

BUSINESS focus

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Official Magazine of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Winter 2018/19

FOOD for THOUGHT

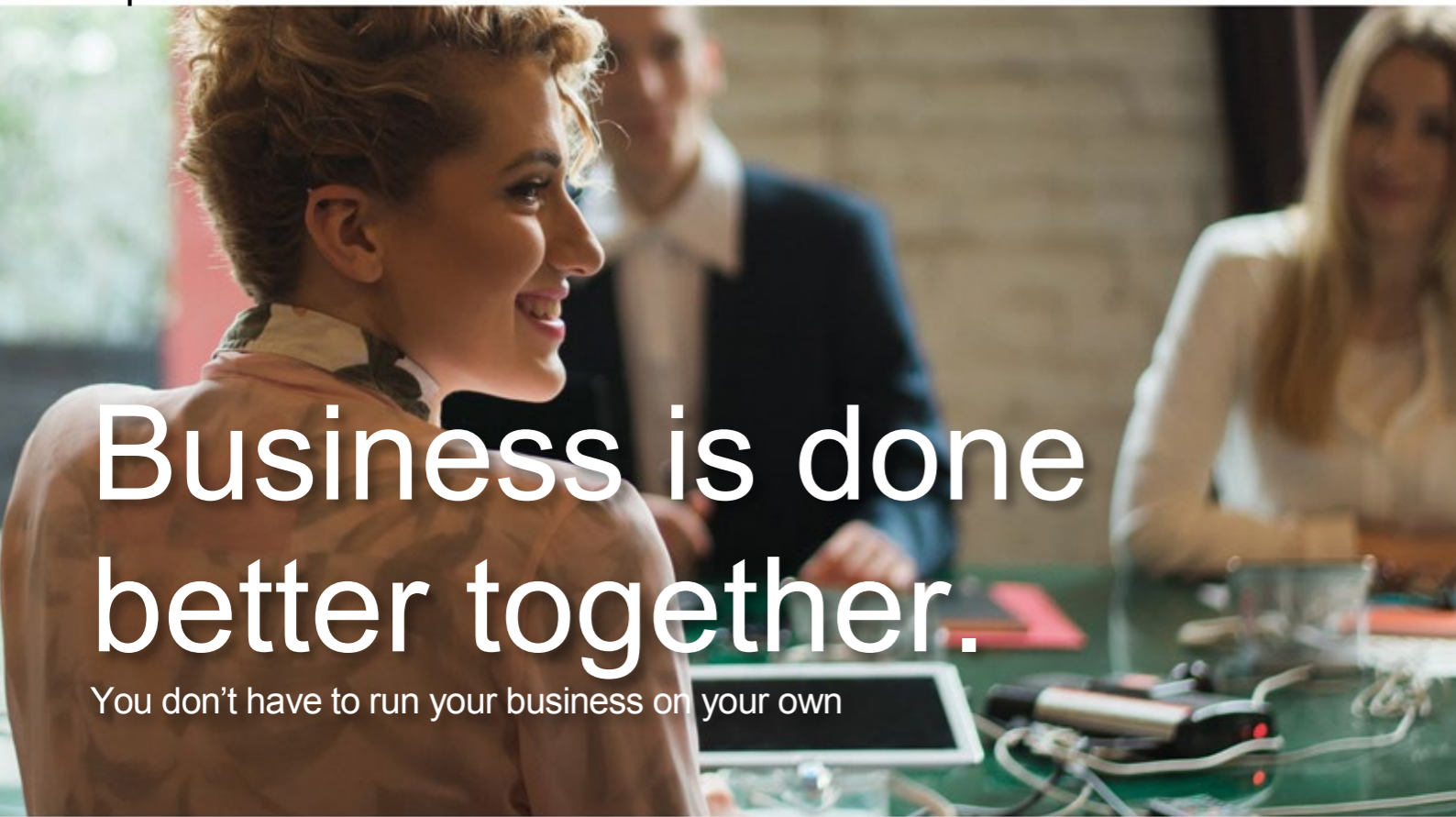
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BUSINESS focus

Official Magazine of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Our Partners



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Business Focus is an open forum for members of the Chamber. Your news, views, features and other items for possible inclusion are most welcome.

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As Brexit negotiations continue to dominate headlines and a lack of clarity surrounds our future relationship with the EU, it remains unclear which issues will directly impact the Bedfordshire business community. But, what we do know is that it's more important than ever that the voice of business is heard.

The Chamber's voice on behalf of the business community was directly referenced in the recent budget announcements. The Chancellor responded to the Chambers' calls by delivering a budget that positively answered most of the British Chambers of Commerce's (BCC) requests. This included an increased Annual Investment Allowance to £1m, securing the VAT threshold for the next 2 years, changes to the SME co-funding for apprenticeships, rates relief for the high street and additional funding for potholes.

These requests were formed based on member input, and truly demonstrates the strength of our voice when we work together.

One of our key commitments to you as a Chamber is to ensure that the voice of Bedfordshire businesses is reaching the very heart of the government.

With that in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Professor Helen Atkinson CBE, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Aerospace, Transport and Manufacturing at Cranfield University, Oli Jaycock, Head of Marketing & Strategic Affairs at London Luton Airport, Matt Harvey, MD of CATS Aviation and Richard Cooper, Board director at Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce for representing Bedfordshire at the inaugural National Expert Panel on Transport for BCC. The panel has been assembled to guide national policy direction in transport and infrastructure from experts across the Chamber network, with Bedfordshire Chamber being the largest contributor to the panel. It aims to represent the collective interests, not just for companies that operate within the county but UK business as a whole.

Your role and views are so important and by working together, I know we can achieve more for Bedfordshire.

#BusinessTogetherness

Justin Richardson

Chief Executive



focuscontent

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Jeremy Brockis
Chairman of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

The **Chairman's** View

What did the British Chamber of Commerce ever do for us (to mis-quote *'Life of Brian'*)?

I recently attended the British Chambers of Commerce annual general meeting in London. Amongst all of the discussions surrounding the BCC's wide-ranging corporate governance review, and changes to its articles of association (which even a sad corporate lawyer such as myself struggles to find particularly exciting.....), we looked at some of the really positive contributions and achievements of the BCC over the last year.

Much of the work of the BCC involves lobbying on behalf of its members and British industry generally. It engages almost constantly with government and it has regular meetings with government bodies at the very highest levels. Chamber representatives attend monthly meetings of the EU Brexit Business Advisory Group (headed by the Chancellor), and bi-monthly trade meetings with Liam Fox at the Department for International Trade. It is part of the HMRC's Joint Customs Consultative Committee, and has regular meetings with BEIS, DExEU, DIT, HMRC and HMT, as well as many other initials(!).

