

LONDON

Business Matters

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AI – help or hindrance?

Creating a learning culture

Year of the dragon

Strength, fortune and success

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Letter from the editor

Chinese New Year always makes for some arresting images and our front cover shot of the year of the dragon celebrations in central London provides some much-needed colour. Further good cheer was provided by the inaugural LCCI SME Business Awards (pages 18-19) which showcased the innovation, talent and dedication to be found amongst small businesses across the capital.

Business achievement was also celebrated in the Guildhall's wonderful art gallery in January when the Lord Mayor joined the party to mark the first anniversary of the City of London Chamber (p 70).

Who will be celebrating after the London mayoral elections on 2 May? For the first time ever two Chamber members – Natalie Campbell of Westminster University and Tarun Ghulati of Squared Watermelon – are candidates and both featured on the front page of a recent edition of the Evening Standard (p 8).

Lord Mayor of London Michael Mainelli writes of AI's transformative effects and the UK's chance to lead the fourth industrial revolution.

”

Artificial Intelligence

Much of this issue's A Smarter City section (starting on page 36), is devoted to Artificial Intelligence or AI. Lord Mayor of London Michael Mainelli writes of its transformative effects and the UK's chance to lead the fourth industrial revolution. On the subject of employment, we contrast the fact that the demand for AI skills has skyrocketed with the importance of 'humanness' in hiring staff. Lawyers from TV Edwards pose the question: is AI the future of commercial litigation? And we also cover a report which highlights concerns about AI risk in the world of cyber security. Much then to consider about a subject that is surely here to stay for the foreseeable future.

Gentlemen

Two gentleman (I use the term advisedly) who played important roles at the London Chamber in times past are remembered on page 60. Sir Christopher Benson DL and David Senior OBE were respectively president and deputy director of LCCI during critical periods and made hugely valued contributions to London business, as well as making their mark on society in different ways. LCCI is proud to have been associated with them.

Peter Bishop
editor@londonbusinessmatters.co.uk

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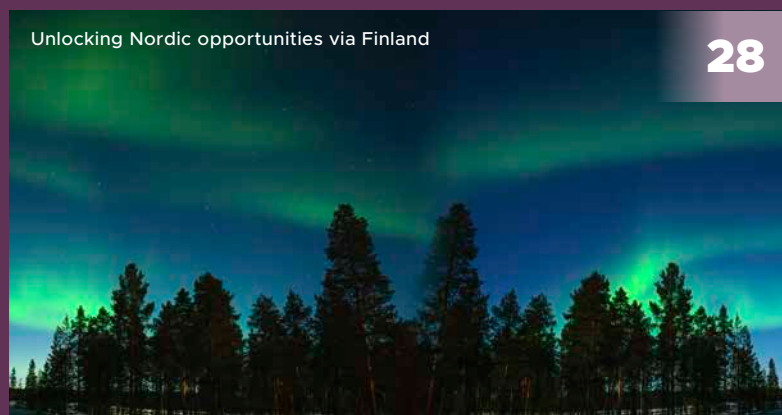
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Spring Budget must restore business confidence

LCCI has called on Chancellor Jeremy Hunt to address four key issues in the Spring Budget in order to restore stability and supercharge productivity and growth

The combination of rising operating costs, high energy prices and high interest rates means businesses have less available capital to invest for growth – the implications of which will be felt well into the longer term.



Jeremy Hunt by Rory Arnold, CC-BY-2.0

It is vital, LCCI urged, that the government implements a clearly prioritised, long-term and targeted plan for UK business recovery.

Key measures

In a letter sent to the Chancellor, the following key measures were proposed:

- **The reintroduction of VAT-free shopping for international visitors**
Restoring VAT-free shopping
- **Apprenticeship Levy reform**
Simplify and enhance the

would enhance London's global competitiveness, reversing the perception of being 20 per cent more expensive than European counterparts. This move is crucial to revive the tourism industry, safeguarding employment, investments and economic growth.

▪ Securing a long-term funding solution for TfL

London's extensive transport network is indispensable for business operations and city connectivity. To ensure its sustainability, we urge the government to establish a stable, long-term funding solution, ending the cycle of short-term political decisions.



Apprenticeship Levy to address its current limitations. London businesses would benefit from a



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The rise of ESG in audit

By Simon de Souza,
Partner



With the ever-changing landscape, it's becoming more important than ever for businesses to ensure they are being proactive with their ESG practices. In this blog, we delve into the topic of ESG and its impact on businesses and the audit profession.

What is ESG?

ESG stands for Environmental, Social and Governance and collectively for businesses, it's a framework of operation to ensure that the business acts responsibly and considers its impact on the environment and society. The three broad components of ESG cover key elements as follows:

- **Environmental** - focuses on reducing carbon emissions, striving towards net-zero, optimising supply chains for minimal environmental impact, managing waste effectively, and considering biodiversity impacts.
- **Social** - encompasses workplace diversity and inclusivity, human rights policies, employee welfare, and community involvement.
- **Governance** - drives the above areas, with focus on management structure, board diversity, anti-corruption measures, and reviewing employee compensation.

Why is it important?

ESG encourages businesses to act responsibly and having a positive impact on its environment and stakeholders. Having robust policies in place can provide a number of benefits, such as assisting in recruitment and retaining talent, enhancing stakeholder relationships, attracting investment, and potentially reducing long-term costs through waste reduction.

As corporate reporting evolves, early adoption of ESG considerations facilitates smoother transitions in compliance and reporting.

Position in respect of financial reporting.

Financial reporting in the UK is evolving, with large companies required to disclose information regarding greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and energy efficiency.

New standards, IFRS S1 and IFRS S2, introduced by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) in June 2023, address sustainability and climate-related disclosures. Although not yet endorsed in the UK, a decision is imminent, with expectations of increased disclosure requirements over time. Despite not all companies being mandated to disclose these details, many proactively include them in their financial statements as part of their ESG strategy.

With ESG being such a high-profile area, there are a number of concerns that have been reported with the concept of greenwashing. These concerns can be allayed to stakeholders through assurance engagements in respect of ESG.

What the future will look like

The trend towards more rigorous ESG disclosures in financial statements is set to continue. Assurance engagements, ranging from Agreed Upon Procedures for specific area reviews to more formal opinions in accordance with ISAE (UK) 3000, are expected to gain prominence. This emerging focus is still in its early stages, and assurance practitioners will play a crucial role in navigating the evolving landscape.

How can we help?

At Lubbock Fine, we understand the complexities and evolving nature of ESG for businesses. To have a conversation regarding this, please get in touch with Partner Simon de Souza (simondesouza@lubbockfine.co.uk)

more user-friendly system with greater flexibility to nurture a skilled workforce and thrive in today's economy.

▪ A solution to the energy crisis affecting businesses

The government must work to combat rising energy costs, which continue to burden businesses and hinder economic confidence. Intervention is needed to alleviate these pressures, preventing further price increases and mitigating the detrimental effects of high inflation on the economy.



@ HM Treasury

Karim Fatehi MBE said that it was imperative that "Chancellor Hunt prioritised London's businesses' urgent needs. The

current operating climate is unsustainable for many businesses; rising operating costs, soaring energy prices, and high interest rates are stifling productivity and hampering economic recovery efforts.

"The reintroduction of VAT-free shopping is crucial for competitiveness, tourism and economic growth. Long-term funding for TfL is vital for citywide connectivity and operations. Apprenticeship Levy reform is needed to support workforce development effectively and addressing the energy crisis is much needed to alleviate burdens on businesses and boost confidence."

Fatehi add that now was the time "for strategic economic planning and proactive measures to restore business confidence and ensure London remains the premier global city for business."

"To ensure its sustainability, we urge the government to establish a stable, long-term funding solution, ending the cycle of short-term political decisions."

”

Unsustainable
LCCI interim chief executive

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Building a better Europe

Belgium's Prime Minister, Alexander De Croo, was the main attraction at the London School of Economics for a recent event hosted by the European Institute. As Belgium holds the 2024 European Union Chair, De Croo delivered a speech on the future of the EU, followed by a Q&A led by Chris Anderson, LSE's Ralf Dahrendorf Professor of European Politics and Society.



Throughout his speech, De Croo drew connections between the political and economic challenges facing the EU, outlining three priorities for Belgium's presidency – protect, strengthen and prepare.

“We as Europeans, before we get bigger, we need to get better,” De Croo said. “The European Union, with all the benefits it offers, needs to get better, needs to become more effective.”

Protect, strengthen and prepare

Firstly, De Croo emphasised the increasing importance of the EU's role in protecting its population, particularly in the context of the ongoing war in

Ukraine. He highlighted the unity the EU has displayed in response to the conflict, asserting their commitment to supporting Ukraine.

Secondly, De Croo discussed plans to concentrate on strengthening the EU economy through a focus on new climate policies and funding mechanisms.

Lastly, he said, preparing for the future of the EU involves addressing questions of expansion, finances and internal decision-making processes. De Croo intends to prioritise these internal aspects as candidate countries continue accession talks.

“We as Europeans, before we get bigger, we need to get better,” De Croo said. “The European Union, with all the benefits it offers, needs to get better, needs to become more effective.”

Cooperation

De Croo also underscored the significance of international cooperation in addressing global problems, both within and outside the EU. Despite the UK's departure from the EU, De Croo pointed to their similarities, including democratic values and economic challenges, arguing for ongoing collaboration to strengthen both their economies and societies.

“Now that the dust of Brexit has fallen, I'm convinced that we have a lot to offer one another,” De Croo said. “There is a channel between us but we have a past in common, and I'm convinced we also have a future in common.”

Optimism

During the subsequent Q&A session, De Croo fielded questions on the war in Ukraine, the upcoming US election, international organisations and the rise of populist parties. He also expressed optimism about the EU's future, citing high expectations of the EU from populations across Europe.

“Today, Europe is being pushed forward by the population and not being pulled forward by some visionary leaders. So this is our big assignment: how do we use the push that comes from our population to build a more effective and a better Europe?”

www.lse.ac.uk



Front page news

It's not every day that you get LCCI members gracing the front cover of the *Evening Standard*. However, on a Wednesday this January, not one but two of them featured in a 'Race for City Hall' special feature in the paper. Both Natalie Campbell, chancellor of patron member University of Westminster, and Tarun Ghulati, president and chief executive of Squared Watermelon and a doyen of LCCI Asian Business Association, were pictured among a host of London Mayoral hopefuls.

Runners and riders

Inside the paper, in a 'runners and riders' guide, the editorial picked out Ghulati's desire to re-open police stations in areas with high crime and to tackle inequality. Of Campbell it said she promised to take a chief executive's approach to deliver recovery and growth to the city.

Both independents, they are two of thirteen candidates in the race. The election takes place on Thursday 2 May.



Didn't look to the Horizon during acquisition?

It's been difficult to avoid the recent resurfacing controversy over the Post Office Horizon system, another failed government IT project, due to the ITV drama 'Mr Bates vs the Post Office'.



Horizon is a £1 billion IT system that enables UK Government departments to make social security payments, it was used by state-owned Post Office and its franchise-like sub-postmasters.

