

BUSINESS focus

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Official Magazine of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Summer 2019



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Essential are powering ahead with
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BUSINESS focus

**Official Magazine of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce**

Our Partners



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Welcome to the summer edition of Focus

With March 29 now been and gone and the UK still part of the EU, the ongoing confusion around Brexit continues to create uncertainty in our region. Our latest Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) results has clearly illustrated business confidence has taken a significant dip, with future domestic and export orders forecast to be on the pessimistic side and investment intentions seeing further declines.

While we're working closely with British Chambers of Commerce to ensure members are as up to date on the latest issues surrounding Brexit, we recognise there are local challenges businesses are having to face; many of which we can have a direct influence on.

After consulting with over 100 members on their key priorities for the coming year we have been able to shape a manifesto that reflects the challenges, opportunities and changes members believe will create a positive impact on the success of business in Bedfordshire. The manifesto sets out its priorities in three core themes; People, Place & Trade.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank those members and key stakeholders who have contributed to the manifesto. Our aim is to continue working collaboratively on these priorities. We recognise that the business environment is an ever-changing landscape - now more so than ever - and as our future relationship with the EU becomes clearer or further trends appear, we will be seeking your views to build on the manifesto. Please take the opportunity to make your voice heard.

You can find our Manifesto at www.chamber-business.com and I welcome your views.

#workingtogether

#achievingmore

#businesstogetherness

Justin Richardson

Chief Executive



focuscontent

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|----|--|----|---|
| 4 | CHAMBER NEWS The latest news and updates | 14 | BUSINESS ADVICE SMALL BUT BEAUTIFUL BREAKS: Tax breaks and benefits every SME should know about |
| 7 | ECONOMIC REPORT Our quarterly financial report review | 15 | MEMBER NEWS Bedfordshire Chamber members share their news and developments |
| 9 | CHAMBER EVENTS Connect with other Chamber members and local businesses | 23 | NEW MEMBERS New businesses that have joined Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce |
| 11 | BUSINESS COMMENT NET LOSS: The worst business investments over the past two decades that saw money disappearing down the plughole | 24 | MEMBER PROFILES Learn more about our members |
| 12 | BUSINESS FEATURE Bedfordshire company Essential are powering ahead with aggressive expansion plans on 2019 | 25 | BUSINESS INTERVIEW Meet Alice Gadney, Director of Silver7 Mapping & Mini Map Makers |

**Jeremy Brockis**Chairman of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

“We now have the lowest level of unemployment since December 1974, and the level for women is the lowest since 1971, when records began. Without investment, the skills shortage is going to become an even bigger problem than it already is.”

The Chairman's View

So, the Brexit farce continues (I seem to have said that previously, and have a worrying feeling that I might be saying it for some time to come...). We are now told that Brexit will take place on Halloween if we do not agree to a deal beforehand which, as many have said, seems laughably appropriate.

The British Chambers of Commerce and individual businesses therefore have to continue to do what they can to prepare for Brexit, even if the politicians prefer to go on holiday (again). Some of this preparation is positive, such as the BCC expanding its chamber network into over 50 overseas markets, creating great opportunities for British business. However, some steps being taken are of less obvious benefit, such as stock-piling to mitigate the risk of a “no deal”, boosting imports and growth figures, albeit probably temporarily.

Nevertheless, whilst business does what it can in some respects, there are others where it is failing to grasp the nettle. The continued lack of investment is a major cause for concern. At the BCC Annual Conference at the end of March, NatWest said that business investment was down 14%. For too long British industry has relied upon an abundant workforce, made easier by the availability of workers from the rest of the EU, instead of investing in new technologies and improved working practices.

We now have the lowest level of unemployment since December 1974, and the level for women is the lowest since 1971, when records began. Without investment, the skills shortage is going to become an even bigger problem than it already is. Online recruitment consultancy Indeed says that online searches for jobs in the UK have fallen by around 500,000 per month. Those in the UK searching for jobs abroad has risen, so the job shortage from which so many of us suffer is only going to get worse.

Getting staff is going to require more money – these days 60% of people looking for jobs do so online, and 75% of those do so on their mobiles, so if a business fails to invest in a website optimised for mobile, it will lose out.

And it is not just a matter of spending more, some thinking outside the box might be required – another statistic that I saw recently was that 70% of CEOs think their business is innovative, but only 20% of their staff do: maybe talking to employees might be an idea to start with?!

Halloween is, of course, immediately followed by All Saints Day. Hopefully this will be an omen for good (although I might just be thinking that because it's also my birthday!).

Lobbying: best practices and techniques

Whether we've experienced its presence in the media, or benefitted from a successful outcome, lobbying will have played a role in most of our lives. Perhaps we've even felt its impact as a business, through a policy that was either rejected or supported by parliament.

Whether directly or indirectly, lobbying is a technique used to influence key decision makers, legislators or elected members of the government to try and persuade either for or against a policy.

Lobbying strategies can be employed by individuals, charities, businesses or pressure groups. The reason this is so relevant to business owners is because it could be relating to a policy that directly impacts the future of your business.

Why lobby?

Lobbying is a tool that enables us to make a difference, change laws and put pressure on the government. It involves the use of persuasive efforts to convince legislators and policymakers towards influencing political change, government decisions and policies.

Policymakers care about problems and it's their job to facilitate political change which can benefit those directly affected by the issues. Policymakers depend on lobbyists to present them with the facts, the concerns and the rationale behind their arguments to help them come to an informed and fair decision involving an issue. Those issues might pertain to topics such as public health, the environment, industry specific matters, education and more.

Types of lobbying

Direct lobbying: In an attempt to elicit policy change, advocacy groups or individuals can take efforts to influence constituency representatives via direct lobbying. This is a powerful and explicit approach which relies on building a working relationship with the legislator either through face-to-face meetings, emails, or contacting influential constituents and representatives and facilitating connections between them in an attempt to mobilise others to make change. This approach requires strategy and due diligence before, during and after the process in order to exert the right amount of pressure, adhere to lobbying best practices, and gain the most favourable outcome.

Indirect lobbying: Indirect lobbying takes place through other channels such as the media, and therefore happens more publicly. The purpose of indirect lobbying is to mobilise others and influence a lawmaker's stance by agitating the issue, pressuring lawmakers and representatives to take action. By heightening public awareness of an issue and attempting to affect public opinions, it gains widespread attention and puts pressure on policy makers to react and take action. Indirect lobbying can be carried out through the media, television, or even social media.

Lobbying etiquette

Decision makers and lawmakers will be most receptive to those who follow lobbying best practices and demonstrate etiquette throughout the entire process. These tips should help stay within the best practice guidelines and maximise your changes of resolving the issues and gaining the recognition and support you need.

Know your facts

Just as you would prepare for a presentation or a job interview, anticipate questions and be sure you are well-versed on the matter in question. Read literature around the topic and concerns you wish to resolve. Demonstrating your knowledge and dedication will help the decision maker hold you in higher regard.

Try to be brief and direct throughout any meetings and through any written communication. Policy makers are short on time and will appreciate you getting to the point.

Prepare

Take along a memorandum or agenda, include bill numbers and reference numbers that pertain to a particular legislation and be specific. Bring literature relevant to the matter, or anything that could support your argument. It's a good idea to leave something tangible with the legislator.