These various groups and committees are not mere talking shops, they make a real contribution to shaping government policy. The BCC's lobbying has helped to obtain a Budget commitment from the government to introduce further steps to mitigate the effects of business rate rises. It has also helped secure a commitment to freeze the VAT threshold for two years, rather than to cut it as had been feared. Further support has been obtained for apprenticeships, with a relaxation of the restrictions around levy transfers, to allow levy payers to pass more of their unspent funds to SMEs. And, in conjunction with other business organisations, the BCC has successfully lobbied to obtain the UK government's commitment to seek a transition period in respect of Brexit.

The BCC has also been working hard in other areas. Considerable amounts of work has been undertaken in relation to the revised regimes surrounding non-preference and preference trade documentation. Regardless of the how hard (or soft) Brexit turns out to be, there is likely to be a massive increase in the demand for export documentation, and Chambers will offer traders peace of mind, and an efficient and trusted partner when trading across the UK border.

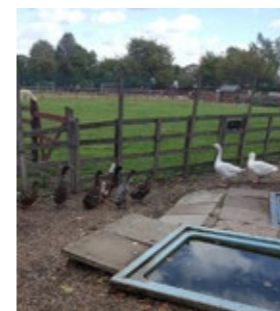
The lobbying and other efforts of the British Chambers of Commerce will continue to promote and assist British industry whenever we can. I would urge you all to take an active part and engage regularly with your Chamber. We are here to represent your views, and the more we hear from you, the better (and we aren't limited just to the aqueducts, sanitation, medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, a fresh water system and public health.....).

“I would urge you all to take an active part and engage regularly with your Chamber.”

Chamber Community Day



Weatherfield Academy was the backdrop for the first Chamber Community Day.



One of the most renowned features of the Academy is, of course, their farm, and it was here that we saw the gang switch up the daily office grind for some old-fashioned manual labour.

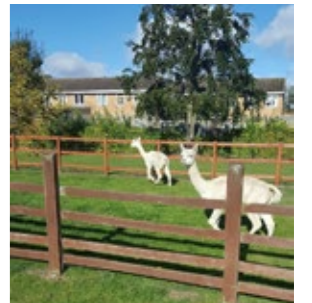
As a team, (also joined by David Meager of DRM Business Training and Consultancy) we got stuck into some fence-painting around the grounds of the farm, accompanied by some friendly (albeit noisy!) goats, llamas, geese and ducks.

The students gave the team a warm welcome during their morning assembly, and we also indulged in a spot of nostalgia as we enjoyed a traditional school dinner with them come lunchtime. It was an incredibly enjoyable and rewarding visit.

What a great opportunity to give something back to the community and enjoy some healthy team-building. Headteacher, Joe Selmes at Weatherfield Academy - a school academy for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and complex emotional needs said: "We greatly appreciate the time given and the links with businesses the Chamber gives."

Activities like this are just one of the ways you can support your local schools and charities, and we are always happy to help you make these connections.

The team are looking forward to finding out what next year's Chamber Community Day will be!



CHAMBER FOREIGN EXCHANGE

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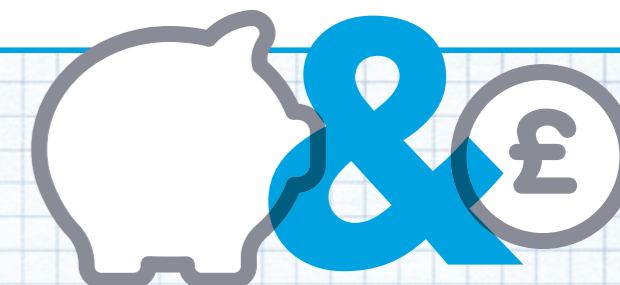
Better together.



Better together.

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Quarterly Economic Survey Report



Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) forms part of the British Chamber of Commerce's national survey and is the principal business survey in the UK. Its results are closely watched by both the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and the Treasury. The data reveals a timely and accurate snapshot for the economic climate for businesses in Bedfordshire and beyond.

Our latest results have been published and the outcome for Q3 2018 indicates local business confidence remaining buoyant with 65% of respondents believing turnover will improve over the next 12 months though 19% expect profits to decline.

- ✦ Advanced domestic orders or custom also saw an improvement in the period with 55% of respondents expecting to see orders increase, 35% to remain constant and 10% expecting a decline.
- ✦ Expectations for investment in training saw a net 8 point contraction on the previous quarter, with only 17% of businesses expecting to invest in training over the next 3 months.
- ✦ Cashflow over the period took a significant dip with 31% of respondents experiencing a decline.

The Bottom Line

To see the report in full please visit www.chamber-business.com

Quarterly growth not likely to maintain momentum

Commenting on the first estimate of GDP for Q3 2018, published today by the ONS, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

"While the pick-up in GDP growth in the third quarter is welcome, the stronger headline figure masks a loss of momentum through the quarter from the particularly strong July outturn, when a number of temporary factors, including the heatwave and the World Cup, boosted activity."

"The services and construction sectors were the strongest performers in the quarter, reflecting a boost in activity from the exceptionally hot summer. The fall in business investment is a concern as it stifles productivity and growth. However, measures such as the increase in the Annual Investment Allowance announced in the Budget should provide a lift to investment over the near term."

"It remains likely that the stronger growth recorded in the third quarter is a one-off for the UK economy, with persistent Brexit uncertainty and the financial squeeze on consumers and businesses likely to weigh increasingly on economic activity in the coming quarters."

"Against this backdrop, the Bank of England's recent hawkish rhetoric looks a little misguided and risks a further weakening in business and consumer confidence. With inflation on a downward trajectory and the UK's growth outlook subdued, there remains sufficient scope for the central bank to keep interest rates on hold for some time yet. To ease the extent of current uncertainty, the government must deliver a comprehensive Brexit deal that gives firms the clarity and precision they need."



Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce

Working together, achieving more.

You'll find plenty of opportunities to connect with other Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce members and local businesses at any of our upcoming events in 2019. With such a variety you're bound to find an event that suits your schedule and provides your business with ways to develop even further.

Connect Over Coffee & Awards Masterclass

Wednesday 9th January, 9.30am - 11am

Basepoint, Luton

Free of Charge

The Chamber, Basepoint Luton and Events & PR invite you to our informal Coffee Morning. This event will give you the chance to network with many other businesses, plus also hear from the SME Luton & Bedfordshire Business Awards 2019, Awards Director, Damian Cummins, he will be sharing tips on how to get your entries noticed by the judges. You will also learn how to use awards as a free marketing opportunity for your business. Previous winners will also explain how their win has propelled their business over the last year and find out exactly what this year's judges are looking for.



