

THINKING BUSINESS

• OFFICIAL MAGAZINE FOR KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE • June - July 2023 •

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

A competitive advantage

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Kent region continues to develop



Jo James OBE
Chief executive

Welcome to the latest edition of Thinking Business.

I am delighted to announce that the Chamber Board have appointed Tudor Price, my current Deputy, to take over as Chief Executive, when I retire at the end of the year. Tudor has worked tirelessly for the

Chamber for the past 12 years and I am delighted that he will be the new Chief Executive when I step down at the end of this year. We will be working closely over the next few months to ensure a smooth transition for the Chamber.

Let me also extend a warm welcome to our returning Patrons, our new Patron The Digital Lookout and our new Chamber Members. We are delighted that you have joined the Chamber and we will endeavour to do all that we can to support you every step of the way.

The Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Awards is the highlight of the Chamber's calendar and gives us the opportunity to showcase the amazing achievements of our local businesses and the very talented individuals who lead and work for them. Entries open 12th June, see page 45 for further details. The event will be held on Thursday 23rd November 2023 at Westenhanger Castle in Hythe. The award categories include: Outstanding Contribution to

Business in Kent, Business of the Year, Construction Project of the Year, Employer of the Year and Entrepreneur of the Year, to name a few. A massive thank you to our sponsors for supporting the event.

Medway's reputation as an ideal location for companies looking to put down new roots is certainly growing; it is now home to 14,000 businesses. Just 34 minutes away from central London on the train, it is one of the best-connected places to do business. Its reputation as a national hub for innovation and engineering spans many centuries from its time as a great ship-builder and aircraft manufacturer. BAE Systems, Medway's largest private employer with more than 1,400 employees, is ensuring the area remains a world class site for innovation. With a multi-million-pound redevelopment on the cards, the facility will bring many new jobs to the area. A high-tech business park under construction next to Rochester Airport is also set to create around 3,000 jobs in the

area. There are also plans to develop a factory on the Hoo Peninsula capable of making 1,000 modular homes a year. If the development is approved, that is estimated to bring another 250 jobs to the area.

It is fascinating to learn more about the rise of artificial intelligence and how AI can benefit businesses. Although AI is still in its infancy, there is no doubt that it will creep more and more into our daily lives. We already see it on our mobile phones and computers with voice activated personal assistants and more and more businesses are adopting AI to assist with routine operations. We take a closer look at the future of AI in this issue.



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



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Editorial and General Enquiries

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce,
Ashford Business Point,
Waterbrook Avenue,
Sevington,
Ashford, Kent,
TN24 0LH

Chief Executive: Jo James OBE

Tel: 01233 503 838
Fax: 01233 503 687
info@kentinvictachamber.co.uk
www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk

Media No. 1931

Published June 2023
© Benham Publishing

Publisher

Ian Fletcher
Benham Publishing Limited,
Aintree Building, Aintree Way,
Aintree Business Park, Liverpool L9 5AQ
Tel: 0151 236 4141
Fax: 0151 236 0440
admin@benhampublishing.com
www.benhampublishing.com

Advertising and Features

Karen Hall
Tel: 0151 236 4141
karen@benhampublishing.com

Editor

Sarah Dale
Tel: 0151 236 4141
Sarahdale@benhampublishing.com

Production Manager

Mark Etherington
Tel: 0151 236 4141
mark@benhampublishing.com

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Our Patrons



Chamber announces new Chief Executive

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce has appointed **Tudor Price** to take over as Chief Executive when Jo James OBE, retires at the end of the year.

Currently, Deputy Chief Executive, Tudor Price, aged 56, has worked for the Chamber for 12 years. He leads on many of the Chamber's support and growth programmes, which has seen the team deliver the Growth Hub, a gateway to business support. He has also been involved in developing services to help business navigate import and export development; climate change and low carbon services, plus the Covid helpline during lockdown.

Working closely with the county's Further Education Colleges, Tudor Price led for the Chamber in being part of the national trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan to help firms across Kent and Medway boost skills development and opportunities.

Chris Hare, Chairman of Kent Invicta Chamber, said: "Tudor was the outstanding candidate in a very strong shortlist and his appointment was unanimously approved by the Board. His considerable understanding of the day-to-day issues facing business



across the county, and his insight and experience, will be invaluable in his new role.

"We all know that after working at the Chamber for 33 years, and leading it for 15 years, Jo will be a hard act to follow. We are confident that under Tudor's leadership, combined with the wealth of talent in the management and team, that the Chamber will continue to deliver

for its members and be the partner of choice for organisations across Kent."

Tudor Price will lead the 33-strong team and work closely with the board of directors to ensure the Chamber continues to do everything it can to support its members that employ more than 50,000 people across the county.

Commenting on his appointment, Tudor Price said: "The business environment continues to be challenging for many sectors across Kent and it is more important than ever that the Chamber continues to deliver strong and easy to access countywide support.

"Over the next few months, I will be working even closer than before with Jo, and the Board, to ensure a smooth handover so we can hit the ground running in 2024."

Prior to joining the Chamber, Tudor worked for Business Link Kent and has worked in a number of industries including business support, recruitment, and logistics. Prior to that he set up the Kent Acting Studio after being a professional actor at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Chamber proud to support the Graduation Ceremony for a second time running



The organisers of the Kent and Medway Graduation Ceremony are delighted to confirm that the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce will again be supporting the event taking place on Friday, 20th October at Rochester Cathedral. The 2022 Ceremony saw a 70% increase in graduates participating compared to the inaugural event in 2019.

Jo James OBE, CEO of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce; said, "The Chamber is proud to support the Graduation Ceremony for a second time running. Through its work in supporting the county's businesses the Chamber recognises the central role apprentices play in so many of our employer organisations and how much they contribute to business continuity and growth. Our work on the Local Skills Improvement Plan and prospective LSIF consolidates this understanding across so many industry sectors. The Chamber congratulates all the apprentices graduating at the 2023 ceremony. They should be proud of their achievements and equally their contribution to the success of their employers' businesses and to the county's economy."

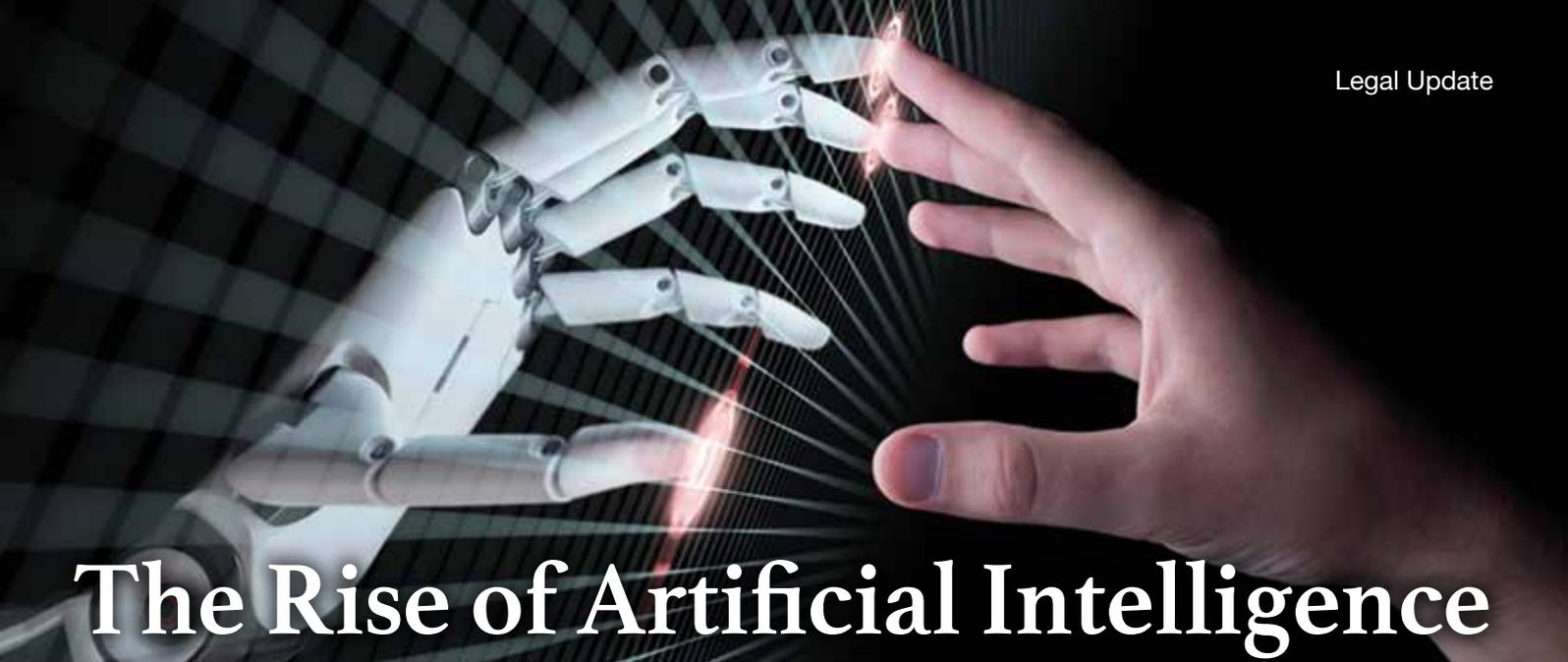
We would love to celebrate with even more apprentices in 2023. For Apprentices who will complete and achieve their apprenticeship between 1st August 2022 and 31st July 2023, now is the time to register via our easy registration process using our Registration

portal. If you are unsure of the process or any require any details to complete a registration please get in touch via our Contact page or info@appgradkandm.org.

There are also new sponsorship options available including for Private Training Providers.

As a reminder of the wonderful vibe of the graduation ceremony, check out the short ceremony reel here: www.appgradkandm.org





The Rise of Artificial Intelligence

By Jonathan Masucci
Girlings Solicitors

The ability for a computer or computer-controlled machine to think, learn and perform tasks that would typically be carried out by human beings is rapidly increasing. As individuals and industries become more reliant on technology, what are the key benefits and challenges that businesses face when adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

Whilst AI isn't currently sophisticated enough to act upon its own set of parameters, there is no doubt it has already made its way into our everyday lives. From the voice activated personal assistant in our smartphones and homes, to online shopping and content streaming algorithms, AI technologies continue to be adopted by businesses at an ever-increasing rate to conduct complex, data-based decision making.

The release of ChatGPT, an AI-based chatbot developed with OpenAI in November 2022, is one such example of an AI system that has the potential to revolutionise the business landscape.

How do AI technologies work?

AI adapts through progressive learning algorithms to let the data do the programming. It achieves this by finding regularities in data so that algorithms can acquire skills essentially to make it better at the job it is tasked to do. That can be anything from learning to play chess, to analysing consumer habits and trends. ChatGPT for instance, makes use of this same

generative process to teach itself responses based on the probability of those sequence of words on a given subject occurring.

Benefits for businesses of adopting AI technologies

A key benefit of AI technology is its ability to automate routine operations. This can make business workflows more efficient by allowing workforces to focus on more important matters and finish pending tasks within quicker timeframes. AI can also assist with market research and present data in a more accessible format for decision makers. Many businesses have already integrated chatbot AI as virtual assistants, to conduct tasks such as handling routine customer queries or communicating important notifications with employees.

A recent study conducted by Stanford University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology also found that AI tools can increase the productivity of low-skilled workers by up to 14%. The results show that AI can not only assist in narrowing the gap between skilled and unskilled employees but where a business has a lack of high-skilled workers, this can be offset by lower skilled workers that access AI technology. This suggests that lower skilled workers can be empowered in the workplace rather than being negatively impacted because their function has been automated by AI capability.

Challenges presented by current AI technologies

Current AI technologies are dependent on humans setting the parameters or providing training data. AI generated responses can sometimes be nonsensical, irrelevant and

robotic, which could limit their application in a customer service setting. This is particularly evident when dealing with more complex or abstract topics and is due to the AI repeating patterns it has identified in its training data.

AI also has the potential to generate harmful responses if such biases are learnt from its training data. In 2016, Microsoft's AI chatbot "Tay" was taken offline in less than a day, after it learnt misogynistic and racist behaviours from Twitter users. As a result, businesses using AI chatbot technologies like ChatGPT, still need to ensure AI-generated responses are proofread and fact checked before the communication is sent out.

With AI systems such as ChatGPT conducting open-source machine learning, requiring vast amounts of data and being able to analyse personal information at new levels of power and speed, also comes the potential for such technology to be used to violate privacy. As a result, businesses need to approach the use of open-source, generative technology with caution, as providing sensitive personal data could result in it being used by the AI in a way that cannot be reliably predicted.

"The future has not been written. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves."
John Connor, Terminator 2 .

Although the rise of the machines is well and truly underway and not without its challenges, far from the dystopian future portrayed in James Cameron's timeless classic, effective and responsible use of AI technologies has the potential to benefit businesses and the wider society in the 21st Century in a way that, until now, has only been the stuff of science-fiction.



Jonathan Masucci
Corporate and Commercial Partner
Tel: 01233 664711
Email: jonathanmasucci@girlings.com

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Why tech should remain part of your portfolio

Lee Wood APFS
Chartered Financial Planner



Technology features in almost every aspect of our daily lives, and prime examples of areas where technology has rapidly advanced over recent years includes cloud computing and electric vehicles.

Advances in technology can bring exciting prospects for growth, and this is one of the key reasons why holding exposure to technology companies is an attractive proposition for growth-minded investors.

Increasing influence

It is impossible to ignore the influence of technology stocks on the prospects for global markets. Tech companies make up 22% of the MSCI World Index, which is an index of the largest companies across 23 developed World markets. Apple and Microsoft are the two largest quoted companies in the World, as measured by market capitalisation, with a combined market valuation of \$4.8 trillion USD. Also, within the top 10 companies measured by market capitalisation are Alphabet (the parent company of Google), Nvidia and Meta (formerly Facebook).

Too big to ignore?

Major global tech giants such as Apple, Microsoft and Amazon are now a feature of our everyday lives. Anyone holding an investment portfolio, or pension fund invested in Equities, is likely to hold these global giants, and any global index tracking fund will have significant exposure. Given the sheer size of the likes of Apple and Microsoft, the prospects for global stock markets are, therefore, closely linked to the performance of a handful of tech companies. One could, therefore, argue that these stocks are simply too big to ignore.

Growth expectations

Investing in technology stocks can provide exciting prospects for growth, as they can often disrupt markets with innovation that changes the landscape. This is very different

from more traditional industries, where growth can often be linked to wider performance of the economy.

Tech stocks have the potential for faster growth, as they tend to have higher margins on the products or services they offer. Valuations of tech companies can therefore be expensive compared to other sectors of the economy, as investors expect to see strong growth in the future. As a result, the valuations placed on high growth tech stocks often leave little room for disappointment.

There are examples of highly rated tech startups quoted on exchanges that are yet to make a profit, with the lofty valuation based on the hope of explosive future earnings growth, which may or may not occur. This is why some areas of the tech sector can carry much greater levels of investment risk than others. Technology stocks can also suffer from being in vogue briefly and then find progress much harder to maintain. A recent example of this is Peloton, the fitness equipment manufacturer, whose shares trade at a fraction of the price seen during 2020.