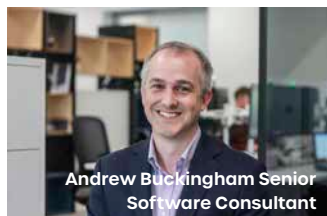
This piece of software was responsible for:

- 4,000 people being falsely accused of fraud or mismanagement
- 700 people being prosecuted
- 200 people being sent to prison
- Three people's deaths.

But why? And how is this a lesson in acquisition due diligence?

The media has reported Fujitsu as the developer of Horizon, and much of the public anger is directed at them. This organisation that generates a net

income of \$1.2 billion, was generally unknown by the public until the recent ITV series - watched by 20% of the UK population. Now, the business is now directly linked with the system that ruined thousands of lives.



Fujitsu has been subject to reputational and financial penalty for an IT system that they didn't directly create, but were in fact 'stuck with' due to their own lack of due diligence during acquisition.

Horizon was actually developed by ICL which was wholly acquired by

Fujitsu in 1998 - when the system was already a failing project and subject to Parliamentary review.

It would appear Fujitsu either didn't adequately assess Horizon as part of the ICL acquisition, or hoped to turn around this core failing product. While there doesn't appear to be any evidence of the latter, we can only surmise that the due diligence did not adequately extend into its technology products, and now, 25 years later, presents a possible \$1 billion financial liability and incalculable reputational damage.

Technology, software products and the services that are built upon them, are now such a critical factor in business value and valuation, there is an increased need for

greater consideration as part of a well-rounded business appraisal and due diligence activity.

Is this a mistake your business can afford to make?

When looking to the horizon of any deal, thorough technology due diligence is vital to not only understand the true deal value, but to uncover things that may cause significant damage in the future.

To find out more about due diligence and value creation in mergers and acquisitions, get in touch with our expert Bruce. watson@waterstons.com

SPONSORED COLUMN

Life planning: the positive power of a pre-nuptial agreement

The importance of financial planning is well established – so why not pro-actively plan your married life?



■ Susie Barter

Pre-nuptial agreements are not just the preserve of the super wealthy. A good pre-nup – and the discussions that inform it – can benefit many marriages.

Everyone wants their marriage to succeed and avoiding future conflict is a good place to start. Individuals are given a valuable opportunity to identify and discuss – in advance – important issues they might otherwise neglect. Resolving differences at the outset of a marriage will help prevent surprises further down the line.

Discussions often start with two simple but key decisions: where will the couple live and how will they fund their life together? From here we consider associated issues that arise in different families: are there family or pre-owned assets they wish to keep separate, or share unequally? Will they share future income? How might a dual-career couple navigate childcare? Whose career might be compromised? Will a future home or homes be owned jointly or separately?

Not all these questions can be answered with certainty. A good pre-nup will provide flexibility and allow for review as the marriage progresses whilst maintaining the agreed framework to guide the decision-making process.

We can help our clients to raise the possibility of a pre-nup with their partner in a sensitive way and can certainly re-assure them that most couples find the process constructive and helpful. It is often parents that propose pre-nuptial agreements to their newly engaged child, or a trusted IFA, accountant, or friend. That can provide a starting point for the initial conversation with their partner.

Pre-nups, like any contract, need to be produced carefully to be effective. Although not enforceable by statute the court has given effect to properly drawn pre-nups since 2010.

We work closely with our property, private wealth and tax teams to provide holistic advice to clients and with client's own advisors to achieve the right results for their particular needs.

Susie Barter

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More inflation surprises to come in 2024

London businesses are predicting inflation and high interest rates will dampen prospects in the first half of 2024, according to LCCI's latest quarterly economic survey. The Q4 2023 edition of the Capital 500, the longest-running private business survey conducted by a regional chamber of commerce across the UK every quarter, also found that firms remain pessimistic about the future prospects of London's economy over the next 12 months.

The latest survey, conducted by Savanta, found that inflation was still the number one issue for London firms with 66 per cent of companies feeling more concerned about it in Q4 than they had in previous months. Four in ten firms also reported that interest rates had become a bigger concern.

Long-term plan

Statistics from the survey underscores businesses' uncertainty about the prospects of both London's and the UK's economy over the next 12 months, reinforcing the need for the government to outline a

long-term strategic plan for growth. Key findings include:

- Only 28 per cent of those surveyed expect London's economy to improve in the next 12 months, with the figure at 26 per cent for the UK economy.
- The stubbornly high – and still rising – cost of raw materials continues to dampen confidence in the wider economy; 54 per cent and 66 per cent of London businesses reported respective increases in the cost of fuel and energy during Q4 2023.
- Firms expect to pass on inflationary and utility cost pressures onto consumers, with over half naming the high cost of gas and electricity as the biggest pressure on price increases. This paints a bleak picture for the cost-of-living crisis.

Business confidence

However, despite businesses' negative outlook for the economy, confidence in their own prospects for the next twelve months reached the highest level ever seen in the decade-long history of the Capital 500.

The increase in business confidence can be attributed in part to a rise in domestic sales. A quarter of businesses reported that demand for their products or services from within the UK had increased, up from Q3 2023. Other positive factors in business confidence included an increase in overall business cashflow, showing that consumers were returning to firms after a difficult first half of 2023. However, export demand dropped in the last quarter of 2023, with just 1 in 10 of those

surveyed reporting that export sales had increased during Q4 2023.

Struggling

Reacting to the findings of the report, Karim Fatehi CBE, LCCI Interim Chief Executive said that they presented a mixed picture. "On one hand, cost pressures – including stubbornly high inflation, energy prices that continue to rise and concern about the prospects of the wider economy – indicate that many firms will be struggling to stay afloat. On

the other hand, businesses have never been more confident about their own prospects, with half predicting an increase in their own profitability over the next 12 months.

"As we look ahead to the UK general election in 2024, businesses desperately need clarity on the government's – and the opposition's – strategy to improve the current operating climate. Only then will businesses, the lifeblood of our economy, be able to see through the current storm and plan a long-term route for growth."

Reaction to Mayor's budget

In response to the Mayor of London's budget, Karim Fatehi MBE, LCCI interim chief executive was pleased to note the inclusion of a number of key measures that the Chamber had campaigned for over the past year.

Transition

"Further funding for the ULEZ scrappage scheme is a win for London's small businesses. The roll-out of the expanded zone has not been without difficulty but firms have been impressively quick at adapting their working practices and logistics to match the aims of the policy – to protect the health of Londoners. The



promise of a further £50 million to locals and businesses to help them make the transition to greener and cleaner forms of transport and operations is important.

Pressures

"We also commend the allocation of significant resources to the Metropolitan Police to support the New Met Plan for London. We hope that tackling business crime will be a key strand of the plan. The impact of business crime has become one of the largest cost pressures for many London businesses, in particular the capital's local high street shops, which serve as a pillar of London's economy."

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Unlocking London's export growth potential

Currently, almost 22,500 businesses across the capital export goods. But Heathrow's new Exporting Excellence report estimates 34,100 more small and medium sized businesses have the potential to export goods but currently do not

If the capital's potential exporters joined forces with those already trading internationally, 56,600 companies would be exporting goods – a 150 per cent increase on current numbers. That represents one in nine businesses, which would deliver a multi-million-pound boost to the city.

Priorities

As part of its Exporting Excellence campaign to boost international trade across the UK, Heathrow spoke to a range of businesses about their priorities for international trade and obstacles to greater growth.

Exporters highlighted a series of challenges to boosting international trade including sustainability, a skills gap, access to finance and the need for the government to provide a clearer and overarching strategic plan for export growth.

Integral role

Karim Fatehi MBE, LCCI interim chief executive, welcomed the report. "It's a timely intervention, which highlights the integral role of the aviation sector in driving London's prosperity.

"London's economic success has always relied on its global connectivity



and aviation is the cornerstone of that global connectivity today and into the future. With nearly 22,500 London businesses exporting goods, generating an annual export value of almost £47 billion, and supporting 1.7 million jobs, it is evident how vital the sector is.

Solutions

"Exporting Excellence provides actionable solutions to boost exports and should spark a crucial dialogue between government, industry, SMEs and aviation businesses. We fully support the steps outlined and we urge policymakers to engage with the report's recommendations in order to unlock the potential economic benefits stemming from a successful aviation sector, thus underpinning Britain's future prosperity."

Businesses across London currently export £47 billion worth of goods every year, supporting 1.7 million jobs.

Recommendations

Exporting Excellence makes a series of key recommendations to government to unlock the full export potential of every region in the UK.

This includes the urgent delivery of the government's Sustainable Aviation Fuel Delivery Plan to ensure domestic production of the low carbon fuel which will be vital in ensuring the industry reaches its net zero goals.

It also recommends moving to a 'digital first' system for customs declarations and launching a new UK-wide campaign to encourage more young people to consider a career in logistics or exporting.

Skills mix

It states: "The UK cannot achieve its economic potential if the country does not have the right mix of skills to handle the complexities of compliance and logistics. During Heathrow's tour of the UK, we witnessed excellent examples of initiatives being developed to tackle the export skills shortage, many of them driven by businesses themselves.

"There is a consensus that the country needs to go further and faster. The UK needs a national campaign to highlight the potential a career in exports could offer job seekers and people leaving education."

www.heathrow.com



Olympian heights

Sir John Armitt CBE was the guest speaker at a recent LCCI Patron members' lunch at Mosimann's Club in Knightsbridge.

Sir John, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, (formerly he chaired the Olympic Delivery Authority for the London 2012 games) is pictured with Liz Henderson, LCCI director of membership and events.



Photographs by Elizabeth Skewes Castañeda

Year of the dragon

Chinese New Year, also known as the Lunar New Year, was celebrated in central London in early February with a parade of floats, dancing troupes, firecrackers, acrobats and street food stalls

Reputed to be the biggest such celebration of the lunar year outside Asia, the event, organised by the London Chinatown Chinese Association, attracted a huge crowd which lined a parade route ending in Trafalgar Square.

Auspicious

The year of the dragon

– the only one which features a mythical creature rather than an animal – is considered one of the most powerful and auspicious years in the Chinese zodiac, symbolising strength, fortune and success. The themes for the 2024 celebrations are Roaring into Sustainable Prosperity and Empowering Youth.



SPONSORED COLUMN

Facing redundancy – the law and your rights

By Rhian Radia, Consultant Employment Lawyer
Bishop & Sewell



Expert Advice

It is important for employees to know their rights, especially if facing redundancy where this could be linked to pregnancy or maternity leave. As well as, potentially, a claim for pregnancy/maternity discrimination, an employee on maternity leave has protected and preferred status in terms of alternative roles.

Employees also need to know about their financial entitlements in a redundancy situation as the amount of redundancy pay will depend on age and length of employment.

If an employer fails to comply with the collective redundancy process, they face potential claims of up to 90 days' pay per affected employee alongside possible claims for unfair dismissal.

The rules and process surrounding redundancy are not designed to stop employers from making employees redundant but are there to make sure it is a fair and considered process.

Rhian Radia is a Consultant Employment at Bishop & Sewell. She can be reached by email:

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+44 (0)20 7631 4141.

Visit

www.bishopandsewell.co.uk or follow on social media.

Government data suggests that 30% of employers make redundancies annually, often overlooking the human impact, especially when redundancies occur unexpectedly. Rhian Radia, Consultant Employment Lawyer at Bishop & Sewell, asserts that while employers have the right to adjust their workforce, employees are legally protected and entitled to a fair process.