Meet the Buyer

Wednesday 27th February, 9.30am

Putteridge Bury, Luton

More information to follow, keep an eye on our website for more details as they develop.



Meet the Neighbours

Wednesday 13th March, 12noon - 2pm

The Sharnbrook Hotel, Sharnbrook

Members Only: £17.00 + vat

Business doesn't recognise borders, which is why you should join us for a great event where you can promote your businesses to like-minded business people from neighbouring areas Milton Keynes, North Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. This is your opportunity to meet with up to 90 different business people in an informal atmosphere with speed-type networking and a light lunch. Make sure you bring plenty of business cards and be prepared for a fun and fast approach to networking. Maximum of 2 people per company.



Connect Over Coffee

Thursday 24th January, 9.15am - 11am

Woodland Manor Hotel & Restaurant, Clapham

Free of Charge

The Chamber invites you to our informal Coffee Morning. This event will give you the chance to explore the various services available to your business through your membership and to network with other new and existing members.

Your membership can benefit your whole business - why not bring colleagues with you?



You Too Can Export Workshop

Wednesday 30th January, 9am to 12 noon

Hart House Business Centre, Luton

Free of Charge

Taking the first steps into international markets can seem very daunting to many businesses, meaning they miss some exciting opportunities for business growth. If you are unsure how to realise the many opportunities out there for your product or service and want to learn more, this workshop will provide clear guidance on how to move forward and provide you with piece of mind. This workshop covers the following:

- A general look at International Business
- Making those initial steps
- Government support
- Using the Internet to assist moving your business to new markets
- Gain an understanding of the costs involved
- How to prepare your business to make the first steps.



WORKING WOES

6 of the most worrying business challenges keeping leaders up at night

It's been said that uncertainty and change are, ironically, two of the only things that are certain in business. And it takes a particular type of person to thrive in such a volatile environment.

Entrepreneurs and leaders are known to be focused, innovative and highly driven by nature, cultivating their talents in order to propel their business model. But the path to success doesn't come without its challenges.

In the first few years of business, there will be numerous difficulties and obstacles to overcome. Similarly, long-standing household names are not without their challenges either. If running a business were easy, everyone would be doing it!

It is for this reason that business leaders seldom enjoy the luxury of an undisturbed night's sleep. Here, we take a look at some of the most worrying challenges keeping business leaders up at night.

1. Skills gaps

The skills gap is apparent across a range of industries and sectors, particularly in the wake of the digitally dependent climate we find ourselves in. The digital world is transient, and because of this constant state of change, it's increasingly difficult for businesses to manage their recruitment requirements. As more compliant-specific, technical and engineering roles begin to evolve - all of which are reliant on specialist expertise - finding the best fit for the role becomes a greater challenge than ever.

Previously, industries that have been known to struggle with finding the appropriate skills within the UK have preferred to lean on EU labour. In the lead up to Brexit, uncertainty grows over whether we will lose the luxury of being able to select from a wider pool of talent as far as the EU.

2. Business regulations

With business comes regulation. And the laws are fast becoming more stringent. With data protection, shared parental leave and the modernisation of many other regulations, new challenges are posed to HR departments and leaders. GDPR left many of us flustered in the lead up to its commencement. Likewise, we have the addition of new regulations such as the EU Cookie law, Making Tax Digital and environmental legislations. But there's no need for these to hamper the productivity of the business environment once in place. It is rather about knowing where to seek advice or support in implementing them appropriately that is likely to be the main concern here.

3. Brexit

A post-Brexit world can be daunting for SMEs. Such a volatile landscape proceeds the divorce - and its imminence will undoubtedly cause many sleepless nights across our community. It is certainly going to fuel change in the business environment. The Independent reports that only 6% of SMEs feel the government is listening to their concerns over Brexit. Loss of EU labour and as a result, skill shortages, along with increased regulation and the introduction of trade tariffs tend to be among the biggest concerns manifesting since the referendum.

4. Connectivity issues

When it works, technology can improve business functionality, efficiency, productivity and the ability to communicate. However, when not working as it should, connectivity issues, for example, can be an extreme hindrance on the ability to function properly. They stand to lose businesses profit, time and in some cases, customers. Hours are sometimes lost due to staff not being able to operate effectively.

5. Competition

No matter your niche, industry, or product, competition is an inevitability. Competition can pose a threat, or it can be a catalyst to innovation and development - the challenge lies with keeping business in a good enough position to compete effectively.

The internet presents ample opportunity for aspiring business leaders, and the increased accessibility for creating a business means it's harder for SMEs to stand out. Everyone has access to their own domain and designing their own logo online. This creates a broader level of competition.

6. Cashflow

Nothing can be more stressful than financial problems. Cashflow problems manifest in many forms; difficulties projecting expenses, accounts payable draining your resources, or a client's resistance to paying. This puts your business, your employees, and your own salary in a vulnerable position. Having adequate cash reserves means you can meet all of your necessary obligations, but when this becomes problematic, your days and nights can be plagued with worries of when and where that much-deserved cash is going to become tangible.

A business community, driven by 'Business Togetherness', is what keeps the Chamber of Commerce alive. We thrive in being able to foster mutually beneficial relationships between our members, and when concerns such as those stated above transcend industry, sector and business type, having a valuable network of like-minded individuals can be the support you need.

What's more, your local Chamber of Commerce is happy to offer impartial advice on any of the above challenges.

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For full details on the sponsorship packages available in 2019 email events@chamber-business.com or call Paula on 01582 522316.

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LOBBYING

What can be achieved when you have a voice?

By definition, lobbying is "The act of attempting to influence business and government leaders to create legislation or conduct an activity that will help a particular organisation."

Professional lobbyists are excellent communicators and paid persuaders whose job it is to influence the decisions of the government. Lobbying campaigns are constructed strategically using an array of tactics and often go unnoticed by the public eye, which might explain why the act itself has earned a somewhat controversial status.

But lobbying is actually a very useful business tactic, particularly for businesses facing threat - whether in the form of corporate tax hike, government privatisations or new policy regulations that could influence against a product or service. It's also used as a way of engineering mass conversation in favour of views that concur with your business' propositions.

At the Chamber, our team members sit on a number of boards and groups that have influential status over political matters. We work to express the views of our members representing them locally, regionally and nationally, on issues that could affect their business.

