

Business FOCUS

Better Together

Working together, achieving more

Official Magazine of Bedfordshire Chamber

Summer 2023

**Sue
Lousada**
**LORD LIEUTENANT
of BEDFORDSHIRE**

CONNECT. GLOBAL. VOICE.



Bedfordshire
Chamber of
Commerce

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Connect with One YMCA to help change and save lives.

A local charity working across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire have officially launched their model where corporate supporters can change and save lives and have an impact on the most vulnerable in their local community.

One YMCA's Corporate Connect Club offers members five core levels of commitment, giving every organisation a chance to add value and support their ESG/CSR.

The Corporate Connect Club is a route to expanding your organisation's impact far beyond the specifics and sector-leading delivery of your core sector. It's your route to wear the badge of your organisation whilst helping vulnerable individuals to belong, contribute and thrive.

Guy Foxell, One YMCA chief executive said: "We are delighted to have just launched our Corporate Connect Club, which will give businesses, large and small, an easy route to changing and saving local lives. Everyone is aware of just how difficult things are for some

of the most vulnerable people in our communities, but it can be difficult to know how to get involved and to know your support is making a difference. That's where our Corporate Connect Club comes in."

One YMCA worked alongside leading corporate organisations to research and design this model, allowing companies to join at different levels and receive many benefits from their membership.

Any organisation is welcome to join and through networks and connections, make a bigger difference in their local community.

For more information, please visit oneymca.org/ccs



“If it wasn't for One YMCA, I'd be dead.”

Graham:
One YMCA resident



Registered Office: One YMCA, Charter House, Charter Place, Watford, Hertfordshire WD17 2RT | Registered Charity Number: 1102301

YMCA
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Business FOCUS

Official Magazine of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

Our Partners



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Design and Print

Treacle Factory

01582 416171

www.treaclefactory.co.uk

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Welcome

Welcome to the Summer 2023 edition of Bedfordshire Chamber
of Commerce Business Focus Magazine.

At the Chamber, we believe that a strong and vibrant business community
is essential to the success of our region. We also believe that at the heart
of every successful business is a commitment to serving its community,
whether it's creating local job opportunities, supporting local charities or
through innovation to create a more sustainable future.

These businesses are the backbone of our communities, and they play
an essential role in driving inclusive economic growth and creating social
value. This is why we love to showcase some of the incredible businesses
that are making a real difference to the communities they serve.

In this edition, we feature Foxley Kingham Anniversary Foundation raising
over £13,000 for its charity partners, Lockheed Martin inspiring coders
of the future through the company's dedicated STEM outreach team,
and Peli BioThermal supporting relief efforts for those affected by the
earthquake via the Luton Turkish Education and Culture Trust.

As we continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the current
economic landscape, it is more important than ever to come together to
support one another and drive innovation and growth. We are proud to
be a part of this vibrant and dynamic community, and we are committed
to doing everything we can to help it thrive.

#workingtogether #achievingmore

Justin Richardson

Chief Executive
Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce



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Richard Cooper

Chairman of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

The Chairman's **VIEW**

"Here comes the sun – it's alright!" sang George Harrison, and we're certainly starting to feel not only the tendrils of warmth in our streets and gardens, but rays of optimism in our business community too.

In fact, small business owners are demonstrating often extraordinary resilience, rethinking their offering to tackle ongoing challenges head-on and chase the upside.

We've seen – and supported – this many times recently at the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. Retail businesses have sprung up, underpinned by a "hybridised" model of initial trading online, on market stalls and at events.

Café and restaurant owners have reinvented their service and menus to redress the balance between quiet early-week business and peak trading that is nearing capacity. And there are many other examples besides.

But while change in the face of challenge is admirable, it's having the right people around you to honestly support, advise and guide your business that helps ensure the changes come out sunny-side-up – and this is where the trusted network that is the Bedfordshire Chamber is indispensable.

So be sure you're making the most of us and the many business owners, experts, consultants, and like-minded peers in our ranks, because the time is right. With more sun and holidays on the way, we're on track for an increase in spending from household improvements to vacations, days out, and much else besides.

George really nailed it with that song, didn't he?

Richard Cooper

“ It's having the right people around you to honestly support, advise and guide your business that helps ensure the changes come out sunny-side-up. ”



2023 Engineering BURSARY AWARD

Here at Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, we were pleased to work together again with David Sheridan of Veruth Holdings for this year's Engineering Bursary for 2023. The bursary of £15,000 is awarded to a Luton student who is going on to university to study engineering.

On the morning of 10th May at Luton Sixth Form College in Luton. David Sheridan of Veruth Holdings announced this year's winner as Cian Lenton, from Luton Sixth Form College. The presentation was attended by students and representatives from Luton Sixth Form, Bedford College and Cardinal Newman Catholic School.

Cian "I am very pleased to have won but was very unexpected, to have won allows me to focus on my Chemical Engineering course at Nottingham University and embrace the passion I have for engineering.

David Sheridan "The standard of the entries was once again very high and I'm absolutely delighted at the continued success of the students and a part of the recognition of engineering not only in Luton but also for the UK economy."

Chamber Health & Safety ONLINE TRAINING

We know that compliance – and especially health and safety – can be stressful. Having the right training can make all the difference between a good day or a bad day in the workplace. Our Chamber Online Health & Safety Training can help you and your team learn and prove the skills needed for your workplace today. Broaden your teams knowledge and give them the safe working environment they need with our simple to use health and safety e-learning.



We provide safety focused training across many industries starting with our free Entry Level courses and Level 1 courses to prepare employees and those new to safety with the fundamental principals and standards they need. Our courses cover a range of topics such as Fire Safety, Food Hygiene, Risk Assessments and even a general Health & Safety introduction.

Managers, Team Leaders and those more experienced with the basics can progress onto our Level 2 and 3 online courses. These provide an in-depth look at staff responsibilities, health and safety management for everyday workplace situations and the legal responsibilities for leadership positions.