The Law

Employees facing redundancy must determine if it's an individual or collective process.

Legislation requires an employer that is proposing to make 20 or more employees redundant in a 90-day period to undertake a collective consultation over a set timeframe.

Employers must keep an open mind during consultation, ensuring it's meaningful and explores alternatives to job losses. Consultation should start at the informative stage to ensure fairness and minimise redundancies.

If an employer is making more than 20 people redundant, they must notify the Secretary of State via the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). If they do not, they may face criminal sanctions. There are no formal rules for employers making less than 20 people redundant, but consultation still needs to take place to guard against potential unfair dismissal claims.

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& Wasbrough**

Tackling crimes against business

The National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) is hosted by the City of London Police and represents UK Police forces working in partnership with the business community to tackle crimes against businesses including retail crime

The NBCC website provides a one-stop-shop for businesses needing guidance and training on crime prevention and signposts where to get further help and support if they are experiencing anti-social behaviour or crime problems.

As part of their national role, the NBCC developed the Safer Business Action (SaBA) Day initiative which sees police and partners across the country joining together to tackle business crime in their communities through targeted operations and engagement.

Positive interactions

The success of the SaBA Days initiative led to the launch of a national Safer Business Action Week which took place for the second year running in October 2023. The week resulted in over 300 arrests and thousands of positive interactions with local retailers and businesses about the issues they face.

Dates for the next SaBA Week in October 2024 will be released soon but a Safer Business Action Month in March has been announced, with every police force in the country being asked to work with local partners to host at least one SaBA Day. Both the City of London Police and Metropolitan Police have already signed up to support the campaign.

Safe space

The NBCC has also teamed up with leading supermarkets and retailers, including Tesco, to launch a scheme to make retail outlets a safe space for people in need of help. The Safer Spaces scheme, also known as Operation PORTUM, is an overarching scheme that businesses can sign up to and support to create safer spaces in retail outlets for employees, customers and people in the community that feel vulnerable. The scheme supported by a number of national retailers now covers in excess of 11,000 retail locations across the country.

The NBCC, working in partnership with national retailers, has developed guidance and a step-by-step process to assist businesses in the planning, creating and implementation of a safe spaces scheme within their business. The NBCC is working to extend the initiative to other sectors such as hotels and banking.

“The NBCC has also teamed up with leading supermarkets and retailers, including Tesco, to launch a scheme to make retail outlets a safe space for people in need of help.”

Advice for retailers

Further support for retailers is being provided by the launch of the Retail Crime Action Plan, which the NBCC was heavily involved in drafting. It sets out advice for retailers on how to provide the best possible evidence for police to pursue in any case, making clear they should send CCTV footage of the whole incident and an image of the shoplifter via the digital evidence management system (DEMS) as quickly as possible after an offence has been committed. The NBCC are holding focus groups with both police and retailers to understand what the blockers are to using DEMS and how they can work with DEMS providers to get more retailers using it.

Key tool

NBCC lead Supt Patrick Holdaway said: “The NBCC is here to support both policing and businesses in tackling and preventing crimes that impact them the most. Retail crime and associated issues such as

Antisocial Behaviour continue to be a priority for the NBCC but we also do a lot of work across other sectors and around employee safety and training.

“The website is a key tool in helping businesses in London find and access the support they need to tackle the growing problem of business crime. There is so much support out there for businesses that it can be confusing to know where to turn for what. The NBCC website brings it all together in one place.”

NBCC produces a monthly newsletter aimed at businesses providing news, crime prevention guidance and support for businesses

www.nbcc.police.uk/newsletter-signup

For information on Safe Spaces and SaBA visit www.nbcc.police.uk/partnerships/safe-spaces and www.nbcc.police.uk/business-support/saba-days



Supt Patrick Holdaway

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Has Spring sprung?



So, the days are getting longer and the temperature is rising, which is great news. However, officially we now know that the UK slipped into a technical recession in the second half of 2023, CPI is still at 4%, interest rates may now remain unchanged until the Autumn and insolvencies are at 13 year high – not such great news!

Labour has just secured a double by-election victory overturning significant Conservative majorities, which makes 10 such successes in a row. The landscape continues to favour a new regime, even though by-elections are not always the best predictor of general election outcomes.

By the time you read this, the Spring Budget may have already taken place and I hope that tax reductions were front and centre, given this is one of the big dials that can be turned either to the advantage of the current government or as a poisoned chalice for the next government.

For the Conservatives, reducing taxes at the expense of public spending is going to attract a significant amount of scrutiny and any cuts in services will attract much criticism. Interestingly, the vast amount of money that was pumped into the system to the benefit of the wider population attracts very little airtime.

For Labour, the financial challenge seems to be centred around an ambitious green agenda with a price tag of £26billion. Whilst the plans are laudable, the

cost seems to be significant and whether there is an appetite to proceed against a backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis is questionable.

Balancing the books, the needs and wants of any organisation is often a fraught affair. The challenge between the interests of shareholders as investors, the employees as the talent delivering the innovation and services that create sales, and the customers appetite for the price that is charged whilst keeping them loyal.

The same balancing exercise applies to the wider political and economic landscape. There is no perfect solution, but the current environment is fertile for change and change creates opportunity. Now is the time to keep your eyes open for new opportunities, which might be different to those we saw last Spring.

Might we see the reuse of the term “green shoots”, a term used prematurely by Norman Lamont in 1991 ahead of the recovery in 1992. History sometimes repeats itself, but I would favour looking out for something completely different, with umbrellas and suncream at the ready!

Simon Underwood is a business recovery partner at leading accountancy firm, Menzies.

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Broadening the mind

Global revenue in the travel and tourism market is projected to reach £735.95 billion this year writes Kathy Melia. So it is no wonder that the boat was well and truly pushed out for Destinations – the holiday and travel show, run in association with The Times and The Sunday Times, at Olympia in February.

With around 220 exhibitors, ranging from African Star Tours to Yak Travel, there was plenty to see and countless brochures to pick up. Not all of it was overseas-related and it was good to see Whitby – North Yorkshire and The Woodland Trust competing with Florida Keys and Hidden Iceland.

Encyclopaedic

There was an impressive turn-out of celebrity speakers to maintain interest over the show's four days including comedian Dom Joly, broadcaster Kate Humble, and (my favourite)

the encyclopaedic travel journalist Simon Calder. A culinary angle was provided by chef Michel Roux and photographer Simon Bajada, the latter demonstrating his skills in Maltese cuisine.

What to read when you go to your chosen destination? Plenty

to choose from at the Stanford's stand – not only the range of travel guides but also appropriate novels – Graham Greene's Travels with my Aunt for example, an ideal travelling companion if your meanderings take you to Brighton, Paris, Istanbul, Paraguay or Argentina!

www.destinationsshow.com



Simon Calder



Business at the heart of sustained economic growth

Shevaun Haviland, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), on her vision for the future of the economy

“2024 is going to be a very noisy political year. With a general election on the horizon, it’s crucial that politicians of all parties remain focused on the economy. Businesses must be at the heart of the sustained economic growth we all want to see.

Things remain tough. Our latest Quarterly Economic Survey showed a rise in business confidence in Q4 2023. However, that slightly more positive feeling isn’t yet producing results. Most firms continue to report no improvement to sales, cash flow or investment.

Challenging

The economic headwinds are clear. Interest rates and inflation remain high, the skills crisis continues to bite and global trading conditions are challenging.

So what are we doing at the British Chambers of Commerce in response – to help London as a global city, and the gateway to the rest of the UK?

The answer is – we’re coming up with practical and realistic policy solutions, across five key areas: green innovation; people and work; local economy of the future; global Britain; and digital revolution. We believe, together, these areas will shape the future of the economy.

Green innovation

It’s about change now, for a better



Shevaun Haviland

tomorrow. The transition to net zero presents businesses with opportunities to grow. Whether that’s by meeting government requirements or by satisfying fast-growing global demand for environmental products. The need for greater action on the environment has never been clearer. We’re outlining ways in which government policy can unlock private capital that will deliver carbon reductions.

People and work

People are at the heart of businesses. Without skilled, engaged and motivated staff, firms can’t develop. The labour market is at a crossroads with record levels of job vacancies and skills shortages hampering growth. Looking forward, workplaces are changing and so are the skills required to navigate it.

Local economy of the future

Local economies play a powerful role in all our daily lives. They impact on how we live, work and spend our money. Crucially, they create a sense of community. Proactive business leadership, institutional reform and further devolution of powers are urgently needed. Local economic development is an essential facet of a thriving society and businesses are integral to its success.

Global Britain

Post-Brexit Britain is carving out a new economic role in the world, including new

trade arrangements with the European Union. It’s crucial that we are ready to harness new global markets opening up. As a country, we also need to adapt to ever-increasing competition for inward investment. We’re calling on government to set up the right policy framework to attract and retain international businesses based in this country.

Digital revolution

Businesses of all sectors and sizes need to adapt to and take advantage of opportunities around digital technology, while ensuring they are mindful of and resilient to new threats and concerns such as cyber-attack and untrustworthy online information. Driving all of this is digital infrastructure, which is still insufficient for many business needs.

What next?

In June, we’ll be bringing all our ideas together in one document, which will be launched at our global annual conference. We hope it will influence party manifestos – and become a playbook for whoever is in Downing Street after the election.

We represent companies of all shapes and sizes. Whether that’s some of the country’s biggest firms on our Business Council or the many thousands of SMEs who are the backbone of our chamber network.

Our message to government is that the BCC is where business belongs. We have the solutions to help navigate us all through the challenges and opportunities ahead.”

www.britishchambers.org.uk

Speaking up for business

by Vittoria Zerbini

LCCI's Capital 500 survey for the last quarter of 2023 showed that London businesses remained apprehensive about inflation despite its recent decline, with two-thirds expressing concerns over its impact on economic activity in H1 2024. Despite worries about rising costs, 50 per cent of firms anticipate improved profitability in the coming year, reflecting a mixed economic outlook.



Pressures

Karim Fatehi MBE, LCCI interim chief executive, was quoted across the media. He said: "These findings present a mixed picture for our city. On one hand, cost pressures indicate that many firms will be struggling to stay afloat. On the other hand, businesses have never been more confident about their own prospects, with 50 per cent predicting an increase in their own profitability over the next 12 months."



Economic impact

While the early January tube strikes were called off, the series of strike actions affecting public transport in the capital has incurred significant costs for London. The strikes were estimated to have cost £100 million per day, potentially pushing the UK into recession. Fatehi, quoted in the *Independent*,



stated, "We cannot afford to let these damaging strikes hit London's SMEs, which have already been hard hit by Covid and global events. London is the engine of the UK economy, contributing over 20 per cent of our national GDP. If London slows down because of this strike, the entire country will suffer." He emphasised the need for a "swift and fair agreement that prioritises jobs and businesses."