Recent examples include the "Not Spots" campaign, an issue which is directly affecting many of our members by hindering their productivity and their ability to do business properly. Justin Richardson, CEO of Bedfordshire Chamber, is backing the campaign, and gathering evidence in an attempt to give a voice to those affected. The end result is hoped to be one that highlights the issue and influences those in power to take action.

Lobbying is the opportunity to use a voice with authority to advocate to your advantage. For example, whether laws and policies need to be revised, or regulations or policies that might influence public perception of your product/service.

Lobbying and representation is one of the central values that we provide as part of Chamber membership.

Types of lobbying

There tends to be two types of lobbying: direct and indirect. Direct lobbying involves direct interaction with key decision makers and politicians; this could be in the form of written letters, phone calls and in-person meetings.

Direct lobbying involves working to persuade the people directly in charge of the decision.

Indirect lobbying, on the other hand, is the act of working to get your messages into the media, helping you gain public support that will influence decision-makers. Indirect lobbying is similar to when the public consensus starts influencing decision-making in government.

Professional lobbyists, therefore, position their campaigns to address these topics and influence both the public and the authorities to sway towards the best interest of their clients. We've seen well-known lobbying campaigns that focus on worldwide issues such as climate change make both headlines and an impact. This is something that is always happening somewhere under the surface, and every so often makes its way into the mainstream media.

Why lobbying is good for business

As a small to medium enterprise specifically, you may not have the internal facilities or expertise to lobby for yourself. Some regulations are absolutely central to the running of your business, and with the fast pace at which the social, financial and economic landscape is shifting, the environment in which we operate is a volatile one. To run a successful lobbying campaign requires a significant amount of manpower and expertise, which many small businesses do not have the luxury of.

Businesses, charities, trade unions and even individuals can benefit from lobbying. The act of lobbying itself is dependent on the industry, the scope, and the country. For example, lobbying for an enterprise which employs over 1,000 people would be a very different venture to the lobbying carried out on behalf of an SME employing around 10 people.

Having that higher representation will provide exponential benefits for your business, no matter your size, particularly when there is a need to engage public involvement.

An effective lobbying strategy will engineer a conversation or a following on a subject matter of vital influence to your brand or product. PR companies are often referred to as lobbyists because they have the ability to influence public perception. When the mass consensus holds a view that concurs with that of your businesses, this can be extremely valuable. Mass conversations are often engineered by lobbyists.

Lobbying can also be used as a tool to challenge legislation that holds you back, passing on your views of a government policy and forthcoming legislation with the privilege of having someone with authority speak on your behalf. They can also contribute to national campaigns about red tape and regulation.

Right now, collective UK Chambers of Commerce are representing the best interests of British businesses, across a wide range of topics. For example, ensuring the fundamentals of the UK business environment are right, enhancing the UK's mobile and digital capabilities and putting the practical concerns of business at the heart of the Brexit negotiations.

The Chamber of Commerce aims to speak to its members on a regular basis so that we are aware of issues that are impacting the growth and success of your business. These views are central to the Chamber's choices and actions when it comes to how we approach our conversations. If you would like to speak to us more about how we can give you a voice, get in touch.




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Jordans Mill

A great day out starts here!

Jordans Mill is a unique food heritage attraction in rural Bedfordshire offering historic Mill museum tours, beautiful gardens, a Riverside Café and Mill shop with locally sourced produce.



Step back in time

Jordans Mill's charming location on the banks of the River Ivel was first mentioned as a milling site in the Domesday Book of 1086. Centuries later, in 1893, the Jordans purchased what was then called Holme Mills to produce flour.

The Jordan family may be best known for producing the UK's first breakfast cereal bar in 1979 but they were making history long before that. Six generations of William Jordans have taken the family business in Bedfordshire from agriculture and transport to innovative production methods for the flour business, followed by animal feed, before introducing granola into our diets.

Jordans Mill has been home to the Jordan family for over 150 years. Located on the banks of the River Ivel, it was valued at 47 shillings. At the time, the mill was one of around 400 mills just in Bedfordshire alone.

A key part of the visitor experience is a guided tour of the iconic Mill museum. The tour, which lasts approximately one hour, takes visitors on a fascinating journey from the beginnings of milling in Bedfordshire to Jordans Cereals' place as one of the UK's leading cereal manufacturers.

During the tour, our guides bring the Mill to life through a demonstration of the ingenious milling machinery and tales of the Jordan family and the generations that worked in the Mill.



1894-1899: The original mill building

The perfect venue for your meeting

Jordans Mill provides a unique location for private functions and meetings. The building is both stylish and comfortable and supported by first class service and great food. Only 1.5 miles from the A1, near Biggleswade, Jordans Mill enjoys excellent transport links and has ample car parking facilities.

We have two contemporary first floor rooms, both with lovely views and a private balcony in each overlooking meadow and gardens. Both rooms are equipped with full AV facilities, hearing loops and have air conditioning. Toilets, including an accessible toilet, are all located within a short distance of the rooms. Free Wi-fi is available throughout the site and parking is free.

The Ouse room

Our prestigious Ouse Room is a large, open and stylish function facility with a wide view of the river and doors to the private balcony. The room offers a generous space which can be used for a manner of different events for numbers ranging from 15 to 60 people.

The Ivel room

With wonderful views, a private balcony and well-proportioned layout, the Ivel Room is a flexible location that can be used for any event. The L Shaped floor plan with a large purpose built meeting table allows for 8 to 14 people for meetings, presentations or private functions.

Delicious, freshly made food in a riverside setting

The large Riverside Café has space for over 100 diners inside with a popular outside terrace, a favourite spot for visitors in the warmer months. The Riverside Café serves a varied menu which changes seasonally, using local ingredients where possible with everything freshly prepared.

Explore the stunning gardens

Visitors are free to explore the Mill Gardens. Take a stroll through the unique food and flower gardens where crops, vegetables and fruits are grown in an ornamental setting alongside wild flowers and cultivated garden plants.

Views of the River Ivel run can be seen at many points from around the garden and the pathways lead up to lots of resting points where you can admire, rest and soak up the atmosphere. What you will see is how the layout of the gardens resembles small fields with wildflower margins to help preserve wildlife habitats across the site.

From the Mill Gardens, stroll across the bridge into the Mill Meadow, which teems with wildflowers in the summer, and next to the meadow is the woodland area which is specially designed to attract wildlife. Throughout the gardens and meadow you can learn more about our new site signage and information hub.

Easy access

Jordans Mill is accredited as a Quality Assured Visitor Attraction from Visit England and is suitable for wheelchair users. The Heritage Centre has automatic double doors with no steps and a lift.