If you're interested in finding out more about these courses, and maybe even want to enrol on one, visit www.chamber-businesstraining.com

“I’m here to serve the county, to thank people for the good they do here, and to build bridges and develop networks, including between local organisations and businesses.”

**Sue
Lousada**
**LORD LIEUTENANT
of BEDFORDSHIRE**

It's fair to say that the Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Sue Lousada, is perhaps not what many people would typically expect from His Majesty's representative in our county – but then expectations (and outcomes) are something she's determined to change.

She's a seasoned businesswoman with a scientific background and a hands-on approach to getting things done. But at the same time, she values the ceremony and symbolism of the office – and the good work of those who have occupied it before her – enormously, as it "shines a light on the good that is in Bedfordshire."

We were lucky enough to get some time in Sue's busy schedule to ask her what the Lord-Lieutenant's duties are, what her strategic plans for the role look like, and why local business is at the heart of her vision.

Interviewer: Good morning, Lord-Lieutenant! Could we perhaps start by asking you what the Lord-Lieutenant does, and why it's important?

LL: Good morning, but first of all, call me Sue! In answer to your question, the Lord-Lieutenant is the Monarch's representative in the county, so I'm responsible for things like organising royal visits and related events (including my Coronation Garden Party in July), and locally administering the State Honours system – as well as managing awards like the recently renamed King's Award for Enterprise and King's Award for Voluntary Service.

That perhaps makes me sound a lot less accessible than I am, but I'm also available to support local charitable causes and officiate at parties and openings, amongst many other ceremonial appearances!

On a more fundamental level, I'm here to serve the county, to thank people (often the unsung heroes) for the good they do here, and to build bridges and develop networks, including between local organisations and businesses, so they can operate more effectively.

Interviewer: You mentioned business – is this now a focus for the Lord-Lieutenancy?

LL: It's certainly a focus for me in this role because that's my background. I worked in a major global consumer corporation, then my husband Simon and I started our own business, which grew to three depots and over 100 employees, so I know the challenges involved in making a small business work.

You have to do pretty much everything for yourself – I've pounded the streets door-to-door in Bedford to drum up business, but I've also managed people, led projects, and fixed processes that went wrong.

And because our business was local, enabling other businesses in Bedfordshire to overcome those challenges and grow means a lot to me.

Interviewer: What are your strategic plans for the office of Lord-Lieutenant? What will you change, introduce, or improve?

LL: I've formulated much of the strategy since taking up the role a few months ago, but to follow on from what I said in my previous answer, supporting individuals and organisations to grow is absolutely key to all of it.



For me that means, amongst other things, driving opportunities for young people. Many of our local businesses are crying out for contact with the talent of tomorrow, and many of our young people are in need of skills acquisition, confidence development, and familiarisation with the adult world. One idea is to organise visitor programmes between local companies and schools, so we can hopefully enable both of them to grow, in different ways.

The Lieutenancy is also launching a pilot business mentoring scheme towards the end of the year, in collaboration with The Growth Hub, to encourage businesses to share insights on growth and business issues with other businesses, to achieve better, faster business outcomes.

We shouldn't forget either that, in Cranfield University, we have a world-class higher education institution on our doorstep, and I'll be working hard to build on previous good work by organisations like SEMLEP and the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce to connect academic expertise to the business community.

Interviewer: You mentioned the King's Award for Enterprise earlier, the winners of which have now been announced. Where do the Awards fit into your strategy going forward?

LL: My strategy will be to encourage more local businesses and organisations to enter the Awards by making good use of my exceptionally experienced Deputy Lieutenants to help them with the applications process.

The Awards are hugely important and our number of successes show that this small county punches way beyond its weight in innovation and achievement. And with four categories available – innovation, international trade, sustainable development, and social mobility – there's potentially something there for everyone.

These awards are open to any business that is exceptional. It is the people that make businesses and recognition of a business similarly recognises the people.

Being born and schooled in Kempston, I feel so fortunate and honoured to have been appointed to act as His Majesty's representative in the county I love.

Bedfordshire has so many lovely people, quietly doing wonderful things, we also have many successful businesses, small, medium, and large. I look forward to helping them all receive the recognition and credit they thoroughly deserve.

Chamber **EVENTS**

You'll find plenty of opportunities to connect with other Bedfordshire Chamber members and local businesses at our range of upcoming events. Here are just a few of the scheduled events in 2023:

Members **SUMMER RECEPTION**

6th June 2023 | 5pm – 7pm

Forest of Marston Vale

Free of Charge Members Only Event

Here comes Summer! And we would like to invite you to our annual Members' Summer Networking Reception, this year being hosted at the glorious Forest of Marston Vale. Grab the chance to make those all-important connections and enjoy a delicious BBQ with all the trimmings in beautiful surroundings.

Meet the Neighbours **NETWORKING EVENT**

15th June 2023 | 12noon – 2pm

Mitchell Hall, Cranfield University

Members only event £ 17 + 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. We know your time is precious, so this snappy and dynamic event is aimed at giving you maximum impact with minimum time out of your business.

Meet the Neighbours **NETWORKING BREAKFAST**

21st June 2023 | 7.45am – 10am

Wyboston Lakes

Members: £ 25 + VAT | Non Members: £35 + VAT

We're so excited to be joining forces with Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce for this networking breakfast. These structured networking sessions are designed to forge new business relationships across county boundaries, and maximise your opportunity to build a profitable network. Attendees will have the chance to speak to their table for a minute or 2 about their business, before moving around 2 other tables during the morning to do the same. This gives you a chance to make connections with as many professionals as possible! There will then be chance to network further and delve deeper into those conversations over a full English breakfast which is provided.

Connect **OVER COFFEE**

5th July 2023 | 10am – 11.45am

Brooklands Resident Association, Leighton Buzzard

Free of Charge Event

We are delighted to be partnering with Buzzard Networking for this informal networking coffee morning, where you can connect with new and existing members.

Sizewell C Supply Chain **ROADSHOW**

11th July 2023 | 10am – 12noon

Wrest Park Enterprise, Silsoe

Free of Charge Event

We are looking forward to meeting with local businesses to discuss the supply chain opportunities that Sizewell C will bring to our region. You will have the chance to hear from:

Ashley Shorey-Mills

Head of Sizewell C Supply Chain Engagement

Ashley will be discussing the supply chain opportunities.