Supporting local businesses

Barnet Council's grant programme for local businesses, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, has enabled five grassroots groups to compete for £10,000 each to support activities such as events and training. The initiative aims to aid businesses after challenging times. James Watkins, head of policy and public impact at LCCI, emphasised that the importance of "targeted funding" supporting business activity had become more crucial than ever. Quoted in *Harrow Online*, he expressed delight at the availability of the grant, mentioning the challenging years faced by small businesses in Barnet and elsewhere in London. Watkins stated that LCCI had been consulted by the Greater London Authority on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which was providing funding for these schemes. He expressed satisfaction at the prospect of targeted support reaching London, emphasising the central role of the city's high streets and small businesses in their communities.

Vittoria Zerbini is media assistant at LCCI

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Time for tax year-end planning



Mike Hardy

Much of the tax landscape have been frozen but that does not mean you should ignore tax year-end planning as we approach 5 April. Consider:

Pension contributions:

Tax limits for pension contributions were eased at the start of the current tax year. You may be able to make contributions for the first time in some years. Take care – To complicate matters, the rules will be changing from 6 April 2024.

Capital gains tax (CGT):

Review your investments now and consider realising gains. This is particularly important in 2023/24 as the exemption of £6,000 will fall to £3,000 in the next tax year.

Individual savings account (ISA) contributions:

Your annual ISA allowance is £20,000 (£9,000 for Junior ISAs), which cannot be carried forward. With the personal

savings allowance frozen and the dividend allowance and CGT exemption both halving in 2024/25, the case for maximising ISAs has arguably never been stronger.

Inheritance tax: Use your annual exemption (£3,000) for 2023/24. Unused exemptions from 2022/23 can also be gifted, but only after you the current year's exemption.

Marriage allowances: If you or your spouse/civil partner had income of less than the personal allowance in 2018/19 (£11,850), you have until 5 April 2024 to claim the

marriage allowance for that year (£1,190). But only if the other partner was a basic rate taxpayer in that tax year. The same principle applies for 2019/20 onwards.

Income planning: Frozen allowances and tax thresholds mean you could move from being a basic rate taxpayer now to a higher rate taxpayer in 2024/25. Similarly, from April you might be caught for the first time by the High Income Child Benefit Charge or personal allowance taper. Actions to limit the larger tax bill include bringing forward income into 2023/24 or transferring income-generating investments to your spouse/civil partner by 5 April.

Always seek advice before taking any action. Tax treatment varies according to individual circumstances and is subject to change. The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate tax advice.

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The best of London's small business community

by Olivia Meekins

The inaugural LCCI SME Business Awards in February celebrated the best of London's small business community. Attended by over 300 guests, the black tie awards at the Park Plaza London Riverbank hotel showcased the innovation, talent and dedication to be found among small businesses across the capital.

Achievements

London's small business



Olivia Meekins

community has remained resilient in the face of economic and operational challenges in recent years and these awards are a testament to their achievements and an ideal opportunity to celebrate success.

Firms of up to 250 employees were invited to enter 21 different categories ranging from best entrepreneur to best young business leader, women of

the year and best family business, with the chance of winning either the gold or silver in their chosen category and the potential to be crowned as overall winner of the SME London Business Awards.

Red-carpet treatment

Guests enjoyed the red carpet treatment with a flowing drinks reception, a three-course meal and surprise

entertainment from a Singing Waiter and Chef Duo from Encore Entertainment before the awards ceremony commenced, hosted by TV presenter and sports reporter James Green.



LCCI chair Julia-Onslow Cole and director of membership and events Liz

Henderson opened the proceedings remarking on the exceptional talent of the finalists and the intrinsic contribution SMEs bring to London, making it the best city in the world in which to do business.

Electric

The atmosphere in the room was electric as the winners were announced across all 21 categories. For the full list of Gold, Silver and Bronze winners see Winners & Finalists 2024 | Events & PR - www.eventsandpr.co.uk

Recorra, commercial waste management company, took home the overall winner of the SME London Business Awards while Jarell Bempong, founder of Bempong Talking Therapy, came away with the Business Person of the Year



Recorra at the SME awards

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UK Immigration

There are a number of immigration categories where a foreign national is able to work in the UK without needing sponsorship.

- Holders of Ancestry visas
 - Spouse of an individual holding a visa
 - Holders of visas as a Spouse of British nationals
- If none of the above apply, then an UK trading entity can sponsor a foreign national if they obtain/hold a sponsor licence.

Isn't it very expensive to sponsor a worker?

The total cost of sponsoring a non-UK employee depends on the following:

1. If you are considered a small company
2. Where the duration is less than 3 years
3. The job type: is it considered a shortage occupation or it's a PhD occupation
4. If the candidate is aged less than 26
5. If the above apply, there are discounts to the overall costs.

An employer must pay for assigning the certificate of sponsorship – the certificate charge and the Immigration Skills Charge. The other costs – Immigration Health Surcharge, priority processing and visa fees – are the responsibility of

the employee and if paid by the employer then is considered to be a “benefit in kind”.

Is it difficult to obtain and maintain a sponsor licence?

The main complexity with the sponsor licence applying for is that, if an application is refused, you are unable to reapply for 6 months. The rules surrounding which entities can apply, the evidence required and whether a licence is required for each related entity in the UK is the challenge. Although information is available on the UK Government portal, it is not always clear which sections apply.

Is the process complicated and burdensome for the employer?

Contrary to popular belief, the sponsor licence obligations compliment the compliance required for employment law, tax, health & safety along with other areas of UK law. It is only burdensome if you don't have an effective infrastructure in place.

For more information/ a free 30-minute consultation contact: <https://calendly.com/adbhadvisory/lcci-consult>



crowned as Britain's best small business.

Olivia Meekins is digital and social media manager at LCCI

award. He is known to work tirelessly to help transform workplace environments to promote mental well-being and celebrate diversity. Bempong said that securing the title was not just an accolade. “It's a testament to our relentless pursuit of excellence and innovation.” See Jarell Bempong's article on page 52.

Alongside 17 other winners from across the categories, they will now proceed to the national finals at Wembley in December with the chance of being



Liz Henderson

LCCI SME Business Awards

Headline sponsors

SSE Energy Solutions and South Western Railway

Platinum

Oxford Business College, Zipcar and Menzies LLP

Gold

Barnes Roffe LLP, Birkett's LLP, City of London Corporation, Lenovo, London & Partners and Lubbock Fine

Charity

CRASH – money was raised at the event for their vital work to construct places that care for people who are homeless and children and adults in need of hospice care.

The Awards will return in 2025. An announcement on how to apply will appear in *London Business Matters*

Anna Bose

Anna has worked within the immigration sector for over 28 years in the Big 4 accountancy firms, in-house and in several boutique immigration practices as well as in the Home Office. She has assisted a wide range of clients, assisting with immigration strategy, compliance, and services. She has the unique combination of experience of government, service provider and client.



Celebrating Chinese culture in photography

A take on stiff Victorian portraiture that juxtaposes an Imperialist style of family portraits taken of passers-by in Hastings and Southampton with their 21st century personal accoutrements has won the special Betser Prize in the international photo competition celebrating Chinese culture, the Global SinoPhoto Awards 2024.



Betser Prize winner: Grace Lau, *21st Century Types*, UK, 2005

The set of images, entitled '21st Century Types', was taken by London-born photographer, artist, writer and lecturer Grace Lau, of Chinese parentage, on her 30-year-old Hasselblad camera. For her project, she created a studio with props including the ubiquitous patterned carpet displayed in Victorian portraits, a ceramic vase with fake peonies, a Chinese stool and a fake panda skin rug which represented an ironic nod to the tiger and bear skin rugs that were popular with Victorian colonialist hunters. The embellished Oriental



Eric Leleu, *Day Dreamers*, China, 2005 – 2010: winner of Observational Photography Series

backdrop provided a discrepancy between the historic cultural context and the modern appearance of her subjects who are carrying everyday items such as coke bottles, chips, ice-cream, mobile phones, sunglasses and plastic shopping bags. Lau has exhibited widely, including at the National Portrait Gallery, Tate Britain, and Turner Contemporary Margate.

Caught napping

Other winners are international newspaper and Chinese magazine photographer Eric Leleu, who won Observational Photography Series with his entry 'Day Dreamers'. This set of images depicts Chinese workers napping in public places during the day as they balance their long hours of

work with their need to rest, illustrating the complex relationship between private and public spheres in China and how intimacy is exposed to the community.

Similarly, the winner of Observational Photography Single Images is migrant worker turned photographer Youbing Zhan for 'Take a Break'. This photo captures workers at an electronics factory in Dongguan City, Guangdong Province, taking a 10-minute break from the dust-free work environment in which they produce computer hard drives, casting off their personal protective equipment in the changing room.

www.sinophoto-awards.com



Youbing Zhan, *Take a Break*, China, 2011: winner of Observational Photography Single Images

London landmarks

Tony Matharu's Integrity International Group has acquired Atlas House, a London landmark in the heart of the capital, together with the Crescent buildings, Tower Hill, for his Blue Orchid Hospitality brand.

Atlas House is an elegant Grade II listed building situated at the core of the City of London, between the Guildhall, St Paul's Cathedral and the Bank of England.

The Crescent, a stunning collection of Georgian buildings, adjoins Blue Orchid's Tower Suites hotel and benefits from views of the Tower of London and the historic Roman Wall.

New life

Matharu, a member of LCCI board, said his acquisitions would "help to breathe new life into London property,

particularly those buildings at the end of their previous lives, ensuring that London remains the best place to live, work, visit and invest."

The Crescent and Atlas House join an impressive portfolio including the Westminster-based Wellington and Rochester hotels, Tower Suites, Tower Residences and 55 Broadway, the iconic Grade I listed building identified as London's first skyscraper, set to be repurposed into a leading 526-room hotel in St James's Park.

www.integrityinternationalgroup.com

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We have a passion for delivering HR and Business Advice.

Clover HR is quickly emerging as one of the nation's top HR consultancies. A gold-standard champion of UK SMEs, the success it has achieved for its many clients has seen it crowned, not only Business of the Year at the 2023 Birmingham Awards but also Best Bespoke HR Consultancy of 2024 by SME News.

Since its conception back in 2017, the Midlands-born consultancy has not only established offices across the UK, in London, Manchester and Cardiff, but has also successfully transformed from a one-man band to a thriving, million-pound company listed at the top of the EB100 – a rank of the UK's top SMEs, as defined by Elite Business.

For Clover HR, it's a text-book case of leading by example, with the qualified team investing just as much hard work, effort and dedication into transforming business for its clients as it puts into achieving successes of its own. The aim is to ensure that companies can perform at their absolute best by learning to prioritise their most valuable asset: people.

As a bespoke HR consultancy service, the depth of knowledge that Clover HR can provide on anything from traditional HR through to training and recruitment proves equally as impressive as the breadth of the services and solutions on

offer. It's all tailored to each client's individual needs and goals – and it's all guided by the four P's: passion, personal, people and performance.

Clover HR goes above and beyond to deliver on its promises, assigning each client their own dedicated specialist to work on their account. The consultancy recognises just how central people are to a business, striving to strike that perfect balance between employee and company needs for excellent results. Oftentimes, this means extending beyond industry standard to offer further added value, be it through collective professional advice or bespoke wellbeing workshops and training sessions.

More than just an outsourced service, Clover HR consultants become an extension of their clients' teams, providing advice 24/7 and meeting face to face whenever they can. Combined with the latest data technologies, this allows them to establish closer working relationships that make all the difference, in addition to driving faster, more data-centric results.