For further information visit www.jordansmill.com or follow us on Facebook /jordansmill or Twitter @JordansMill



Victorian flour Mill



Crop, vegetable and fruit gardens open all



Today's modern cereal products adorn the shelves of supermarkets nationwide

Member News



Temporary Recruitment

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#MeToo Movement lands in Bedfordshire

Hollywood may have brought the MeToo Movement to light, the fight for gender inequality has arrived in Bedfordshire with the launch of the EVOLVE network by the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation. Hosted by the High Sheriff, Julian Polhill at Howbury Hall the launch was lifted by an inspiring speech from the well-known business woman and philanthropist, Dame Stephanie Shirley.

The EVOLVE network was initiated to harness the skills, expertise and resources of local women in order to address gender inequality within the county and to raise funds for the Mark West Fund for Women, which funds local charities who support women in vulnerable situations.

Fozia Irfan, the CEO of the Foundation stated: "We know that women and women's services have been disproportionately hit by austerity measures – women face a triple jeopardy of cuts to jobs, benefits and vital services. Many women work in part time, insecure employment which makes them vulnerable but conversely a lot of the services they need to access for themselves and their families, have also been severely underfunded."

So far, the Foundation has raised almost £100,000 for the Mark West Fund for Women from individual donations and from organisations such as London Luton Airport Limited and the Amateurs Trust. These donations have been used to fund projects run by local charities such as Azalea to help women, facing poverty and homelessness and Families First who work with victims of domestic abuse.

The Foundation is calling on local women who are interested in being part of the movement to advocate for gender equality in the county and to raise funds for women, to come together in this collaborative network.

Thanks also have to go to MHA MacIntyre Hudson and the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce for supporting this event and to the Lord Lieutenant, Helen Nellis for taking on the role of Patron of the network.

Further details can be found on our website <http://www.blcf.org.uk/giving/donate/evolve/> or by contacting fozia.irfan@blcf.org.uk on 01234 834930



Sir Thomas Keens; the man who put Luton and King's House School on the map

In the last quarter of the 19th century Luton was little more than a small town dominated by the hat industry. Within a few short decades, the town was well on the way to being transformed into one of the most vibrant industrial towns in the south of England.

This amazing feat, described in the national press at the time as an 'economic miracle', was the result of a bold joint-venture between the Borough Council and the newly formed Chamber of Commerce. The lynchpin between the two was Thomas Keens, Councillor for the North Luton Ward, founder of the accountancy firm Keens, Shay, Keens and Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce.

To spearhead the campaign, Keens wrote a ground-breaking booklet, unique for its time, entitled 'Luton as an Industrial Centre'. Widely distributed to businesses and industrial leaders up and down the country, it promised cheap land, subsidised electricity and discounted business rates for any qualifying enterprise wishing to relocate to Luton. So successful was this strategy that before too long the town's housing and infrastructure were struggling to cope.

Education was equally a concern for the affluent and expanding Luton business class, and in 1891 a group, led by Keens, Richard Charker and David Southam, raised the capital for a new private school based in King Street by the name of King's House School. The school flourished during and after World War 1 and in 1926 Miss Costin moved the school from King Street to a large, detached property in Dunstable Road called 'Moorlands' which it leased from the Walsh family who were King's House Parents.

From 1926 until 2011 the school was therefore known as Moorlands School, before it reverted to King's House School in September of 2011.

Thomas Keens, likewise, went on to achieve great success, becoming an MP and Chairman of Bedfordshire County Council. He was awarded a Knighthood in 1934 for public and political service. Until his death in 1953, the school's prospectus carried a personal endorsement from the man who did so much to help make his native town the industrial giant it had now become.

kingshouseschool.co.uk



#Growing Talent: Time for Action

Feedback from employers shows that recruiting young people with relevant skills and attributes remains challenging.

SEMLEP 'Growing People' is an employer-led approach to skills development and building a talent pipeline of individuals through making careers education relevant to the labour market, the core of the activity is employer-education engagement to inspire, promote appropriate pathways, develop skills and competencies.

From our surveys we know businesses have increased awareness of the value in employer-education engagement and an appetite to get involved and with the increasing focus by the Department of Education on the need for quality careers provision in schools, we now have the opportunity to influence young people and schools and make a difference. If we do not act now, skills shortages will worsen. We need businesses to take the lead with us and become involved.

SEMLEP aims to make it as simple as possible for employers to engage with school and college students through our established network that can:

- Provide employers with introductions to delivery partners and local schools
- Focus on high impact provision and relevant events that work for businesses
- Share best practice
- Provide coordination where required at no cost to employers or schools.

Please pledge your support to provide one or more employer engagement activities in schools and colleges per year by providing us with a contact at your organisation. Many businesses are working with young people and examples of some can be found at #Growing Talent. If you are you already working in schools, let SEMLEP know so we can help highlight your activity and help you to do more.

For more information contact Paul Thompson at paul.thompson@semlep.com or on 01234 436100.

Member News



Warden Plastics meets ethical and sustainable supply chain global standard



Mark Barrett
Managing Director
Warden Biomedica

Warden Plastics, the Luton based plastic injection moulding and extrusion company, has become a Sedex audited member following an external Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit (SMETA). Sedex is one of the world's largest organisations for helping companies manage responsible sourcing in their supply chain, helping protect people, the environment and business.

Warden Plastics worked alongside auditors over the past year to meet compliance across four pillars; labour standards, health and safety, the environment and business ethics. Commenting on the audit, Managing Director, Mark Barrett said, "We work hard to apply the most stringent ethical and environmental standards to our business operations and supply chain, and we're always looking to develop further. The audit enabled us to review the strengths and weaknesses of our internal systems and make improvements. Becoming a Sedex audited member demonstrates to our customers, staff and suppliers that we are truly committed to ethical performance and continuous improvement. We're proud to have achieved this global audit standard."

Warden Plastics works nationally and globally with companies in a wide range of industry sectors including automotive, electronics, medical, defence and construction. It invests heavily in advanced technology and production capability. Since it was established in 1957, the company has displayed a strong corporate social responsibility culture, always aiming to go beyond compliance in areas of sustainability, business integrity and health and safety. www.wardenplastics.co.uk



Loving Luton

Bedford College LOVES Luton. The region's No. 1 provider of apprenticeship and professional training is winning over new employers every week in the boom town of Bedfordshire.

With international companies like Vauxhall offering fantastic job opportunities locally, and working with The Bedford College Group for training, they lead the way in working with the top team. Led by Director Gina Bubbins, the college's Business Development Team are the conduit between employers, Government grants and the most eager would-be employees in the county.