Steve Carroll

Senior Supply Chain Lead at Sizewell C

Steve will be giving an overview of Sizewell C and an update on the project.

Connect **OVER COFFEE**

15th August 2023 | 9.30am – 11am

Mercure Bedford Centre Hotel

Members Free of charge | Non Members: £25 + VAT

'Just A Minute' – The Concept:

We provide venue & Coffee/Tea. Bring your literature & business cards. Then, showcase your business with a 1 minute pitch

'Just A Minute' –The Benefits:

Raise the profile of your business in front of prospective customers. Interactive discussions—positive feedback. Ideal platform to promote anything exclusive you are offering to, or looking for, from fellow members.

**To book your places and for further information call 01582 522448
or visit www.chamber-business.com/events/chamber-events**

QES 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 2023 saw a softening in local business confidence with companies seeing contraction in both domestic and international sales.

- Domestic sales and forward orders saw a dramatic fall on the previous quarter with only 24% of respondents seeing an overall increase in sales for the period compared to 51% in the previous quarter.
- Export saw a decline in the period with 75% of companies expecting overseas sales to improve or remain constant.
- Cashflow for local businesses saw a significant deterioration with only 11% of respondents seeing an increase for the period.
- Only 9% of companies plan to increase their investment intentions for capital expenditure and 20% plan to invest in training – the lowest recorded rates since the pandemic

The Bottom Line

Responding to the findings, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, Shevaun Haviland, said:

"The Budget included several positive measures for business, including increased childcare support as well as plans for full capital expensing. However, it did not go far enough to shift the dial on growth which remains stubbornly low.

"The Government failed to tackle some of the major issues holding firms back from their potential, in particular energy costs and the tight labour market which remain top business concerns.

"The Government's new energy support package represents a drop of 85% in the financial help available to businesses. We reiterate our calls for increased, targeted support for those firms who desperately need it.

"The energy crisis faced by firms and households are two sides of the same coin. Yet, non-domestic customers do not enjoy the same protection as households.

"To ensure competition in the business energy sector, and solve market failures, Government must also ensure Ofgem has the necessary powers to properly regulate the industry.

"While we welcomed the Government's decision to add five new construction jobs to the Shortage Occupation List, the lack of skilled labour is having a corrosive effect on our economy. This shift to a new system cannot come fast enough and other sectors facing huge recruitment pressures, such as hospitality, must be given help."



Shevaun Haviland
Director General of the British
Chambers of Commerce

Member NEWS



Essential Celebrates 25TH ANNIVERSARY

From just one embroidery machine and a dream, to now a fully equipped, modern factory that produces close to 11,000 pieces of branded garments a day! Essential has been operating as a family run business in Bedfordshire for 25 years this June. They are an award-winning corporate promotional clothing supplier with all stages of production done in house, from artwork right through to production and packing, enabling them to be on top of all quality checks.

The company started as Essential Embroidery Design and worked closely with creative agencies that focus on blue-chip companies such as Google, EE, McDonalds and more. However, in 2018 they launched the Essential Workwear division, which specialises in supplying all types of branded workwear and PPE to companies of various sizes, across a variety of sectors. Although Essential Workwear is only 5 years old, it is supported by the 25 years' experience and offers the same quality and service as Essential Embroidery Design, bringing the service Essential perfected on the blue-chip companies to smaller SMEs.



One of Essential's main focus is 'Sustainability', offering sustainable and organic garments as well as water-based ink for printing. In 2021, Essential Workwear launched a garment recycling initiative to help customers become more sustainable and achieve targets for net-zero emissions which has been hugely popular!

It's time for your company to stand out from the crowd with branded workwear! Take advantage of our Member2Member offer for a discounted price.

www.essentialworkwear.com



CODE QUEST COMPETITION Brings together Students from Local Schools to Solve Coding Challenges

In April, the world's largest aerospace and security company, Lockheed Martin, brought together teams of students from local schools across its US and international sites, including the UK, to compete in the company's annual global coding challenge. The competition is intended to inspire coders of the future and test the ability of individuals to solve a series of complex problems by working together as a team.

During the UK Code Quest challenge, teams competed at two of Lockheed Martin's sites: Ampthill in Bedfordshire and Havant in Hampshire – students were supported by the company's dedicated STEM Outreach Team to work through various sets of coding challenges, developed by Lockheed Martin's engineering and IT professionals – the intense challenge created a competitive, yet fun environment encouraging collaboration and innovation.

There were two divisions in the competition – Bedford School secured first place in the Advanced Division, and Samuel Whitbread Academy won first place in the Novice Division.

Leigh Beeton, Lockheed Martin UK, Ampthill's Director of Engineering said: "Congratulations to Bedford School for winning first place in the Advanced Division, and Samuel Whitbread Academy for coming first in the Novice Division of the Lockheed Martin UK, Ampthill Code Quest 2023 competition. As a global leader in technology and engineering solutions we have a vested interest in STEM outreach. By engaging tomorrow's workforce and showcasing the diverse and varied roles STEM learning can lead to, we are inspiring them to consider the exciting and fulfilling careers in technology, engineering, and scientific discoveries. It is fundamentally important for our company to develop a future talent pipeline that will enable us to continue solving some of the world's most complex and pressing problems. Over the next 15-years, we'll need to hire a significant number of early career STEM professionals to support our mission and the mission of our customers."

Paul Scullion, Director of Digital Learning at Bedford School said: "The Lockheed Martin Code Quest competition is a fantastic event, it's definitely the highlight of our programming competition season at Bedford School. Code Quest is a great opportunity for our students to really challenge themselves and solve problems by working as a team. The students enjoy the realistic challenges which gives insight into what industry will be like for them in a few years' time."