Ultimately, whether you're looking for someone to guide you through conflict, navigate mergers or foster a more positive company culture, Clover HR is a partner you can rely on.

Clover HR



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Royal radio broadcast from Wembley

In April 1924, the British Empire Exhibition opened at Wembley on St. George's Day. During the opening ceremony, King George V made the first-ever BBC radio broadcast by a British monarch. He also sent a telegram that travelled around the world in one minute 20 seconds

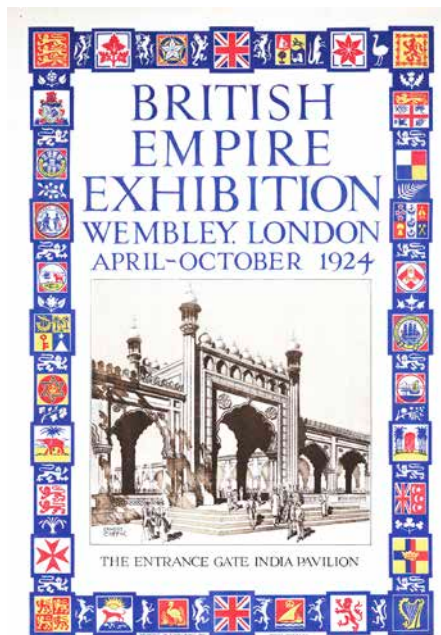
In his speech, the King didn't mention the radio broadcast itself but concentrated on the exhibition. He seemed to joke about the "exceptionally unfavourable weather" and said of the British Empire: "Those who doubt the Empire's potentialities, and those who simply do not consider them, will be confronted with a clear sight of what this great community of free nations can produce."

Global supremacy

The exhibition was a colonial exhibition intended to boost trade and support for the empire at a time when other powers such as America and Japan were vying with Britain for global supremacy. It was held at Wembley Park between 23 April and 1 November 1924 and again between May and October 1925.

It had been planned to hold a British Empire Exhibition as far back as 1902 but the Russo-Japanese War and later World War I intervened.

The Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) was president of the organising committee and wanted the exhibition to include "a great national sports ground". The Empire Stadium (later Wembley Stadium) was built to hold



125,000 people (including seating for 30,000) in a hybrid Roman Imperial and Mughal architectural style. It comprised not just a football pitch but also a quarter mile running track.

Extravagant

During the exhibition, the Empire Stadium saw numerous musical performances, a military tattoo, the first rugby union match at Wembley, a simulation of an air attack on London, a rodeo and the extravagant *Pageant of Empire* organised by Frank Lascelles, a British pageant master and artist.

Of the 58 colonies that comprised the British Empire in 1924, 56 participated in the world's largest exhibition. A plethora of buildings was constructed, the Palace of Engineering being the largest. It included displays of engineering, shipbuilding, electric power, motor vehicles, railways (including the Flying Scotsman), metallurgy, telegraphs and wireless. The Palace of Industry featured

the chemical industry, coal, gas, metals, medicines, food and drink, textiles, gramophones and even Nobel explosives.

Culture

Each colony's pavilion was designed to reflect its culture and architecture, as well as its products. The Maltese pavilion was designed like a fortress to resemble its Mdina Gate. The Canada pavilion showcased its farming, forestry, paper and water industries while also promoting the country as a holiday destination. A highlight of Australia's pavilion was a ball of wool measuring 16 foot in diameter.

Pears' Palace of Beauty, located in the amusement park, sold commemorative soaps. Its exhibition space comprised ten glass-fronted rooms, each containing an actress or model dressed as a noted historical beauty. These included Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, Mary Queen of Scots, Nell Gwyn and Madame de Pompadour.

Attractions

Other attractions included a lake, a funfair, a garden and restaurants catering to various tastes. Veeraswamy & Co ran the Indian restaurant and later founded the first Indian restaurant in England. It is still open today at 99-101 Regent Street.

The British Empire Exhibition cost £12 million to stage and attracted 27 million visitors. Admission fees were 1s 6d (7¹/₂p) for adults and 9d (3³/₄p) for children. The existing Wembley Park underground station was rebuilt and a new station, Exhibition Station (Wembley) connected the route to Marylebone. A bus station was built to transport up to 100,000 passengers a day.

Despite such vast expenditure, the exhibition was not a financial success and did not even recoup its costs. It closed for good on 31 October 1925.

100 years ago in London is researched and written by Alexa Michael





Be lucky

LCCI's Go Connect! Networking earlier this year was hosted by Lucky Voice in the City and gave members a chance to demonstrate their vocal prowess.

Filipe Borne, head of sales at Lucky Voice, and Victoria Jayne, LCCI's head of events, welcomed an enthusiastic crowd before the fun began.

www.luckyvoice.com



Housing in London

Responding to the government's housebuilding announcement in February, LCCI acknowledged that the Prime Minister and Housing Secretary were right to acknowledge the need to improve the availability of housing in London. It should be recognised that the housing crisis in London has significant economic and social effects, driving workers, families and in turn businesses out of the city. Thriving businesses require thriving communities.

However, LCCI added, it was imperative that any reforms to housebuilding in the London Plan did not squeeze out land for economic activity and jobs in favour of meeting the need for the greater provision of affordable housing in London.

Logistics space

Karim Fatehi MBE said: "Our members have consistently raised concerns about the distribution of land being diverted away from economic uses, particularly around logistics, as more commerce has moved online and demand has grown. The lack of available logistics space has put pressure on businesses to move further out of London, which affects their ability to meet consumer needs and removes all important job opportunities from the capital.

"The London Chamber will study the details of the proposed plan and we will engage with the government, businesses and the Mayor of London to ensure they are workable for businesses."

The Knowledge

LBM's test of what readers know about London

- 1 Which African statesman is honoured with an English Heritage plaque in Cambridge Street, Pimlico where he lived from 1933-37? 
- 2 Which former Leader of the Labour Party once edited the Evening Standard?
- 3 *London Tide*, 'a play with music', opening at the National Theatre in April, is based on which Charles Dickens novel?
- 4 What is unique about the statue of Victorian philanthropist Sir Sidney Hedley Waterlow which stands at the entrance to Waterlow Park in North London? 
- 5 Bread Street, Honey Lane and Milk Street are turnings off which London thoroughfare? 
- 6 Footballer Tommy Baldwin died earlier this year. With which London club was he most associated? 
- 7 Which Asian revolutionary (later to have a city named after him) once worked in the kitchens of a London hotel?
- 8 With which Livery Company was Lord Mayor Dick Whittington said to be most closely associated?
- 9 Which poet wrote: "Hell is a city much like London – populous and smoky"?
- 10 In which London borough is Hampton Court Palace located? 

The Great Gate at Hampton Court Palace CC-BY-SA 2.0

Find the answers on page 61

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Trade in services boosts UK exports



Responding to the latest trade data from the ONS, William Bain, head of trade policy at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), commented that the UK had achieved another good year for services exports in 2023, showing the strength of that side of the economy. But, he added, there would be concern about the drop in goods exports.

“Further measures are needed to address this; more must be done to connect exporters and would-be exporters with customers in markets across Europe and the rest of the world. The government should set up an exports council and work with business to build upon our relative strength in services exports across even more sectors, while providing fresh impetus to improve overseas sales of goods.

“This would be a very welcome step as 2024 is already looking like a challenging year for international trade. We are yet to see the full effects of Red Sea disruption and patchy global growth is only adding to the uncertainty.

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“This would be a very welcome step as 2024 is already looking like a challenging year for international trade. We are yet to see the full effects of Red Sea disruption and patchy global growth is only adding to the uncertainty.”

UK trade picture

The data for the whole of 2023 shows that the UK’s services trade continues to lead the way. Removing the effects of inflation, total annual UK exports in combined goods and services rose by 0.6 per cent (£3.9 billion) to £690.8 billion in 2023.

This was down to the UK’s robust

trade in services which rose by 5.3 per cent with strong performances in financial, business, professional, cultural and travel services exports across the world.

The flipside was a disappointing performance in goods exports, which fell by 4.6 per cent.

Imports

UK goods imports in 2023 fell by 7.4 per cent while services imports rose by 13.3 per cent (excluding inflation). The picture for imports of services in the final quarter of the year was not as strong, however, as they fell by 0.5 per cent (£0.4 billion).

On goods imports in December, the ONS found no effects in the data of the Red Sea disruption. Goods imports volumes fell by 3.6 per cent for the month, with rest of the world imports falling by 4.5 per cent and EU imports down by 3 per cent on November. Again, the leading cause was fluctuations in oil and fuel trade but also with falls in machinery and transport goods (principally from China).

Exports

Services export volumes exceeded goods exports volumes by £62 billion in 2023. After taking inflation into account, UK services exports are 4.7 per cent higher than pre-2020 lockdown levels.

Although the annual performance for UK services exports rose, the last quarter was negative, with an estimated drop in exports of 4.4 per cent (£5.2 billion).

For the month of December, UK services exports were static after inflationary effects were removed. Goods exports fell by 0.5 per cent in December, with a 3.2 per cent fall in exports to the EU being partially offset by a rise in rest of the world exports by 2.1 per cent. Fluctuations in trade in fuels were a leading cause but there were also falls in machinery, chemicals and transport equipment.

www.britishchambers.org.uk

Working in the UK

| Vandana Dass on EUSS – from pre-settled to settled status

What is the difference between pre-settled and settled status for EU nationals?

Compared to pre-settled status, settled status offers a more stable immigration status to nationals of EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. It is also a mandatory requirement for British citizenship.

With pre-settled status under EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), you can spend up to two years in a row outside the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man without losing your status. Whereas with settled status, you can be absent for up to five years in a row without losing your status.

- Pre-settled status: continuous 2-year absence is allowed
- Settled status: continuous 5-year absence is allowed

If you lose your settled or pre-settled status, you will usually need to apply for a visa, like other non-EU nationals, to live and work in the UK, even if your biometric residence card has not expired.

You may **switch from pre-settled to settled status** once you have acquired 5-year **continuous residence**. 5-year continuous residence may not be required for child under 21.

The count starts from the day you started your continuous residence, not the day you were granted pre-settled status. For example, you started living in the UK from 7 June 2017 and were granted pre-settled status on 12 August 2020. You would be eligible to apply for settled status on 6 June 2022 if continuous residence had been maintained.

Continuous residence

It is a requirement that you must not spend more than six months (whether consecutively or in total) outside the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man in any 12-month period during the 5-year period unless one of the exceptions applies:

- one period of up to 12 months for an important reason - for example, childbirth, serious illness, study,

vocational training, an overseas work posting or because of coronavirus

- compulsory military service of any length
- time you spent abroad as a Crown servant, or as the family member of a Crown servant
- time you spent abroad in the armed forces, or as the family member of someone in the armed forces
- working in the UK marine area.

The Home Office can check on applicant's NI number which is the easiest way to prove residence. If the applicant has been working without any break of six months or more, then it is likely that they only need to submit their NI number.

“If continuous residence cannot be proved using NI numbers, alternative evidence would be required and you are likely to be notified when you submit the online application if further evidence is required.”