The prospects for technology

The Covid-19 pandemic led to a rapid take-up of tech, and the strong performance seen by leading tech names drove the wider market to recovery from the low point reached during the first pandemic lockdown.

2022 was, however, a period when markets' focus shifted away from technology, and value stocks and companies whose fortunes benefit from interest rate hikes outperformed. One of the reasons for this is that tech companies often rely on borrowing to fuel their growth and as interest rates rise, it is more expensive for these companies to service their debt. As markets expect interest rates to peak later this year, and possibly fall during 2024, attention has shifted again to the tech sector, which has seen strong gains so far this year.

The need for diversification

Diversification is a key component of any successful investment strategy. Whilst it is easy to be attracted to the growth potential that technology offers, it is vital to remember that high growth investments tend to be volatile – in other words, they can amplify the ups and downs of investment markets over time.

Whilst many tech companies are priced on the basis of explosive growth in the future, a good proportion of tech companies have now gone through their rapid expansion phase, and now offer something for the value investor. This is why holding a spread of companies can help reduce risk.

It is also important to balance exposure to technology with other sectors of the economy, such as financial stocks, utilities and industrials. By allocating your portfolio across different sectors, you can look to reduce the risk of one sector underperforming, and therefore harming the portfolio value, as not all sectors move in the same direction or speed at the same time. Adding balance by investing in other asset classes, such as Bonds, Property and Cash can also further reduce risk, as their returns don't tend to be linked to stock market returns.

It's always best to speak to an Independent Financial Adviser before taking any action to change an investment strategy. ©



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How Chat GPT can help you to write your content

Sarah Hawes from Izzy PR has been using Chat GPT, researching what it can do and delving into how it can be used by Kent Invicta Chamber businesses to write their content.

If you've not heard of it, it's an AI-powered ChatBot that can write content.

Choosing a topic

Chat GPT can suggest topics but to find one that's relevant to your audience, base your search on FAQs, information gained from customer surveys, or other search tools - we like Answer The Public.

Getting started

Typing a search into ChatGPT – for example: 'The benefits of meditation' - generates a response which you can use as inspiration. Make it more niche, so that it appeals to one of your target audiences: maybe 'meditation to help you sleep'.

Editing

ChatGPT advises that once content has been generated, it needs to be edited so that it flows – and we agree. You need to inject your knowledge, expertise and information around Chat GPT's very basic run-down.

If you're tempted to cut and paste, don't. You won't look very knowledgeable or expert.

Publishing

ChatGPT suggests publishing your content on your website or blog – but we know it can go so much further. Repurpose it for social media posts and articles, share at networking, turn it into a mailer, webinar, or send to a relevant publication.

Accuracy and tone

Check facts carefully. Make sure the tone of voice is authentic too; ChatGP has no insight into your brand's characteristics, so make sure the vocabulary, phrasing and voice is recognisable and familiar to your audience.

izzypr.co.uk

Should You DIY Your Business Design?

As professional designers, we think we can spot when a business DIYs its design. But more importantly, so can its customers and potential customers.

So, here's five reasons to work with professional designers - not necessarily us, but we'd love to help if we can:

1. You'll Save Time

An experienced designer will work faster than you, freeing up your time to focus on what's really important - running your business.

2. You'll Save Money

Marketing is one area where cutting corners to save cost rarely results in long-term business gains. The value added by creative ideas and quality design is well-documented, but by working to the correct technical specifications, professional designers can also reduce print and production costs.

3. You'll Stand Out and Stay Ahead

By expertly manipulating your company logo, typography, imagery, tone of voice etc. professional designers will get you noticed all for the right reasons. And if you stay ahead of your competitors branding-wise, you're more likely to beat them business-wise too.

4. You'll Look Professional

Inconsistent use of multiple logos, layouts, colours and fonts always looks unprofessional and confusing – and that risks turning off customers and potential customers.

5. You'll Stay Legal

Professional designers understand laws around copyright labelling etc., so your materials will comply with all the latest rules and regulations.

So, the choice is yours... Professionally-designed peace of mind? Or a potential DIY disaster?

For more information visit www.hh-creative.com

Helping disadvantaged families

The Red Eagle Foundation is a Kent charity primarily focused on helping both children with life-limiting illnesses and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Through raising funds, we are able to purchase medical and specialist equipment for disadvantaged families that are not available on the NHS such as bespoke wheelchairs, buggies and car seats for children that are most in need. With the cost of living rising, more families are currently in need of our help.

The foundation also works with parents of children with

life-limiting conditions, giving their children experiences that they will treasure, such as VIP experiences and short breaks to places such as Disneyland.

These special breaks give families fantastic memories and children a break from their ongoing medical procedures.

Red Eagle Foundation CEO, Dominic Comins, said: "There are so many ways in which we can help children of Kent,

however, as a very small charity we need funding. We would love other Chamber members to take part in our events and become part of our family. We run golf days, colour runs, quiz night and corporate balls so there really is something for everyone. Please do get in touch if you would like to get involved."

To find out more visit www.redeaglefoundation.org

Talis IFA sponsors Aspinall Foundation running event for third year running

Talis IFA is delighted to be sponsoring the popular Aspinall Foundation running events again in 2023.



This is the third year that the South East-based Independent Financial Advisers have sponsored the event, and MD of Talis IFA, James Cole, has several good reasons for choosing to support the Foundation's fundraising efforts.

"I absolutely loved visiting animal parks as a child – and The Aspinall Foundation's parks are some of the best in the world," said James. "With their focus on breeding and re-establishing endangered species in their natural habitats, their work is crucial. You only have to look at the huge number of projects that they are leading and supporting around the world to see how important it is.

"As well as animal welfare, I'm also keen on fitness – ever more so as I'm not

getting any younger! These runs are a great way to get outside and enjoy a bit of exercise – and see the animals too.

"I'm delighted to be sponsoring the events at both parks this year. As Independent Financial Advisers, we spend our lives advising our clients on the best way to make their money work for them, so we have to make sure we're being responsible. That extends to how we use our money too. So, when we think about who to support, it's really important to us that it's an organisation which is looking to the future and doing something important, sustainable and enriching life in ways that go way beyond money. To me, The Aspinall Foundation's work is doing all those things."

The Howletts Honey Badger 5k event took place on Sunday 23rd April. Later in the year, on 1st October, you can join another 5k run around Port Lympne Hotel and Reserve. The events offer a unique chance to run around the parks and see the stunning and endangered animals and take a more leisurely stroll around afterwards. Best of all, you'll be helping to support The Aspinall Foundation's work saving rare and endangered species and returning them to the wild.

For more details of the events, visit www.aspinallfoundation.org/the-aspinall-foundation/support-us/fundraising-events/fun-runs

For more information about Talis IFA, visit www.talisifa.com

Time to replace your fluorescent lighting with LED

Ashford-based mechanical engineering company Professional Engineering Services is warning businesses to look up – at their lights.

The company specialises in keeping hazardous areas safe, but this year, part of their work will be helping businesses to move from tube lighting to LED lighting.

If your office, warehouse, school, retail or commercial property has T5 or T8 tube lamps, you need to know that they are being phased out of manufacture, import and banned from sale from August.

While there's no legal obligation to switch to the preferred, efficient and environmentally friendly LED lamps, you could save money and be greener with LED lighting.

Here, MD Wesley Brown explains why the change is happening and how it affects your business.

How do I know if I have a T5 or T8 lamp?

T5 or T8 will be stamped on them for you to see.

Can I still use T5 and T8 lamps?

Yes, you can still use them, but from August 25th, 2023, the manufacture and import of T5 and T8 fluorescent tube lamps will be prohibited in the UK.

Rather than wait for the lights to go one by one, replacing them all with LED could be more beneficial.

It will also avoid any workplace hazards such as dark areas.

How much time and effort is it to change to LED lighting?

Switching to LED lighting is a quick and easy process – it can be retrofitted in place of T5 and T8 light fittings with ease.

Is it worth changing my T5 or T8 lights to LED?

LED lighting is more energy and cost-efficient too, which means you will be using less power and paying a lower amount for it too. T5 and T8 lamps contain mercury and need to be disposed of properly to avoid any issues for your business.

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We'll turn an argument...

Not all businesses run smoothly – arguments and disputes inevitably occur. Once harmonious partnerships can sour, impacting business performance and profit. So it's essential to resolve disputes as effectively as possible before legal action comes into force.

...into a settlement.

Whether you decide to seek a settlement or to defend a claim; our experienced team will be with you every step of the way.



To find out how we can help, call us on **01622 698000** or email enquiries@wmlaw.uk

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Connor Styche, Managing Director of The Digital Lookout receives their Patron certificate from Jo James OBE



Kent Invicta Chamber Patrons appointed

This year's Kent Invicta Chamber Patrons have been appointed at a ceremony staged at Eastwell Manor in Ashford. They represent key sectors in the county and organisations that support and service the local business community.

Ten Patrons have continued in their role from last year and are joined by new Patron, The Digital Lookout who are a full service marketing agency, based in Maidstone, dedicated to the construction industry and built environment.

Jo James OBE, Chief Executive, Kent Invicta Chamber, said "I would like to thank all our Patrons for their commitment to the Chamber for the coming year. I am delighted to welcome The Digital Lookout to the Patron scheme and look forward to building a closer relationship with them. With construction being such a force of nature in our county right now they are an appropriate partner to join our Patron scheme."



Left to Right – Mark Lumsdon-Taylor – Partner, Rakesh Shaunak – Group Chairman & Managing Partner, David Boosey – Audit & Assurance Partner

Now, Ready for Take-off

Whether you are a listed entity seeking a fresh approach to your auditing, an SME looking to optimise your cash flow and return on investment or an organisation tackling sustainability and ESG, MHA, one of the UK's leading accounting and consultancy firms, has now landed in Gatwick Diamond.

We're well known for our pragmatic attitude to business, our integrity, and the fact that we are passionate about helping organisations to be the best they can be. We also offer incredible value as our clients regularly remark.

MHA is not only one of the UK's leading firms in its field, but we are also the UK representative of Baker Tilly International which employs more 41,000 staff in 145 territories across the world. That means if your organisation is multi-territory or operates overseas, MHA can provide a comprehensive and joined-up service.

As you would expect, our expertise includes accountancy, audit, and tax service, a business or individual could require along with a host of other service lines from ESG and Green Finance to Restructuring and Grant support.

We are also acknowledged as leaders in helping businesses to meet their sustainability and ESG commitments. We are trusted by our clients to generate valuable cross-business and environmental risk assessments, support mandatory and voluntary carbon reporting. In addition, our unique Dynamic ESG service leads with a proprietary assessment and prioritisation tool called Activate, driven by strong Purpose with Profit motivation and pragmatic delivery that's business sustainable.

If you'd like to know more about what we might be able to do for your organisation, why not give us a call and let us help you take off too.

For further information contact Lesley Bennet. Email lesley.bennett@mhlip.co.uk



Connor Styche, Managing Director, The Digital Lookout, said "In just 2 years, we have grown beyond all expectations so that we're now proud to be a key player in the Kent construction community. The Chamber supported us in getting here, and their investment in the development of the industry we work within, means we now consider ourselves part of the same team, developing our local economy."

Patrons took delivery of their prestigious certificates which were designed and produced by local businesses Oak Creative and Frameworkx.

Photography by Ali Kittermaster

Kent Invicta Chamber Patrons 2023/24

- **Air IT**
- **Ashford Borough Council**
- **Brachers LLP**
- **Caxtons Property Consultants**
- **Lee Evans Partnership**
- **MHA**
- **MidKent College**
- **Stagecoach South East**
- **The Digital Lookout**
- **Towergate Insurance Brokers**
- **University of Kent**



Find a Voice

Find A Voice is a charity based in Ashford, Kent, which has been supporting children and adults with severe communication difficulties for 27 years.

We offer varying support opportunities including: loaning communication aids to service users free of charge, supporting schools with outreach sessions, individual lessons within our centre, helping people with communicating using Makaton, iPads, Switch toys and group sessions working on life skills.

Our centre works with clients to achieve AQA qualifications and assist them with volunteering placements for future employment opportunities. Due to the nature of our work, we also work closely with parents and carers who may be struggling and supporting them with guidance and signposting. Our Sensory Room on site is open to the public. Booking is essential and a nominal fee is charged to cover expenses.

We support adults and children who may have:

- Autism/ADHD
- Down's Syndrome
- Early Onset Dementia
- Oral cancer
- Stroke survivors
- Dyspraxia
- Dyslexia
- PTSD Mutism
- Survivors of accidents who may have had their ability to communicate taken away from them.

Our charity survives purely on fundraising and the good nature of our supporters and across the year we host varying events to fundraise including quiz nights, wellbeing groups and 'Evening With' events with celebrities.

If you or someone you know may benefit from our services or would like to donate to our charity, head over to www.findavoice.org.uk for more information.

If you are a business that would like to sponsor any of our events or donate a service, it would be wonderful to hear from you.

Brachers advises BN Care Group on BGF investment and linked transactions

Brachers has advised a UK care home group on a deal which will help drive forward its ambitious growth plans.

Brachers' corporate team has advised BN Care Group on the successful private equity investment by the Business Growth Fund (BGF). BGF acquired a 30% stake in the business, together with a series of linked transactions including a new funding facility provided by HSBC UK Bank Plc.

The deal also involved the reorganisation of the BN Care Group, the buyout of the early-stage investors in the BN Care Group and the £3,600,000 acquisition of Bymead House Limited.

BN Care Group is a nursing care home group based in the south of England providing a range of residential services to meet the varied needs of elderly people. It has a clear focus on the quality of the care for its residents and has operated three nursing care homes (Hay House and The Dales in Exeter and St Vincent's in Sussex) since 2017.

The acquisition of Bymead House in Dorset increases the group's combined capacity to over 120 beds. The BN Care Group currently employs over 100 staff and aims to

at least double in size over the next five years while continuing its focus on its residents' care needs.

The Brachers team was led by Matt Simmonds (Corporate Partner) and also included Alistair Wickham (Corporate Associate) and Cameron Gaston-Penny (Corporate Solicitor).

Wade Newmark, BN Care Group Chief Executive, said: "Our care homes offer a range of high-quality services from end-of-life support to specialist dementia care. Importantly, all our homes are rated Good by the Care Quality Commission. The financial backing from BGF and HSBC means we can accelerate our growth plans, supporting even more people in the region that need our services.

"I am very grateful to Matt Simmonds and the team at Brachers for all their support during the transaction. We had to deal with multiple transactions at once with multiple interested parties. Matt and his team supported us at every stage and were vital to helping us achieve a successful completion. A true team effort. I was hugely impressed with their dedication and commitment to our deal."

Matt Simmonds, Brachers Corporate Partner, commented: "Wade has huge enthusiasm for delivering quality care for his residents.



The investment from BGF will help his business growth and ensure that many more residents will benefit from his well-managed and compassionate residential care provision. We look forward to working with Wade as he continues his exciting journey.

