade with the EU once Brexit took effect.

But a high proportion of businesses say they are still having major problems trying to use the deal to trade with Europe.

The BCC has sent the Government a report setting out the main issues the TCA is causing with solutions to many of the problems.

The survey also found that alongside problems with the TCA, four in five (80%) firms had seen the cost of importing increase since January, more than half (53%) had seen their sales margins decrease and almost three quarters (70%) of manufacturers had experienced shortages of goods and services.

What Businesses Say

“Customs on both sides of the EU border seem to have a separate set of rules to be able to charge different amounts for the same thing. We don't know until it's too late what these costs are.”



A Meeting of Engineering Minds and Business Values

ECO MEP are delivering energy efficient building services safely, and to the highest standards, every time.

Ashford based Paul Hooker describes himself as an electrician, who runs a business. Back in 2015, as an experienced and forward-thinking electrical engineer, he surrounded himself with the best of the best, and began delivering projects to his exacting standards, and building long-term relationships with clients and suppliers.

Eight years later he has teams of electrical engineers working across the whole of Kent, alongside many main contractors,

on both commercial and industrial projects, as well as direct with clients including the University of Kent and EKC (East Kent College) Group.

Leon Richardson joined ECO as a Director in 2022 following a demand from clients for a full MEP package offering. His shared values and ethos for exceeding expectations, made him the obvious choice for Paul. He also brings 18 years of knowledge and experience as a mechanical engineer and a reputation in the industry for going the extra mile.

Responding to demand

Kent's construction frameworks favour a supply chain with combined service providers, but Paul explained that that's not the reason for the collaboration and joining of forces here.

"We work better when we work together, as a unified team, with our clients, with contractors and sub-contractors, and with our supply chain. I've known Leon for years; we've worked together on countless projects, where I've admired his workmanship."

"More and more recently, ECO Electrical were being asked if we provided mechanical building services, especially as we're moving away from fossil fuels to heat our buildings. It was just a no-brainer for me, but I wouldn't have settled for anyone other than Leon to join us."

ECO MEP recently launched into the Kent construction and building maintenance market, providing mechanical, electrical and public health services including design and installation for construction projects and existing buildings, with energy efficiency at their core. Utilising their combined knowledge of building services, they are committed to working with designers and consultants to reduce the energy usage and whole life carbon impact of Kent's buildings.

With our know-how of products, regulations and wellbeing standards, what we deliver doesn't just meet requirements, it exceeds them.

ECO's engineers provide design and installation of power, lighting, air-conditioning, heating, cooling and ventilation in any application. They also have the capability to undertake water, gas, and above ground drainage aspects of a project.

"There's not much we won't do but our specialism is in bespoke building services system design, focused on energy efficiency and safety. Early engagement ensures we can add the most value to a project through our experience and knowledge."

Recruitment

The ECO MEP team includes highly qualified and experienced engineers working alongside apprentices, each bringing different skills and knowledge to a project. They are supported by designers, professional estimators, contracts managers and quantity surveyors.

"To grow our employees' skills and abilities is one of our most important objectives and a company value. As we look to recruit further, we're taking the opportunity to nurture aspiring engineers and offer training in a hands-on approach. Our apprentices are guided by highly qualified engineers which gives them an insight to our methods of delivering quality workmanship."

We support each other to deliver an exceptional service. We continually look to the future, with innovative ideas, exploring new products and upskilling ourselves at every opportunity.

Another of ECO's core values, promoting energy efficiency, gives a unique opportunity to learn about sustainability in the future of construction, and how this is applied within building services.

"We take pride in expanding our company and want every employee to feel like the valued team members they are. We want to smash through the huge gender disparity in engineering and encourage anyone to join us in understanding the future of construction and guide keen engineers to success."

Paul is clearly adapting to the changing industry, building relationships, developing his teams' skills and looking for more people to join him. It also seems there's no limit to his ambition.

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The Business Listing Directory provides members with the opportunity to showcase their company to others.

THINKING BUSINESS MAGAZINE

The bi-monthly Thinking Business magazine is where a Chamber member can add a 250-word article.