If continuous residence cannot be proved using NI numbers, alternative evidence would be required and you are likely to be notified when you submit the online application if further evidence is required. The documentation requirement is not stringent and a variety of documents are accepted, including utilities bills, school letter and bank statements.

Child, grandchild or great-grandchild under 21

There are two ways that the above

person can switch from pre-settled status to settled status:

1. they have reached 5 years' continuous residence; or
2. their relevant parent, grandparent or great-grandparent has been granted settled status. In this case, they will be granted the same settled status even they do not have five years' continuous residence.

They can choose which way to apply when making the application.



British citizenship

You may be able to apply for British citizenship once you have been granted settled status for 12 months. More stringent residency requirement applies for applications for British citizenship. Amongst other requirements, you must have not been outside the UK for 450 days or more in the past five years and for 90 days or more in the last 12 months prior to the application.

Not switching

Under the current policy, if you do not switch to settled status, your pre-settled status may be extended by two years shortly before it is due to expire. You are not required to act.

The Home Office may cancel this extension if they think you no longer meet the requirements for it, for example you had been absent from the UK for over two years.

Vandana Dass is managing director and senior solicitor at Davenport Solicitors

www.davenportsolicitors.com



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Unlocking Nordic opportunities via Finland

Finland stands out as a dynamic gateway for British businesses seeking to expand their global footprint. The country's commitment to innovation, sustainability and technological prowess offers fertile ground for UK companies looking to explore new markets.

Innovation at the core

Finland's innovation ecosystem is powered by a unique blend of factors that drive forward-thinking business solutions. The country's emphasis on research and development, coupled with a highly skilled workforce, sets a solid foundation for cutting-edge collaborations. For British businesses, this environment offers a plethora of opportunities to engage in sectors where Finland leads, such as clean technology, ICT and health tech.

A green future

Sustainability is not just a buzzword in Finland; it's a core principle guiding business practices and government policies. The country's ambitious climate

goals and the drive towards carbon neutrality by 2035 create a compelling narrative for UK companies focused on green technology and sustainable solutions. This alignment with global sustainability goals presents a strategic advantage for British businesses aiming to be at the forefront of eco-friendly innovations.

Technological excellence

Finland's reputation as a tech-savvy nation is well-earned. A strong emphasis on engineering and technology education produces a talent pool often referred to as 'super-engineers'. This talent base is a significant asset for UK companies in tech-related fields, providing access to individuals skilled in developing solutions that push the boundaries of what's possible in technology and engineering.

B3CF: facilitating UK-Finland business synergies

At the heart of these opportunities is the British & Commonwealth Chamber of Commerce in Finland (B3CF). Under the leadership of Vladislav Dobrokhotov, a Freeman and Marketor of London, the B3CF connects UK businesses with Finnish partners, leveraging Finland's innovation, sustainability and technology strengths and offering a conduit for British companies to navigate the Finnish market landscape effectively.

The chamber's role extends beyond networking; it offers insights, strategic partnerships and a deep understanding of the Finnish business environment, ensuring UK companies can capitalise on Finland's opportunities. With an International Advisory

and operated by Y-Säätiö and the Salvation Army. The visit, led by Juha Kahila of Y-Säätiö, offered insights into Finland's laudable 'Housing First' model, drawing global admiration for its innovative approach to tackling homelessness.

This model has not only caught the attention of global observers but has also inspired significant initiatives in the UK, such as Prince William's announcement of a five-year programme to combat homelessness, drawing heavily from Finland's strategies. Alderman King's focus on this area dovetails with his anticipated agenda as the prospective Lord Mayor of the City of London for 2024-2025, reflecting a shared commitment to societal welfare and innovation between the UK and Finland.

Support and connections

Finland offers a compelling proposition for British businesses looking to expand internationally, with its robust innovation ecosystem, commitment to sustainability and technological excellence. The B3CF stands as a pivotal partner in this journey, providing the support and connections necessary for UK companies to succeed in the Finnish market. As businesses look towards a future that demands innovation, sustainability and technological adeptness, Finland, through the facilitation of the B3CF, represents an ideal partner for British enterprises aiming to lead in their respective industries.

www.b3cf.com



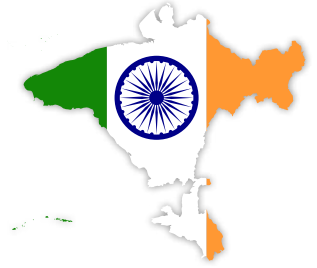
Board, including figures from the City of London, such as Aldermen Alastair King and Prem Goyal OBE, the B3CF is well-positioned to support British businesses in their Finnish ventures.

Innovative

A recent highlight was Alderman Alastair King's visit to Finland, a notable segment of his which was the tour of a facility in Espoo Kuusiniemi, dedicated to aiding individuals experiencing homelessness

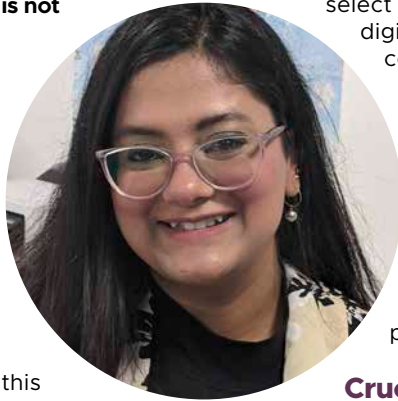
Vladislav Dobrokhotov, executive director of the British & Commonwealth Chamber of Commerce in Finland, Juhana Vartiainen, Mayor of Helsinki, Alderman Alastair King, and Chamber chair Garry Parker on the balcony of Helsinki City Hall

Election time in India



| by Sejal Singh

In a year that is brimming with electoral activities, the most monumental is India's general election. Scheduled to unfold over the months of April and May, this colossal event is not just a political spectacle but also an impressive technological and logistical feat. It involves orchestrating the voting and counting processes for an anticipated 960 million eligible voters, marking it as the largest democratic exercise in history.



The task of facilitating this democratic right, from remote rural locales to bustling urban centres, displays India's commitment to its democratic ethos and technological prowess.

Integrity and secrecy

Implementing online voting for India's vast electorate involves a secure digital platform where voters can authenticate themselves and cast their votes electronically. This

process requires robust cybersecurity measures to ensure the integrity and secrecy of each vote. Voters log in using unique credentials, select their candidates on a digital ballot and receive confirmation of their submission. Such a system aims to streamline the voting process, making it more accessible and efficient while maintaining the democratic principle of one person, one vote.

Crucial

The electoral battlefield sees the emergence of two major alliances vying for the leadership of the world's largest democracy. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the incumbent Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), is looking to continue its governance, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm. The opposition unites under the newly formed Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (I.N.D.I.A.), a coalition

of 26 parties including heavyweights like the Indian National Congress and Aam Aadmi Party, poised to challenge the NDA's tenure. This alliance aims to present a united front against the ruling party, signifying a crucial moment for India's political landscape.

Aspirations

As the election draws near, both alliances are ramping up their campaigns, reaching out to the electorate with their visions for India's future. The BJP, under Modi's leadership, seeks to capitalise on its previous term's achievements, while the I.N.D.I.A. alliance is determined to address the needs and aspirations of a diverse and growing population, advocating for change and inclusivity.

The world watches as India prepares to make this historic choice, a testament to the strength and vitality of its democratic institutions and the technological innovations that make such a massive electoral exercise possible.

Sejal Singh holds an MSc in international relations and diplomacy from the University of Edinburgh



Overseas business opportunities

A selection of business co-operation offers made by companies wishing to work with UK firms taken from the Enterprise Europe Network Partnership Opportunities Database. To find out more about these and similar opportunities contact Innovate UK EDGE at contact@innovateukedge.ukri.org



Bulgaria

Company seeks partners to join a project proposal for the validation of a zero-waste, green technology for processing black mass. The proposed technology allows full complex recycling of lithium ion batteries in a completely closed cycle without generating waste and 100% return of the used raw materials in the production process.

REF: TOCA20231201001



Spain

Group offers a chimney flue closure device comprising a bracket configured to be attached to the chimney wall. The device is designed to close the chimney securely. The bracket is configured for easy attachment to the chimney wall. The closure mechanism, activated by a simple process, effectively prevents unwanted draughts, contributing to an overall optimisation of energy consumption for the heating system.

REF: BOAT20231211016



Finland

The company was founded in 2019. As the only mechanical textile recycler in northern Europe, it produces recycled textile fibres from B2B end-of-life textiles. The recycled textile fibres can be used in various nonwoven products, for example using airlay or needlepunch technology.

REF: BOLV20231211014



Poland

Supplier of an earthquake forecasting system utilising space radiation detectors and satellite data. The company is looking for partners and is interested in applying their solution and supporting them in further research.

REF: TOPL20240207006



Austria

A company pioneering in Virtual Reality (VR) solutions is looking for partners interested in revolutionising safety and awareness training in industrial settings. The company is a technology

firm specialising in Virtual, Augmented and Mixed Reality apps and is on a mission to develop immersive VR training modules that address common safety hazards in the production industry.

REF: TOAT20240207009



Italy

Developer of a range of lube free pneumatic engines with capacity from 0.2 to 20 kW, which can be powered by heated air or gas, thus reaching a performance similar to the one of a gas turbine engine. The company is looking for agents and distributors under commercial agreement.

REF: BOIT20240202006



Latvia

Recruitment agency, founded by a team of lawyers, provides qualified personnel sent according to partner criteria. The company is seeking dependable European partners to the provision

of workforce through commercial agreements and is also looking for law companies to establish partnerships.

REF: BOLV20240206008

To obtain details of these and similar overseas business opportunities, contact Innovate UK EDGE London at innovateukedge@londonchamber.co.uk



Critical minerals - Nigeria's new era of sustainable and profitable mining

| by Dr Ama and Yinka Oyegoke

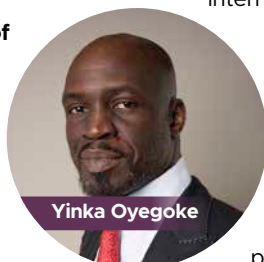
As the world transitions to a greener future, the focus on critical minerals is intensifying. Nigeria, traditionally an oil-driven economy, is now at the forefront of this change, reshaping the narrative of Africa's mining sector. The country's pivot towards the extraction of critical minerals like lithium and graphite is not just a shift in resources but a strategic move in global economics.



Dr Ama

Legislative changes

The introduction of the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act (Amendment) Bill, 2023, by Hon. Gaza Jonathan Gbefwi marks a significant legislative effort to modernise Nigeria's mining sector. These changes aim to align the industry with global sustainability standards, making it more attractive to international investors and partners.



Yinka Oyegoke

Under-development to innovation

Despite its vast mineral wealth, mining has historically contributed less than one per cent to Nigeria's GDP. This under-development presents a unique opportunity for growth and innovation. The focus on critical minerals can diversify the economy and reduce oil dependence, creating a more resilient economic framework.

Untapped

Nigeria's potential in mining is vast and largely untapped. Recent reforms have put the country on a path to becoming a pivotal player in the global supply chain of critical minerals. With over forty-four priced solid minerals and a significant number of active mineral titles, Nigeria is poised to make substantial contributions to the global demand for these resources.