"Congratulations and thanks also to the teams at BGF and HSBC. Thank you also to our Alistair Wickham and Cameron Gaston-Penny, the teams at Richard Place Dobson and Stevensdrake for their invaluable support on the transaction."

Other advisors included Richard Place Dobson (Corporate Finance Advisors to BN Care Group), Ashfords LLP (Legal Advisors to HSBC), Michelmores LLP (Legal Advisors to BGF), and Stevensdrake (Property and Employment Law).

Marketing Agency Re-accredited with Good Business Charter

At Not Another Marketing Agency, we're proud to work with businesses that put Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – running a business to ensure that your community benefits – at the forefront of their values. CSR is part of our business core, and we are delighted to announce that we have been re-accredited with the Good Business Charter.

The Good Business Charter is an initiative of the Good Business Foundation. Businesses that have been accredited by the Good Business Charter can prove that they take their responsibilities to their staff and their community seriously. There are 10 components that every business must demonstrate:

- Paying employed staff and contracted staff at least the real living wage.
- Environmental responsibility.
- Fairer hours and contracts in place.
- Paying a fair amount of tax.
- The positive wellbeing of their employees.

- A commitment to their customers.
- Employee representation.
- Ethical sourcing.
- Clear commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- Prompt payment to suppliers.

Accreditation shows that a business is run ethically. We can confidently demonstrate each of the points on the Good Business Charter, so it was important to apply for re-accreditation.

We think it's vital for us to show our clients that they are working with a business that looks after its staff and contractors, that takes its environmental impact seriously and who also has a demonstrable commitment to diversity and inclusion.

If you're a business that's looking to work with a socially responsible company to increase your marketing reach, we'd love to chat. Head to www.notanothermarketingagency.co.uk for more information.

£45,000 funds support for Ukrainian refugees in Kent

Kent Community Foundation has awarded £45,000 from the Ukrainian Support Fund to organisations that are supporting Ukrainian refugees in Kent.

The Ukrainian Support Fund was launched in 2022 with funding from the Masonic Charitable Foundation to help local charities and community groups supporting Ukrainian refugees' social integration into the UK. Kent Community Foundation has distributed £45,000 to seven organisations, supporting family workshops, information hubs, weekend activities, and other socially inclusive initiatives.

The successful organisations were: Medway Plus, Canterbury 4 Ukraine, Craftship Enterprise CIC, Tunbridge Wells Welcomes Refugees, Invicta National Academy, Medway Help for Ukrainians and Romain Slovak Czech Community CIC.

Natalie Smith, Director of Grants and Impact, Kent Community Foundation, said: "Kent Community Foundation was one of ten Foundations across England and Wales to receive a share of £485,000 from the Masonic Charitable Foundation to offer financial support to grassroots charities and community organisations that were preparing support for refugees arriving from Ukraine, funding the direct delivery of services and developing longer-term support for their integration. The £45,000 that has been awarded to the seven grass roots organisations will make a huge difference to the lives of Ukrainian refugees in Kent and Medway."

Giles Polglase, from Canterbury for Ukraine (C4U), said: "Canterbury for Ukraine brings

local volunteers, charity organisations, education providers and local businesses together to support Ukrainian families coming to the Canterbury area in their search for safety – it is a truly community-based association run by volunteers who give their time freely. This award will both help coordinating the activities of C4U centrally and sustain activities over the next period; it will help us do more and remain responsive to the needs of Ukrainian displaced persons and their hosts."

Though a year has passed since the invasion of Ukraine, its impact will undoubtedly last for many years and continue to inflict suffering on the millions of displaced Ukrainians around Europe. But sadly, Ukraine is but one of the many countries facing conflict and discrimination around the world, with thousands of people being forced to flee their homes every day.

Les Hutchinson, Chief Executive of the Masonic Charitable Foundation, the Freemason's charity, said: "I am delighted that we have been able to offer significant aid to many Ukrainians who have arrived in this country. They have abandoned everything in a country grappling with the consequences of a catastrophic conflict, and I am proud that the assistance provided by the Freemasons is making such a difference."

To contact Kent Community Foundation about funding for charities and community visit www.kentcf.org.uk/funding

Looking to relocate to East Kent?

Independent Property finders, Relocate to East Kent can assist you in your search.

Anyone, looking to relocate to the area to buy or rent properties or holiday lets or temporary accommodation we can help. We have a great deal of useful information available including local schools and colleges and the most suitable area that matches your needs.

Canterbury, Deal, Folkestone, Margate, Broadstairs have all been mentioned as

the best places to visit, live or work in. We are currently seeing lots of positive press coverage about East Kent, on the television and in films.

The area is attracting lots of visitors from Europe, so holiday accommodation is very busy.

To find out more and how we can assist in your search to relocate to East Kent visit: www.relocatetoeastkent.co.uk



Sponsored

The Power of FoodE: growing online sales

As the oldest commercial vineyard in Kent, Biddenden Vineyards has pioneered the industry for decades. Now in 2023, not only are they growing grapes (and planting more!) but they are growing their online sales simultaneously.

FoodE is a new to market e-commerce platform, which gives the vineyard so much more than just a digital shop front. FoodE has integrated into the vineyard business and streamlined the fulfilment of online sales. Biddenden Vineyards has embraced the technology, growing their online sales which are often a secondary revenue stream for producers like themselves.

So what exactly is FoodE?

FoodE is an e-commerce platform specifically for food & drink businesses. With FoodE, you get a professional website AND a whole host of clever features to help boost sales. The front end website gives an intuitive and easy customer experience, which is paramount to online sales. Integration with accountancy, courier services and marketing software means the time consuming fulfilment process is reduced dramatically.

Built with Wordpress and WooCommerce, users have quick access to a dashboard of customer and sales information, designed to help them make informed marketing decisions. FoodE gives insights and recommendations based on previous purchase patterns to help maximise sales.

FoodE was designed and built by Oak Creative, Kent branding agency. Having worked with many food and drinks brands over the last 30 years, they saw the need for a reliable food and drink e-commerce platform. The creative and tech minded team put together their creative know-how and the online sales expertise to develop FoodE.

'Our new site gives our customers a much better shopping experience. As consumers ourselves we know how little attention spans we can have when shopping online, so we've added features to really help our customers find what they need fast. Plus, everything now links together internally and we're really confident in its capabilities which is so reassuring for the future.' **Anne Jennings, Biddenden Vineyards, Marketing Manager**



Getting your Energy and Emissions Under Control

Energy and climate change are more important for business than ever.

There are three main reasons for this:

- 1. Energy Costs.** When your contract ends it is likely that the unit costs for electricity and gas will triple.
- 2. Regulations.** Larger companies are having to record their carbon emissions and for their annual reports.
- 3. Supply Chain Pressure.** Clients and customers often require a statement on a supplier's carbon emissions and plans to reduce them during the supplier accreditation process.

Even the smallest company can benefit from a statement on carbon emissions on their website and this can be referred to when applying to be a supplier to larger companies.

The main reason for supply chain pressure is that a supplier's emissions are reported by client companies in their own annual emissions audit. Technically these are called "Scope 3" or "Third Party" emissions.

What can you do to reduce emissions and energy costs?

This will be slightly different for a small office or home-based business and a larger commercial or industrial site.

The principles would be the same, the priorities being:

1. Measure your energy use and emissions (the emissions are sometimes on their invoice).

2. Set the controls properly.

3. Invest in efficiency measures.

For home based businesses I would suggest two quick hints:

- a) Install LED lights, preferably from a known manufacturer.
- b) If you have a condensing boiler (most are these days) control the temperature from the boiler. Condensing boilers operate more efficiently at lower temperatures, they condense better extracting heat from the flue gases.

For more information visit www.economic-energy.com

Bowden PR signs Dragon's Den Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs Matt Walker and Cristian Brownlee appeared on BBC One's Dragon's Den to pitch for a £40,000 investment for 15% in their business which assembles and distributes the game changing Omeo wheelchair.

At the end of their pitch in February, Matt and Cristian were delighted to have negotiated a joint offer from Dragons Touker Suleyman, Sara Davies and Steven Bartlett, who each pledged a third of the money for a 5% share of the business.

The business partners both use wheelchairs after accidents causing spinal damage. Matt, 43, from Ascot, has a T10 spinal injury which has left him permanently paralysed from the waist down and Cristian, 33, from Chislehurst, has a T4 spinal injury which has left him



permanently paralysed from the chest down. Having both had active lives before their accidents they wanted chairs that would give them improved mobility and the additional freedom they missed.

Matt Walker, Director Adapt Ability, said: "Cristian and I have both been using an Omeo for years and believe passionately in its game changing functionality and aesthetics. It has changed our lives radically for the better and

we want to be able to share that incredible benefit with as many people as possible. We are thrilled that Bowden PR will be with us on that journey."

Bowden PR was originally asked to PR only the appearance on Dragon's Den but is delighted to have been further contracted to promote the Omeo and share Matt and Cristian's stories with the media.

www.bowdenpr.co.uk

New appointment at Heart of Kent Hospice



Heart of Kent Hospice is pleased to announce the appointment of David Dadswell to its fundraising team in the role of Corporate Partnerships Manager.

The hospice has a comprehensive strategy planned over the next five years and has made several new appointments

across the fundraising team to be in the best position to deliver all its exciting activities and events.

David said: "Switching from the commercial sector to the charity sector has been a refreshing change of direction for me. Being able to play a part in supporting the amazing services the hospice team delivers in the local community is a real motivation."

This year has started well with several key events including Maidstone Road Run, the annual Bluebell Walk and an exciting karting event marking International Women's Day. The hospice website has an online events calendar which is always being updated with flagship events and corporate activities, all of which play a vital role in supporting the 46 amazing nurses and health care

assistants who care for patients at the hospice.

The hospice is also extremely excited to announce a second free art trail which is coming to Maidstone in the summer of 2024 in partnership with Wild in Art, Aardman and Presenting Partner Maidstone Borough Council.

"The first art trail 'Elmer's Big Heart of Kent Parade' was such a success in 2021, we are hoping to repeat this success with the next trail 'Shaun the Sheep in the Heart of Kent' next year. Please get in touch if you would like to get involved with this exciting project and benefit from becoming a corporate sponsor," he added.

For further information visit: hokh.org

The Rising Threat of Underinsurance:

How is Inflationary Pressure Affecting the Property Sector?

By **Jason Oldham ACII**,
Client Service Director at
Pi-Property Insurance

Cooperation is no bad thing, unless we're talking about the rise of inflation. Amidst the turbulence of recent years inflation and underinsurance have proceeded to align within the property sector, and this poses a significant threat.

When faced with increasing costs, it can be tempting to shop elsewhere. Property owners could be forgiven for searching for deals, but without the right type of professional guidance, lower premiums could result in underinsurance, and greater costs at the time of a claim. In a recent review conducted by Allianz, almost 50% of policies had a Building Sum Insured less than 80% of the rebuilding estimate, illustrating that underinsurance is already widespread, and will grow in tandem with inflation rates.

Inflation and rebuild costs

Prior to rising inflation, the construction and property sectors were already attempting to manage a significant level of disruption. Brexit resulted in labour shortages, whilst the demand of materials

outweighed supply, and the cost of desired materials rose. The pandemic subsequently built upon these existing issues; affecting the global supply chain, prices, and in unfortunate circumstances, has caused businesses to enter administration. The impact of the latter has given rise to delays in construction work, and in worst cases, project cancellations.

Global demand is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future and has been likewise impacted by the war in Ukraine. Raw materials have and will become difficult to source, whilst pricing increases are anticipated for cement, concrete and mini steel products. The issues are intrinsically linked, and their outcome points to higher rebuild costs.

Add inflation and greater costs of living to this complicated mix, and the results seem all too clear. Challenges and disruptions can and will occur, but in the face of adversity solutions remain. With careful planning and the right professional advice, we can prevent the risk of underinsurance created by inflation hikes.

Index linking

Whilst we cannot offer a quick solution to inflation, reducing the risk of underinsurance caused by inflation is very much within our capability, and index linking forms the core of this process. Simply put, index linking is applied to calculate the difference between the sum insured and the rebuild value of a property, ensuring that an asset's insured value is in line when changes (such as inflation and high cost of living) occur. Insurers' recommended indexation provides a form of suitable inflation protection for customers' insured properties and is automatically updated in line with economic changes when the policy renews.

The importance of rebuild valuations

To apply index linking, an accurate rebuild value is vital. This can be carried out in person via a survey, or using a desktop device, and entails a RICS qualified valuer (for insurance purposes) to calculate rebuild costs from the ground up if a property is destroyed by fire. In light of current times, some valuation firms are recommending a desktop valuation exercise every

six months, ensuring greater peace of mind and accurate index linking.

Arranging insurance on a non-adjustable basis

The arrangement of insurance on a non-adjustable basis is also something to take into consideration and should be discussed with a property insurance specialist broker. Under a bespoke Property Owners policy this clause can provide additional protection from the effects of inflation on rebuild costs after a claim has occurred.

Prevention is key

We acknowledge that the cover requirements outlined above, and their associated increased premiums, come at a difficult time. Customers are feeling the squeeze at home and in their business, and the odds of underinsurance only complicate matters, but prevention is entirely possible.

Seek the right help from the start. Use a specialist property insurance broker for advice and guidance on avoiding underinsurance and consider the re-evaluation of all insured property by a professional member of the RICS.



At Caxtons we know that in the face of current pressure and rising inflation, providing all the necessary details can feel overwhelming, but remember prevention is key, and preferable to underinsurance.

We have a proactive and close working relationship with our brokers Clear Insurance Management enabling us to provide a bespoke policy with Pi-Property Insurance.

Our property insurance team is always on hand to answer queries and offer guidance, speak to us on **01474 537733** or visit **www.caxtons.com**

Bethan Smith

Head of Property Insurance, Caxtons Property Consultants



Streamlining Construction

Use our time, not yours - is USP for Medway-based firm

CCBD Group's strength is streamlining operations for companies in the construction industry to save valuable time.



Managing director **Chris Cordner** talks about his route from chippy to business owner, why he loves Medway, and why he has set up a charity event raising funds to support children's mental health.

Streamlining operations for companies in the construction industry to ensure growth whilst saving valuable time – that is CCBD Group in a nutshell, says managing director Chris Cordner.

Chris "started out as a chippy, just like my dad" and worked for a joinery contractor after gaining his carpentry qualifications, but when the firm he was working for went bust, a friend of his found him a job in business development

to tide him over but then never looked back.

"I've always had a background in the construction industry and have gained many years of experience in business development supporting this industry," he said.

"I started providing freelance services to family and friends and built up a good network of people that we could help. Building good rapport with people and forming good relationships is key to our success."

Now the UK's No.1 fully integrated construction growth service, CCBD Group has grown from strength to strength and counts McLaren Construction as one of its major clients under their business development service.

CCBD Group is split into seven divisions: The five core divisions are business development, consultancy, digital marketing, health and safety and tender pricing, with architectural design and labour supply completing the seven areas.

"We started with consultancy and business development, which marry together well, and then, as we've grown, we have introduced the other divisions to form a fully integrated service," he said.

"Essentially, we wanted to be the only company that a contractor needs. We use the term fully integrated because each of our divisions and services all work together with the one common end goal of growth.