Matthew Barber, Head of IT & Computer Science at Samuel Whitbread Academy said: "I'd like to say a big thank you to Lockheed Martin for running the Code Quest competition, particularly their STEM Outreach Team who give up their own time and volunteer to run this event for schools. It was a fantastic opportunity and experience for our students to be able to visit Lockheed Martin's facility in Ampthill."

CHUMS Charity's Record-Breaking MENTAL HEALTH FUNDRAISER

On 18th March, Bedfordshire based Mental Health Charity – CHUMS – held a Gala Ball at Bedford Blues Rugby Club. The event, sponsored by Raymond James Hitchin, played host to a memorable evening that brought together the community to celebrate and support CHUMS 25th Anniversary. The Gala Ball was a resounding success, raising over £28,000 to support CHUMS' various services, which provide crucial support to help children, young people, and families in the local area cope with mental health challenges.

CHUMS has been providing mental health support in Bedfordshire and beyond since 1997. The money raised will be used to continue to provide the charity's services including the Trauma Support Service, the Recreational Therapeutic Service, the Disability Friendship Scheme, the Suicide Bereavement Service, and the Babyloss Support Service.

The 25th Anniversary Ball was a fitting tribute to the important work that CHUMS does in the community. The event was attended by 200 people, including CHUMS supporters, local businesses, staff members, and members of the community who were keen to show their support for the charity. Guests were treated to a night of live music, dancing, and a delicious three-course meal, all whilst raising money for a worthy cause.

Speaking movingly on the night, CHUMS service users Betsy Banks and Henk Kroon, shared their personal experiences and told of how CHUMS had supported and helped them to cope after experiencing bereavements in their families.

Introduced by CHUMS CIC Chair, Ben Banks, special guest on the night, HM Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Susan Lousada said: "I was thrilled to join guests at the CHUMS Ball. It was a wonderful occasion and the money raised will continue the vital work that CHUMS do supporting families and young people during times of



need. It was both humbling and inspiring to hear directly from people whose lives have been affected by the loss of a loved one and how CHUMS have been there to help them through their darkest hours. I would like to congratulate CHUMS for everything they have achieved in the past 25 years."

The Lord Lieutenant kindly presented two unique items to CHUMS CIC CEO, Dawn Hewitt, who has ably led the organisation since it was founded in 1997 – a specially commissioned 25th Anniversary poem by Amptill based poet Sharnice Williams entitled 'The Site of a Sanctuary'. And an original painting entitled 'Walking beside you; every step of the way' – a beautiful piece of original art created by adults with learning disabilities at MK SNAP and donated to CHUMS in recognition of the incredible support they provide to children and young people.

CHUMS Charity Chair, Jenny Williams said: 'CHUMS is extremely grateful for the support and generosity of the community and looks forward to the next 25 years of providing mental health support to those who need it most.'

For more information on CHUMS' services, please visit their website at www.chumscharity.org.

IF YOU LOVE ITALY, YOU'LL ADORE SICILY

For over 2,500 years, Sicily has been at a strategic crossroads of the western world. It has left Sicily with an unparalleled historical legacy. Nowhere else have Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, French, Germans, Spanish, Italians and even the British left such an indelible impression.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the Sicilians, have always been fiercely independent. Rome is just 263 miles from Palermo by air – but in many ways, it might as well be on the other side of the planet.

The island's flag is of the three-legged man. Sicilians will tell you that, it demonstrates that no matter how roughly thrown, a Sicilian will always land on his feet.

But whether it's Greek temples, Roman villas, Norman cathedrals or Baroque churches, fresh seafood, beautiful beaches or the warm welcome from the natives, Sicily offers a range of attractions and historical sites that are not easily matched.

MOUNT ETNA One of the world's most active volcanoes. Guided day trips, either privately or on a shared, small-group experience take you up the volcano. It's a chance to explore Etna's lava



caves and sample local delicacies. If nothing else, a view from the summit is awe-inspiring. If it is erupting, then the sight of red hot lava spewing high into the night air can be seen for miles. A pyrotechnic reminder of nature's raw power.

GOLE ALCANTARA Deep in the foothills of Mount Etna, the Gole dell 'Alcantara Gorge is one of Sicily's hidden gems. A unique landscape, carved out by the Alcantara river. It's a great alternative to the beach – a hot spot for adventure seekers.

I have really only scraped the surface, but if you fancy taking your next trip to the Isle of Sicily, then why not contact me, for a completely hassle-free booking experience.

*Marco Williams | Travel Counsellors | 01234 581066
Marco.Williams@travelcounsellors.com*

Member NEWS



We are here for you!

Supporting mental health and wellbeing across
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes

www.mind-blmk.org.uk

For more information please contact:
e: hq@mind-blmk.org.uk t: 0300 330 0648

Charity No. 1068724



Mind BLMK

We are here for you...

Sadly 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health issue each year, whilst 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (such as anxiety and depression) in any given week.

Mind BLMK works across our communities to support positive mental health and well-being. Our services include community-based peer support groups & activities, crisis support and peer mentoring. We now have our 'Young Person's Sanctuary' in Luton and Bedford (drop-in service for 14-17-year-olds), with further launches planned for Central Beds.

We are delighted to announce the arrival of our 'Young Person's Wellbeing Navigator Service', for individuals aged 16-25 living in, or attending an education setting in Central Bedfordshire. This new service strives to promote independence and resilience and works alongside the young person to offer support, enabling and equipping them with the tools, skills and knowledge they need to navigate challenges and positively manage their own mental health and wellbeing. We also offer training and education to individuals and corporations to teach about positive mental health and well-being and what people can do to support those going through a tough time.

If you or someone you know is looking for help with your mental health and well-being, please get in touch – we are here for you. Or if you're a business looking for a local charity to support, contact our fundraising department at: fundraising@mind-blmk.org.uk

e: hq@mind-blmk.org.uk | t: 0300 330 0648 | mind-blmk.org.uk
Twitter: @MindBLMK | Instagram: @MindBLMK
LinkedIn: @MindBLMK | Facebook.com/MindBLMK

COLPAC MAINTAINS ITS 'AA' GRADE BRCGS ACCREDITATION

Leading designer and manufacturer of paperboard food packaging, Colpac, has maintained its prestigious 'AA' BRCGS (British Retail Consortium Global Standards) grade following an annual audit at its Flitwick site.