Also prepare yourself for a blatant refusal and rudeness. Take it with a dignified response and accept that this can unfortunately be part of the process. Becoming too argumentative or aggressive will most certainly go against you.

Follow up

Effective lobbying involves ongoing communication. Ensure you build a secure and trusted relationship with the decision maker in the lead up to any meeting, and always follow-up. If possible, try and secure a second meeting and thank them for their time.

Know the boundaries

Do not mistake your lobbying platform as an opportunity for bribery or protest, and steer clear of anything that may be misinterpreted as an illicit attempt to 'win over' the legislator. Stick to the etiquette, the guidelines and the facts.

When used correctly, lobbying can be a useful tool in mobilising and encouraging change, heightening mass exposure of a topic or issue, putting pressure on government and creating change that helps you reach your business goals. Whether it's an issue that directly or indirectly affects your business, your local Chamber of Commerce can lobby on your behalf. Get in touch if this is something you would like to find out more about.

www.chamber-business.com



Bedfordshire Business Manifesto

Throughout this period of significant economic and political uncertainty, Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce has been working closely with the local business community to identify the challenges, opportunities and changes our members believe will make a significant and positive impact on the success in our region. Informed by surveys, member input and developed by wider stakeholder discussions the Chamber commits to campaign for these changes and this manifesto sets out its priorities in three core themes:

See our full Business Manifesto at www.chamber-business.com, this also highlights the pledges we have made against the core themes for 2019/20.

People

Businesses can only perform as well as the people that start, run and work in them. To thrive, they need access to the right skills, in the right place and at the right time. A quality 'pipeline' of talent is essential, as are the tools to improve the skills of existing employees. We've seen and heard that local businesses are often hampered by mismatches between skills they need and those available in the local area. You have told us that your business needs more influence over the ways in which skills development is funded, as well as an alignment of the apprenticeship levy to match continuous learning and development that suits the needs of your business now and in the future.

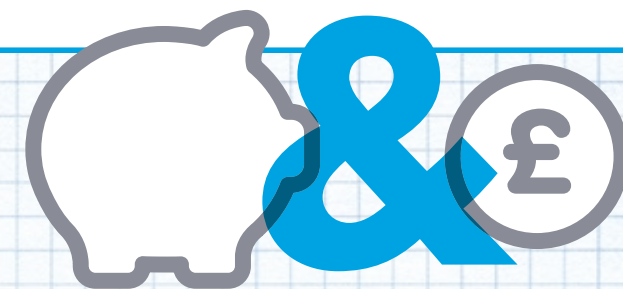
Place

A world-class economy needs world-class infrastructure. Businesses rely on transport networks to move goods and people and a modern digital infrastructure to compete in a competitive world. Failure to invest in capacity is hampering business growth. You have told us that for Bedfordshire to remain competitive we must not aim just to make do but to always focus on the long term growth of the county.

Trade

Business is the lifeblood of the economy, creating wealth, employment and opportunity. That's why it is vital that we create the right environment for small, medium and large sized companies to invest, grow and create new jobs. Ensuring our peer network continues as an enabler for business growth, both locally and internationally, is at the heart of what we do. You have told us that connecting members within the network with trading opportunities and create a thriving ecosystem of collaboration is essential to the growth of your business.

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 Q1 2019 saw business confidence take a significant dip with 53% of respondents expecting turnover to improve over the next 12 months but 27% expected profits to decline.

- There was a contraction of export revenues in the period with overseas sales and future orders declining.
- Domestic sales were more positive than anticipated but orders for Q2 2019 are forecast to be on the pessimistic side.
- The top 3 factors affecting business in the area are other overheads, likely to be driven by increased wage inflation, exchange rates and the price of raw materials. In the next 3 months 41% of respondents expect the price of their goods and services to increase.

The Bottom Line

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

Business hits the brakes - hard!

Responding to the results, Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

"Our findings should serve as a clear warning that the ongoing impasse at Westminster is contributing to a sharp slowdown in the real economy across the UK. Business is hitting the brakes - hard."

"These are some of the weakest figures we've seen in nearly a decade, and that's no coincidence. The prospect of a messy and disorderly exit from the EU is weighing heavily on the UK economy, and must still be avoided. The unwanted prospect of a disorderly 'no deal' exit, and the serious damage and dislocation it would bring, is still just days away unless Parliament acts to avoid it."

"At the same time that firms are having to enact costly contingency plans, the cost of doing business here in the UK continues to rise. This week sees a new tax year with a number of changes adding to the upfront cost of doing business in the UK, including the introduction of Making Tax Digital and changes to auto-enrolment, leaving many firms facing more bureaucracy and new expenses. It beggars belief that ministers are piling on more and more costly obligations at a time that businesses are already having to cope with Brexit and uncertainty."

"For too long Brexit tunnel-vision has distracted government from fixing the fundamentals to support growth here in the UK. We need to see an increased focus on creating the conditions for business success here at home - including concerted efforts to plug growing labour shortages, delivering an immigration policy that works for business and speeding up physical and digital infrastructure projects."



Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce

Chamber Events

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. Events are being added to our calendar all the time, please visit www.chamber-business.com to see what is new.



Summer Members Reception

Thursday 20th June, 5pm - 7pm
Forest Centre, Forest of Marston Vale
Free of Charge - Members Only

Here comes Summer! And we would like to invite you to our annual Members' Summer Networking Reception. Grab the chance to make those all-important connections and enjoy a hog roast with all the trimmings in beautiful surroundings. Your Chamber team will be on hand to make those important introductions and update you on current benefits and services.



Network With Your Neighbours

Thursday 10th October, 9.15am - 11am
Keech Hospice, Luton
£10.00 + vat

Join us at Keech Hospice together with the Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, for a morning of networking. We have joined forces to provide this chance to meet members of a neighbouring Chamber and make the most of this great networking opportunity. Enjoy coffee & croissants while introducing yourself to like-minded people who could be the connection your business needs to grow. Places at this event are limited so book now and get this date in your diary. We look forward to seeing you there.



Meet the Neighbours

Tuesday 23rd July, 12noon - 2pm
Northamptonshire
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 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.



Christmas Members Reception

Thursday 5th December, 4.30 - 7.30pm
The Rufus Centre, Flitwick
MEMBERS ONLY - Free to attend

This members' only event offers you the ideal opportunity to network with both new and existing members. The Chamber team will also be on hand to update you on our current services and benefits. Make sure you bring plenty of business cards and be prepared to meet like-minded professionals.

Would you like to promote your business further? Why not take part in our mini exhibition and let fellow members find out more about you and your business. If you are interested in taking part at a cost of £75 + VAT please drop us an email events@chamber-business.com

Connect with Businesses and Raise Your Profile with Event Sponsorship

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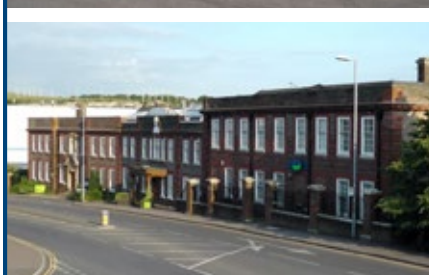
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NET LOSS

The worst business investments over the past two decades that saw money disappearing down the plughole

Whether you're a sole trader just starting out or a multinational corporation influencing millions of people across every continent, the business world comes with one nailed on guarantee – there are no guarantees. From colossal global players we've all heard of, to 'one day a week' businesses designed just to generate a few extra pounds, every enterprise is at the mercy of consumer trends, market conditions and the decisions made by owners; and at times, there is a perfect storm allowed to brew that can result in disaster striking.