Integrated approach

Under the guidance of the Minister of Mines, Dele Alake, Nigeria has introduced policies focusing on value addition in mining licences. These policies aim to generate employment and promote in-country processing and refining, a shift from mere extraction to a more integrated approach in the mining value chain. The collaboration between the Africa Finance Corporation and the Solid Minerals Development Fund for a midstream processing plant is a testament to Nigeria's commitment to sustainable mining practices.

Data-driven

The National Integrated Mineral Exploration Project represents a substantial investment in data collection, enhancing Nigeria's mining capabilities. This initiative is pivotal in discovering and exploiting the country's mineral wealth, including positioning Nigeria among leading lithium-rich countries.

Opportunities investors

The UK and other global investors are presented with significant opportunities in Nigeria's sustainable mining sector. This new era aligns with international sustainability goals and offers potential

for high-return investments in a rapidly evolving industry.



Brazil's mining giant Vale serves as a model for Nigeria, with its focus on environmental management and community development. These global perspectives are crucial for Nigeria's mining sector to adopt sustainable and responsible mining practices.

Call to action

Nigeria's focus on sustainable and profitable mining of critical minerals is a global invitation for investment and collaboration. The country's solid mineral sector, valued at over USD\$700 billion, presents enormous potential for growth and profitability. Entities like Africa Sustainable Trade and other investors have a unique chance to be part of this sustainable venture.

Fatima Umaru Shinkafi, leading the Solid Minerals Development Fund and the Presidential Artisanal Gold Mining Development Initiative, plays a pivotal role in this transition, emphasising Nigeria's readiness for foreign investment and collaboration in the solid mineral sector. This development is more than a local initiative; it's a call for global partners to engage in mutually beneficial relationships, contributing to a sustainable, profitable and environmentally responsible mining sector.



Gaza Jonathan Gbefwi

Dr Ama and Yinka Oyegoke are respectively co-founders, chair and chief executive of Africa Sustainable Trade.

www.africasustainabletrade.com

Trade and investment

In February, the UK signed a deal with Nigeria to boost trade and investment and unlock new opportunities for UK and Nigerian businesses.

The Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership (ETIP) is the first the UK has signed with an African country and is designed to grow the UK's and Nigeria's already thriving trading relationship, which totalled £7 billion in the year to September 2023.

Collaboration

The agreement will create opportunities across sectors crucial to both economies, such as financial and legal services. It will see Nigeria commit to working towards removing barriers preventing UK lawyers from practising international and foreign law in Nigeria, a step that could significantly increase UK legal services exports.

World-leading

The deal will also pave the way for further collaboration in the film and media industry and encourage world-leading UK education providers to offer high quality education in Nigeria.

Nigeria is the biggest economy in Africa and one of the world's fastest growing economies – predicted to be in the top 20 by GDP by 2035. It is expected by the UN to nearly double its population to over 370 million people by 2050.

SPONSORED COLUMN

Make Menopause Your Business



Haley White (MSc) Founder - Menospace

Menopause Is Everyone's Business

Perimenopausal/menopausal women are the biggest demographic in the workforce. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have recently made headlines stating employers could be sued if they fail to make reasonable adjustments for women going through menopause.

With a recent Korn Ferry and Vira Health survey of 8000 women showing that 47% experience symptoms that disrupt their lives and that 13% have quit their jobs due to their symptoms, we need to be looking at ways we can break the taboo and make menopause mainstream in the workplace.

Why is it essential for businesses to prioritise menopausal support?

Employers have a responsibility for the health and safety of their employees. The number of tribunals citing menopause has tripled, yet staff training and the right policies are still lacking. Employers and managers need to realise that this is not something that is going to go away or that can 'be fixed'. It's something that every woman goes through, and it affects all of us – including men.

How can businesses raise awareness and implement support?

Although menopausal symptoms differ for everyone, businesses can implement various approaches to provide support for all.

Here are some top tips:

Have a menopause policy. A policy provides guidance for managers, ensuring that the right support is given. Having a policy in place can prevent legal costs and reputational damage.

Create a safe culture. To end the stigma, we need women to feel comfortable talking about menopause in the workplace. Setting up a support network is an excellent initiative.

Challenge negative menopause stereotypes to reduce stigma around the menopause.

Get SMT buy-in. Change starts from the top. Make sure the senior leadership team are aware of the impact of menopause in the workplace. Improve menopause awareness within the leadership team through training. This helps to embed menopause into strategy, so it isn't just a 'tick box'.

Reasonable adjustments

- Support requests for flexibility – e.g. work-from-home requests, reduced or changed hours
- Easy access to cold water, clean toilet and washing facilities
- Put sanitary products in toilets
- Have desk fans available

Staff training is key. A lot of people don't fully understand menopause or its effects. Providing staff training helps to reduce stigma and create an inclusive workplace culture. This can include workshops, line manager training, webinars and Menopause Champion training.

Visit our website for more information:

www.menospace.co.uk

To book a FREE consultation email: hello@menospace.co.uk



Vijay Dugar

Beauty from the beast

On Nepal's National Democracy Day in February, HE Gyan Chandra Acharya hosted a reception at his country's embassy in Kensington where Nepali pashmina was celebrated

Highest grade

Vijay Dugar, president of the Nepal Pashmina Industries Association, guided the audience through the many steps needed – from the Himalayan heights where the Chyangra goats are raised to the combined traditional and modern processes carried out in towns and cities – to create cashmere of the highest grade.

The industry employs 50,000 people in Nepal and their efforts result in exports to nearly 80 countries, providing much needed foreign exchange receipts.

The programme that brought Nepali pashmina to the UK

to participate in Source Fashion, London was supported by FCDO and ITC Geneva.

www.chyangrapashmina.com
www.nepalfibers.com



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Peru joins the ATA Carnet scheme

Peru is set to become the 79th country or customs territory to join the ATA Carnet scheme – the renowned ‘passport for goods’ which facilitates temporary exports for goods bound for trade fairs and sporting events as well as samples and professional equipment.

The carnet itself is an international customs document, in operation since 1963 that allows duty - and tax-free temporary admission of goods for up

to one year. From 30 April this year, temporary exports to Peru can be accompanied by the document which is issued by a range of chambers of commerce in the UK including LCCI.

Expansion

Henk Wit, chair of the ICC WCF World ATA Carnet Council which oversees the document, commented: “The ATA family welcomes Peru as a new member in the guarantee chain in a part of the world where we have been striving for

expansion for a long time. It has proven successful to have neighbouring countries in our chain as we often do most of our business with neighbouring markets.”

www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-ata-carnet



To the victors the spoils

By now the men’s Guinness Six Nations rugby union championships will be well under way, with the women’s event starting later in March. But how will the respective trophies be transported with the minimum of fuss to the European venue where the victorious teams will be presented with them? That’s where the ATA Carnet comes in ...

Here is the men’s trophy which, accompanied by a Carnet, made the journey to Paris to be shown off before the start of the tournament at the beginning of February.

“But how will the respective trophies be transported with the minimum of fuss to the European venue where the victorious teams will be presented with them?”

”

The ATA Carnet scheme in the UK is overseen by UKNATACO

www.uknataco.co.uk

Passports for goods

A new training course on ATA Carnets – known as ‘passports for goods’ – is ideal for companies and sole traders who wish to ease export/import procedures of non-perishable commercial goods taken overseas on a temporary basis for sports events, exhibitions, trade fairs or to be used as commercial samples or professional equipment.

The course covers the complete ATA Carnet journey and includes:

- Uses, benefits and restrictions

- Application process
- Security requirements
- Carnet security
- What to do when something goes wrong
- ATA Carnet best practice.

The course covers all countries in the ATA Carnet scheme but is particularly beneficial for companies/sole traders moving goods temporarily to the EU.

tradeenquiries@londonchamber.co.uk

Bringing the ATA Carnet into the 21st century

Two splendidly bejewelled, bespoke microphones, flown in from New York, eased through customs without a scrap of paperwork at Heathrow Airport in February. What's this? Is LBM reporting a customs dodge or a crime?

Not a bit of it! This was the occasion of the first-ever US ATA Carnet, processed at JFK and Heathrow respectively, which relied solely on the scanning of digitalised information accessed by a smart phone. US Council for International Business (USCIB) facilitated the operation to bring in the mics in partnership with LCCI, HMRC, US Customs and Border Protection, Roanoke Insurance and Rock-it Cargo.

The test procedure was conducted ahead of the TPI Awards Ceremony at Battersea Power Station, the live events industry's largest celebration, recognising achievements in the world of live touring. The microphones will be used during the ceremony and shipped back to the States post-show.



David Antia, ICC, Amanda Barlow, Chris Palmer, Declan Daly, USCIB, and Peter Bishop, UKNATACO

Dependent

USCIB selected Rock-it Cargo to



Amanda Barlow and Chris Palmer of Rock-it Cargo with the precious mics

participate in the e-ATA Carnet testing phase due to the nature of Rock-it's business and because Rock-it Cargo is one of the largest ATA Carnet users in the U.S. Rock-it Cargo is a freight forwarder focused on live entertainment and TV production, which are highly dependent on ATA Carnets to ensure the show goes on.

"We're thrilled to launch the official test-phase for e-ATA Carnet processing in the United States," said USCIB chief operating officer Declan Daly. "We've taken a crucial and exciting first step to finally bring the ATA Carnet into the 21st century."

Forefront

"It's great that HMRC is at the forefront of piloting digital Carnets alongside our counterparts in the USA, and we're really pleased to enable the first digital carnet movement between the two countries," said Sally Beggs, deputy director for Customs Policy and Strategy at HM Revenue & Customs. Davor McKinley of UK National ATA Carnet Organization added that this operation highlighted "the close working relationship between the UK and USA and demonstrates that digitalising ATA Carnets will play a pivotal role in strengthening our mutual trade further."

www.uscib.org

How to resolve international trade disputes

Supply chain disputes toolkit: prevent, manage, resolve is a new training course from the London Chamber of Arbitration and Mediation to help international businesses to resolve disputes with customers and suppliers.

In the course participants will explore:

- Common sources of



Duncan Gorst

disputes: Gain an understanding of the typical reasons for conflicts, focusing on payment issues, delivery challenges and quality concerns.

- **Prevention strategies:** Learn best practices in contracting and claims management to proactively prevent disputes from arising.
- **Management and avoidance:**

Discover techniques in negotiation and mediation to address and avert potential conflicts.

- **Resolution tactics:** Equip yourself with practical knowledge on how to effectively bring or defend a claim in court or arbitration.

The course is delivered by Duncan Gorst, senior associate at Osborne Clarke. The first course takes place online on 13 March, 10.00 – 12.30. For more information and to register contact tradeenquiries@londonchamber.co.uk



Demand for AI skills skyrockets

Generative AI had a rapid impact on the skills landscape over the course of 2023 and its influence is set to grow into 2024. Data from Coursera's Job Skills of 2024 Report finds that interest in AI skills has skyrocketed, with searches from enterprise learners for terms such as 'AI', 'ChatGPT' and 'generative AI' increasing 271 per cent year-on-year.

Within this rapidly growing field, Reinforcement Learning, which enables learners to build machine learning models, is the fastest-growing AI skill with particularly fast growth among government-affiliated learners.