If you have a question about how we can help, please email info@kentinvictachamber.co.uk

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FIND OUT MORE...

www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk

February - March 2023

Kent Invicta LIVE Events



Every week we bring you a mix of information sessions, networking events, workshops, panel sessions and training sessions with some of the top local business professionals from an array of different industries.

Each event is designed to offer invaluable up-to-date information tailored to our attendee's wants and needs, as well as networking opportunities to help you grow your business.

With many events held online and across Kent, you're sure to find the right one for your business.



Business Talks

Join our next Business Talks event, as we explore The Kent Mining Museum based in Deal, and network with other business professionals from the local area.

The Kent Mining Museum will take visitors on a journey through the story of the East Kent coalfield spanning almost 100 years, from when coal was first discovered in 1890, to the closing of Betteshanger Colliery in 1989.

During this event there will also be plenty of networking opportunities.

Tour of The Kent Mining Museum
Thursday 16th February 2023 | 10:30am - 12:00pm
Members: £12.50 + VAT | Non-Members: £17.50 + VAT



International Women's Day

Join us on International Women's Day where Patience Ogunbona from ATI Coaching, Consulting & Training Ltd, will be discussing 'How to Become The Best Version of Yourself in Today's Challenging World'.

This year's focus of International Women's Day (IWD) is #EmbraceEquity. Women need to support other women to thrive. Therefore this call is not only for the men to embrace equity but for women to do the same amongst each other. This can only happen when women choose to raise each other up, create opportunities, challenge each other and help remove barriers to progress.

Wednesday 8th March 2023
10:30am - 11:30am
Members: Free to attend | Non-Members: £5.00 + VAT

For all events and to book...

www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/events



Hosted by members of the KCFG committee, Cheryl Causebrook and Ella Brocklebank, we bring you **KCFG Live!**

The Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG) is a one-stop-shop for local businesses to discuss the future of Kent development, giving companies access to local knowledge, expertise and contracts.

During the morning you will enjoy a full English breakfast which will be followed by a presentation from our guest speakers.

Tuesday 7th February 2023, MidKent College, Maidstone
Tuesday 7th March 2023, The Village Hotel, Maidstone
KCFG Members: £22.50 + VAT | Non-Members: £32.50 + VAT | 7:30am - 9:30am

Virtual Business Networking is a bi-weekly, fun way of networking which is highly interactive, sparking interesting conversations and aims to bring like-minded people together, guide forward new ideas and form new business relationships.

Each event will be an eclectic mix of conversation topics as we interview our guest business and encourage questions from the attendees.

Tuesday 7th and 21st February 2023
Tuesday 7th and 21st March 2023

10:30am - 12:00pm
Members: Free to attend
Non-Members: Free to attend

This informal event will give you an opportunity to promote your business and make invaluable connections. 'Chamber Connections Networking' are very popular networking events.

Any business, any size, we know and understand the pressures and ambitions your business has.

Imagine what you could achieve being part of a local, national and international business community.

Thursday 2nd March 2023
Cave Hotel, Faversham
10:30am - 12:00pm
Members: Free to attend
Non-Members: Free to attend

Events at a glance...

Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG)
 Tuesday 7th February 2023
 MidKent College, Maidstone

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 7th February 2023

Skills, What is Happening in Kent & Medway And Why Should Businesses Get Involved?
 Thursday 9th February 2023

Business Talks: Networking and Tour of The Kent Mining Museum
 Thursday 16th February 2023
 Betteshanger Park, Deal

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 21st February 2023

How Supporting Charities Can Boost Your Corporate Responsibility
 Thursday 23rd February 2023

Chamber Connections Networking
 Thursday 2nd March 2023
 Cave Hotel and Golf Resort, Faversham

Annual General Meeting
 Friday 3rd March 2023
 Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Ashford

Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG)
 Tuesday 7th March 2023
 The Village Hotel, Maidstone

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 7th March 2023

The Empowered Woman How To Become The Best Version of Yourself in Today's Challenging World
 Wednesday 8th March 2023

INCOTERMS 2020 And Their Relationship With Duty And VAT
 Tuesday 14th March 2023

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 21st March 2023

Employment Law Update
 Thursday 23rd March 2023

Golf Day For The Kent Association For The Blind
 Thursday 30th March 2023
 Cave Hotel and Golf Resort, Faversham