AOL-Time Warner Hell

For most, the proposed AOL-Time Warner merger has become the go-to example of why some things should just be left alone. All the intentions were good in 2000 when an internet giant decided to saddle up alongside one of the planet's true content kings.

The internet giant were perceived to be the rocket fuel that would propel a slow-moving Warner machine to exponential growth, and AOL wanted something tangible to mirror its stock price. But the internet bubble bursting in such dramatic fashion, combined with Warner's internal departments being found to be notoriously independent and obstructive to change, meant the merger was doomed.

The \$400billion deal severely hampered the fortunes of both companies and the deal was pulled entirely within three years.

Gone for a Google

In a counter-story to the flimsiness of the internet machine, while AOL were preparing to toil over a deal that would see 50% of their market value wiped out, Google co-founder Larry Page and Sergey Brin were looking to hawk their business to the highest bidder.

When Excite CEO George Bell passed on a purchase sum of \$1million, the duo reduced their price by 25%, but still Bell resisted. Five years later they sold the company to Ask Jeeves for \$343million!

Friends Reunited, Ambitions Destroyed

When ITV decided to join in with the dotcom boom in 2005 it acquired one of the biggest online success stories since the Millennium, Friends Reunited. The site, started up five years previously in a back bedroom by husband and wife team Steve and Julie Pankhurst, had grown into a social behemoth with 15 million UK and Australia users, over a million of whom had signed up to the premium paying service.

Under ITV, spin-offs included TV shows, adverts, travel communities and video montages; but this perceived expansion was a front and, in reality, panicking execs were firefighting severe underperformance against the incredible growth of Facebook.

ITV cut their considerable losses in 2009 by selling the site to DC Thomson. FriendsReunited closed in 2016.

Breaking with Britishness

Sometimes a damage to a brand's reputation can be just as profound as errant smudges on its annual accounts. British Airways' imperiousness as a homegrown institution

 **Comment**



has always seen it held in the highest regard, particularly to a customer base likely to turn its nose up at the idea of slumming it with some of the budget airline operators.

So the decision to relinquish the famous Union Jack livery at the end of the 1990s – in favour of a more ethnic array of colours and designs – was interpreted as a slight to all the staunch British values the airline should have been holding, at a time when global travel was booming.

Sure enough, no sooner was Chief Executive Bob Ayling replaced in 2001, and amidst a barrage of complaints, the brand went back to its traditional tail fin turn of colours.

While BA did go full circle in correcting their mistake, there is undoubtedly a layer of gloss that's been removed from this most pristine of brands.

Jamie's High Street Horror

For so long an iconic name, face and presence in the kitchen, Jamie Oliver has sautéed and seasoned more than his fair share of meaty business ideas, but most of these have been in the form of TV projects, charitable foundations or supermarket product placement. When it comes to funding his own future on the high street, the 43-year-old has been less successful, with disastrous investments in Jamie Oliver's Cookery School and the Jamie's Italian chain leaving the "pukka" chef out of pocket. His restaurant empire recently shelved a third of its bases with debts of £75million, while his cooking schools failed to sizzle, and most stores closed in 2014.

And, of course the high street has been the final resting place for so many other investments and rescue packages. Where brands such as Woolworths, Toys R Us, Maplin, Debenhams, Poundworld and Mothercare were once leaders in their sector, now stores sit empty. Others, of course, such as HMV, Blockbuster, Borders and Jessops have been undone by the relentless efficiencies of technology.

While mulling over some of these catastrophic business failures is a trip into the world of schadenfreude, there is an important lesson lingering beneath the face palms and sniggers. Namely, that in some cases the fault is laid at the decision made, while in others it is the lack of decision or action that has provided the final nail in a company's coffin.

Either way, it proves that however big or small we are, we have both the power and a duty to scrutinise the detail, make measured decisions, know our limitations and ensure a stream of relevance for everything we do in growing our business, even if the business world outside our window will always be unpredictable, insecure and volatile.

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Essential: A Bedfordshire-based Family Owned & Operated Corporate Clothing Supplier Since 1998



Essential – also known as Essential Embroidery Design & Print – are powering ahead with aggressive expansion plans for the next few years.

A leader in their industry, Essential embroider and print company logos on corporate clothing supplying some of the biggest and most well known brands in the world – think Google, Michelin, Nissan, Formula E and more.

Founded in Luton in 1998 by husband and wife duo George & Nicki Georgiou, Essential started life with just a single embroidery machine. By focusing on quality and impeccable customer service the business took off! Today the company employs around 60 people and brands roughly 10-11 thousand garments per day from their factory now based in Dunstable.

After a string of successful years, they are doubling down on the future having invested just over £1m in new machinery and a state-of-the-art office extension.

This investment includes brand new Screen Printing, Embroidery, Digital 'DTG' Printing machines, and even a bespoke Garment Embossing machine. This new machinery increases the company's overall production capacity whilst also ensuring they have the most energy efficient and sustainable options on the market.

Along with the investment in machinery, Essential have also just completed a new office extension, building a brand-new board room, two product showrooms, a completely modernised canteen as well as providing a dedicated faith room for its employees. The extension will also allow the company to double its office and admin staff over the next few years.

Managing Director, George Georgiou, had this to say about the recent investments: "I am thrilled with the way our team has really come to together over the past few years. These ongoing investments and growth are a testament to their hard work. We are not only creating a state-of-the-art space for clients to visit and allow us to showcase our offering, but a fantastic environment for all our staff to be happy and proud of at work."

"The focus is now to back up the investments with further growth, to achieve our ambitious plans!"

One way Essential are doing this is with the launch of their newest division, Essential Workwear and brand new website – www.EssentialWorkwear.com. This new division focuses on selling branded workwear and PPE (personal protective equipment) as opposed to promotional clothing which the company has traditionally been focused on.



“ We are not only creating a state-of-the-art space for clients to visit and allow us to showcase our offering, but a fantastic environment for all our staff to be happy and proud of at work. ”

Having only been officially launched in the past 12 months the division is already gathering pace by winning contracts with restaurant chains, automotive groups, and manufacturing companies.

The hard work pays off! Last week at the Luton & Bedfordshire SME Business Awards Essential came away with a hat-trick win, picking up the awards for their two nominated categories 'Dunstable Business of the Year' & 'Business of the Year 50 Or More Employees' as well as the award for 'Overall Winner' of the night.

Louis Georgiou, Marketing Manager, had this to say about the win: "We are absolutely thrilled, overwhelmed to win all three including the Overall Winner. Proud is an understatement. It really is a testament to everyone that works with us every single day, who come in and put effort into what we produce and without them, we could not have done it. Essential is a family business, it all started with our dad and a single embroidery machine in 1998, so to be where we are today is really big."

With a strong management team in place, along with George and Nicki's two children now also working in the business they are ones to watch for sure – a real success story from the Bedfordshire area!