"Businesses use our time and resources which means they can focus on the day to day running of their business and manage their projects and tasks more effectively while knowing we are taking care of the required needs in the background."

The firm provides consultancy (specialist contractor supply chain management and procurement) services for more than 5,000 clients across the UK consisting of End clients, Architects, Consultants, Main Contractors,

CCBD

GROUP LTD

Streamlining Construction



Developers and Local Authorities and have supported the growth to just over 400 contractors in total under the business development division. The health and safety division enables contractors to obtain all their vital policies and accreditations such as Constructionline, SSIP and Acclaim Accreditation which enables them to engage with specific clients. The tender pricing division helps companies submit accurate and competitive bids for tender contracts, saving businesses valuable time.

"The construction industry is about a decade behind other industries in terms of digital marketing, so having a division tasked with digital marketing works well for contractors looking to modernise their marketing literature and needing support with social media content, video marketing, e-brochures and logo design/rebranding.

"Our digital marketing literature is custom designed and unique to the client; there are no stock pics or templates," added Chris.

"Marketing is so powerful. An e-brochure can target all your clients within a couple of minutes."

By combining all the services under one roof, Chris says it gives their clients one point of contact for all their needs.

"We build relationships with our clients so we know what they need," he said. "We take away all the stress and all the time spent on these tasks when that time can be used more effectively on their own work and clients."

The company is based in Medway, with clients from across the UK. Having lived in Medway since he was one years old, Chris loves the region. "Kent is the garden of England; I love Kent," he said. "It's good for my kids, it's good for family life, and it's a great location for business.

It's great for my staff commuting and has good travel links to go and see clients."

As a father of two young daughters, Chris was keen to organise a charity event in aid of Place2Be, a charity supporting children's mental health.

"I suffer quite badly with my own mental health," he said. "Plus, now I am a dad of two girls, aged three

and four, it changes your outlook and priorities. As a dad, I want my children to grow up with support and the charity Place2Be does a lot with children in schools and families to support their mental health.

"I love football and I love Soccer Aid and I wanted to do something similar, a Soccer Aid for the construction industry if you like. It will be good fun."

The CCBD Group Charity Football Tournament will be held at **Chatham Town Football Club on Friday 30th June.**

There will be a 16-team tournament, food, bar, and raffles. There are some remaining team places for the tournament.

Email chris@ccbussinesdevelopment.co.uk for more details and to register interest.

“Businesses use our time and resources which means they can focus on the day to day running of their business and manage their projects and tasks more effectively while knowing we are taking care of the required needs in the background.”

5 WAYS TO USE customer data collected at a business show or event



Judith Andrews

If, like me, you exhibit at events to promote your business, then hopefully when the event is over, you've gathered lots of useful data about your target audience from the attendees.

Now is the time to think about putting it to good use, so here are **5 top tips** for getting every ounce of value out of that data:

1. Collate and categorise your information ASAP

Data collected digitally is usually easier to sort into meaningful categories.

One vital category is how you met or interacted with people at the event. You could also sort them by industry, business

size, favourite ice cream flavour – whatever helps you target them more specifically!

If you collected business cards, add them to your database. Add notes to remind you of important information about individuals. It sounds arduous but it's worth it. Hearing from you again could start a relationship that converts into business.

2. Make prompt contact...

...within a few days, a week at the most.

Don't rush, though. Take the time to go through your categorised data and supplement it with any notes you made on the day. Use it to reach out in a personalised way.

Reminding them of how you met will make them feel valued.

3. Consider how you'll make contact

Email is the most efficient method.

If you have a manageable number of contacts, you can send personalised messages or at least group them into categories, with a general reference to how you met: 'I really enjoyed that talk about social media...'

Invite them for coffee or to another event.

Alternatively, send direct mail about special offers or events – but ensure they relate to something they expressed interest in when you met.

Untargeted messages suggest you don't care what they actually want.

4. Consent or legitimate interest?

These are two of the 6 lawful bases for using personal information within the GDPR. Both consent and legitimate interest are useful for marketing purposes but both must be done correctly.

- 1: Consent means a person has given you explicit, informed permission to use their data for a particular purpose. Consent is the better option for communicating B2C.
- 2: Legitimate interest allows you to message potential customers who have not specifically consented to receive information about your business, but whom could reasonably expect to do so. However you must be able to justify contacting them, and you should document your reasoning and keep a record of the process.

In both cases, you should always give the option to opt out.

5. Use the information – or lose a golden opportunity

However much information you collect, make good use of it.

It allows you to build up a picture of your customers, and talk to them in a useful and meaningful way. It helps you to adapt your offering to really fit their needs.

And when your customers feel special, they're more likely to be a repeat buyer, increase their spend, or recommend you to others.

GET IN TOUCH to find out how you can make the most of the personal information in your business.

hello@businesstamer.co.uk
0207 294 7599



Foundations for Something Great



Goldberg Engineering takes great pleasure in having received nothing but positive feedback from their clients since the company's formation in 2018, with all 5-star reviews on Google.

Goldberg is a fast-growing structural engineering firm of consulting engineers, offering civil engineering and structural engineering consultancy and design services all over the UK. We are committed to providing

project support until completion for every job and maintain personal and direct contact with every client. Goldberg continues to expand its team who each bring their own individual strengths and experience to the company resulting in an extensive, proficient and diverse business.

Being chartered engineers with decades of experience in the industry, we are able to work in a multitude of sectors such as residential, commercial, industrial and nuclear. We offer various

services including structural condition surveys, building structures design, temporary works design, MMC design and below ground drainage works. We are fully equipped with the latest industry software and tools to produce our calculations, reports, drawings and models allowing us to be fully compliant with BIM Level 3.

Our clients are extremely satisfied with the work we do for them. Chris, a previous client said: "Goldberg are a fantastic engineering business. They are extremely knowledgeable and were able to answer all of our questions without hesitation. They continually kept us up to date throughout our project. Without a doubt we will use them for any further structural work; we can't recommend them enough."

[Goldbergen.com](http://www.goldbergen.com)

Outline Planning Approved for Otterpool Park, a new 8,500 home garden town near Folkestone in Kent

On the 4th April 2023, Folkestone & Hythe District Council's Planning and Licensing Committee granted outline planning permission for Otterpool Park, a new 8,500 home garden town located just a few miles from the coastal towns of Folkestone and Hythe.

The site is bounded by the M20 and Channel Tunnel Railway Link to the north, the A20 / Stone Street and Sandling Park to the east, Harringe Lane to the west, and Aldington Road to the south.

The transformative development, led by master developer Otterpool Park LLP on behalf of Folkestone & Hythe District Council, supported by planning and development specialists Quod, Arcadis, Tibbalds and Farrells, will deliver homes, jobs and community facilities in a vibrant, sustainable new community.

The approved plans include:

- Up to 8,500 homes including over 1,870 affordable homes and over 400 self-build homes.
- Approximately 50% of the application site will be open space with new cycling and walking routes and significant historic features retained including bronze age barrows, Roman villa remains, Westenhanger Castle and its medieval barns, world war airfield remains and Folkestone Racecourse's parade circle.
- Creation of an integrated transport network to connect the new garden town and reduce car use centred around Westenhanger train station.
- Electric vehicle charging points and other measures aimed at limiting environmental impact and boosting nature biodiversity by 20%.
- Up to 29,000 sqm of retail and related uses.

- Up to 87,500 sqm of employment floor space including commercial business hubs, a commercial business park and a light industrial park.
- Up to 67,000 sqm of education and community facilities floorspace including up to seven primary and up to two secondary schools, nurseries and crèches, health centres, places of worship and community centres.
- Up to 8,000 sqm of hotel floorspace and 8,500 sqm of leisure floorspace, including a sports pavilion and indoor sports hall provision.
- Infrastructure and utilities including a new electrical substation, potable water network reinforcement and provision of a fibre-to-home broadband network.

The outline planning consent gives the go ahead to the principle of a development at Otterpool Park and is the first stage of a three-tiered planning approach.

Master developer Otterpool Park LLP will now progress the detailed planning for the first phase, including the town centre and Castle Park, a park at Westenhanger Castle. Enabling works are expected to commence later this year.

Andy Jarrett, Managing Director, Otterpool Park LLP, said, "This landmark decision is a pivotal point in the delivery of Otterpool Park and follows seven years of planning, masterplanning and community engagement.

"We are committed to creating an exemplar and sustainable garden town that will do so much more than meet local housing needs. This is about creating a new community which includes everything it needs to thrive now, and in the future, with a fundamental focus on enabling healthy, active, and sustainable lifestyles and early delivery of the infrastructure needed to support a community of this scale."

www.otterpoolpark.org

When business makes you sick and how HR needs to respond

I've had several employees chatting to me about "burnout", "being stressed out" and many are struggling with their mental health. On the other hand, managers are "sick" of hearing the terms "burnout", "stressed Out" or "mental health".

We seldom put words like management consulting, wellness coaching and HR in the same sentence. Equally, ISO Compliance, Health and Safety and Legal Compliance are all terms that have been reduced to jargon.

Ascertaining whether someone has been harassed at work is very difficult to prove unless there's been physical abuse or extreme traceable circumstances. A case in point are the recent reports that workplace-related abuse seems to be on the increase across the UK. There appears to be a certain polarisation occurring - those who don't have and those that do, and the don't haves want what the haves have. We are in a cost-of-living crisis; has no-one noticed yet?

Where to from here? Are there any solutions? Fortunately, there are. Stop criminalising terms like "burnout", "stressed out" and "mental health" and start looking for what works. What works is being proactive, leading from a place of confidence and compassion. What many managers don't accept is that the cost of helping those who really struggle is far less than the cost of losing people and retraining someone to replace them.

Get hold of me if any of the above scenarios resonate with your circumstances –
admin@derekgotogreenconsulting.com

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How to fill in a form for success



Filling in a form correctly could be the difference to its success or failure.

Filling it in correctly gives a higher rate of success, avoids hold-ups if it's sent back with queries and makes for a much smoother process.

No one likes to spend time on paperwork and form filling is a

major part of it. Is it the fear of 'getting it wrong'? or being 'not sure where to start'? Or knowing it's one of those jobs that will be tricky?

Things I ask my clients to consider when filling in a form:

- Is it the right form?
- Have you prepared what's needed?
- What is being asked?
- Why are particular questions asked?
- How best to answer the questions.
- What, if any, evidence do you need to supply?
- What do I write if I don't have any answer?
- When/how to follow-up once the form has been sent off.

Forms are unavoidably, part of our lives – personally and

professionally. We will all have a form to complete at one point or another and we need to ensure we complete it well to get the best possible outcome.

Forms you might be filling in:

Grant and funding applications
Governments forms
Bids and tenders
Events and projects
Awards and recognitions entries
Job and promotion applications
Benefits forms – for yourself or others

Form-filling skills can be taken into other areas of life – the methodical method they require can be very useful elsewhere.

Rosemary Williams is a business coach with RW Coaching.
rw-coaching.co.uk

Time to mine your data and find your gold

Dello Insights provide data analysis and data-driven insights to online retailers and e-commerce businesses. Data-driven decision-making is paramount to thriving and not merely just surviving.

Lucia and Paul create a wealth of opportunities for innovative e-commerce retailers by building personalised dashboards that turn under-used data from sales orders into valuable assets to improve profitability.

They can help clients make sense of data and identify key trends and insights, so they can make better-informed decisions about their business strategy, marketing campaigns and product development.

Whatever the size or budget of your business, Dello Insights has data-driven solutions. You could benefit by saving precious staff time and allowing them to focus on using their skills in the business rather than completing onerous manual tasks.

For the higher-turnover business, instead of hiring and training an in-house data analysis team, using Dello allows you to focus your attention on what you do best - running your core business activities.

By leveraging the data-driven insights we uncover, you will identify new opportunities for growth and stay ahead of your competition.

For more details, visit www.delloinsights.com

SIM Motorsport – a unique Motorsport experience

Used by professional race drivers, the highest spec race car simulators are now available for you and your team to experience.

The motorsport business based at Gillingham pier is set in a smart F1 hospitality environment, catering for individuals, group bookings and private events as well as a unique race school for young and aspiring race drivers. Its ambassador is Freddie Hunt, son of racing legend James Hunt.

CEO Simon Ricketts explains what makes it such a unique Motorsport experience. "We are focused on motorsport – not gaming," he said.

"Our FIA licensed race car simulators are the highest spec in the UK, enabling drivers to get truly immersed and feel tyre adhesion, understeer, and oversteer through their backside rather than just their hands. We can replicate pretty much any race car – whether H Gate, Paddle Shift or Sequential gearbox and put you on iconic race circuits from around the world."



The race chassis are created by AXSIM, the racing arm of Cranfield Aerospace. They have the latest hardware and software technology enabling drivers to have as real an experience as possible – even the brakes are hydraulic brakes from a Porsche GT3.

They can cater for groups of up to 20 drivers with endurance races and the popular ultimate driver challenge.

The hospitality is second to none and for those just wanting to watch and relax, there is an air conditioned 'grandstand' plus a fully licensed bar.

To book an event or race school, visit: www.simmotorsport.co.uk

Why marketing is so important for every business

AB Marketing is a Kent based lead generation and marketing company helping businesses with outsourced marketing requirements.

Based on The Isle of Sheppey, AB Marketing was founded in 2011 by Abby Brend, who has 20 years' experience in lead generation and appointment setting.

The foundation of all sales is company product and brand awareness. With good marketing, sales will follow. Marketing raises awareness, the hard work put in at ground level increases brand awareness and builds pipelines.

A product or service may not be needed immediately but when it is, people need to be aware of your company and your service/product. Not just startup businesses but in the current climate for all businesses, sales are so important, and many see marketing as secondary – when it should be primary.

AB Marketing works with businesses to provide support in speaking to people, building pipelines, establishing requirements and timeframes, passing quote requests, online demos, event bookings, or appointments to you or your sales team. By providing genuine, qualified leads at the right time enables you and your team to spend more time to work on closing more sales. They can also reengage with lapsed customers or even current customers.

For more information, visit www.abmarketingservices.co.uk



STAY AHEAD of the pack with digital skills

Technology is both the biggest opportunity and threat facing the future business landscape, and if your business can't keep up with advances then it may start to fall behind competitors.

With Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce's Local Skills Improvement Plan highlighting the need for improved digital skills among existing and incoming employees, EKC Group is here to help.

Apprenticeships

Based at our Colleges, EKC Training centres and employability centres across the county, we have experienced staff on hand to train your team and bridge the skills gap being felt by many sectors. Available to both new recruits and existing employees, apprenticeships are an excellent way of ensuring your workforce have the knowledge, skills, and qualifications needed to stay ahead of the curve.

Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to attain qualifications while working, with regular days in College designed to enhance theoretical and practical knowledge. At EKC Training, we offer a wide array of them, including many that will boost digital literacy amongst your workers. These range from Level 3 ICT to more specialised qualifications such as our Level 3 Engineering Design and Draughtsperson Apprenticeship, which draws on industry-standard CAD techniques to model and prototype buildings and projects.