This is the seventh consecutive year that Colpac has maintained the 'AA' grade certification and the auditor specifically commented on the condition of Colpac's factory as being excellent.

During the audit process, Colpac achieved zero non-conformances along with very positive praise for its working practices.

The BRCGS Standard for Packaging Materials is viewed as a global benchmark of quality, safety, and legality for food packaging manufacture. It provides a robust framework for all types of packaging manufacturer in the production of safe and legal packaging materials, and to manage product quality to meet customers' requirements.

"This is a fantastic outcome, and down to the efforts of all team members across our sites. It is testament to our hard work and dedication



to continually improve and manufacture and source products to global food safety standards," comments Colpac's Compliance & QA Manager Frances Dickman.

"I am really proud of our team for achieving this standard for the seventh year running. We strive to manufacture products to the highest global standards and it's really motivating to receive this recognition," comments Linda Ritchie, Colpac's Assistant Finishing Manager.

Established over 85 years ago, local employer Colpac designs and manufactures paperboard food packaging from its Flitwick based site, distributing to UK retailers and wholesalers, and exporting to over 60 countries worldwide.

<https://colpacpackaging.com/>

East West Rail UPDATE

Many of us recognise that the corridor from Oxford through Milton Keynes and Bedford to Cambridge has huge potential. The region is a buzzing economic hub of innovation, technology and science, but local businesses across all sectors face obstacles which are restricting their growth.

To thrive, businesses need room to expand and be connected. East West Rail (EWR) can help unlock these constraints and unleash the potential and aspirations of hard-working businesses.

Combining the forces of Oxford and Cambridge and connecting them with fast-growing towns and cities in between, including Milton Keynes and Bedford, will enable new opportunities across the region. The railway will bring businesses closer to supply chains, research sectors, industry peers and other sectors, creating wealth and jobs for an area of more than 3.8 million people.

EWR will also support businesses to attract and retain a skilled workforce, many of whom will not be able to commit to a new role which cannot be accessed by reliable, sustainable and affordable public transport. East West Rail enables a much wider catchment for your business, by allowing you to access a workforce who are confident that they can travel easily and accessibly on workdays and at the weekend.



East West Rail has now progressed significantly. Track-laying work on the first phase of construction between Oxford and Bletchley has now passed the halfway point. As part of the Chancellor's Spring Budget 2023, the Government also announced that they expect to make an announcement in May, enabling us to confirm the Bedford to Cambridge section of the route and share updates on other sections of EWR at the same time.

The team here at EWR Co looks forward to engaging with businesses and communities following this announcement. Dates and details will be shared on the EWR Co website when we have more information.

To keep up-to-date with all the latest news, you can also sign up to our newsletter.

To share any thoughts or questions, please get in touch by emailing contact@eastwestrail.co.uk



WELLBEING Products to make you feel good!

Health & Wellbeing has proven to be one of the more resilient 'sectors' over the last couple of years, after all, we ALL have to wash and clean ourselves everyday which means we all use and need these products, we just don't realise it!

It is a category that many have a preconception about, but it is not just the healthcare and beauty industries that use wellbeing products, everyone likes to feel good!

When we are not feeling on top form, we need products to help us get better... a pack of tissues for the persistent winter cold, or hay fever in the summer, a relaxing bath soak to ease the tension of the day away.

We all go on holiday, we all like a little bit of sun on our face, we all buy the essential travel accessories to make sure we don't burn and we have the emergency first aid kit in case someone slips by the pool.

Actually, the more you sit down and think about it the more wellbeing products are used by everyone, every day as part of your 'daily life' so why not consider it as a promotional product? Solicitors go on holiday, insurance brokers wash, estate agents get colds and teachers brush their teeth.

It is a product range that is ever evolving as retail brands constantly create new versions of products to compete for market share, there may not be obvious new products launched but they are there!

A new lip balm flavour, a body wash with a new natural ingredient, new colourful on-trend packaging so why not broaden your mind and give your promotional product range a 'healthy' new feel.

To discuss your next campaign, give Jo a call on 07852 951425 or drop an email to jo@thelittlebrandingcompany.co.uk

Member NEWS

John Bunyan Community Boat 10 YEARS OF CRUISING

This July, the John Bunyan Community Boat celebrates its 10th year of operation. The John Bunyan was launched at a boat-naming ceremony at Priory Marina on the River Great Ouse in July 2013. It was created to promote the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park and to gain traction for the project with Bedford's local community. Over the past 10 years the John Bunyan has become one of Bedford's top tourist attractions carrying over 60,000 passengers. It offers a range of cruises from leisurely Sunday cruises to Kempston, music cruises featuring Jazz, Motown and Irish Bands, dining with Fish & Chip suppers to Thali and Tandoor Curry Cruises, and Afternoon Tea Cruises.

Last year the John Bunyan Volunteers received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the equivalent of an MBE for a voluntary organisation, in recognition of services to the community which was presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire.

At the recent Bedford Independent Everyday Heroes Awards for 2022, in partnership with the Harpur Trust, The John Bunyan Community Boat's Operations Team won the 'Raising the Profile of the Town (Team)' award, sponsored by Bedford Radio. Stephen Goosey, John Bunyan Boat Chair, said, "This is a great achievement to win the award, this shows the hard work our volunteers on the Operations Team puts in. However, without the wider volunteer team in all roles this would not have been possible, and shows the great commitment of all volunteers on the John Bunyan Community boat."



Stephen Goosey and Teresa Clarke
with James Pharoah of The Quarry
Theatre (l) at the Quarry Theatre
for Bedford Independent Everyday
Heroes Awards 2022



INTENSIVE SUPPORT PROGRAMME on offer to businesses in Bedfordshire

Firms in Bedfordshire only have a few weeks left to sign up for SEMLEP's Growth Curve programme which supports businesses looking to achieve long-term growth.