"We have been working with the biggest and best employers in the South of the county for years, but as Luton takes off with some exciting developments at the airport and elsewhere, we are forming more great alliances," said Gina.

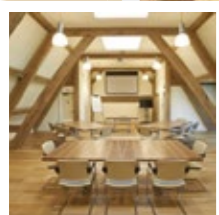
A dedicated Luton business development manager Mark Livingstone is on the road meeting managers who need advice on apprenticeships and advanced training for staff. He reports into Head of Business Development Rosetta Triolo who is well known from her years at Heart Radio and Central Bedfordshire Council. Together with the rest of The Bedford College Group team they have their sights firmly set on securing Luton business.

"Bedford College understands the needs of businesses and employers, we work with them and to their timetables and have the expertise to guide companies through the ever-changing Government funding around, for instance, the Apprenticeship Levy. Ask us for help, we know how to navigate the paperwork," added Gina.

Organisations from Luton who train their staff via Bedford College include Vauxhall, GKN, Luton Airport (Dart), Trumpf, Luton Borough Council and NHS Luton.



Our stunning conference and training rooms overlook the beautiful River Ivel, gardens and historical Mill museum.



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Cawleys Waste Management gives credit to the Bedford College team

Kirsty Dwan, HR Manager at Cawleys Waste Management, said: "When the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced, we at Cawleys decided to use it to develop our existing staff using local colleges.

"We partnered with Bedford College to deliver a supervisory and Management programme to our aspiring leaders. The communication and support from Bedford College has been great and we are just launching the first of two cohorts for the Level 3 Team Leader/Supervisor Advanced Apprenticeship with the second cohort due to start in early 2019.

"In addition Bedford College is delivering the Level 5 Management apprenticeship to departmental managers within our business. We look forward to further developing our staff with the help of programmes delivered by Bedford College.

"The partnership with Bedford College allows us to fulfil our wish to support local businesses as well as fulfilling our commitment to further development of staff within Cawleys that will help us to become an employer of choice in the local area." www.bedford.ac.uk/apprenticeships

Member News



The Bedford Daycare Hospice

The Bedford Daycare Hospice, an independent charity established in 1991, provides holistic care for patients with life limiting illnesses. We care for our patients in a calm homely atmosphere from diagnosis through treatments to either remission or palliative care. Our services are unique in Bedfordshire, where away from the clinical environment the patient can just be themselves in a safe place where the focus is on living. Our patients are cared for by a staff of registered nurses and we have a retired surgeon and a retired GP on our Board of Directors. A number of our Directors are due to retire shortly, and we are looking to welcome new voices and experience to our Board. The duties are not onerous and would include attendance at 4 or 5 Board Meetings per annum, usually held later in the day and lasting no more than two hours where the implementation of current plans is discussed together with formulating policies and plans for the future. If you would like to know more about joining us, bringing your commercial acumen, then please contact our Chairman Donald Parsons FRCS in confidence here at The Hospice. www.bedforddaycarehospice.org.uk

Royale Essance Ltd

Royale Essance Ltd is an innovative fragrance company, which created a brand called Royalé Scentric to deliver air care solutions to various industries. Here at Royale Essance Ltd we believe the power of scent can drive sales and change the mood in the room. This is why we created a robust Air Scent Device that can pump out a delicate mist of fragrance to create the perfect aroma in the air.

We know how much your business means to you and how important it is to maintain a high level of customer services. Welcoming your customers with a pleasant scent not only leaves a long last impression but also leaves a memory within the customers mind.

Your staff are one of the main keys that drive your business, this is why all of our Air Scent Devices are scientifically tested to enhance the mood in your work environment to achieve great results. Test results have proven that the power of scent can increase your sales revenue by maximum 20% in the first year.

Our Air Scent Device's work based on the size of the room (m2) from there we choose the most efficient device. We then go through the fragrance selection, where we have the most enchanting fragrances for you to choose from; however, if you feel you want something bespoke for your business, we can also offer this.

Contact Royale Essance to arrange your free consultation by telephone on 01582 283138 / 07391144466, by email at customer@royaleessance.com, or online at www.royaleessance.com



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Contact our Bedfordshire office on
01525 304479 or
julie.lewis@maplebrookwills.co.uk



Fire and Business Continuity, are you prepared?

What would happen if your business suffered a fire or other emergency?

Fact: Almost 1 in 5 businesses suffer some sort of disruption every year, be it fire, flood or other emergency.

Following a disaster 25% of businesses never re-open; 80% of companies who don't recover in a month are likely to go out of business; and 75% of businesses without Business Continuity plans fail within 3 years.

All Businesses no matter how small need to consider what to do in order to prepare for an emergency that may disrupt your business. If you don't, a fire or other emergency could result in:

- loss of reputation and/or loss of customers
- financial, legal and regulatory penalties
- human resource issues
- increased insurance premiums
- Or at worst the complete failure of your business!

A simple Business Continuity Plan can prepare you for the worst and help to ensure your business recovers. Each year there are over 3,000 arson attacks on businesses in the UK and arson accounts for over 45% of all fires at businesses with the majority of the offences down to opportunistic vandalism.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a duty on the Responsible Person to undertake a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment which will assist in the formulation of a Business Continuity Plan in relation to fire.

Do you have Fire Risk Assessment? And, if so, does it include:

- The regular checking of services (electric, gas etc)
- The provision and regular checking of Fire Safety systems (Fire Alarm, Emergency Lighting, Fire Fighting Equipment (FFE) etc.)
- Fire safety /evacuation procedures including regular fire drills (every 6 months)?
- Fire safety training upon induction and refreshed including the use of FFE (1 - 3 years)?
- Staff familiarisation with the fire alarm panel and the location of mains switches and valves?
- Who and how the emergency services should be called?
- Access for fire appliances and location of nearest fire hydrant?
- A procedure to ensure that all appropriate electrical /gas appliances are turned off?
- A procedure to check that all doors and windows are locked when the building is unoccupied?
- A procedure to check the integrity of external fences, gates and doors?
- A procedure for dealing with and signing off identified deficiencies?
- A designated area for external waste bins that are secured in situ away from the building?
- A designated area for skips, that is at least 6m away from the building?
- A list of out of hour's key holders made available to the Fire Service?
- Consideration of external risks associated with the environment? E.g. water (flood), failure of services?

Further advice can be found on Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services website: www.bedsfire.gov.uk

Chamber Online

Welcome to the new Chamber Online service, which is designed for your protection and peace of mind.