Training

Aside from Apprenticeships, we also host short and part-time courses to fit around your or your employees' busy lives. Whether its navigating Excel spreadsheets more effectively, creating impactful PowerPoint presentations or even mastering CAD SolidWorks software, there's an option that will boost your business' skillset.

A true jewel in our crown is the recently launched robotics lab, which will soon become available to employers looking to try out the latest tech or train up their workforce. Featuring programmable robot arms, conveyor systems and electric vehicle repair simulations, the Canterbury College facility will offer a 'try before you buy' experience to businesses from SMEs upwards to experiment with potential technological solutions to see whether such equipment could enhance your company.

Lecturers across the Group are in the process of becoming certified trainers on the laboratory's equipment, meaning employees from around the county and further afield will be able to get qualifications and be able to pioneer these new tools in the workplace.

Digital skills in the classroom

Digital solutions are also assisting us as we look to the future of education. In each of our six Colleges, we are introducing 'immersive classrooms' which are providing a new and exciting method of learning.

These suites allow our students to join classes taking place across the globe, with leading experts being able to host guest lectures from their offices or homes. Immersive classrooms also enable our students to engage with a diverse range of peers, strengthening their social ability and exposing them to different cultures.

In subjects which require industry-standard technologies, we ensure learners gain experience on software and equipment they will use in the workplace. For example, Art and Media students learn digital art, video editing and sound editing in our Mac suite, getting to grips with the complete Adobe Creative Cloud.

Our Games Development students learn how to use Blender, meanwhile Accounting apprentices must master Sage accounting software to complete the course.

So, whether you as an employer are looking to try out the latest technology, train up your existing staff, or find a job candidate fully equipped to take your company into the future, get in touch with us at ekcgroup.ac.uk today.

BOOST YOUR WORKFORCE WITH THE 'OUTSTANDING' EKC GROUP



EKC Group runs Colleges, training centres, employability centres and apprenticeships across East Kent, and achieved Ofsted Outstanding earlier this year. Here are some ways the Group can help your business grow and upskill.



Apprenticeships

- Great way to find new staff or upskill existing ones
- Wide range of qualifications at different levels
- Staff on hand to guide you through the onboarding process



Training

- Dedicated centres for Civil Engineering and Plumbing & Electrics
- In-College professional development courses
- Short and Part-Time Courses to fit around work hours



Recruitment

- Talent pipeline of young, ambitious recruits
- Newly-qualified students with the latest skills and knowledge
- Strong with soft skills and understand the younger generation's mindset

Find out more about how we can help grow your business by searching ekcgroup.ac.uk today.



How will AI affect the product design industry?

Artificial Intelligence has already had a significant impact on many industries, including tech, marketing and PR, and the product design industry is no exception.



AI-powered technologies are starting to transform the way products are designed and manufactured. AI is enabling designers to create better products in a shorter period, while also providing valuable insights that were previously unavailable.

Open AI, which owns ChatGPT, has estimated that 80% of jobs could be impacted by AI, but how worried should the design industry be? Are these just scare stories, or will jobs seriously be at risk? And how can we use AI to improve the product design industry?

At Cornelius Creative, we believe AI will become an integral part of the product design process, but it will be used as a tool rather than replacing product designers. Its value is more in aesthetics than it will be in problem solving difficult design decisions or coming up with new ideas for how a product functions. This still requires years of education and expertise.

AI is here to stay. It can assist with generative design, predictive modelling, testing and validation and personalisation. It's transforming the product design industry by enabling designers to create better products in less time, providing valuable insights, and allowing for more personalised products. As AI continues to evolve, we can expect even more changes and improvements in the product design process. We think the future of a combined AI and human product design industry is very exciting.

Find out how we can transform ideas into successful products at:
<https://corneliuscreative.uk/>

The Increasing Dependence on Technology-Enabled Care by an Ageing Population

As the UK population continues to age, there is increasing dependence on technology-enabled care. From elderly people living in their own homes to senior citizens in assisted living facilities. Accelerated by Covid, today technology has become crucial to providing quality healthcare for the elderly and vulnerable individuals in housing, home care, nursing and care homes.

Benefits of technology-enabled care

Increased Independence

Wearable devices such as personal alarms and fall detectors allow individuals to move around freely. This not only enhances their quality of life but also reduces the need for caregivers to be present at all times.



Improved Quality of Care

Telehealth services have streamlined the care process, ensuring that residents receive the right treatment at the right time. Reducing hospitalizations, and improving overall well-being.

Improved Safety and Security

Sensors and cameras can be used to detect falls and other potential hazards. These devices can alert staff members and caregivers so they can take immediate action, preventing accidents and injuries.

Embracing technology-enabled care gives individuals access to better quality care.

At Everon, we provide trusted digital solutions that support older or disabled people, those with dementia, learning difficulties, and those with long-term support needs. We are the European market leader in digital grouped living solutions. Everon has been providing digital solutions since 2007 in Finland and Sweden and was introduced in the UK in 2019.

Find out more about our solutions at
<https://everon.net/solutions/>

Medway's innovation in Augmented Reality for Aircraft

BAE Systems has been a world leader in the development of Augmented Reality (AR) displays for over half a century. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the company helped lead the development of this technology, before the term 'AR' was even coined.

The BAE Systems site in Rochester has produced more than 15,000 head-up displays (HUDs). Think of these as a type of augmented reality for pilots that presents real-time, essential flight information overlaid onto a view of the outside world. The products designed, developed and manufactured at Rochester are in service on more than 50 different aircraft types in more than 50 countries. This includes some of the some of the most advanced and demanding military aircraft, such as the Eurofighter Typhoon, F-16 Fighting Falcon, and F-22 Raptor.

HUDs from previous generations used bulky optics and cathode-ray tube technology to create images, similar to that found in old television sets. As technology advanced and analogue turned to digital, BAE Systems began to develop intellectual property for optical waveguide technology - a way of manipulating light to create an image within a thin laminated piece of glass.

Continuous investment has allowed the company to bring forward a new era of completely digital augmented reality displays.

Not only are the latest displays up to 70% smaller and lighter, but they also offer unrivalled clarity compared with traditional HUDs. BAE Systems' latest head-up display, LiteWave®, boasts an eye-motion box three times the size offered by existing HUDs. This means the pilot can sit naturally in their seat and look around the cockpit, while retaining sight of the display symbology in their peripheral vision.

Since developing the world's first operational HUD back in the 1950s, BAE Systems has relentlessly pushed the boundaries of what's possible in the realm of AR. The company's innovation in waveguide technology has raised the bar for displays of the future - giving pilots the increased comfort and situational awareness they deserve. .

For more information visit www.baesystems.com



Artificial Intelligence - a competitive advantage

Following the release of previous data protection and security acts such as GDPR in 2018 and one of the earliest sets of AI governance, the Asilomar AI principles, the European Union is intending to release the Artificial Intelligence Act which could then become recognised as a global standard.

Regulatory concerns are raised outside the UK with European law enforcement agency Europol warning of the dangers of unlawful use and online disinformation through the use of ChatGPT, developed by Open AI. Italy is the first country to place an outright ban on ChatGPT due to its data and user privacy concerns. Italian data protection authorities are currently investigating issues further.

In the United States, public consultation has commenced within the White House on how such AI should be regulated.

Instead of giving responsibility for AI governance to a new single regulator as in the case of the EU law (with conformity monitored by capAI), the UK Government opted for what is presented as a collaborative approach between businesses and existing regulators such as the Health and Safety Executive, Human Rights Commission and Competitive Marketing Commission. The intent is to support UK businesses across industries to become global leaders in AI.

AI regulation and development

On March 29th 2023 the Government released a new White Paper based on AI (artificial intelligence) regulation within the United Kingdom highlighting five key guiding principles:

- Safety, security and robustness
- Transparency
- Fairness
- Accountability and governance
- Contestability and address

These principles are set on verifiable criteria of capability and are part of the strategy to shape governance of AI. Sir Patrick Vallance set out a key recommendation to establish a regulatory sandbox, allowing businesses to explore and trial the proposed AI regulations with regulatory support. Businesses are encouraged to provide feedback on how this works with their products and services with the white paper consultation open for response with a deadline of 21st June 2023.

The AI White Paper discusses introduction of statutory duty for regulators mapping those already seen in the UK data protection framework and encourages work on implications of AI through the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (DRCF).

The information Commissioners Office sit on the AI committee at the British Standards Institute and work with international counterparts and stakeholders. They provided a response to the Governments White Paper in April 2023. The ICO provided input into the EU AI Act26 and the Council of Europe's legal framework on AI through the Global Partnership on AI (GPA) and G7 grouping, setting out its strategic vision in the ICO25 transformation programme which relates to empowerment of responsible innovation, regulation, and sustainable economic growth.

To empower people and organisations to use information responsibly to invest and innovate, and drive openness, transparency, and accountability. The ICO responded to the AI White Paper by encouraging collaboration, highlighting alignment to existing legislation and suggesting amendments to the principles set out. For example, to ensure the fairness principle is included within the development stages as well as use of AI, and under GDPR Article 22 they discuss providing 'justification' of use replacing the existing required 'consideration' in situations where personal data is used.

AI developments in Business – End Point Detection and End Point Protection

In recent surveys, 21% of organisations state that they are already using AI tools like ChatGPT, with 27% investing in staff training in AI tools and technologies, but what about cybersecurity and end user malware or ransomware threats?

Next generation enterprise protection software known as end point protection (EPP) and endpoint detection and remediation platform (EDR) have been developed to proactively monitor and identify potential threats such as malware or ransomware. This provides an optimum quality security system providing faster threat detection across multiple devices both on the network and across



mobile devices such as tablets, iPhones Chromebooks in schools and businesses

This singularity platform provides better security for networks when compared with traditional antivirus software in that it relies on behavioural AI analysis to offer an immediate remediation across different domains. EDR and EPP offer an innovative and versatile response empowering modern enterprises to implement autonomous real time action delivered at machine speed. The benefits of XDR (extended detection response), EDR and EPP are evolving concepts that provide automated monitoring and responses to events to reduce workloads, reduce costs and minimize downtime by controlling threats.

We at Nova IT use this technology on all our systems and include this as standard for all our support customers.



The issues that arise is that younger drivers now solely rely on ABS, traction control, electronic stability, emergency braking systems – and the question arises of how will we ever become advanced riders (or drivers) with these safety systems acting for us?

Camera based technology is being used to enforce the law. A new pioneering AI speed camera 'Redspeed Sentio' with 4D radar technology has been created by Redspeed International. The camera records a driver inside the car when caught speeding, on the phone or without a seat belt. The first one was installed on the A23 in South London and can monitor 6 lanes of traffic.

Electric motorbike 'Proximus' uses 5G and AI to identify people, vehicles and obstacles transmitting images analysed by an algorithm with AI capabilities. Testing was seen as 99% accurate leading the way to safer traffic systems in the future with the right regulation in place.

These are all currently being implemented in road going bikes but will this in the medium future make an appearance in road racing and short circuit racing bikes. This has yet to appear in the prototype Moto GP class and it will be interesting to see how the FIM (Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme) legislate when teams start to utilise AI to gain a competitive advantage. Nova IT will be well placed to see whether AI seeps into racing with our sponsorship of IOM TT (Tom Weeden) and BSB (Finn Smart-Weeden) race teams.

Summary:

Some of the benefits and implications of AI have been discussed in this article. In particular, the impact of AI development on organisations and communities are significant requiring regulatory certainty and public understanding when new innovative technology is developing rapidly. Current legislation for AI is non-specific. Whilst the EU are in the process of passing their EU law, the UK lacks a similar equivalent.

Although it appears that the Government plans for AI may be flimsy, with vague proposals set out in the White Paper, there is a real opportunity for businesses to discuss those principles set out, collaborate with peers, and co-ordinate with sector-specific ombudsmen and representative groups in developing new business opportunities and potential future AI legislation.

Link to Consultation:

https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cBDeiMplOHEXtYO



AI development and regulation in vehicles - safer traffic in the future?

The future of motorbikes is to hand over safety and responsibility to computers with the use of AI. Manufacturers including BMW, Honda and Yamaha are working together to create a common standard. AI systems evolving include:

- MOTORiD recognises and reacts with the owner
- MOTOBOT is a self-propelled robot that can drive a motorbike independently
- AI as a driving assistant to increase safety and promote better driving – line selection, speed changes and navigation warnings

- V2V (Vehicle to vehicle) communication – satellite based system that localizes and protects vehicles from potential danger
- Voice control
- Self-balancing motorbike with autonomous steering and stabilization at slow speeds. Sensors monitor and correct deviations to stabilise the bike
- Northern Artillery animates the world's first AI powered bike in early 2023
- Kawasaki develops Rideology, a native language dialogue system for the rider to talk to the motorbike and the bike to respond

Kawasaki has moved into AI following Yamaha with a similar automated self-riding motorbike under development using Motobot to take over control in an emergency situation.



DON'T RISK

your company's valuable brand and data by lacking the proper **Cyber Security Measures**

Pieterse Associates Cyber Security is here to provide specialist services to ensure your company's cyber security posture is strong and up to date.

We offer a range of services to companies, no matter how small. Our goal is to prevent cyber attacks from happening, rather than dealing with them as they occur.

Our team of experts can help you with a variety of services to ensure your company is protected. One key area we can assist with is email security. We can help prevent impersonation, interception, phishing, ransomware, and verify authenticated email senders. By securing email communication, you can rest easy, knowing your emails are safe and reduce the chances of your emails landing in a SPAM filter.

In addition to email security, our team focuses on secure web browsing. We can assist in preventing phishing and ransomware attacks and providing guidance on how to maintain safe web browsing practices.

Data privacy is another important area we specialise in, ensuring your company follows GDPR regulations and

cookie consent policies. This is critical to safeguarding any personal data collected from customers.

Our user security awareness training provides your employees with knowledge of potential risks and how to prevent cyber attacks, reducing the potential for a successful attack to occur.

Our end-point protection service secures devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones from potential cyber attacks. Ensuring that endpoint devices are secure will provide an additional layer of protection for your company.

We provide fractional virtual Chief Information Officer (CIO)/Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) services, ensuring you have access to on-demand expert advice and leadership to make informed decisions about your cyber security strategy. Moreover, we perform internal and external penetration testing to identify vulnerabilities that cybercriminals may exploit. We can also prepare your company for Cyber Essentials and Plus certification.