For more information visit www.eed-uk.com or www.essentialworkwear.com



SMALL BUT BEAUTIFUL BREAKS

Tax breaks and benefits every SME should know about...

Small business owners often complain about not being able to see the wood for the trees when it comes to efficiencies that, however small, can make a profound difference to a bottom line. In simple terms, the day-to-day demands of keeping a business ticking over, and in many cases the need for an owner to be involved at every step of the process, means taking a step back to look at the broader picture is something we rarely allow ourselves to do. And yet, the value of spending time reviewing, revising and planning going forward could be worth many times that of the perceived loss of business from those few hours away from the coal face.

Here are eight ready-to-go tax breaks and benefits that are worth investigating:

Flat Rate Scheme for VAT

Perhaps the best tax break of them all is the Flat Rate Scheme. While this doesn't allow you to claim input tax, if those input costs to your business are small it may be worth you investigating a process that sees you pay a percentage well below the standardised 20% level of VAT. The scheme is for businesses with a turnover of no more than £150,000 per year, and the 'flat rate' you pay is determined by which sector you are in. For some sectors, the incentive is low (in accountancy or book-keeping, for instance, it's 14.5%, meaning 5.5% of the VAT is retained by the company), while in others the rate is higher (in farming, the flat rate level is only 6.5%, offering a 13.5% profit on VAT invoices).

Enhanced Capital Allowance

While the naming is as vague as the claim process – “to find out more about this first-year allowance go onto the government's website or consult your accountant” – at the heart of this scheme is a drive to reward businesses that use cars with low CO2 emissions, energy-saving products and water-saving equipment.

Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme

Although not technically a tax break for the business itself, potential investors can benefit from this scheme that applies to relatively new companies looking for capital investment as a way of fueling growth. The logic is that easier routes to new investment fuel optimism and accelerate growth in new ventures, leading in turn to higher revenues and bigger profits – thus a return and reward for both the government and the investor.

Employment Allowance

A business with employees, and that has more than one active director, can reduce the amount of National Insurance it needs to pay by £3,000 via the Employment Allowance scheme, in a benefit that goes directly to the employer. Therefore, no National Insurance need be paid by the Employer himself/herself until the company's entire £3,000 allowance has been used up.



Dilapidated Premises Allowance

This tax break is for SMEs who are planning to move their company into premises that have been empty for more than a year and are now going to be occupied in a new business capacity. For instance, a business that plans to breathe new life into an abandoned shop or warehouse can now claim up to 100% tax incentive on any renovations that are carried out.

Research & Development Tax Credits

Another category that looks simple but ends up being notoriously complex in its terminology, the good news is this R&D initiative isn't just limited to science laboratories, as you might suppose. In essence, any business that has to undergo genuine background research in the process of moving forward with an idea or plan can apply for tax relief.

Annual Event Tax Break

In a lesser-known scheme that has been operating since 2003, limited companies can claim up to £150 including VAT per head for annual events involved in rewarding staff (such as a Christmas or summer party). More than one event can be claimed, but the total per person must not exceed £150, even by a penny, or the incentive becomes null and void. Interestingly, while an actual event must be named, the tax break could, in theory, allow a director to party by themselves, should they wish; and the scheme also permits an invitation to his or her partner, who also qualifies for the £150 total.

Uniform Tax Break

Employers can also claim back the cost of any staff uniform that features a permanent logo, while employees get a tax rebate for the cost of maintaining and replacing their attire. Claims can be backdated four years and an amount paid in one lump sum.

In summing up, the schemes outlined above will certainly suit any business entity that arranges its own accounts in-house, but even if you have an accountant, it's worth following up on advice. After all, while a good money man should be across these initiatives, subtle changes to government taxation, grants, benefits and initiatives are going on all the time, so it's never a bad idea to deliver a friendly prod.

Member News



Dunster House's Anniversary: 25 Years Changing the Market

Bedford-based timber garden products company Dunster House is celebrating 25 years of expansion and development. Continuously breaking the market with new innovative outdoor products, this British company currently has seven sites across England, 13 sister factories overseas and a growing export market.

Employing over 300 people across the UK, the history of Dunster House, is a story about growth, hard work and persistence, as this family business maintains the same spirit as when it was founded. Still managed and entirely owned by the Murphy family, it has striven to be the best in the market from day one and has become the largest log cabin company in the UK.

The company that has plenty of affordable products to feed everybody's needs, is now celebrating its anniversary with sales through all its ranges of products; gazebos, garden offices, sheds, log storages, garages, waterless toilets, as well as their very popular children's climbing frames and log cabins, with the unique fully insulated Warmalog range.



Helping those in need

Unimproved sanitation or poor hygiene still cause 4% of deaths and 5.7% of all disability or ill health in the world, according to the World Health Organization. This is one of the reasons why Dunster House decided to open a Humanitarian department within their headquarters, dedicated solely to finding solutions to sanitation problems by using the company's expertise, resources and knowledge of design and manufacturing. Currently, the company is also one of the leading manufacturers of sanitation equipment and has become an official supplier of NGO's, such as Oxfam and Unicef, while keeps working day by day to make a global impact and change people's lives.

Find out more about our products by calling Dunster House at 01234 272445 or visit www.dunsterhouse.co.uk

Working together, achieving more.



Kids in Action launches 'Key to the Door' Appeal

Kids in Action provides support and social opportunities to children and adults with special needs.

Our aim is to make a positive difference to each individual, encouraging their participation in social activities, in a safe, non-judgemental environment as many experience isolation and loneliness.

Our main facility is in Dunstable, a 10,000 sq ft warehouse which has been transformed into a giant youth club housing different accessible spaces for social interaction where we run activities for children and adults, over 150 members attending a week.

As the charity has grown and developed over the years, it has become vital that the future of Kids in Action is secured, and this is why the decision has been taken to commence the process of buying the building. The decision and plan will ensure that Kids in Action will be able to support children, young people and adults with special needs and disabilities, together with extended support to their families' long term, ultimately creating a lasting legacy.

A parent recently quoted on a visit to the centre “coming here with my son has made such a difference to his happiness. I don't know what we would do without Kids in Action.”

We are looking to raise £750K to buy our home, we are very excited about this project and we are looking for as many people as possible to get involved in our journey to achieve this.

If you would like to know more about the challenge, please email paul@kidsinaction.org.uk or go to www.kidsinaction.org.uk

Member News



Local Forest teams up with Willow Tree Gin

On International Day of Forests, the Forest of Marston Vale launched an exciting new partnership with locally produced Willow Tree Gin.

Willow Tree Gin, made in Stanbridge, is a small, family run business, with Philip Schofield as a fan and a strong environmental ethos. Herbs for the botanicals are grown fresh on the family farm, the water cooling system is eco-friendly and 50p from every large bottle sold now goes towards tree planting in the Forest of Marston Vale.