Hundreds of firms have taken part in Growth Curve since it launched in 2020 but with the programme's funding coming to an end, organisations only have until June 30 to make the most of fully-funded specialist support from its business advisers.

SEMLEP Growth Hub manager Vicky Hlomuka said: "Growth Curve is an intensive programme for fast-growing businesses who want to take their organisations to the next level.

"Even in these last few weeks of Growth Curve, businesses can still access invaluable, free, one-to-one advice sessions with our advisers to help them focus on their business planning."

Growth Curve has supported a wide variety of businesses from a range of sectors, including architects, healthcare companies, security businesses, technology installers, sports facilities and accountancy firms.

Growth Curve is open to firms which are experiencing or projecting high growth in the next two to three years, have a minimum of two employees and a current annual turnover of £100,000 with projected 20 per cent annual growth minimum.

Growth Curve and its Growth Curve Peer Networks have been part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

To register for support from the Growth Curve programme fill in the enquiry form at <https://www.semlepgrowthhub.com/growth-curve/>

To find out about other forms of support offered to businesses in Bedfordshire by SEMLEP's Growth Hub visit <https://www.semlepgrowthhub.com/>

To book our public cruises visit www.bmkwaterway.org/johnbunyanboat or to book a charter email: charters@johnbunyanboat.org.

GROWING JUST TO STAND STILL

The New Reality for SMEs

In a small and medium enterprise (SME), the need for growth comes with the territory, but a sea-change is brewing in how and why SMEs seek growth. This is because so many factors are now acting as a brake on business performance – the aftermath of the pandemic, supply chain interruption, spiraling inflation, energy bills and employment costs – that in many businesses a minimum degree of growth is becoming necessary for survival, not just success.

So what does growth look like, and how do you achieve it? Here's our Top Eight SME Growth Tips for 2023

1. Tackle costs from new angles

Take action against rising costs to prevent them strangling growth. This isn't just about finding the best deals, but also considering making larger purchases before prices rise again or outsourcing non-critical processes.

2. Keep pricing savvy

To underpin business growth, product development and innovation must still happen, and pricing needs to be kept at a level overall where it can still fund that investment.

3. Revisit your offering

A key driver of business growth is closeness of fit between what you sell and what customers need – and this can change greatly over even a brief period. Focused market research can help you upgrade your products and services, driving the growth both of your existing customers and new prospects.

4. Major on partnerships

Expansion, whilst it can deliver growth, can be costly and risky. But focusing on creating partnerships potentially delivers far more growth relative to the investment and effort involved.

5. Diversify (the what and the how)

Growth can be about extending the range of items or services you sell, but it's also about finding ways to make their consumption more financially accessible and repeatable. A subscription model, for example, creates a future revenue stream through which regular, repeat-purchase products and services can be diversified.

6. Keep your eye on budgets

Future growth is undermined by poor budget management, and periods of growth often result in bad financial decisions and budgeting because it feels like there's money to burn. Strong budgeting and regular forecasting is the bedrock on which sustained growth in a healthy business is built, and if you haven't got the Finance expertise in place to manage it, you need to look for some outside help.

7. Optimise cashflow

Cashflow is king, and businesses that can pocket sales revenue before they have to pay for making the sale possible will do best.

8. Gain insights – and make them pay

Good MI – Management Information – is key to unlocking opportunities in your business, understanding where all is not what it seems, and analysing trends to ensure you're prepared for what's coming next.

For more information on how you can use EFM's team of Finance and business management experts on a pay-as-you-go basis to help your business drive growth, visit efm.uk.com



Peli BioThermal Provide ESSENTIAL EARTHQUAKE AID

Caring colleagues at Peli BioThermal have made substantial donations to help the ongoing relief efforts, supporting victims of the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

Staff at the Leighton Buzzard based business donated clothing, toiletries, blankets and other essential items to support the local branch of a UK based charity.

The charity, Go Dharmic, is providing vital aid to the regions impacted by the earthquakes, which claimed the lives of more than 50,000 people and have left many thousands more homeless.

Jyoti Qurban, Transport Coordinator at Peli BioThermal, presented boxes of donations to the Luton based branch of the Luton Turkish Education and Culture Trust, which is raising funds and arranging collections to support relief efforts in the earthquake zone, where families are in desperate need of food, shelter and ways to keep warm.

Jyoti said: "We were overwhelmed by the rapid response and outstanding generosity of our colleagues who were happy to help and made so many donations. It was amazing we were able to help the ongoing relief efforts happening locally and on a global scale."

Big-hearted team members generously donated numerous items, collected in packaging products produced by Peli BioThermal, which specialises in temperature-controlled packaging and service solutions for the global life sciences industry.

Jyoti arranged for regular shipments to the charity, which ensures donations are shipped to the parts of the region most affected by the devastation.

To learn more about Peli BioThermal and the company's wide range of products and offerings, visit www.pelibiothermal.com.

Member NEWS

FOXLEY KINGHAM Anniversary Foundation Supports Local Charities

The Foxley Kingham Anniversary Foundation aimed high – literally – this year to raise funds for its charity partners. The courageous team of accountants undertook challenging, even ‘death-defying’ acts to inspire people to dig deep into their pockets for the three important local health and wellbeing charities.

Raising over £13,000 for their charity partners, the fundraising focus of the socially and locally aware financial firm was on health and wellbeing, particularly mental health.

The Foxley Kingham team chose fundraising activities that would inspire donations, and, at the same time, meet their personal goals and challenges.

Accounts and Audit Senior, Aimee Dimmock, opted to beat her own 13,000-foot skydive from 2018 with a daredevil ‘wing walk’. Strapped to the pole in the centre of an aircraft’s wingspan, Aimee spent an adrenaline-inducing, 12-minute acrobatic flight at 120mph. “I thought it was crazy enough to raise lots of money,” said Aimee, beating her previous fundraising target, with an incredible £3,300.



And the tough-as-ever FK cycling team, similarly, took on a longer ride, with a 68.2-mile course up-hill-and-down-dale Ride Essex route, raising £2,800.