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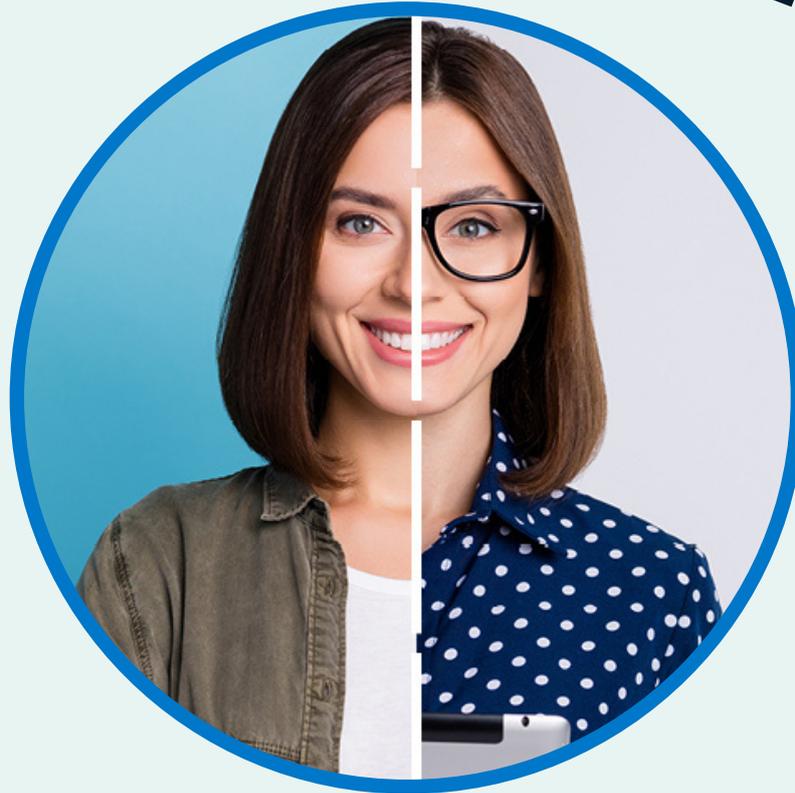
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Furley Page promotes four lawyers to Senior Associate



Daniel Bridgland



Sarah Woolnough



Rachael Stibbe



Richard Waters

Leading South East law firm Furley Page has promoted four lawyers to Senior Associate in its latest round of promotions.

From the start of May, Daniel Bridgland, Sarah Woolnough, Rachael Stibbe and Costs Lawyer Richard Waters have all been promoted to Senior Associate.

Daniel Bridgland joined Furley Page's Real Estate team in April 2022 following almost a decade as the head of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs team at another Kent law firm. With more than 20 years' experience advising clients in Kent about property law, he specialises in supporting rural business clients with a range of matters.

The firm's commercial property and agriculture and rural business teams have been further strengthened by the promotion of **Sarah Woolnough**. Sarah, who celebrates her 25th anniversary with the firm this year, has extensive experience in dispute resolution and deals with a wide range of property litigation work.

Rachael Stibbe joined Furley Page's Personal Injury team in February 2020 and handles predominantly personal injury work on behalf of claimants, as well as defendant work where required.

Richard Waters joined the firm in 2016 and heads up Furley Page's costs team. As a Costs Lawyer, Richard services the firm's dispute resolution, personal injury and vulnerable client teams.

Jeremy Licence, Managing Partner at Furley Page, said: "Each of these lawyers has consistently demonstrated the highest standards of professionalism and a commitment to providing our clients with exceptional service. These well-deserved promotions reflect their contribution to the firm's strong performance and significantly strengthens the expertise within several of our core teams.

"Furley Page prides itself on developing its staff and providing excellent opportunities for career progression across the firm, to attract and retain top lawyers who can deliver outstanding results for our clients."

For more information about Furley Page please visit the website www.furleypage.co.uk

East Kent solicitors Boys & Maughan and Gardner Croft complete merger

Canterbury and Thanet solicitors Boys & Maughan and Gardner Croft merged on 2 May.

The amalgamated practice has 180 staff, spread across six sites, including Gardner Croft's Grade II listed offices at 2 Castle Street, Canterbury. Some personnel have moved over from Boys & Maughan's office in Broad Street, Canterbury, which has closed. Both business names are being retained at Castle Street, which is trading as Boys & Maughan Incorporating Gardner Croft.

Boys & Maughan Solicitors Senior Partner, Andrew Baker, explained: "We are delighted to complete the merger with Gardner Croft. Expanding in this way bolsters our offering across several key areas and enhances our service to clients. Our Castle Street staff are highly respected and Gardner Croft's business aligned exceptionally well with our values and approach to legal work. Combining the depth of experience and expertise of our partnerships in a single move has also accelerated the future stability of our respective practices."

Tim Townsend, Richard Giles and Joanna Illingworth, previously partners with Gardner Croft, are continuing to practise after the merger and have become partners in the amalgamated practice. Boys & Maughan has served the communities of East Kent since 1803. It has offices in Birchington, Broadstairs, Canterbury, Margate and Ramsgate. Gardner Croft was established a century later in 1900 and moved to its Castle Street premises in 1955.

www.boysandmaughan.co.uk

CooperBurnett takes on a right royal challenge

To celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and raise money for its charity of choice, Demelza, a team from Tunbridge Wells-based law firm CooperBurnett LLP has signed up to take part in a challenging ultra-marathon event - the Dulux Race To The King.

The brave team members are Partners: Victoria Sampson, Joseph Oates, Gemma Gillespie and Sarah Strong; Head of Accounts, Gareth Warner; Associate Solicitor, Ayla Clissold; and PA to the Commercial Property Team, Hannah Mashford.

The event will involve covering 100km – the distance of two ultra-marathons! They will head off from Goodwood and take in the Monarch's Way to Bosham, on to Arundel Castle and back to Goodwood.

Incredibly, Ayla has opted to run the entire 100km in just one day, while Sarah and Hannah will be walking

the course in one day. Victoria, Joseph, Gemma and Gareth will be completing it over two consecutive days (Saturday 17 June and Sunday 18 June).

"Some might argue that those of us tackling it in two days are getting off lightly – but I disagree!", say Victoria. "We will be camping out in the wilds on the Saturday night – with no hot bath, massages or any luxuries at all – and getting up to face 50km all over again!"

CooperBurnett will be raising money for Demelza – which delivers extraordinary care to extraordinary children who are facing serious or life-limiting conditions, throughout Kent, South East London and East Sussex.

The firm has set a target of raising £5000 – which will be pound matched by the Partners at CooperBurnett.

www.cooperburnett.com



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34 minutes and counting

Now home to 14,000 businesses, Medway's reputation as an ideal location for companies looking to put down new roots is growing. And thanks to the highspeed train service, operated by Southeastern, it is possible to be in central London within just 34 minutes, making Medway one of the best-connected places to do business. Thinking Business' editor, Sarah Dale, visits the South East's largest urban conurbation, checks out the recent news and discovers there's a real buzz to the place.

Set for take-off

Medway's recognition as a national hub for innovation and engineering spans many centuries from its time as a Royal Naval Dockyard at Chatham, where great ships including Nelson's flagship HMS Victory were built. It later became home to the Short Brothers, the aircraft manufacturer, who pioneered and flew their aircraft from the River Medway and Rochester Airport over many decades.

Today, located adjacent to the airport site is BAE Systems, Medway's largest private employer, with more than 1,400 skilled workers, maintaining the area's world class reputation for innovation.

BAE Systems develops some of the world's leading avionic technology. Its Medway facility is a thriving electronic systems hub, developing and delivering advanced technologies for the commercial and military markets.

Now the company is planning a multi-million pound redevelopment, which will include the construction of a new state of the art manufacturing facility which will bring many new jobs to the area.

The plans will ensure its workforce has a top working environment for further developing and manufacturing its complex aerospace and defence equipment, from pilot displays to flight control computers and active control sticks for fast jets.

Innovation-led growth

A high-tech business park under construction next to Rochester Airport is on course to help create around 3,000 jobs in the area. Innovation Park Medway, spanning over 60,000sq m, will offer 30 plots across two sites for businesses in innovation, technology, precision engineering, manufacturing and support services.

The southern site will provide flexible office space, which will be available to lease. Construction is due to begin shortly when the first anchor tenant will be announced this summer. The scheme will also provide potential new space for the 50 businesses based at Innovation Centre Medway, which is located on the same site and opened in 2010.

Infrastructure work on the northern site will be completed in June. Its 28 plots are available to buy through Medway Council's fast-track planning process, with the first businesses expected to move in during mid to late 2024. The facility will include outdoor green spaces, as well as extensive landscaping across both sites.

With recruitment support to help provide opportunities for local people, occupiers will also be able to link to further and higher educational institutions offering access to high quality research, development, funding and partnership opportunities with local universities.

Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive of Medway Council, said: "The pioneering business park will provide fantastic opportunities to help businesses grow, as well as the infrastructure they need to succeed. It has excellent transport links, a skilled local workforce and will give businesses the chance to thrive in a like-minded, innovative environment."

Businesses interested in securing a plot or office space on a pre-let basis can find out more through marketing agent Harrisons and Avison Young with further details at innovationparkmedway.com

Medway plans to go modular

Medway's reputation as a place for forward-thinking businesses continues to rise at pace.

It could soon be at the forefront of a house building revolution after Berkeley Homes submitted plans to develop a factory on the Hoo Peninsula capable of turning out 1,000 modular homes a year. The proposals, if approved, would see the housebuilder create an estimated 250 jobs on a 35-acre site on the Kingsnorth Industrial Estate on the outskirts of Hoo St Werburgh.



The factory would pre-build sections of each home in the factory, before transporting them to site for the final stages of their construction.

Modular homes are seen by many as a way of increasing the speed of delivering new homes, while at the same time ensuring they are energy efficient, reducing carbon and built to the highest standards. Berkeley Homes successfully operates a similar factory at Northfleet, near Gravesend.

Medway powers through

The green light has also been given to redevelop a former power station and create more than 2,000 jobs. German firm Uniper successfully applied to create MedwayOne on a 583 acre site, including the former Kingsnorth plant on the Hoo Peninsula.

The former coal and oil powered station was decommissioned in December 2012 and will be transformed into storage, a data centre, lorry park, and manufacturing space, generating £44m a year for the area's economy. One of the key elements of the scheme is an energy-from-waste plant which will be used to power the development.

Dovetail Games is perfect fit

Medway-based simulation developer and publishing success story, Dovetail Games, has recently joined forces with French company, Focus Entertainment.

The £15m turnover Medway company employs 200 highly-skilled, creative and innovative employees and is based in Chatham's Historic Dockyard. Founded in 2008, Dovetail originally operated as Railsimulator.com and specialised in train simulators before branching into other subgenres, such as flight simulators and fishing.

Focus is best known for publishing titles ranging from Space Marine 2, The Surge, and Aliens: Fireteam. The publisher has also previously released simulation titles such as MudRunner and its sequel SnowRunner, which is why Dovetail is seen as a solid fit with its management remaining in place.



Proposed view of Innovation Park Medway next to Rochester Airport

Medway gets creative to level-up

It's very clear driving around Medway that the council and its partners are keen to capitalise on its rich heritage to ensure it has a vibrant future as a place to live, work, learn and visit, with the creative industries key to its success.

In 2021, Medway Council was awarded £14.4m from the government's Levelling Up Fund to take forward a number of important projects, including The Docking Station and the refurbishment of The Fitting Rigging House in Chatham's Historic Dockyard into stunning new spaces to help build creative skills and growth.

The Docking Station is a Grade-II listed former accommodation for police staff, which will house the Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries at the University of Kent. When open, the new creative facility will provide workspaces for artists and technologists, flexible space for teaching and graduates, plus performance areas.

£6million of the Levelling Up funding will support a major programme to refurbish The Brook Theatre Chatham into a new state-of-the-art and accessible modern theatre offering spaces for creative industries to flourish.

The area has also been buoyed up by news that MidKent College is opening a new Art school and expanding its art courses to offer qualifications to university level, accredited through the University of Kent. Medway School of Art is working in partnership with the University of Kent's Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (iCCI) and Medway Council.

Education, Education, Education

Another factor attracting companies and fuelling growth is the proximity to a skilled and educated workforce with three universities and more than 90 per cent of schools rated as good or outstanding, an £86million further education campus, a university technical college, recently rated Good by Ofsted, and the Royal School of Military Engineering.

Going Places

In 2024, Medway will be celebrating the enormous progress made in Medway since the closure 40 years ago of the Chatham Dockyard that hit the local economy hard at the time. There can be little doubt that Medway's fortunes have come full circle thanks to the extraordinary commitment and hard work of the council and partners to transform the area into the modern-day thriving success story.

Medway was ranked as the third most improved city in last year's PWC Good Growth Index thanks to improvements in jobs, income distribution and work-life balance. Now the largest regeneration zone in the Thames Estuary Medway is undoubtedly positioned for economic success for the next 40 years to come.



Medway's role to keep RAF jets mission ready

With roughly 7,000 commercial flights passing through the UK each day, it takes hundreds of people across multiple organisations working around the clock to ensure a safe airspace. This includes the early detection and escorting away of rogue aircraft, and the Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft is the backbone of this mission.

The Royal Air Force's fleet of Typhoons are on standby to deliver Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They stand ready to scramble at supersonic speeds to secure UK skies and support our international allies.

BAE Systems' teams in Rochester help to ensure Typhoons are available when and where they are needed. This includes service and support – troubleshooting and repair of key avionics equipment, such as displays and flight controls.

What's more, RAF pilots' heads are laser scanned to produce a 3D model and manufacture custom liners for the Typhoon's sophisticated helmet system.

"This service is crucial for the RAF. If pilots' helmets don't fit, they won't be able to see the display properly and the helmet won't stay in place at high-g forces; a major safety issue," said Sam Holder, project manager at BAE Systems in Rochester.

"Our teams work hard to provide a flexible and agile availability service, adjusting their output as per service demands, which ultimately helps to increase our customers' flying capability."

With service and support for the platform secured for the next five years (last November, BAE Systems announced avionics support contract awards totalling £80 million), the teams at Rochester will continue to play their part to support those who protect people and critical infrastructure.



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Skills For Life

Training Schemes for your Business

2023 has been a challenging year for business with the cost of living soaring and concerns about a recession at the forefront of minds, but a new poll of SMEs in England from the Skills for Life campaign reveals that SMEs in the South East expect on average a 24 per cent growth in revenue this year.

The Skills for Life campaign aims to help SMEs understand the schemes available to them, including:

- **Apprenticeships**
- **T Levels: industry placements**
- **Skills Bootcamps**
- **Multiply numeracy courses**
- **Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)**

According to the research, 69% of SMEs in the South East are also planning to invest in upskilling their workforce, bolstering their capabilities for the year ahead and ensuring they have the workforce in place to meet demand in the sector. Others are



seeking new recruits, with nearly a quarter (24%) looking to hire from training and employment schemes including apprenticeships and hosting T Level students on industry placement.

The optimism for growth for the year ahead is positive, and there are many options available for businesses looking to plug skills gaps and boost their workforce in a cost effective way that will help them to reach their 2023 ambitions.

Businesses that are considering hiring employees can access a range of government training and employment schemes offering work experience or upskilling existing staff, some of which offer financial incentives.

To find training and employment schemes for your business to keep your business moving, please visit:
www.find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk



Trade deals with Australia and New Zealand from May 31 is “good news”

Free trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand will make exporting cheaper, faster and more secure for UK businesses.

The UK has signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Australia and New Zealand with businesses expected to be able to use the new agreement from 31 May 2023.

The benefits of the agreement include more flexible rules of origin when exporting goods that are better suited to modern supply chains; equal treatment and improved business environment for UK businesses operating in Australia

and New Zealand; and easier travel rules for UK businesspeople wishing to deliver services in Australia and New Zealand.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has welcomed the news of the new FTA.