For all events and to book...

www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/events

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Golf Day

Raising funds for:
Kent Association for the Blind

Thursday 30th March 2023

£70
per person

£280
Team of Four



The Cave Hotel & Golf Resort (Boughton Golf Club) Brickfield Lane, Boughton, Kent ME13 9AJ



8:30am Arrival Bacon Rolls, Tea & Coffee



10:30am - 3pm 18 Holes of Golf



3pm Two Course Lunch & Prize Giving



SCAN ME

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Proud to be the Chamber's
Charity of the Year





Experience Kent – Wine tasting tours and street theatre to safari park sunsets



Visit Kent encourages businesses to think local for team away days and experiences **with new business events campaign, Meet in Kent**

Visit Kent has launched a new business tourism campaign to boost visitor numbers across the county in the off-peak season. The six-week campaign, entitled Meet in Kent, will extend a year-round invitation for local businesses in Kent - and neighbouring areas of London - to consider Kent venues, experiences and attractions when booking their next corporate or team event.

The Meet in Kent campaign is part of a drive by Visit Kent to support business events suppliers in the county to rebuild relationships post pandemic with their local clients, as well as helping them to attract a new audience. A push for sustainability and increasing investment in training and development remain key trends. The Meet in Kent campaign will be looking to tap continued demand for incentive and personal development activities to increase staff wellbeing, promote personal growth and skills development.



Deirdre Wells OBE, Chief Executive at Visit Kent, said: "With the Meet in Kent campaign, we want to deliver a project that helps to strengthen consumer confidence in business events and create off-peak business

opportunities by encouraging local businesses to book their away days, corporate events and team building experiences with business events suppliers that they may not realise are located near to them – here in Kent. "We need to continue to assist venues, attractions and experience suppliers in the face of continued tough economic times. We know through our research that the business events market offers a great opportunity for suppliers to capitalise on new trends with the potential to add income, diversify and grow their business.

"Kent has a wide range of venues and experiences to choose from. This promotion will show how Kent has a compelling offer for businesses looking for ways to bring their staff together to collaborate, learn and motivate."

The Meet in Kent campaign will provide a free platform for business event suppliers based in the county, including hotels and attractions with meeting spaces as well as dedicated purpose-built conference and meeting venues. In addition, local experiences or attractions, including foragers, golf courses, cookery schools and other activity providers will also participate.

It forms the latest stage of the EXPERIENCE project, co-funded by the Interreg France (Channel) England programme, which seeks to boost visitor numbers across the county in the off-peak season.

To find out more, visit: www.meetinkent.co.uk

We don't know what we don't know

P	H	O	N	E
F	L	E	X	I
C	L	O	U	D
T	E	A	M	S
#	Q	U	D	O

This is one of my favourite sayings and one of the reasons I love networking and talking to other businesses, we can all learn so much from each other.

Pre Covid we couldn't have predicted what lay ahead. For many we have had to change how we work and how we interact with our customers, suppliers and colleagues alike.

We fell into a way of using the technology we had in the way we knew. There are a multitude of reasons for this but most importantly "we don't know what we don't know!"

Now almost 3 years on we have the ability to stop and take stock of where we are.

Luckily as an expert in your own field you don't need to know your way around the communications minefield. It is my role to advise you of business best practice and share how you could offer the best customer experience to your customers.

We work with businesses ranging from single users running a business on a mobile right up to large customers with call centre requirements and everything in-between. We can advise on all aspects of telephony and importantly all our services are available on 30 day contracts allowing you to try a service without being locked into any long term contracts.

When did you last review your services? If you think I can help your business contact me for a coffee and a chat at s.murphy@drd.co.uk

Award winning Maidstone company committed to the environment



BISON is an award-winning, 45-year young, Maidstone Brand Design, Print and Signage company that specialises in everything you need to give your brand impact without negatively impacting the planet.

For us, the sweet spot is the place where creating high quality, inspiring and exciting work brings value to the customer first, without creating pain or suffering to any creature or planet Earth.