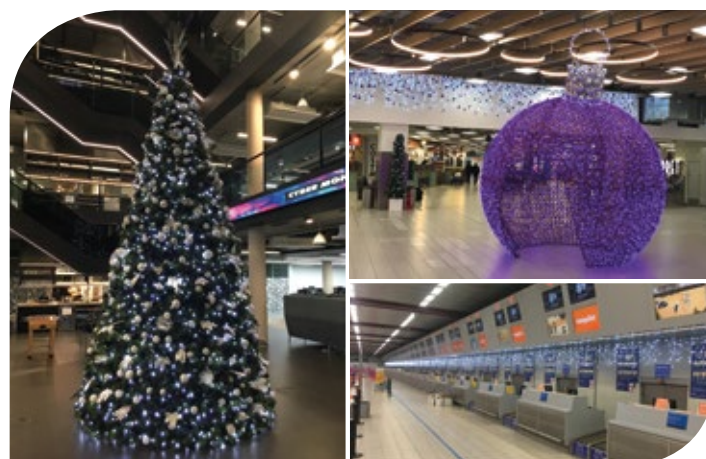
"I think what the Forest is doing is amazing and I wanted to find some way of giving back to the community," Says Mary Vincent, founder of Willow tree Gin "obviously they're local to where I'm producing my gin and the sustainability of what they do is my passion as well so it's a great partnership."

Find out more at marstonvale.org or willowtreedistilling.co.uk.

Bling your business with Christmas Decorators

At the Christmas Decorators we design, plan, install, remove and store lights and decorations on a rental basis. We have secured the contract for LLA which is a large project for us; we also work with small businesses – shops, hotels, offices as well as homes. We take the hassle out of your Christmas allowing you to focus on driving your own business whilst increasing your footfall through dynamic and colourful displays.

If you would like a free no obligation quote please contact Karen on 01438 500007 or email karen.weetman@thechristmasdecorators.com



Best New Business 2019 for Mini Map-Makers

Captain Alice (Alice Gadney) Director at Mini Map-Makers was immensely proud to receive the award for 'Best New Business 2019' recognised by Bedfordshire Business Women on International Women's Day! A very different business from her other one, Silver7 Mapping – Mini Map-Makers involves a lot of creative thinking about resources and workshops making it all relevant to the whole UK Curriculum, organising events, workshops and outdoor activities, dealing with multiple clients and delivering talks and events to an audience as young as four years old. Which is all great fun and a lot of effort but for an incredible reward: "I want to be like Captain Alice when I grow up" and that, Mini Map-Makers, is why!

minimapmakers.co.uk | silver7mapping.co.uk



Rett UK's invaluable work with young people

Rett syndrome strikes previously healthy children, mainly girls, around the age of 18 months when the child regresses and loses key skills including the ability to walk, talk and feed themselves.

A key project Rett UK has developed is focused on teaching the parents and the child new ways to communicate. One mum recently told us after one of our training events:

"I suspected Sophie (who has Rett syndrome and Downs Syndrome) could read but I had no idea how to confirm this. To my shame, I had previously suggested to Sophie she wasn't able to read and she had become very upset. Callie (Rett UK communication lead) simply asked Sophie "Do you read some words as well as looking at the picture?" Sophie replied with a clear 'yes' (looking directly at Callie and blinking slowly). Callie produced an alphabet booklet and asked Sophie would she like to spell. 'Yes' came the next reply. I held my breath whilst Callie showed Sophie the pages of letters. M. U. M. Blinked Sophie and Callie wrote the letters. I thought my chest would explode with pride. My daughter's first written word was Mum. Callie asked if Sophie wanted to continue, an E was added. A phonetic 'Mummy'. I had worried in the past if I was treating Sophie like a baby for referring to myself as Mummy but I am proud to say Mummy is my title. Sophie's second word was Dad. My daughter can read and spell!"

Giving a non-verbal child a way to communicate is life changing and impacts hugely on their overall health and well-being.

To read more about our work please go to www.rettuk.org.

Signature Flatbreads continues to invest despite Brexit uncertainty

Signature Flatbreads has sent a message of stability amidst the uncertainty of Brexit by pledging significant financial investment, with the company; committing to improve staff wages by moving to the Real Living Wage; increasing production with the implementation of two new lines; and creating new jobs.

Signature Flatbreads has voluntarily raised the wage of its factory workers from the National Living Wage of £8.21 per hour set by the government to the Real Living Wage of £9 per hour. The significant investment made by the company demonstrates a desire to offer more certainty and stability to staff at a time when it is needed most.

Signature Flatbreads supplies flatbreads such as tortilla wraps, pitta and naan bread to the UK's major retailers and foodservice operators as well as to 30 countries around the world. The company is passionate about its business and the people who work within it, and from 6th April 2019 the Real Living Wage of £9 per hour was implemented to all permanently employed staff working in its Dunstable factory.

The company also aspires to implement the Real Living Wage to all agency staff and is set to apply for membership of 'The Living Wage Foundation' to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to pay a fair hourly rate to its staff. Sixty-five per cent of staff at the Dunstable site are non-British EU citizens, and many have been left unsettled by the Government's lengthy ongoing Brexit negotiations. There are over 4,700 Living Wage Employers in the UK, including more than 1/3 of the FTSE 100 and household names including Ikea, Aviva, Nationwide.

Following a highly successful year in 2018, Signature Flatbreads has created 50 new jobs in 2019 as it has added two new production lines to its Dunstable factory which are a result of new business landed by the company. The recent launch of new Deli Kitchen products from their branded offering demonstrates the strength and stability of the business during turbulent times in the UK market. Exports to non-EU countries is also an area that is growing in significance to the manufacturer.

Zizou Benchaoui, Joint Managing Director of Signature Flatbreads said: "Our business is only as good as the people who work within it, and we are fortunate to have a dedicated and loyal workforce. Manufacturing top quality products is essential to our success so we believe this significant and ongoing investment is a clear signal to the industry of our confidence as a business, as well as to our staff recognising their importance. We want to reassure our employees that we will be providing security during this uncertain time.

"The addition of our two new lines will enable us to keep up with the growing global demand for our flatbreads, whilst also offering employment opportunities to a considerable number of new workers."



www.signatureflatbreads.com

Member News

Hat District's first Topping Out Ceremony at Hat House

Friday 1 March saw the 'topping out' of the external works of Hat House in Guildford Street, the first of Luton Culture's Hat District creative cluster of buildings. Madam Mayor of Luton, Cllr Naseem Ayub, assisted by Mark Smalley of local company Neville Construction, lifted a floorboard on the top floor with a golden crowbar to initiate the start of internal works on the building.



In her speech, the Mayor of Luton said: "I would like to thank Luton Culture for buying this run-down building, fundraising for its development, and for having the vision to make this old Hat Factory into a vibrant creative workplace once more. My thanks also extends to SEMLEP (South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership) who has invested £3.9m of Local Growth Fund into this building, and three others being developed in the vicinity, as part of the Hat District project. We value this investment in our town and into arts and cultural enterprises like this."

Hat House is an historic Edwardian hat factory that's currently in the final stages of an 18 month renovation programme. Hat House will offer workspace to meet a demand for creative businesses, providing jobs and career opportunities in Luton's cultural quarter.

Are you looking for creative workspace in a heritage setting in the heart of Luton with fantastic transport links to London and the region? Hat House and the Hat District could be the perfect location for you.

Call 01582 547470, email hatdistrict@lutonculture.com. Follow the Hat District project for all the latest news: www.hatdistrict.co.uk; Twitter @TheHatDistrict; Facebook @TheHatDistrict; Instagram @thehatdistrict.