“ We have strong Chambers in both Australia and New Zealand and will be working with them to get the most out of these trade deals for all our economies. ”

“It is good news to hear that the free trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand will finally come into force at the end of the month,” said William Bain, head of trade policy at the BCC.

“These deals will lower tariffs, simplify customs procedures, allow for greater freedom of movement for labour and provide stronger market access for the UK’s world-leading services sector.

“But the success of any free trade agreement comes down to whether businesses use it, so it’s vital the

Government shouts from the rooftops about these new opportunities.”

A recent BCC survey found that almost a quarter of firms (23%) said finding a business partner or distributor overseas would encourage them to either start exporting or export more.

“We have strong Chambers in both Australia and New Zealand and will be working with them to get the most out of these trade deals for all our economies,” he added.

The top five UK goods exported to Australia (in the four quarters to the

end of Q4 2022) were: medicinal and pharmaceutical products [£464.4m]; cars [£391.7m], other manufactures (consumer) [£339.2m]; specialised machinery (capital) [£282.5m]; and beverages [£249.9m].

The top five UK goods exported to New Zealand (in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2022) were: cars [£174.9m]; mechanical power generators (intermediate) [£78.9m]; specialised machinery (capital) [£76.9m]; road vehicles other than cars (capital) [£58.4m]; and medicinal and pharmaceutical products [£42.4m].

7 reasons to knock your house down and start again

For some build projects that Vernacular Homes undertakes, demolition, redesign and rebuild give the client the home they want, whilst also being built to modern safety and energy efficiency standards

7 reasons why demolition and rebuild is considered for some projects.

1. What's left?

A large renovation project could involve taking so much away that there is very little of the original house left. Is what is left worth more than the additional VAT you will pay? See item 6 below.

2. Existing structure

Significant changes to your home could necessitate extra work and materials, such as additional timbers and steels to ensure structural integrity. You might also need to add ventilation, fire safety aspects and damp proofing.

3. Poor build quality

It's very common for refurbishments to uncover unforeseen issues, particularly in older houses. Leaky pipes, asbestos, inadequate foundations and low energy efficiency could mean starting again is more sensible.

4. Make the most of your plot

A rebuild could improve the light, views or privacy. It gives you a chance to make the absolute best use of the plot without compromising and retrofitting what you already have.

5. Insulation

New builds are far better at keeping homes warm, as they must be built to comply with insulation regulations – retro insulating older properties can be costly.

6. VAT

New build homes are VAT zero rated. A £500k spend on a refurb will attract a VAT charge of £100k, a total cost of £600k. A new build would give you the whole £600k budget for the build.

7. New builds are worth more

A new house complete, is likely to be worth around 10% more than a renovated and extended property of the same size.

To find out more visit: vernacularhomes.com



RDUK committed to making a positive impact on the environment

Buying a renewed laptop is a great way to get an excellent quality laptop at a discounted price.

Our renewed laptops are refurbished to like-new condition, so you can buy with confidence that your laptop's performance will match your expectations. Additionally, buying renewed is an environmentally friendly way to purchase tech, as it reduces waste and extends the life of the device.

We take time to get to know our customers, in order to understand their needs, and provide the best solutions

for them. We use the latest technology, most efficient processes, and experienced professionals to deliver high-quality renewed laptops, desktops and displays. In addition, we stock open boxed products, as well as a wide range of new components and accessories. Our goal is to ensure that our customers enjoy complete satisfaction during every experience with us. We also strive to stay ahead of our competition and provide every customer with the most competitive prices in the industry.

RDUK has implemented various green practices to

help minimise our carbon footprint and waste. We have implemented recycling programs to ensure that all our waste, including e-waste, is disposed of responsibly. RDUK is proud to be a green company and is committed to making a positive impact on the environment. We are proud to be a part of the Microsoft Authorised Refurbisher program. This program is designed to give refurbishers access to original equipment manufacturer (OEM) software licenses, which are not normally available to the general public.

To find out more information visit: <http://rd-uk.co.uk>

You can help your staff through the cost-of-living crisis

You can reduce financial stress within your team and boost recruitment and retention with help from ethical and non-profit organisation, Wave Community Bank.

The cost-of-living crisis' grip is getting to us all, and it's only predicted to get tighter still. So, it's only natural that financial stress is going to seep into work.

According to Nudge Global's recent report, 'Elephant in the Workplace', 35% of HR professionals have noticed staff being unproductive at work because they're distracted by their money

situation, and 53% of staff worry weekly about money.

It's more important than ever then, to safeguard your staff's finances. Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce member, Wave Community Bank, and their workplace savings scheme, CHORUS, is designed to do exactly that. It's free to the employer and is a great tool if you're worried about how your staff are coping through the economic crisis.

With CHORUS, your staff can save automatically straight from their wages, removing any hassle to saving. On the flip side, staff can also apply for affordable credit. Wave Community Bank are

twice as likely to approve a loan application from an employee repaying through CHORUS and interest rates on loans through CHORUS are lower when repaid this way. Plus, as an employer, you can be assured you are recommending an ethical, regulated financial service.

Savings and loans with Wave Community Bank can provide that all-important safety net for those struggling during the current crisis, and it's free to offer to staff. It's good to know that there is an ethical option out there which puts people before profit.

Find out more at: www.savewithchorus.org.uk

BRACHERS ADVISES MWA FINANCIAL on its funding partnership with ThinCats

Brachers' Corporate team has advised MWA Financial (MWA) on its successful fundraising with ThinCats, together with a series of linked transactions including the acquisitions of Sterling Financial Consultants, Winser Financial Services and Martin Dore Limited.

London-headquartered MWA has entered into a long-term partnership with leading alternative finance provider ThinCats to support the group's plans to build a national firm of independent financial advisers. The partnership with ThinCats marks the start of 'phase two' for the owner-managed MWA, that will see it complete on a number of live acquisitions designed to take adviser numbers to more than 30 and AUA above £1bn over the next 12 to 18 months.

MWA was launched by Chief Executive Cam Banks in 2016 with the ambition of recreating in the UK the holistic advice model prevalent in his native Australia. Banks has more than 25 years' experience developing financial advice networks in Australia for major organisations including ING, AXA Asia Pacific and AMP. Ed Rosengarten joined the business in 2021 as Executive Chairman to help execute and accelerate its growth strategy. Before joining MWA, Rosengarten was head of funds at Smith & Williamson and, prior to that, spent 20 years at M&G, latterly as Chief Executive of the firm's equity business.

The Brachers team was led by Matt Simmonds (Corporate Partner) and also included Alistair Wickham (Corporate Associate) and Cameron Gaston-Penny (Corporate Solicitor). The team has previously worked with MWA on its successful acquisitions of Hampshire-based Prosperity Independent Financial Advisors and Essex-based CHC Wealth Management.

Cam Banks, MWA's Chief Executive, said: "Our partnership with ThinCats is exciting and enables us to really push forward with our strategy



to grow MWA Financial into an outstanding wealth management practice here in the UK.

"I am very thankful to Matt Simmonds and his team at Brachers. They are, in the truest sense of the word, our legal partners and have invested in our journey with us. The advice and support that they have given us has been invaluable over the past few months."

Ed Rosengarten, MWA's Executive Chairman, said: "With the phase one foundations successfully in place, our focus for phase two is on accelerating adviser and asset growth through carefully selected acquisitions and targeted organic growth."

"The partnership with ThinCats provides us with the complementary capital required to execute our strategy, positioning MWA as an attractive and capable owner-managed alternative to the abundant acquirers in the market."

Matt Simmonds, Corporate Partner, said: "I am absolutely delighted for Cam, Ed and the team at MWA Financial. We have worked with them for a number of years and are seeing the business flourish. Cam's and Ed's philosophy and desire to create something better is hugely inspiring. We are so pleased to have the opportunity to work with them as they grow."

Other advisors on the transaction included Irwin Mitchell LLP (Legal Advisors to ThinCats), Mazars LLP and Clarke Wilmott LLP.



Hotel to offer a new experience to travellers to Kent



Delta Hotels by Marriott Tudor Park is pleased to share some exciting news. In 2023 we will be undergoing renovation across the hotel to give upscale bedrooms and meeting space décor.

The hotel boasts 120 guest rooms and suites on 2 floors many of which overlook our beautiful grounds. Tee off from our 18-hole Championship golf course, get pampered in the hotel spa or take a dip in our indoor pool. Visit Cast Iron Grill, our family restaurant for fresh, locally sourced, best of British dishes whilst Zest Bar is the place to be if you want to watch a big match. Mezz Bar is where we serve our scrumptious afternoon tea. Make memories with us and plan an event to remember in one of our 11 different event spaces. Delta Hotels by Marriott Tudor Park Country Club is perfect for your next business meeting or leisure stay.

We are proud to become part of the Delta Hotels family, and with our addition to the brand comes Delta's widely recognized level of first-class service and amenities. The hotel will truly offer a new experience to travellers to Kent.

For more information please visit [marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)

Ambition comes to fruition for product design and marketing company

Product design and marketing company Cornelius Creative Ltd, which was set up just before the first national lockdown, has just celebrated its third year in business.



Husband and wife team Simon and Lucy Cornelius set up the company in March 2020 to address their work/life balance after the birth of their son.

After a rocky start during the Covid-19 lockdowns, the company won a Theo Paphitis Small Business Sunday award in February 2021. Today, they are a team of five and can list SharkNinja, Hansgrohe and Crosswater among their clients. In the first three years, the company has worked with over 50 different clients on 130 projects, launching 30 new products into the market and helping to file 33 patents.

Simon Cornelius said: "We had gone into 2020 with massive ambitions and plans to launch our own business. It was supposed to be 'our year', but we had no idea what was about to happen. Now, three years later, the business has navigated through the biggest global event of our generation, and has not



only survived, but is thriving. I'm so glad we've been able to create work for people in Kent, particularly for graduates who tell me they've been struggling to find jobs. We're keen to put Kent on the map for innovation to compete against London".

The company recently moved into an 800 square foot office in Fawkham, which they are currently renovating. Once the renovation is complete, they plan to progress the prototyping side of the business with a dedicated 3D printing workshop.

[corneliuscreative.uk](https://www.corneliuscreative.uk)

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June - July 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 Bites: Employee Engagement

During this bite-sized session, come and hear from Maria Wilson, Director of Saxon HR Consultancy who will explain what employee engagement is, the benefits to companies with a highly engaged workforce and an overview of simple, but effective strategies to create highly engaged and high performing employees.

In today's competitive business landscape, employee engagement has emerged as a critical factor for organisational success. Engaged employees are more motivated, productive, and loyal, leading to increased overall performance.

Thursday 15th June 2023 | 1:00pm - 1:30pm

Members: Free to attend | Non-Members: Free to attend



Business Talks: Networking and Tour at Woodchurch Wine Estate (Opulence – Bespoke Wine Experiences)

Set on hills looking south over Romney Marsh, their land has the perfect geography and climate to produce the highest quality grapes and the finest English sparkling and still wine.

After tea and coffee on arrival, you will have a brief tour of the beautiful vineyard to learn all about the story behind the vineyard and their wine, from the Founder and Owner, Graham Barbour. Following this, you will be able to taste two of their exceptional wines and enjoy time to network in the stunning surroundings.

Thursday 22nd June 2023 | 10:30am - 12:30pm

Members: £19.50 + VAT | Non-Members: £24.50 + 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 6th June 2023, Tuesday 4th July 2023, Tuesday 1st August 2023
The Village Hotel, Maidstone
KCFG Members: £22.50 + VAT | Non-Members: £32.50 + VAT | 7:30am - 9:30am

Events at a glance...

Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG)
 Tuesday 6th June 2023
 The Village Hotel, Maidstone, ME14 3AQ

International: Exploring The World Of Export
 Thursday 8th June 2023
 Online via Zoom

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 13th June 2023
 Online via Zoom

Business Bites – Employee Engagement
 Thursday 15th June 2023
 Online via Zoom

Business Talks – Networking and Tour at Woodchurch Wine Estate (Opulence – Bespoke Wine Experiences)
 Thursday 22nd June 2023
 Woodchurch Wine Estate, Susan's Hill, Woodchurch, Ashford, TN26 3RE

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 27th June 2023
 Online via Zoom

International: Correct Use Of Tariff Codes, Commodity Codes, HS Codes
 Thursday 29th June 2023
 Online via Zoom

Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG)
 Tuesday 4th July 2023
 The Village Hotel, Maidstone, ME14 3AQ

Chamber Connections Networking (The Coachworks)
 Thursday 6th July 2023
 Coachworks, Dover Place, Ashford, TN23 1HU

International: Trade And Finance
 Tuesday 11th July 2023
 Online via Zoom

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 11th July 2023
 Online via Zoom

National Networking Online with Dorset Chamber
 Wednesday 19th July 2023
 Online via Zoom

Virtual Business Networking
 Tuesday 25th July 2023
 Online via Zoom



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 13th and 27th June 2023
Tuesday 11th and 25th July 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 6th July 2023
Coachworks, Ashford
10:30am - 12:00pm
Members: Free to attend
Non-Members: Free to attend

For all events and to book...

www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/events

Successful Launch of the Kent & Medway Manufacturing Focus Group (KMFG)

The Launch of the **Kent & Medway Manufacturing Focus Group (KMFG)** took place at the Bridgewood Manor Hotel on 26th April and was well supported by regional manufacturing and engineering businesses, education providers, representatives from the Local Authority and support services to the sectors.



The event opened with a welcome from **Tudor Price, Deputy CEO of the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.**

Lucy Druesne, Skills Programme Manager for the Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) then outlined the objectives of the KMFG, as an opportunity for the sector to become a more united voice within

the region. She then went on to outline the work being carried out as part of the LSIP and the importance of Kent & Medway businesses being a part of the skills conversation in the region.

Jonathan Shaw, the Strategic Director for Kent Further Education, the representative body for the region's three further education colleges, provided an overview of the skills focus in terms of current and future Government Policy and the leadership of this at a local level. He highlighted the fantastic Strategic Development Funded (SDF) new facilities that the three local college groups have recently opened. Jonathan outlined all they have been doing to assist businesses in the sectors and to support the talent pipeline and upskilling of the workforce in the areas highlighted by the LSIP Pilot.

This was the first of what we hope will be many meetings of the Kent & Medway Manufacturing Focus Group. We thank all who came along to the launch and we look forward to supporting these vital sectors within Kent and Medway.

KMFG will meet every last Wednesday of the month with a mix of both in person and online engagement.

Details of future KMFG events can be found on the Chamber events page and on the Local Skills Improvement Plan page <https://kentemployerskillsplan.org/>



It will help you reduce costs and improve long term efficiency across your business based on a comprehensive and personalised strategy.

- Your customers will be looking at their supply chain compliance to make sure they are working with responsible partners - otherwise it effects their own efforts to reach Net Zero.
- Virtually all public sector tenders now require bidders have a demonstrable carbon reduction roadmap and a growing number of private sector contract tenderers are introducing this as a compulsory.
- Your ability to raise finance can be improved through a commitment to carbon reduction.
- Staff and clients want to work with a responsible company which can aid retention and recruitment.
- Reducing Carbon emission is the socially responsible thing to do.
- Your competitors are already on the Net Zero path – don't let them get ahead.