As a business committed to the environment, we manufacture and print from 100% renewable energy, use cruelty-free, vegan inks, are over 95% plastic-free in our packaging and produce minimal wastage (of which zero goes to landfill). What's more, we've recently reduced our carbon footprint by over 75% and reached 85% off grid energy as a result of major renewable investments including 58 solar panels, auto LED lighting and a new heating and cooling system.

The environment and quality are both extremely important to us. That's why we are proud to be ISO14001 (environmental) and ISO9001 (quality) certified as well as winners of the Sustainability and Decarbonisation Business of the Year award at the annual Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce awards.

From complete rebrands to high quality, tangible business cards, BISON have you covered for everything you need to

make your brand stand out. Branding - Office Graphics- Custom Signage -Vehicle Graphics- Luxury Business Cards - Exhibition Stands

What our customers say:

F51 Skate Park:

"It honestly is an absolute pleasure working with BISON – they have been so accommodating throughout the whole process"

Helena Martin, Hollaway Studios

The Big Cat Sanctuary:

"BISON executed a complete rebrand with concise precision. They combine approachability and competence with complete professionalism and skill in their work."

Giles Clark, Director of Conservation

Leeds Castle:

"We were very impressed with BISON's design vision for the project – there were so few design iterations: the brief was met almost straight away"

Catherine Pell, Curator

Talis IFA sponsors local theatre company on tour

Talis IFA is delighted to be sponsoring Up The Road Theatre, a Kent-based theatre company, who are taking their brand new theatre production 'Beneath the Banner' on tour in March and April 2023.

The production features real stories from former Kent coal miners and their families, and will be visiting Co Durham, Northumberland, Cumbria, Yorkshire and Lancashire, before finishing with three dates in East Kent. During the tour, the production will also visit the National Coal Mining Museum for two performances.

The play has been informed and inspired by extensive research, including interviews with former miners and their families.

It tells the story of Gail, a young woman looking to unearth the truth about her grandad's life as a coal miner and features a host of characters from the coalfields, including a pit nurse, Coal Queen, pit head baths attendant and a mine rescue worker.

James Cole, MD of Talis IFA, says, "We're proud to be able to support this local theatre company with their latest production. As a Kent-based independent financial adviser with a strong focus on helping people to live the lives they want, it's important to us to be able to support different types of businesses here in different ways. Arts companies like this, which keep our local history and heritage alive, as well as offering opportunities for young artists, are a vital part of our community."



**James Cole, MD
Talis IFA**

'Beneath The Banner' is written and directed by Nicola Pollard, Artistic Director of Up The Road Theatre, who grew up in East Kent. She said: "Members of my mum's family were coal miners in south Wales, and I grew up in East Kent, where signs of the coal mining past remain. This play is a chance to shine a light on unknown stories from those communities, of the women and children as well as the men who worked at the collieries. Our aim is to take work into areas with little access to live arts, so we're thrilled to be working with rural touring schemes, who support artists in taking work into the heart of small communities. This production wouldn't have been possible without their support, or that of Arts Council England. I'm thrilled to have the National Coal Mining Museum as a project partner."

TAKE A BREAK and focus on your mental wellbeing



Image: Irana I. from Pixabay

A new year is the time we traditionally look at every aspect of our lives – home, family, work, health – and do a general audit to see what's working and what we can improve on. Whether or not you are an advocate of the New Year, New You premise, there is no better time than now to have a look at your mental wellbeing.

According to the NHS, evidence suggests that there are five steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing.

1. Connect with other people

Good relationships are important for your wellbeing because they help you build a sense of belonging and self-worth, give you an opportunity to share positive experiences and help you support others.

- Take time daily to be with your family e.g. eat dinner together
- Arrange a day out with friends
- Switch off the TV to talk or play a game with your children, friends or family
- Have lunch with a colleague
- Visit a friend or family member who needs support or company
- Volunteer at a local school, hospital or community group
- Have a video chat to keep in touch with a relative or friend who you can't see face-to-face or ring them for a chat (try not to rely solely on social media and text messages to keep in touch)

2. Be physically active

Not only does being active improve your physical health and fitness but it also improves your mental wellbeing by raising your self-esteem, helping you to set and achieve goals; and causing chemical changes in your brain to positively change your mood.