Members of Bedfordshire Chamber now have access to an online resource that features

- ✔ 750 free downloadable template business documents
- ✔ Documents cover HR / employment, health & safety and legal
- ✔ HR Health Check – find out how compliant you are regarding employment matters
- ✔ H&S Health Check – find out how compliant you are regarding health & safety
- ✔ Newsroom – keep up to date with news and legislation changes
- ✔ My Account Area – a place to store your frequently used documents

To access Chamber Online visit chamber.beds.questcover.com

Please note that you will need your unique log in details to access the documents. These can be obtained from the Chamber by calling 01582 522448.





New Members



We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all **New Members** of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. Members who have joined in the past three months are listed below. You can learn more about becoming a member and all of the associated benefits by calling us now on 01582 522448 or by emailing your enquiry to info@chamber-business.com

Aircraft Research Association Ltd

BEDFORD

Aircraft research, development and manufacturing, military and civil aviation

Atlas Translations Ltd

ST. ALBANS

Language services including translation, interpreting, subtitling, transcription & voiceover

AZ Syed & Co Limited

BEDFORD

IT, digital marketing agency

Business2Business

NEWPORT PAGNELL

Publisher of Business2Business, the monthly business newspaper for Bedfordshire

Ceema Technology Limited

BIGGLESWADE

Dedicated in-house mechanical and electrical design and assembly capabilities

Events and PR

OLD STRATFORD

We run 8 regional SME Business Awards including Luton and Bedfordshire, as well as the SME National Business Awards and the National Business Women Awards

FUJIFILM UK Ltd

BEDFORD

Fujifilm strives to push the boundaries of innovation to help make the world a better, healthier and more interesting place. In-house research promotes growth in existing fields - photography, medical and diagnostics, graphic systems - while exploring new possibilities in areas including biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, life sciences, energy and highly functional materials.

Holme Mills Heritage Centre Ltd

NR. BIGGLESWADE

A food heritage attraction situated on the banks of the river Ivel in Biggleswade - Riverside café, mill shop, meeting rooms, mill and beautiful flower gardens

Katrina Douglas Marketing

LUTON

Marketing strategy for businesses that are starting up or stuck

Lea Manor High School

LUTON

Secondary school in Luton

Luton Irish Forum

LUTON

Improving welfare, providing social opportunities and promoting Irish culture to all communities

Maplebrook Wills

SILSOE

Wills, trusts, lasting powers of attorney, funeral plans and probate

Moodpants Limited

LUTON

Designing a very different range of quirky ladies underwear to match your mood and retailing by website in the UK

Motor Neurone Disease Association

NORTHAMPTON

The MND Association is a charity focused on improving access to care, research and campaigning for people living or affected by MND. Our vision is a world free of MND.

Oil Pollution Services Ltd

SILSOE

Environmental equipment design

Otter and Moose Ltd

BEDFORD

Bedfordshire gift boxes

Rhombus Ltd

SILSOE

Engineering and technology consultancy. Contract staff supply. Security systems installation and maintenance

Spike Cacti

LUTON

Sells cacti and succulents

Star Platforms

DUNSTABLE

Star Platforms offer a UK wide powered access hire service including a comprehensive range of scissor lifts, cherry pickers and low-level platforms

UK Implant Manufacturing Co Ltd

DUNSTABLE

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Elevation coaching - elevating you, business and life to the next level

Victoria Dale

BEDFORD

Diversity and inclusion consultant

Water-to-Go

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Water filtration systems - Clean, safe filtered water, anytime, anywhere.

Member Profiles

Member Profiles are provided as part of membership to the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. You can learn more about becoming a member, so you too can enjoy this and a host of other benefits, simply by calling us now on 01582 522448 or by emailing info@chamber-business.com

Aircraft Research Association Ltd



Timothy Figg

www.ara.co.uk

tfigg@ara.co.uk

Aircraft Research Association is a leading independent specialist in aerodynamic research and solutions to international aircraft and defence manufacturers, including design and manufacture of high fidelity instrumented models, Transonic Wind Tunnel testing, high order Computational Fluid Dynamics (including flight physics analysis) and coordination of international research projects.

Amazon



Beth Magee

www.aboutamazon.co.uk

Amazon is proud to be part of the Bedfordshire community with fulfilment centres in Ridgmont and Dunstable, providing thousands of full time permanent roles with competitive pay and comprehensive benefits. Through Amazon in the Community we engage with local charities and welcome children from local schools on STEM tours at our sites.

Business2Business



Andrew Gibbs

01908 394501

www.businessmk.co.uk

news@businessmk.co.uk

Business2Business is the only dedicated monthly newspaper serving the Bedfordshire business community. It reaches the desks of around 4,000 decision-makers and is widely available in business venues across the county. It provides news and advertising opportunities to promote your business in print and online.

Victoria Dale – Diversity and Inclusion Consultant

Victoria Dale

07973111512

victoria@victoriadale.co.uk

Providing business-led consultancy and training solutions for employers to help them navigate the complex landscape of discrimination law, develop more inclusive people policies and practices and deliver practical Diversity and Inclusion strategies that help their business grow and attract, develop and retain a more diverse talent pool.

Luton Irish Forum

Noelette Hanley

01582 720447

www.lutonirishforum.org

info@lutonirishforum.org



We help Irish and other communities to meet their basic needs and become financially independent. We offer a choice of social activities to keep healthy and active, whether it's attending a club or volunteering. Our cultural events and activities encourage a more vibrant sense of community and of Irish identity.

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We are a Bedford based gift box company who really want to promote our lovely county. We specialise in gift boxes full of hand-made, Bedfordshire sourced products. Whether you need client gifts or gifts for loved ones do get in touch - we can help!

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Sabrina Appleton

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www.starplatforms.co.uk

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Star Platforms offer a national powered access hire service with a comprehensive range of scissor lifts, boom lifts (cherry pickers) and low-level access platforms. As an accredited IPAF provider, we also offer training courses on how to operate and manage powered access equipment effectively.



Toma Habashi

Director, *Silvertoad*

Meet Toma Habashi, director and owner of local creative agency Silvertoad

History of the company:

Silvertoad was many years in the making in my mind and ambitions, long before it had a name and became an actual company! I spent 18 years learning all I could around the industry. I started as a journalist, moved into publishing, then reprographics, followed by design which led me to print, print management and then back to tech when things all changed with the advent of PDF. I met a lot of people during these years and utilised my journalism skills to ask lots of questions along the way, absorbed all I learnt, put in lots of extra hours and pushed to get to the top of the tree in whatever I was doing and took advice from my first boss in the industry who said, if you're going to go for it, then do it at your peak. It will be hard to walk away from it all when you get there, but that's the time to do it. So at age 34, I did just that.