Hat Factory works reveal magnificent artwork

Work continues apace at the Hat Factory to install the steel framework for the glass-fronted section of the building. The glass will allow Tim Head's artwork: 'Light Rain' to be seen by people heading into town from the station.



Coach House at Wardown House, Museum & Gallery available for hire

Wardown House, Museum and Gallery, built c1875, is situated in the beautifully landscaped Wardown Park, on the outskirts of Luton town centre. The house was formerly a family home, then a military hospital and is now a popular museum and gallery. Its recently refurbished Coach House is a self-contained historic building in peaceful surroundings, making it a perfect venue to get away from it all.

The self-contained period building has a capacity of 12 people for business and private events and is available for half and full day hire, seven days a week. A variety of food and beverage options are available and there is free parking for delegates.

Need a larger room for more people? There's a wide selection of rooms available for hire in Wardown House and other sites across Luton including Stockwood Park and the Hat District.

For booking enquiries, please contact the venues team at Luton Culture: venues@lutonculture.com.

Luton Culture



John Bunyan Boat Takes to the Water again!

As Summer is well and truly here, the bright sunny weather is again attracting passengers to board the John Bunyan, Bedford's Community Boat on the River Great Ouse.

The John Bunyan Boat is owned by the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust, a charity which was set up in 2006 to promote the building of a waterway between the River Great Ouse at Kempston and the Grand Union Canal at Campbell Park Milton Keynes and is run by the Trust's trading company, B&MK Waterway Enterprises Ltd.

It is called a Community Boat because it is managed and run by a team of volunteers with only two part time admin staff. The John Bunyan Boat was launched in July 2013 so it is now entering its seventh season on the river.

The boat operates public cruises on Thursdays and Sundays with Fish & Chip Supper Cruises on Saturday evenings, monthly Jazz Cruises and Motown Soul Cruises on a Thursday evening, and the occasional Folk night. Another highlight is an Afternoon Tea Cruise from Bedford Town Centre to The Barns Hotel, or a Lunchtime cruise from Bedford to Gt. Barford with lunch at The Anchor. There is something for everyone!

It is also available for Charter Hire, cruises for parties, special occasions, wedding cruises, group or work outings and school trips. The boat carries up to 50 passengers, is fully licensed and has catering and refreshments facilities. There is also an access lift and a toilet suitable for people with disabilities.

For information go to www.johnbunyanboat.org or phone 0330 1239 511 or e-mail: charters@johnbunyanboat.org Follow on Twitter @JohnBunyanBoat or Facebook: JohnBunyanBoat.



Total Wellbeing looks after Luton

Total Wellbeing Luton is a completely free service to support both the emotional and physical wellbeing of people living in Luton. The integrated service aims to provide a one-stop shop for people looking to improve their physical and/or emotional health. It may be that they have taken the decision to stop smoking, pursue a healthier lifestyle by starting an exercise or healthy eating plan, or to book in for their free NHS Health Check having turned 40. For others it may be to seek some support for emotional problems which are affecting their wellbeing.

Total Wellbeing Luton has already helped over 6,000 people in Luton, with over 95 per cent of people who've used the service saying that they would recommend it. Some have lost weight, some have stopped smoking, some have found a new love of exercise and some have identified that they have an underlying health problem which they are now receiving help to manage. Others have joined new groups and formed important friendships and relationships that enhance their lives.

The service is unique in that it offers a truly integrated and holistic approach to physical and emotional wellbeing. People can self-refer via the website: <https://www.totalwellbeingluton.org>, call 0300 555 4152 or be referred by their GP. All of the practitioners are trained to recognise co-existing health problems to ensure that people receive a truly holistic experience.

The Total Wellbeing healthy lifestyles team can also work with businesses in Luton to improve the wellbeing of staff. The team can undertake NHS Health Checks in the workplace, signposting people to any further help they may need for any health problems that are discovered. They can even run mindfulness or nutrition workshops.

To contact the healthy lifestyles team, run by Active Luton, email healthandwellbeing@activeluton.co.uk

Member News



JPA Founder Turns 91

John Pulsford created JPA Furniture in 1974, in a time of recession and the three-day week. The very first orders were literally written out by candlelight at the kitchen table which doubled up as the office in the daytime. Even when times were tough, he was determined to beat the odds! 45 years later, JPA now employs 27 staff and has established its niche in the office furniture sector focused on sustainability, service, quality and local approach. Our mission is to make a positive impact locally via an innovative furniture recycling and rehoming programme.

Now 91 years of age, John is Executive Chairman and comes into the office every day to oversee proceedings whilst the second generation of Graham, Ian and Fiona take care of the day-to-day running of the business. You can generally tell if he's in the office by looking for his little red sports car outside!

JP (aka The Grand Fromage) is adored by the JPA Staff Family and is the heart and soul of the company – never failing to greet everyone he meets with generosity, kindness and good humour. It's all about the people. On his 91st birthday staff filled his office with 91 red helium balloons and he celebrated in turn by giving wine out to all the staff!

Every aspect of the company reflects John's integrity and quality, not forgetting his dogged determination to keep improving and making progress – even serious illnesses haven't been able to hold him back – he's truly inspirational. The company has grown beyond all recognition winning social, environmental and business awards – most recently as Sustainability Business Leaders Award Winners 2019. None of this would have been possible without his inspiring leadership, endless effort and passion for people.

Having diversified over the years, JPA now provide Consultancy, Project Management, Fit Out, Design and Planning and Furniture services. Sustainability underpins all JPA activities who are now zero landfill and carbon neutral. All products are designed to be recyclable with a unique end-of-life redundant furniture scheme in place.

01727 840800 | www.jpa-furniture.com



Ryebridge set to celebrate a decade in business

A Save The Date invitation has been prepared, as Ryebridge gets set to mark a decade in business with a high-profile fundraising sports event and golf day.

September 2019 marks 10 years since Managing Director Daniel Coyle launched Ryebridge Construction, a company which now has a workforce of over 70, boasts an array of clients from across the UK and has established itself as experts in working within 'live' airport environments.

For its 10th birthday Ryebridge will be joining forces with Age Concern Luton and are pledging to raise at least £40,000 over the coming year, with the company's fundraising set to culminate with a black tie, sports themed dinner and a golf day in September.



Daniel said: "We have established our roots in Luton and recognise the proud history, cultural diversity and the huge potential that exists within this town. Where possible we tap into this via local recruitment and by using local resources. We are always looking for ways to reinvest in the town, by forming associations with local charities, businesses and educational

establishments along with developing and training our local employees in order to fulfil their career potential.

"The team will come together for a range of fundraising events over the next 12 months, with every penny set to go to Age Concern Luton to benefit some of the most vulnerable members of our community."

Swimmer and former Olympian Greg Whyte OBE, Patron of Age Concern Luton, said: "This is an exceptional charity and we are delighted that Ryebridge is so keen to raise funds and awareness and we look forward to seeing you all at these events. Lots of famous sporting faces will be there to join us at every step of the way."