Don't feel you have to spend hours in a gym if that's not your bag. Have a read up on different activities you can try to keep active including running, aerobic exercises, classes, and strength and flexibility exercises.

3. Learn new skills

This can boost self-confidence, raise self-esteem, help you build a sense of purpose and connect with others.

- Try learning to cook something new
- Take on a new responsibility at work such as mentoring a junior staff member or learning a new business-based skill such as making presentations
- Work on a DIY project such as fixing a garden gate. There are lots of free video tutorials online
- Sign up for a college course to learn a new language or practical skill
- Try new hobbies e.g. writing a blog, taking up a new sport or learning to paint

4. Give to others

Carrying out small acts of kindness can create positive feelings, give you a feeling of purpose and self-worth and help you connect with others.

Start by asking friends, family or colleagues how they are and really listening to their answer. Offer to help someone you know with a home DIY or work project. Or volunteer in your community by helping at a school, hospital or care home.

5. Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

- Notice the everyday e.g. food you eat, environment etc
- Pick a regular time to be mindful e.g. your morning commute or lunchtime walk
- Try something new e.g. go somewhere new for lunch
- Try and empty your mind from thoughts and worries. Gentle yoga or walking can help
- Practise mindfulness when you find yourself either reliving past problems or pre-living future worries because it brings you back to the present.



New Year - New You?

Is 2023 your year to focus on your health?

Ok, let's not hide away from it. December has just flown by, and you overdid it. You indulged. You overate and put weight on.

January is now here, and like many, you made a new year's resolution to lose that weight finally and get back on track.

I am David Breaker of Breakthrough Life Coaching, Kent's number one Weight Loss Coach. I have helped hundreds of people lose weight and change their lifestyles.

As someone that has been there and got the size 6 XL T-shirt, I fully understand the challenges it takes to lose those extra lbs.

11 years ago, I was a very different man. I was 32 stone (193 kg), unemployed and throwing my life away. I got a wake-up call and support to change it around and lose the weight, so I now make it my mission to help others achieve the same.

- **Are you sick and tired of never losing that weight?**
- **Often feel bloated, low energy or just not happy in your body?**
- **You have tried diet after diet and yet always put the weight back on.**

If any of these statements seem familiar, please reach out for support today.

Why not check out my website <https://www.breakthroughlifecoaching.co.uk/> or email me at david@breakthroughlifecoaching.co.uk to start that journey with the full support you need to make 2023 your year?

Welcome to our new members

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Matt Edwards

*Business
Development
Manager, Kent*

*The Education and
Skills Partnership*

36 years with one excellent employer, the Halifax.

Highlights:- Mortgage Adviser at 18, Branch Manager at 21, setting up the Bank of Scotland business structure within Halifax England, Halifax Estate Agency and running Halifax Retail in Kent and Central London. I was fortunate to work for an employer that continually invested in learning, thus enabling me to succeed and gain many relevant qualifications.

Working at ESP I aim to share the continuous learning advantages with all.

What was your first job and what was the pay packet?

Full time Government YTS with Halifax Building Society £145 for a month.

What do you always carry with you to work?

In the boot of my car you will always find my golf clubs.

What is the biggest challenge facing your business?

Helping local SME's understand the benefits of vocational learning and the funding that is readily available. Empowering employees to solve day to day issues and streamline from within is far better than employing external consultants.

If you were Prime Minister, what one thing would you change to help business?

Increasing the communication around upskilling existing employees and the support available, plus make the levy funds more accessible for SME's needs.

What can you see from your office window?

Construction workers. My office is at home and we live on a new build site in Faversham. I am looking forward to the day it is just green space with no diggers and site offices.

If you could do another job what would it be?

My golf game is not great as I only started playing 8 years ago, but I would love to challenge Rory McIlroy down the last few holes at The Open.

As a business person, what are your three main qualities?

I was extremely successful in the bank and followed Jack Welch's simple 4 E's framework; Energy, Energize, Edge and Execute. These 4 traits I still believe are the foundations for success.

What was your biggest mistake in business?