“We didn’t expect quite as many hills,” said Steve Sansom, Associate Director. But despite the ride being more challenging than expected, the team completed the journey in the respectable time of just over four hours, stopping just twice for repairs, refreshments and moral support!

“I’m very proud of us,” said Steve. “And thank you to our many sponsors, including Water-to-Go who very generously gave us all BPA-free, filtration water bottles too. Planning for the year ahead fundraising challenges has already begun so watch this space!

The charity partner for the year ahead is NOAH Enterprise, which helps the most disadvantaged in the Luton area. NOAH’s focus is on providing a practical, empowering and caring service to people who are homeless, either those who are temporary or entrenched rough sleepers; those who are marginalised; or those who have fallen into poverty.

David Morris, Chief Executive, said: “With the Foxley Kingham Anniversary Foundation having such a high profile locally, it’s a privilege to be selected as their charity partner this year to support those people who really need our help locally. We are excited to be working together and can’t wait to see how they beat last year’s fundraising feats!”

Tara Aldwin, Director at Foxley Kingham and Trustee of the Anniversary Foundation said: “Last year we raised £10k for local organisation, the Level Trust, and this year we’ve gone on to raise £13,000 to support our health and wellbeing charity partners. I’m so proud of the team and don’t know how they’ll top this year’s amazing feats. We’re all looking forward to watching them do it though!”

The Anniversary Foundation was established to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Foxley Kingham in 2018 and fundraise to help local causes in the Luton area.

The Foxley Kingham Anniversary Foundation charity partners for 2022/23 were: **Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Charity’s Emergency Department Appeal**, supporting Child and Adolescent Mental Health Room (CAMHS). **CHUMS Charity**, supporting mental health and emotional well-being support for children, young people and their families. **Mind BLMK** supporting positive mental health and well-being through wellbeing centres and local venues.

For more information visit: www.fkca.co.uk/about-us/fk-in-the-community/

More information on NOAH Enterprise can be found at this link: <https://www.noahenterprise.org/>



IWSC DISTRIBUTOR Trophy 2023

The judges, which includes personalities from across the trade, commented on the extensive work Hallgarten has undertaken over the past 12 months to elevate their own sustainability practices and review their future commitments to carbon neutrality, as well as the development of their own portfolio throughout the last year.

Here’s what the judges said: “A company with a fantastic range and a great team, our judges were impressed by the incredible amount Hallgarten Wines have achieved over the past year, particularly in the sustainability area. Rather than box ticking the sustainability boxes, our judges felt Hallgarten was trying to take its responsibility in a new direction with their own eco-standard rating scheme. Additionally, they are showing a strong commitment with their intention to be carbon neutral by 2023. Beyond

sustainability over the last 12 months, they have shown real commitment to their customers, launching a new magazine. Also a commitment to employees with the new diversity and inclusion team and ongoing commitment to education. A diverse and cutting-edge wine range – with 220 new wines launched in past year, our judges felt Hallgarten came across as a very human business and one they’d happily work for.”

The judging panels for the 2023 award comprised of experts from across the wine industry: Masters of Wine Junior Vianna and Sarah Abbott – as well as drinks retail consultant, Cat Lomax. Christelle Guibert, CEO for the IWSC completed the panel.

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

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Founded in 2010 by ITV's Political Editor, Robert Peston, our aim is to end educational inequality by giving all young people access to the same prestigious networks available to the top fee-paying schools in the UK. Through talks from today's influential figures via our Inspiration programme, our Experience work experience programme linking state school students to industry-leading companies, we are helping level the playing field for young people of all backgrounds. Our services for schools and students are entirely free of charge. Bespoke projects like Finding Futures, delivered in partnership with SEMLEP, offer state-school students quality work experiences that could shape and inform young people as they make decisions about their future. We believe every young person in the UK should have the right to high-quality work experience regardless of their starting point in life or geographical location.

<https://www.speakersforschools.org/work-experience-for-all/>

From Ancient Accountants TO CLOUD ACCOUNTING

For centuries the accounting industry has been reliant on the good old bookkeeping methods, before that *ancient accountants* recorded crop yields and tallied tax on stone tablets. Soaring forward to 2023, computerisation and cloud accounting have relegated traditional bookkeeping to the history books. As we look forward to the future, Artificial Intelligence (AI) looks set to [revolutionise the world of accounting](<https://www.icaew.com/-/media/corporate/files/technical/technology/thought-leadership/artificial-intelligence-report.ashx>).

The Potential of AI in Accounting

Recent success in AI, such as the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT, have shown AI is no longer just for the large tech companies. As small business accountants, Crouchers are excited to explore the massive potential of AI in our industry and to share the benefits that small businesses will be able reap.

The Benefits of AI in Accounting

AI has the power to bring us information from data, it can analyse vast amounts of financial data in a fraction of the time a human would take. Providing insights that can allow users to make better decisions and boost their businesses.

One of the most significant benefits of AI in accounting is its ability to improve the accuracy of financial data. With AI and Cloud accounting, small business owners can have all the information they need in real time, helping with cash flow forecasting, budgeting and better decision making. This is increasingly important for SMEs, often operating on tight budgets, these benefits can help SMEs to grow and thrive.

Using AI can reduce your operational costs by streamlining and minimising the need for manual labour and data entry. Freeing up your vital employees to focus on strategic decision making that requires the human touch.

Embrace the Future

As we look forward to the bright accounting future with AI, we are excited to share the benefits that AI will bring with our clients. The launch of ChatGPT is an excellent example of the power of AI, and we look forward to seeing how it can further transform the accounting industry. We urge small businesses to embrace these new technologies and reap the rewards that AI can bring to their financial management processes.

www.crouchers-accountants.co.uk

crouchers 
chartered accountants and business advisers

New MEMBERS



We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all **New MEMBERS** of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. 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

Bedford Coffee Roasters Ltd

bedfordcoffeeroasters.co.uk

Coffee masters creating organic coffee sourced from the Cameroon and around the world.

Beds & Northants

M S Therapy Centre

mscentrebedsandnorthants.com

Our charity, set up in 1983, provides therapies, services and support needed to enable people living with Multiple Sclerosis to self-manage their condition.