On Friday, September 13th, 2019 Ryebridge Construction will celebrate its 10th birthday with two events: a day time Charity Golf Day at Luton Hoo and an evening black tie sporting celebrity dinner in the Walled Garden of the Luton Hoo Estate. All this will be in aid of Age Concern Luton.

www.ryebridgeconstruction.com

Turning teams into families with Supported Internships

At Central Bedfordshire College, we are passionate about ensuring the highest quality of work-based learning is accessible to all our students. There's nothing we love more than seeing our learners succeeding both in and out of the classroom. That's why we have championed the Supported Internship programme, which is changing lives every day by providing the opportunity for students with additional needs not only to gain valuable experience, but to thrive and flourish in the workplace.

The programme involves a dedicated member of Central Bedfordshire College staff accompanying a Supported Intern to a work placement, monitoring each student's progress, assisting them with any tasks as needed, and encouraging them to work as independently as possible. As the student's confidence and skills develop, the staff member steps back to allow them to reach their full potential. As one staff member explains, "We're there to help the students if they request it, but offering support that's not needed does them a disservice – this programme helps them to believe and trust in their own abilities, including problem-solving."

The purpose of the Supported Internship programme is to help the supported interns to develop independence and proficiency to allow them to embark on a fulfilling career. Our Supported Interns have certainly found fulfilment in their work. Hannah, who is working at B&M with the programme, says, "The Supported Internship programme, and employment, has given me a sense of belonging and has made me feel important." Joseph, a Supported Intern at Luton Town Football Club, agrees. "It feels like a family – and I love the banter".

The students are delighted with the welcome and backing they have received from their employers. Amber is a Supported Intern at a local charity shop. "I'm the only volunteer who has been till-trained," she reports, glowing with pride. "My employer is very encouraging!"

This pride, and the blossoming self-assurance which comes with it, have been instrumental in preparing these learners for the world of work, transforming many of them from shy and hesitant students into poised, driven and valued employees. Central Bedfordshire College staff member Tabitha, who works closely with Hannah, has witnessed this impact first hand. "Hannah's confidence has really grown and she's surpassed every expectation and met every challenge with patience and adaptability. We're so proud of her."

A step in the right direction

Stepping Stones Luton are a charity supporting vulnerable women and their children experiencing Domestic Abuse and the issues surrounding it in and around the Luton and Central Bedfordshire area. We provide programmes to empower and strengthen women, helping them overcome the trauma of abuse.

Did you know 28% of women over 16 have experienced Domestic Abuse? Many of the 400 plus women that seek our help have a number of varying issues, including mental health, substance misuse, and offending. Our aim is to support these women and help create happier lives for them and their children.

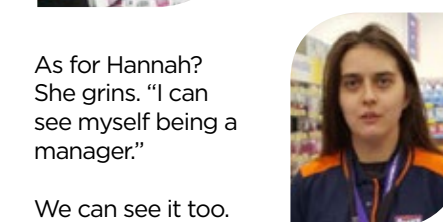
Did you know that one fifth of children have experienced Domestic Abuse either directly or indirectly? Children living in homes where there is DA can have a serious impact on

So, where do they see themselves going next?

Joseph has aspirations of being a footballer in the future and hopes to stay working at Luton Town Football Club. "I'd like to work up to doing a full version of each role," he confides.



For Amber, the perfect role is already hers. "I'd like to stay on and work part-time properly in the shop, and then work up to full-time – I know all the people and I really enjoy it."



As for Hannah? She grins. "I can see myself being a manager."

We can see it too.

Find your next step at our Open Event on June 20th at our main campus in Dunstable! Sign up now at www.centralbeds.ac.uk

their behaviour and wellbeing, causing them to be withdrawn, anxious fearful and struggle with school life. Our objective is to help break the generational cycle of abuse and set them up for a positive future.

We have an Ofsted 'Good' accredited Childcare Facility on site, which allows the women to bring their children in to be cared for whilst receiving support. This is a safe and secure environment for the children with play at the forefront. A hot meal is provided, and parenting programmes are available for mother and child.

If you would like to know more about us or would like to fundraise for us, either through a run, a cake sale etc, or would like to offer your expertise as a volunteer, please visit www.steppingstonesluton.co.uk/





Wellbeing in Education

In February this year the government announced a trial on mental health and wellbeing support in schools, involving 370 schools across the country. This is a welcome sign that mental wellbeing is becoming a higher priority on our agenda. Our wellbeing education should be starting from a young age. Along with physical hygiene, like hand washing, we should be learning about emotional hygiene.

As noted in last quarters chamber magazine, in the article by Natasha Devon MBE, mental health illness is costing UK business billions. We know our young people – the next generation of British workers – are experiencing mental health illness at a young age. 50% of adult mental health problems have started before the age of 15 years (MQ: transforming mental health). Therefore, it makes sense to educate our children, our next generation on their wellbeing. Our mind and body matter, equally, together. As the Chamber says: 'better together, working together, achieving more'; our mind and body united are better together too.

We need to look at daily lifestyle habits which can act as protective factors for the future. The trial taking place in schools has some of these daily lifestyle habits included such as mindfulness practice as well as one -off awareness lessons from specialist instructors or trained teachers. Awareness is great and adult wellbeing in workplaces, mental health first aid and peoples general understanding is paramount in changing our thoughts and culture around mental wellbeing. There are daily lifestyle changes we can make if we learn about them from a young age. Positive psychology research into interventions aiding us to thrive is ongoing but there are some well supported activities we can already use. These can be short and sweet and effective such as mindfulness, gratitude, character strength use and goal setting.

What we practice grows stronger as we grow and change as people.

Chill Your Beans wellbeing has a range of homework diaries loaded with wellbeing activities for weekly practice. Giving our students a chance to add protective factors as part of their lifestyle. Chill Your beans will be at the Festival of Education in June (educationfest.co.uk).

You can contact Chill Your Beans on chillyourbeansinfo@gmail.com or by visit chill-your-beans.co.uk for more information.

What is the key to building a business with longevity?

As business owners most of us understand the importance of having a compelling 'why', a reason that keeps us driving our businesses forward in the good times and bad. And that 'why' is often connected to leaving a lasting legacy. Which begs the question; 'when 92% of businesses fail in the first five years, how do you build a business that stands the test of time?'.

I'm not sure there is a single answer but if I had to hedge my bets it would be these 3 things:

The presence of purpose

Purpose not only propels founders, it also connects a business to its audience in a very real and authentic way. Consumers are more conscientious than they've ever been, we don't just buy products we buy meaning, we care about the 'why' behind a business and the identity of founders. Brands no longer own the narrative consumers do, the rise of social media and the importance of user-generated content exemplifies this. Brands no longer have the power to control the brand story.

A robust business model

There are many complicated definitions of what a business model is, I like to keep things simple, it's a sustainable way to make money both now and in the future. A good idea is not enough, it requires so much more than that. I see a lot of short-term focused business models that are based around ads and funnels that are weak, because the strategies they are built on are short-sighted. Jeff Bezos has built the business model for Amazon based around what's going to stay the same not what's going to change. I love this approach to building a sustainable business. What is going to stay the same for your ideal customers over the next 10 years? Innovate around those things.

Firm foundations

It is the foundation of a house that determines how long it stands. It doesn't matter how beautiful it is on the outside or how big it is, none of these things determine how long the house will stand. This is determined by the depth of its foundation. It is the same in business. One of my mentors once told me, the higher you go the deeper your roots must be. What does this mean for a business? A commitment to clear values, a clear vision and mission, long-term thinking, and the establishment of a capable and unified team to name a few things.