Having worked for 36 years in a major UK bank, I regret not taking the plunge and setting up on my own. I guess it is never too late.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Unlock the potential of every employee in your business and take advantage of all the support and funding that is available. Retaining staff and promoting from within is far more cost effective than recruiting.

Who do you most admire in business?

Everyone who has the vision and courage to go it alone and build their own business no matter what the industry.

John Spence President for a second year



John Spence, Property Litigation Partner at the Tunbridge Wells-based law firm CooperBurnett LLP, has been voted in for a second term as President of the Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and District Law Society (TWTDLs), while Senior Associate Sarah Strong from its Private Client team also remains on the Council.

John had a successful first year in office which included a number of social events and seminars, as well as a well-attended dinner in November, which raised £1500 for Demelza Hospice Care For Children; a figure that was price matched by the partners at CooperBurnett.

The TWTDLs was founded in May 1933 by local solicitors practicing in Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. Led by a committee elected annually, it offers support to local solicitors and other legal professionals, including networking, training and social events, while also representing the local members in consultations with The Law Society, Solicitors Regulation Authority and other Government bodies. In addition to solicitors, the membership also includes paralegals, trainees, legal executives, barristers and in-house counsel.

"I am proud to be President for a second year," says John. "Our events throughout the past year have been well attended and we've already got a date scheduled in for a quiz night in March."

John is looking to increase the number of training events TWTDLs runs this year from four in 2022 to at least six.

"These courses have covered a range of subjects from employment to property litigation and are important for continuing professional development," he says.

Other goals John has this year include continuing to strengthen the relationship between TWTDLs and the Law Society of England and Wales. He has met Lubna Shuji, current Law Society President at regional events. In addition, he is looking to secure additional sponsors for the organisation (alongside Newman Business Solutions and TN Recruits Law).

CooperBurnett has been closely involved with TWTDLs for a number of years. Partners Victoria Sampson and Katie Gillam have held the position of President in the past, as did former Partner Jonathan Smithers, who went on to be President of the Law Society.

"John has been an exemplary President of TWTDLs over the past year, raising its profile and highlighting what a vital role it plays in supporting the legal profession locally," says Partner Joseph Oates. "We are very proud that he is continuing his presidency into a second year and wish him another successful term in office."

Introducing Derek Bennett Skinner

As well as being a university trained and UK accredited Level 6 Secondary School Teacher, a Lecturer and Public Speaker, a Management Consultant and Mental Health Coach, I've had a similar business to the one mentioned below for over 25 years.



My company, Go to Green Consulting, can offer (but is not limited to) the following bespoke Unique Focus and Service Areas:

1. Mental Health: Mental Health Support and Coaching; and, Anger and Stress Management.
2. Business coaching and support.
3. Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality Services, which can include, but are not limited to: ISO 9000 : 2000; ISO 14000; ISO 18000; ISO 45000 : 2018

4. Human Resources Management, Development and Training.
5. Online and in-person tutoring and training in several School, College, University and Industry related subjects.
6. Course Writer and Researcher.

I have written several Health and Safety Courses for a variety of industries, including one for Engen (a large Petro-chemical Company in Africa) entitled Permit to Work Systems based on the Piper Alpha Oil Rig Disaster. One of my proudest moments was delivering a research review of several recent Journal Articles about global warming at the American Association of Geographers Conference in Washington USA (April 2019); and presenting an updated version of that information at the Geography Teacher and Educator Conference on 27 January 2023.

I am looking forward to serving you all.

For further information please Email : admin@derekgotogreenconsulting.com

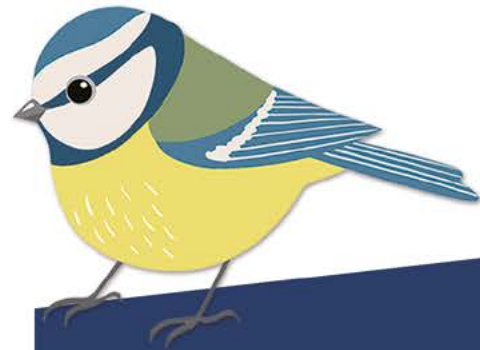


BIRD NESTING SEASON

MARCH - AUGUST

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upcoming survey season and
let's ensure your project
stays on track.



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