David R Bulmer Associates Ltd

davidbulmerassociates.co.uk

Insurance Broker. We provide clients with a professional service to cover all aspects of their Commercial and Personal insurance requirements

Fliweel Tech

fliweel.tech

Fliweel helps businesses with their transformation goals by streamlining manual and repetitive tasks by utilising tools such as Microsoft Office 365, Google Workspace, Zapier and Make. Fliweel helps businesses improve their efficiency and profitability by automating their business processes.

George Hay Chartered Accountants

georgehay.co.uk

Accountancy and business advisory services

GMLD

gavinmuge.com

Training courses and business consultancy services

Home Instead Luton

& Central Bedfordshire

homeinstead.co.uk

Range of domiciliary services offered to older people in Luton and Central Bedfordshire

Link to Change

linktochange.org.uk

Charity supporting children and young people experiencing child exploitation and grooming

Love of Lebanon Co UK Ltd

Sale of books for education/leisure worldwide

Maiana Limited

maiana.uk

E-commerce - A modern & positive lifestyle platform

Marco Williams

Travel Counsellor

travelcounsellors.co.uk/marco.williams

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Michael Thorn Photography

michaelthorn.uk

As a professional photographer I create the right images for businesses that show your story to the world, helping your customers to know, like and trust who you are and what you do. Commercial and Brand Photography, Headshots, Portraits, Events, Products and Special Projects.

Queen Elizabeth School

Secondary School and 6th Form

Raw Thunder Creative

rawthundercreative.com

We are a Creative Agency. We create content that helps you stand out from the noise of the world through video, animation, podcasts and beyond. We tell your stories and messages, and promote your business/brand using our creative expertise.

Several Seats

serveralseats.org

Several Seats is a community interest company that aims to promote mental health in women of colour from ethnic minority backgrounds. We champion young women with lived experiences to have a seat at the table. Our mission is to Inspire, Empower and Educate.

Silvertoad Ltd

silvertoad.co.uk

Full service marketing agency

The Harpur Trust - Bedford Giving

harpurtrust.org.uk

The Harpur Trust is a charity focused on providing education and on improving the lives of people in Bedford. Forming part of the Trust's Community Strategy, Bedford Giving is a collaborative initiative to give, get and grow a brighter future for children and young people in Bedford

Trillium Flow Services Ltd

trilliumflow.com

We serve customers in the power, oil and gas, general industry, and water and wastewater sectors with highly engineered valves, pumps, and actuators. We offer project support, starting with highly engineered, reliable product lines for your industry and continuing with a unique level of support and service.

Utility Warehouse - Join Davina

joindavina.co.uk

Help people reduce household and business utilities and create additional income streams

Working Options in Education

workingoptions.org.uk

Working Options provide free opportunities for young people from age 14 to fulfil their potential. We work with a range of businesses to help them access the true range of talent that exists in UK schools, improving the diversity of the workforce, raising awareness of opportunities and supporting young people.

Member PROFILES

Better Together
Working together, achieving more

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

GMLD

👤 Gavin Muge
☎ 07762 556361
✉ gavinmuge@hotmail.co.uk
📌 gavinmuge.com



My aim is to help organisations grow and develop their people so that they can produce the best results possible. Coaching workshops, Training new skills and Mentoring individuals are all part of how I add value. We never stop learning and developing!

Raw Thunder Creative

👤 James Davies
✉ james@rawthundercreative.com
✉ info@rawthundercreative.com
📌 rawthundercreative.com



A creative agency that helps your business stand out from the noise. We provide solution based content using video, animation, podcasts and beyond. Over sixteen years, founder James Davies has worked with start-up businesses to household names including Saatchi & Saatchi, Johnson & Johnson, EY, Tesco, NHS, Bourne Leisure and many more.

George Hay Chartered Accountants

👤 Caroline Hicks
☎ 01767 315010
📌 georgehay.co.uk



We are trusted advisers, providing bespoke, value-led accountancy, tax, audit and business advisory solutions to businesses and private clients, and sector-specific support spanning a range of industries. We also operate a payroll bureau, and offer an outsourced bookkeeping service, designed to save you time.

Several Seats CIC

👤 Joan Idowu
☎ 07454 706216
✉ team@severalseats.org
📌 severalseats.org



Several Seats promotes positive mental health in ethnic minority women. We encourage women to finally have a seat at the table by creating a community where women of colour can be seen and heard. Our mission is to inspire, empower and educate women through peer-to-peer support and learning.

Link to Change

👤 Hayley Brown
📌 linktochange.org.uk



Our work continuously supports children and young people who are systematically excluded from society due to exploitation, grooming, modern day slavery and trafficking. The local expertise and knowledge we possess, results in Link to Change being known as one of the foremost specialist charities working across the boroughs of Bedfordshire.

Silvertoad Ltd

👤 Toma Habashi/Amy Habashi
✉ hello@silvertoad.co.uk
📌 silvertoad.co.uk



Silvertoad are a full-service agency providing highly efficient, seamlessly integrated marketing solutions. Our in-house team provide Creative Design, Website and App Design and Development and Online, Digital, and traditional Marketing Services. We deliver consistently fantastic results and committed to offering an enhanced, measurable service every time we engage on a project, whatever the requirement.

Marco Williams Travel Counsellor

👤 Marco Williams
✉ marco.williams@travelcounsellors.com
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Part of a multi-award winning international travel business, offering leisure and corporate travel. Travel Counsellors was consistently recognised in 2020 as "The Best Travel Company to Book With" by MoneySavingExpert. Our financial protection is unparalleled in the industry. And above all, with us, its personal.

Sue Ryder: St John's Hospice

👤 Nick Burr
📌 sueyder.org/how-we-can-help/sue-ryder-st-johns-hospice



Sue Ryder provides palliative care and bereavement support across Bedfordshire, both at St John's Hospice and in the community. We partner with local businesses, to create a positive impact by increasing staff engagement and retention through planned events, volunteer days and skill sharing to make a tangible difference.



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