What do you get?

We will assign a dedicated Decarbonisation Adviser to your business in order to understand the challenges you're facing and set expectations, timescales, and undertake some initial research on the business.

Your Adviser will then make an appointment to meet with the Client to undertake a face-to-face interview and assess the current operation to understand the actions your business needs to take in order to drive towards Net Zero. We will require the past two years' worth of energy consumption data.

Once all of the data has been collated and analysed, your Adviser will draft a detailed report that will include assessments of the following areas of carbon impact,

- Building makeup (age, construct, floors, offices, meeting rooms etc)
- Utilities
- Fuels
- Heating provision
- Lighting
- Insulation
- Glazing
- Company vehicles
- Other heavy equipment of note
- Carbon footprint details – spread sheet inc. emission scope, type, units, Gov conversion factor, tCO2e figure.

It won't cost the earth

The report will present an analysis of usage, your carbon impact and will make recommendations which can be shared with stakeholders, in the context of your current business performance and mid to long term objectives. It will identify which are the quick wins and which will take a longer-term investment. It will give details on what carbon offsetting options might be available and local and national initiatives might be running in your area. It will also signpost to any current funded or commercial options to help you implement the report's recommendations.

You will also receive a "Confirmation of Audit" Certificate and will be registered with the Government's SME Climate Commitment Pledge platform.

Audits start from £575 + VAT for Chamber Members (£675+VAT for Non- Members) for a single site business with no more than four company vehicles.

Clients with four or more vehicles and/or multi-site locations will be quoted separately as the size, location and number incur additional costs.

How do I book an appointment?

Complete an expression of interest here www.kentnetzero.org or call us on **01233 503838**



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Andy Griffiths, Director of Partnerships, Kent Cricket



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Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board

Earlier in the year, your President, Richard Lavender joined the Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board (KMCMPB) to represent the business community across Kent.

The KMCMPB provides a strategic link within partner organisations with regard to the Armed Forces Covenant and is chaired by Cllr Lesley Game, Chair of KCC. Cllr Howard Doe is Deputy Chair and Deputy Leader of Medway Council. Board members come from the military, local authorities, NHS Health, Kent Police, Kent FRS, service charities, RBLI with the Lord-Lieutenant, a key member.

The Armed Forces Covenant was jointly signed by Kent County Council and Medway Council and is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served, and their families, are treated fairly. This does not mean that service families are given positive advantage, but rather that they should not be disadvantaged because of their service.

The Armed Forces Act 2021 has strengthened the Covenant where it concerns education, health, and housing provision. This new statutory duty to have due regard to the principles of the Covenant will help improve overall delivery of public services for the Armed Forces Community. Councils failing to show due regard in their dealing with the military may be subject to a complaint's procedure or through the Ombudsman or, at the last resort, Judicial Review. I was privileged to give oral

and written evidence to the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill in March 2021.

The KMCMPB gives strategic direction to strengthen links between communities and the military. It champions the Armed Forces with annual Armed Forces Day Celebrations and Freedom Marches. We are also required to review the work of the Armed Forces Covenant on an annual basis through the Board, just as they do in the Houses of Parliament every November. To date more than 10,000 businesses have signed the Covenant and I know that both Richard and I are very keen for members of the Chamber to sign up.

Through both SERFCA and the Employers Recognition Scheme, we can help you become a military-friendly employer. Service personnel are highly talented people who show courage, loyalty, and teamwork, but they might need your help to prepare for interviews or talking about the role they play in layman's terms. Their spouses also have difficulties in getting employed through gaps in their CVs. Most of the military move every two years. I can put you in touch with them.

It would be good if you also considered, acknowledged, and promoted the valued role reservists play within the community. Here in Kent, we are always seeing cadet adult volunteers.

**Canon Peter Bruinvels CC
Covenant Lead and Civilian-Military Liaison
Adviser to Kent Council
Peter.Bruinvels@kent.gov.uk**

Remote learning for careers in business and finance

MidKent College is launching a new season of online courses that enable people who want to, or already, work in finance to further their careers.

AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) qualifications are internationally recognised and essential for progressing in any careers around book-keeping, accountancy, and finance. Online courses mean they're now far more accessible to more people than ever before.

Helen Mitchell is AAT co-ordinator and finance lecturer at MidKent College. She said: "The courses appeal to people who want to combine studying with an existing role. Induction and exams are in college, but lessons are live by remote learning, so it suits busy people.

"We do a unit at a time, input, revision, then sit the exam with a 6 week wait for results. Anyone who wants to start has got to have a Merit at Level 3 AAT Advanced Diploma in Accounting. Ideally, they would be in work and sponsored by employer, but if they're not working that's fine, they can self-fund and the college offers an instalment plan."

Holly Cattermole, 21, from Larkfield, started at Level 2 and has progressed to Level 4 at MidKent. "I hope that once I achieve Level 4 it can open more doors for me and will lead to new, higher, and more experienced roles for me such as an Assistant accountant or even a Finance Analyst position. I would highly recommend this AAT course to anyone who is interested in an accounting career."

www.midkent.ac.uk

Otterpool Park LLP and EKC Group announce new partnership

Otterpool Park LLP and EKC Group have announced a new partnership that will boost skills in East Kent and ensure that education, employment and training for local people are at the heart of the Otterpool Park garden town development.

The collaboration agreement will support the delivery of the new garden town located just a few miles from the coastal towns of Folkestone and Hythe by supporting housebuilders, contractors and their supply chains to meet their skills needs throughout the 25-year construction programme. It will also create opportunities for EKC Group students to engage with the development and promotion of Otterpool Park.

Andy Jarrett, Managing Director of Otterpool Park LLP said, "10,000 homes will be built here over 25 years and it's very important to ensure that skills are available when we need them, both for ourselves as the master developer and for our partners.

"As a sustainable garden town, we place a strong emphasis not just on the delivery of new homes and facilities but on providing opportunities for education, employment and training.

"EKC Group has an excellent reputation for construction skills training and the partnership will also help us to engage with local people, and we will be creating, in addition to construction skills, 9,000 long-term jobs.

Graham Razey OBE, CEO of EKC Group said, "Partnerships between education and industry demonstrate both to our young people and to our communities that we can work hand in hand to create better futures. Our students will have the opportunity to look at future industry practices and train in the skills that enable them to be able to secure opportunities when they finish their studies."

www.otterpoolpark.org/our-new-partnership-with-ekc-group

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Last Word


Nikhil Kamboj
Founder
Databox 360

Nikhil Kamboj is the Founder and Director of Databox 360 – www.databox-360.com Databox 360 provides professional cyber security and risk advisory services.

In a world where the majority of businesses increasingly rely on digital technology on a day-to-day basis, cyber-attacks are becoming ever more common. Consequently, it is more important than ever before that businesses are adequately protected from cyber threats.

I help businesses with:

- Security Audits, Awareness Training
- Deploying AI-based Security Solutions
- Disaster Recovery/ Business Continuity Planning
- Compliance with Cyber Essentials and ISO27001

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

After I completed my engineering degree in IT, I started working as a Trainee Technical Support Engineer providing support for Hewlett-Packard computers. Although a huge learning curve, pay was very low.

What do you always carry with you to work?

My coffee flask and smartwatch.

What is the biggest challenge facing your business?

The current economic climate is pushing businesses to cut budgets despite the growing cyber security threat, landscape and risks.

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

Like many STEM industries, cyber security sector is facing a severe shortage of talent. To futureproof, I would introduce basic ICT skills at a much earlier stage of schooling and make some elements mandatory.

What can you see from your office window?

I have to travel a lot and don't get to spend much time in the office which overlooks the University of Kent campus landscape.

If you could do another job what would it be?

I'd be a Pilot.

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

Passion, Resilience, Willingness to learn.

What was your biggest mistake in business?

When I started my journey as an entrepreneur, I used to try and do everything myself.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Get all the help you can, from mentors or your contacts who have already done it. Hustle and network, and always listen to what your customers need.

Who do you most admire in business?

Kevin Mitnick, Chief Hacking Officer of KnowBe4 is a true cyber security legend and Security Consultant to the Fortune 500 and governments worldwide. He also helps the FBI despite being on the Most Wanted list in the past.

Exciting news from Supersonic Playground

Supersonic Playground are really excited to share some big news. We have recently been acquired by the prominent technology agency, Appoly Group. This acquisition marks a significant milestone for us, emphasising our dedication to extending our national reach and augmenting our capacity to offer our customers outstanding products and services.

You can rest assured that the high level of service and attention you have come to appreciate from us will remain unchanged. Our founder, Rich Dean, will continue to be a part of the company, focusing on new business development and creative direction.

Our team, office, name, and brand will remain unchanged, ensuring you receive the consistent,

personalised service you trust. Headquartered in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, Appoly Group specialises in complementary digital services such as: Web application development, Native iOS/Android mobile app development, Cybersecurity.

With Supersonic Playground joining their ranks, their team boasts 30 talented developers and creatives. We are enthusiastic about the new opportunities this partnership offers our clients, and we are confident that Appoly Group's expertise will elevate our capacity to serve you.

For more information please visit www.supersonicplayground.com www.appoly.co.uk


James Merrix

Co-founder of Appoly Group

"We believe Supersonic Playground will contribute a wealth of creative experience to our group, and we hope Supersonic Playground's clients will benefit from the group's wider offerings. We are excited to welcome them to the group."

Rich Dean

Founder of Supersonic Playground

"The Supersonic Playground team and I are really excited to join Appoly Group. It's a hugely important step forward for the company and it opens a new chapter in our growth. I'm really looking forward to being able to continue to help with new business and creative direction."



Managing Partner of Girlings Solicitors, Andrew Watson, retires

Andrew Watson, Managing Partner of leading Kent Law firm Girlings Solicitors LLP, has retired following a 26-year spell as the firm's Managing Partner and having spent his entire career, spanning almost 40 years, with the firm.

Andrew joined Girlings as an Articled Clerk in June 1984, qualified as a Solicitor in 1986, became a Salaried Partner in 1989, and an Equity Partner in 1990. He succeeded Tony Girling as Managing Partner in 1997 aged just 36.

Girlings traces its origins back to Margate in 1881, and now has offices in Canterbury, Ashford, and Herne Bay. During his tenure as Managing Partner, Andrew oversaw the successful evolution of the firm away from its roots as a multi-office

High Street practice to a highly regarded full-service practice offering a mix of business law and private client services.

Andrew combined his role as Managing Partner with a successful litigation practice. His particular focus is contentious probate work where he is recognised as an expert in the field. His combination of skills and old school courtesy have earned him the respect, affection, and admiration of colleagues and opponents alike.

He has acted for clients in several noteworthy and reported cases, including Hogg v Dover College (an employment case), Wood v Smith (a case on the validity of a will), and Paine v Catlins (an insurance case arising from a hotel fire).

Beyond his work with the firm, Andrew's passion for cars, boats, and his expanding family have provided welcome balance to the rigours of legal practice.

Andrew is succeeded by Lesley Rushton, who becomes the first female Managing Partner in the firm's history. Other management changes include the appointment of Carl Vincent as the firm's Chairman and the promotion of Charlotte Nock and Chris Brightling to the firm's Management Board.

Lesley Rushton said: "While Andrew will be greatly missed, he will be able to enjoy his retirement knowing that his achievements have laid down a strong legacy upon which the firm will continue to build. We are immensely grateful for Andrew's service and dedication to the firm."



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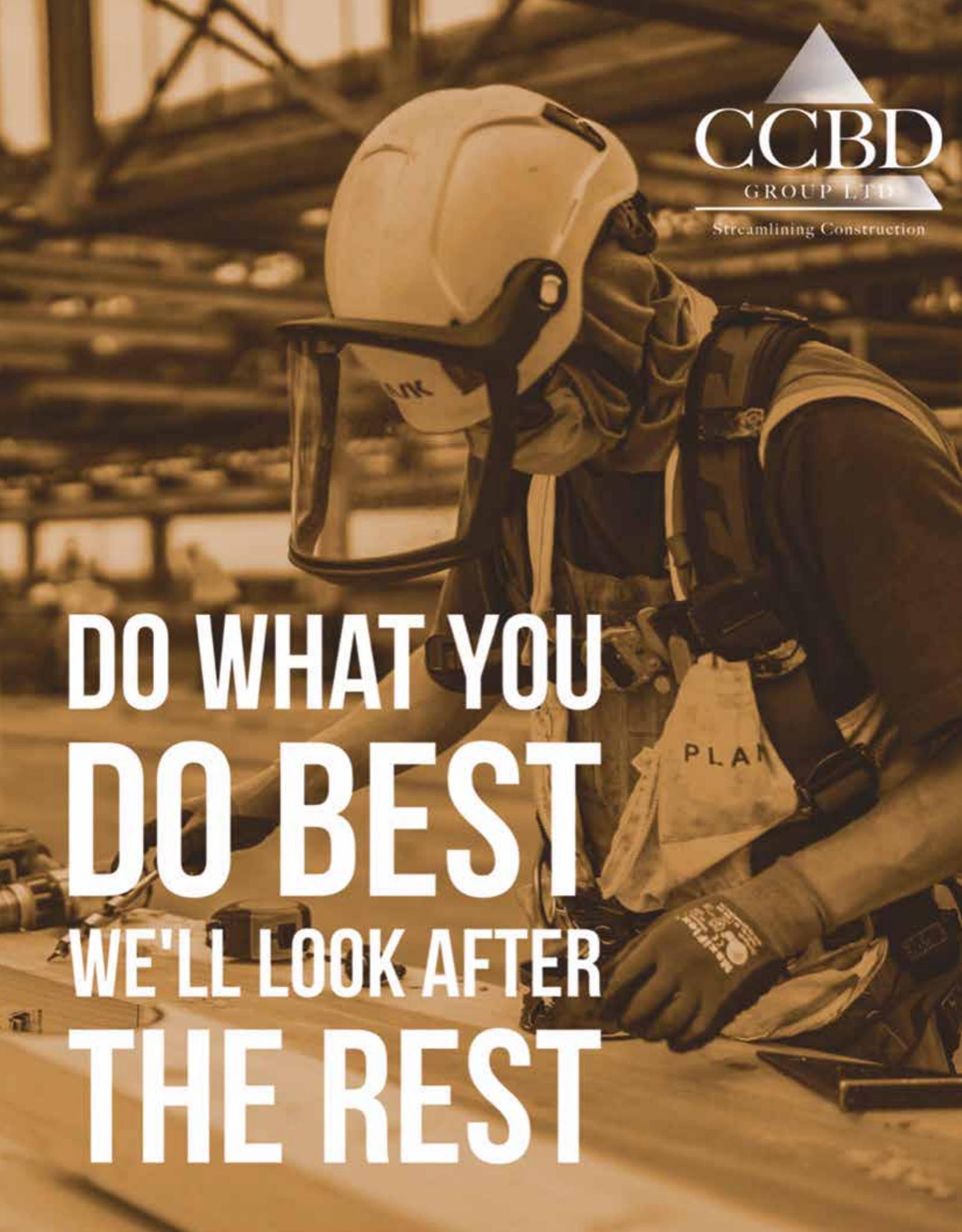
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