Katrina Douglas is a Chartered Marketer, author, consultant & speaker who helps purpose driven business leaders gain momentum. She creates marketing strategies for businesses that provide a clear roadmap to their goals, and ensure that every marketing activity they engage in has a purpose and is part of a well-oiled and effective marketing machine.

<http://katrinadouglas.marketing/>

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

Active Luton

LUTON

Our wide-ranging and far-reaching work as Luton's leading sport and leisure trust strives continually to improve the lives of Luton's residents whatever their age, ability, way of life or culture.

Aegis Group

LUTON

Facilities management - Security services
- Key holding - Chauffeur - Training - Cleaning

Afternoon Teas by Crème Brew Lait

BEDFORD

Travelling tea room, serving vintage afternoon tea

Citilink Solutions Ltd

BARTON LE CLAY

VIP transport solution. Executive cars, VIP minibuses, corporate hospitality

Citizens Advice Luton

LUTON

Local Advice Company

Cube Building Consultancy Ltd

FLITWICK

Building surveying and project management services for commercial property managers, owners, tenants and investors

Cubix Operations Ltd

LUTON

Luton airport penthouse office suites, let on flexible terms, with spectacular views

Eagle Brewery

BEDFORD

The Eagle Brewery is home to many of Britain's iconic ale brands including Bombardier, Courage and McEwans plus a range of high quality beers under the Eagle banner

Hitachi Zosen Inova

FARNBOROUGH

Construction - Energy from Waste

Identifi Office Professionals

BEDFORD

Provision of permanent and contract HR, Business Admin, Finance, Sales & Marketing, Autotech recruitment services

Interfood Technology Limited

HADDENHAM

Food manufacturing, processing & production machinery sales and service

Jelf Insurance Brokers Ltd

MILTON KEYNES

Commercial insurance brokers

JPA Furniture

ST. ALBANS

Office Furniture Sales: Commercial/ Office/University/Healthcare/School and Accomodation

Matt Page Installations Limited

WELWYN GARDEN CITY

MPI Ltd are an installation and lifting specialist. We work on behalf of several utilities & manufacturers installing LPCB rated products such as access covers, kiosks, cabinets, cages, doors and windows protection systems. MPI Ltd cover many aspects including delivery & access logistics, manual handling and a choice of unique lorry loader cranes.

MCW Nursery Support Services Ltd

SILSOE

Childrens nursery support services. Training/Health & Safety Auditing/Pre Ofsted/Online Training

Mulberry Inheritance Planning

AYLESBURY

Professional will writing and estate planning services

Neon Recruitment Ltd

LUTON

Recruitment agency 'Recruiting Bright Sparks'

South Beds Golf Club

LUTON

Private members golf club

Store Retail Solutions Ltd

WOOTTON

We design, build and publish bespoke revenue generating mobile Apps for the SME Hospitality and Retail sectors. We can also provide EPOS software and hardware for both of these sectors too

The ExtraCare Charitable Trust - Wixams

BEDFORD

Retirement village providing mixed tenure apartments to people aged 55 and over - Charity

The London Straw Factory Ltd

BEDFORD

Paper straw manufacturer

Vindis Seat

MILTON KEYNES

Seat vehicle sales, servicing, leasing

Vindis Skoda

CAMBRIDGE

Fleet sales for Skoda passenger vehicles

Vindis Volkswagen

BEDFORD

Volkswagen vehicle sales, servicing, leasing

VIP Relocation Ltd

LUTON

Serviced apartments

Virgo Associates Limited

BEDFORD

Accountancy and taxation advisors

Wildanet Ltd

HAYNES

WISP (wireless internet services provider) building a wireless network across Bedfordshire to deliver guaranteed superfast broadband to rural and hard to reach areas. HQ in Cornwall, regional base in Bedfordshire

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

Aegis Group

Qadeer Qureshi
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Denise Pointer

www.lutonsfc.ac.uk

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Alice Gadney

Director, *Silver7 Mapping & Mini Map Makers*

Silver7 Mapping is a Cartographic services company that can add value to your business through mapping. The sister company, Mini Map-Makers, is a Cartographic education company, delivering to schools and academies, that introduces mapping to children.



Tell us a little about the creation of Silver7 Mapping/ Mini Map Makers

After graduating from Royal Holloway in Geology and Oxford Brookes from their Post Grad Cartography course, I secured a job at FWT Studios who made Maps of the London Underground and other transport maps. I had several map related jobs after that and then secured a job at an Oil and Gas Consultancy in Maidenhead. I spent 4 amazing years there and knew I could use my experience and fieldwork to create my own company! So I did.

The first contract I won was for The Crown Estate at their Regent Street office. I worked on their digitisation programme - getting all the estate mapping digital. Training the original Cartographer (who was still hand painting in the estate areas) how to use the digital mapping system was great fun. I managed to find such a variety of map jobs and settled in to another Oil and Gas company in London for a year or 2. I was subsequently asked to join the British Cartographic Society as their Restless Earth Coordinator, travelling around the UK teaching schools about Disaster Mapping.

Map skills are a requirement at GCSE Geography and A level (and appear in other subjects). So when my 4 year old son asked me "to teach his friends about maps", I considered how that could be done and he said I could be "Captain Alice from Mini Map-Makers". Mini Map-Makers then evolved, testing the 'X' Marks the Spot Workshop at Wootton Lower School in November 2016.

I launched officially at The Higgins and Forest of Marston Vale in August 2017 with 125 attendees. Since then, I have travelled around the UK and taught over 3000 children and 1000+ adults about how maps are everywhere and why they are still important. I have taught schools in Luton, Sacred Heart going for their Artsmark Award through the Culture Challenge. In Bedford, Hazeldene and Queens Park Academy. Also in Wilstead and Milton Keynes. Both Guiding and Scouting have participated in workshops. The local Home Education groups are very active and really enjoy my visits and ideas. I have delivered several talks and attended Careers Fairs at Bedford Academy, Wootton Academy Trust, Kimberly College and Denbigh

School in Milton Keynes. Resources have evolved and NESW Workbooks, card games and Map Packs are now available. I was proud to collect the "Best New Business 2019" award at the Bedfordshire Business Women awards in March. I have had over 20 interested participants wanting to be a cartographer.

Who are your main customers?

Customers range with requirements, however they are companies that would like to have additional visualisation for marketing and planning purposes. Maps are an instant picture of sales for that company, or area locations of offices and hubs.

Who or what helped you to become the successful business owner you are today?

Steely determination! I have had all the ideas and creative thoughts for the variety of projects I have been involved in. However, support and advice from family and colleagues have helped shape the business over the 10 years!

Silver7 Mapping looks to be unique - do you have any competitors?

There are a few mapping companies, both large and small out there. We aren't that flooded with competition. There are also specialities such as urban mapping, event mapping.

How do you utilise Social Media for business promotion?

As a visual company, I use Instagram and Twitter to show any work and promotions.

What was the last book you read? Any favourite genre?

I read The Map Makers Race by Eirlys Hunter - a super book for children and teachers! I am not a great reader but love to review map books for children!

How would you describe yourself in 4 words?

Determined, Focused, Imaginative and Creative.

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