My total investment in starting Silvertoad was £35.00 to register the company, which I promptly claimed back as an expense as soon as our bank account was opened! I got some great advice from a very successful business man (who has been and still is a client of Silvertoad) at that time when I asked him if I should borrow money to start the business, he said 'you don't need mine or anyone else's money, just start your business and work as hard as you do and it will all come.' He was so very right and on the day of our 10th anniversary, I had the pleasure of calling him and thanking him for his amazing advice and his support and custom ever since.

We have developed and grown as a company since day 1 and continue to innovate and push boundaries in what we do. An agency like ours is exceedingly difficult to run and manage, it's an ever-changing landscape technologically and we're massively affected by ups and downs in the economy as marketing and advertising is (wrongly) one of the first things companies cut back on in difficult times. It's all the harder when you offer as wide a range of services as we do and across so many industries.

Silvertoad was and still remains very unique in what we do and this was the intention from the start. The aim was to bring a fresh approach to design, print and what was the early days of web. We never fazed by new technology or progress, in my mind media is media, it's simply the way we distribute the information that varies. It's been a journey that's for sure! YouTube was months old when Silvertoad was launched, facebook had just entered its second year. Insta followed 4 years later along with Pinterest in 2010 and we've had to adjust, learn and utilise all these platforms and a lot more besides. But we love it and we embrace it all and utilise whatever means we can to help promote our customers businesses, products and services and of course, our own!

Silvertoad was launched just 1 week after the credit crunch officially hit in 2008 and everyone said it was madness! It was, but it was calculated and it helped us to grow and flourish as we were happy to take the risk and go where others wouldn't and grew out of the recession together with it and beyond it.

How did you come up with the name?

It was the last and final attempt at the end of a long night spent at a lovely Italian restaurant with a friend, fuelled by far too many Peroni's. It was my friend who actually came up with it! All I'd

stipulated was that I didn't want to be pigeon-holed by our company name - I wanted it to be generic and allow us to grow and develop the business without limiting ourselves with the name. And of course, being an agency, it had to be quirky and well, just agency!

What motivates you? And how do you motivate your staff?

Lots of things motivate me, but money isn't one of them. My dad gave me some amazing advice when I was 16, 'Never focus on or be motivated by making money. Be excellent at and enjoy what you do and the money will follow. I motivate my colleagues and our team with respect and equality and give everyone an equal voice. There are no staff at Silvertoad and I'm just a member of that team like everyone else and do my part within that structure. We let individuals find their own place in the team and do what they love which is so very important.

What are the main principles you follow to build successful customer relations?

The same ones that I used to start and grow Silvertoad as a company over the last decade - honesty, integrity respect and empathy. It doesn't need to be any more complicated than that. One of my favourite sayings is 'people buy from people not from companies' and this is more true now than ever before. The more choice we have, the more we look to work with people who we trust to be honest with us, have the integrity to do the right things, for themselves and on a customer's behalf and of course, we all appreciate it when someone understands our problems or issues and is able to relate and help us through things.

That over 90 percent of our work at Silvertoad is through repeat business and recommendation is testimony to our strong principles, if we say yes and promise something, it will be done, every single time. Our customer service and the work we deliver, is our 'sales team' and as long as we focus on being excellent at what we do, we don't ever have to worry about customer retention or relations, it just happens! Much like the same principle I apply to money. That said, your 'suppliers' are equally as important as your 'Customers'. We're all but links in a chain and we all have our equally important part to play, up or down the chain. If you respect and treat your suppliers with the same fervour and thoughtfulness as your customers, then you are on the right track to success.

Describe yourself in 3 words:

I asked my 4 kids to answer this question as I was curious to see what they would say! Risky I know, but I was quite happy with their answer 'Honest, Hardworking & Determined'

Which three guests, living or past, would make your perfect dinner party?

Gerald Durrell, Winston Churchill & Elon Musk.

What advice would you give your 16 year old self?

Be careful who you trust. Say less, do more. Don't smoke!

www.silvertoad.co.uk



Eagle Lab



Introducing Barclays Eagle Labs

Our national network of Eagle Labs provides entrepreneurs, individuals and ambitious businesses with the space, tools and confidence to innovate and scale. We offer co-working and office space, structured mentoring, events designed to help businesses grow, industry and corporate transformation and access to new and emerging technologies.

Available as co-working, as fully-equipped tech labs, private offices or for mentoring, learning and events, Barclays is committed supporting businesses to advance their skills and digital confidence.

Having grown to 20 Eagle Labs across the UK in locations such as Cambridge, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Birmingham, with more Labs in the pipeline, we have opened our doors to more than 100,000 visitors and hosted over 1,600 community and business events since launching our first Lab in late 2015.

We facilitate and deliver learning and activities such as coding, digital fabrication and rapid product prototyping, as well as offer business incubation, mentoring and co-working and office space for ambitious high-growth businesses. Our aim is to become an integral part of the business and local community and complement the ecosystem wherever we operate.




The original concept for Eagle Labs was to take over under-used branch and office space and turn them into thriving business and community hubs to drive digital skills to help develop the UK economy. We have since broadened our model to work with partners who share our vision to create a prosperous and progressive community and have extended our reach beyond Barclays' spaces by partnering with like-minded organisations such as L&G in Cardiff, Avenue HQ in Liverpool, CodeBase in Edinburgh and Ormeau Baths in Belfast, to name a few.

We're also excited to announce that we have partnered with Cranfield University to launch an Eagle Lab at the campus. Situated within the heart of the Cranfield University campus, the Eagle Lab will be tailored to the aerospace and aviation technology community, drawing on the University's aerospace heritage stretching back over 70 years. The Eagle Lab is the first step in the University's AVIATE project (Aviation, Innovation and Technology Entrepreneurship) which will create unique specialist enterprise facilities and programmes at Cranfield University to support start-ups and SME's, particularly those with high-growth potential.

Our new Lab will also include a tech lab that will be fully equipped with digital fabrication equipment and include a dedicated Lab Engineer to help businesses and entrepreneurs gain a foothold into the world of Industry 4.0 which includes internet of things, user experience, sensor technology, advanced manufacturing and augmented reality as we believe that embracing new technologies and techniques are critical for the success of businesses.

We're looking forward to working with the business community in Bedfordshire.

Find out how we can support you and your business:

-  @Eagle_Labs
-  cranfieldeaglelab@barclays.com
-  labs.uk.barclays

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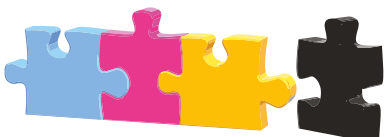
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