Amid an estimated shortfall of more than 3.4 million cybersecurity workers,

the report also finds that cybersecurity skills make up half of the top ten fastest-growing skills in the tech domain. Three out of these ten are developer skills, with demand reflected across verticals.

Business skills

The report found that seven out of ten of the fastest-growing skills overall are business skills. As technology and consumer behaviour continue to evolve, digital marketing skills make up half of the top ten fastest-growing business skills, with e-commerce, media strategy and planning, and search engine optimisation the top three overall.

Audit ranked the ninth fastest-growing

skill overall and the sixth top business skill - showcasing a growing focus on applying regulatory frameworks, protecting data, and deploying new technologies such as AI safely.

Leadership

Emerging technologies like AI shift the demands of the workplace and businesses continue to face macroeconomic disruptions. There is growing demand for leadership skills that enable institutions to navigate change. These include people management, negotiation, influencing and employee relations which all sit in the top five fastest growing leadership skills.

www.coursera.org/skills-reports/job-skills

Double-edged sword

In its latest Cyber Security Insights Report, global corporate intelligence consultancy S-RM has found that almost all C-Suite and Senior IT Professionals plan to increase their use of AI-based technologies over the next 12 months, outside of IT/IT security.

However, only 53 per cent expressed full confidence in their security function's ability to secure the use of AI across the business. The main concerns include: the risk of AI gaining unauthorised access to data and leaking it without robust governance; ensuring AI's dependability in threat detection without misinterpretations of vital information; and finding the expertise required to implement this technology and cyber solutions successfully and securely.

Increased risk

Despite its benefits, the advancement

of generative AI also poses an increased risk for cyber security departments:

- **Targeted spear phishing:** AI can automate the time-consuming process of scraping public data, identifying new company joiners and crafting deceptive emails with malicious links, potentially targeting thousands of individuals with daily customised attacks.
- **Ongoing correspondence:** AI's ability to handle multiple conversations simultaneously without confusion or distraction amplifies threats, particularly in cases of persistent schemes such as invoice fraud.
- **Rise of vishing:** As voice imitation technology improves, AI could exploit this capability in real-time on consumer hardware, turning phone

calls into a more lucrative platform for threat actors to conduct simultaneous deceptive conversations.

One step ahead

Jamie Smith, head of cyber security at S-RM, commented: "The advancement of generative AI is a double-edged sword for cyber professionals. On the one hand, it has presented companies with enhanced defensive capabilities but equally, it has strengthened threat actors' tactics, techniques and procedures. The breakthrough of this new era marks a significant juncture for cyber security innovation. Organisations will have to invest in the latest technologies and the best talent to achieve their objectives and stay one step ahead."

www.s-rminform.com



Jamie Smith

The transformative effects of AI

| **Lord Mayor Michael Mainelli on the UK's chance to lead the fourth industrial revolution**

“The world is at the start of the fourth industrial revolution, one led not by the steam engine, cars or the internet but by Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI will have a transformative effect on the way we all do things. Whether it's education or innovation, transport or technology, our world will change.

Last year AI dominated conversations like never before, from jobs to skills, regulations and governance. That's why the major theme of this year's World Economic Forum's Meeting at Davos was 'AI as a driving force for the economy and society'.

So far much of the conversation has focused on the risks of AI. This has spurred countries around the world into exploring regulation and governance of AI. The UK hosted the successful AI Safety Summit last year which I had the pleasure to attend. In the US, President Biden signed an Executive Order to mitigate the risks of AI, while in the EU a draft deal on AI rules was agreed in December.

Ethical

Here at the City of London Corporation we're taking our own measures to help mitigate the risks of AI. Last year, as part of my Mayoral theme I launched, in partnership with the British Computer Society, the 'Ethical AI Initiative'. This is a new certification that aims to ensure that AI within financial services is built ethically and fairly.

The modules define ethical frameworks for using AI; they also support technologists and their companies to understand how to work safely with data used in building and testing AI – covering privacy, governance, architecture and sustainability. In just a few months, we have over 2,000 students from more than 240 organisations across 41 countries and over 100 certificates completed.

Economic growth

Putting the risks aside, AI has the tremendous potential to boost UK economic growth and to make sure the



finance system works in a way that is fairer to people, more accessible and more transparent than ever before.

The City of London Corporation's mission is to support the UK's world-leading financial and professional services sector. Integrating the ethical application of AI throughout that ecosystem swiftly and safely is vital to the Square Mile's continued success as a global financial powerhouse.



In our report AI: Accelerating Innovation, we detail how the UK's financial and professional services sector is at the forefront of investing in and adopting AI technologies to boost productivity, develop new products and improve customer experience.

Today, nine per cent of banks have already dedicated at least some resources to Generative AI initiatives.

The scope of transformation includes providing better customer experiences, improving risk management, addressing financial crime and offering innovative financial products to their customers.

Global hub

The UK has the potential to be a world leader in AI and reap the economic

benefits. The UK stands as a global hub for innovation, with world-leading universities and a dense ecosystem of AI-based companies.

The UK is the second most likely global destination for mobile AI researchers after the US. And we attract more AI-related private investment from venture capital than the rest of Europe combined.

The UK's AI market was valued at over \$21 billion as of 2022 and is estimated to grow at a 34 per cent rate between 2022-2035, and potentially be worth \$1 trillion by 2035.

At a time when everyone, everywhere, is looking to stimulate economic growth, PwC has predicted that UK GDP will be 10.3 per cent higher in 2030 because of AI. That's the equivalent of an additional £232 billion – greater than the annual cost of the NHS in England – making it one of the biggest economic opportunities in a generation.

The conversations around AI in 2023 were dominated by the risks but I want to see the conversation shift to the enormous benefits of AI. And how we in the UK are in a prime position to lead this fourth industrial revolution in the same way we led the first.”

AI: Accelerating Innovation. How Artificial Intelligence is turbocharging UK financial and professional services (theglobalcity.uk)



Is AI the future of commercial litigation?

by Adam Haffenden and David Hart

As the legal landscape continues to evolve, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into facets of the legal field has become a topic of fascination and concern. Particularly in commercial litigation, where the stakes are high and the complexities abound, the role of AI is being increasingly scrutinised. In the UK, this scrutiny has intensified with discussions around whether AI is the future of commercial litigation or if its integration presents more challenges than solutions.

Events, such as the case involving Steven Schwartz in the USA, have underscored the potential pitfalls of relying solely on AI in legal practice. Schwartz, seeking precedents for a personal injury case against an airline, used AI, specifically ChatGPT, to conduct research. However, the AI system provided him with fictional cases, unbeknownst to Schwartz, who subsequently submitted these fictitious precedents as real evidence. This occurrence is a phenomenon termed “hallucinating” where AI generates fictional information as real, raising serious ethical and legal concerns for any legal AI optimist. This filing resulted in a hearing into the lawyers’ conduct ultimately leading to Schwartz, fellow lawyer Peter LoDuca and his firm Levidow & Oberman being fined.

Displacement

In 2021, the Law Society released a report *Future Worlds 2050: Images of the Future Worlds Facing the Legal Profession 2020-2030* which presents a sobering perspective. It

forecasts a significant reduction in jobs within the legal profession due to the widespread adoption of AI. This report highlights that should legal professionals not consider how this technology can be integrated into their work, then they could be amongst those left behind by this innovation. This could also raise concerns about the displacement of legal professionals and the potential erosion of expertise and judgment in legal practice should solicitors and barristers fail to adapt fast enough to this technology.

Whilst Schwartz’s case and this report serve as a cautionary tale, they also highlight the capabilities and limitations of AI in the legal realm. AI technologies can be invaluable tools for tasks such as document review for disclosure requirements, drafting legal templates and identifying potentially relevant legal precedents. These technologies have the capacity to streamline processes, enhance efficiency and reduce the burden on legal professionals.

Discernment

In commercial litigation, where nuanced interpretation of the law and strategic decision-making are paramount, the role of AI is likely to be significant. While AI can assist lawyers undertake their work particularly with repetitive tasks such as disclosure, highlighting potentially critical information hidden underneath thousands of irrelevant documents, it cannot replace the expertise and discernment required

to understand why such information is critical and how best to build a legal case with it. Human judgment, ethical considerations and contextual understanding are indispensable components of effective legal representation, which are unlikely to be replaced by AI.

Checks and balances

Moreover, the risk of AI-generated hallucinations underscores the importance of human oversight and accountability. Legal professionals must remain vigilant in verifying the accuracy and authenticity of AI-generated information. Final checks and balances are essential to prevent potentially catastrophic legal consequences arising from erroneous or misleading AI outputs. This role of trust and responsibility cannot be replaced by AI and is likely to continue to be a central part of a solicitor’s or barrister’s work.

AI undoubtedly holds promise as a valuable tool in UK commercial litigation. Its ability to streamline processes, enhance efficiency and provide insights can augment the capabilities of legal professionals. However, the reliance on AI must be tempered with caution, recognising its limitations and potential pitfalls. Skilled professionals will continue to play a pivotal role in applying the law to the facts of the matter, exercising judgment and ensuring the integrity of legal proceedings.

Adam Haffenden is a partner and head of dispute resolution at TV Edwards. David Hart is a paralegal in the dispute resolution team

www.tvedwards.com



Adam Haffenden



David Hart

ChatGPT and logistics

| by Adan Omar

ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence software that mimics human interaction, has arrived. Have you tried it? It goes beyond searching to answering questions. Instead of going through each website, ChatGPT integrates that information and gives you what you want. That makes searching less tedious and more focused.



Integrity issues

However, the chatbot is limited in that it can't handle opinions. Also, it is not updated with the latest information. Chatbots like ChatGPT will not replace our thinking, creativity or innovation. They can only complement. It is a fantasy that AI will give you a magical button to press. We expect more chatbots but Google and other search engines could slow their growth; they could lose their advertising revenues with the significant adoption of chatbots.

There will be integrity issues in academia, like writing research projects and plagiarism, which the same AI can reduce. Jobs, mostly in the service sector, will be lost as more AI is adopted. Even areas that looked secure, like law, are now vulnerable.

Logistics and supply chains

The good thing about logistics and transport is that they are 'real'.

No matter what software you use, something tangible must be transported. You can use ChatGPT to help you compile memos, identify sources or even the shortest or lowest cost route. But it can't reduce weight and dimensions or fasten the ship's speed. Technology has limits.

ChatGPT can be customised for various logistics industries by fine-tuning its training data with industry-specific terminology, regulations and operational nuances. Developing specialised prompts and algorithms can also enable it to offer tailored solutions for inventory management, route optimisation, warehouse operations and customer inquiries within retail, manufacturing, e-commerce and transportation sectors.

Automation

We also expect to see automation of manual tasks like invoicing, accounting, billing, etc. but the actual logistics and transport will be improved by realities, like having faster trains, cars, ships and airplanes.

Like farming, where the farmer must plant crops, weed and harvest, so must someone load, transport, unload or store goods. We could argue that logistics and transportation is somehow insulated from AI.

That is good news for this industry. It shall suffer few disruptions. A significant disruption in the sector was the advent of barcode technology. Its introduction revolutionised inventory management, enabling automated tracking, precise stock control and faster data processing. This innovation drastically improved supply chain efficiency by enhancing accuracy in inventory tracking and streamlining the entire logistics process. The last disruption was containers.

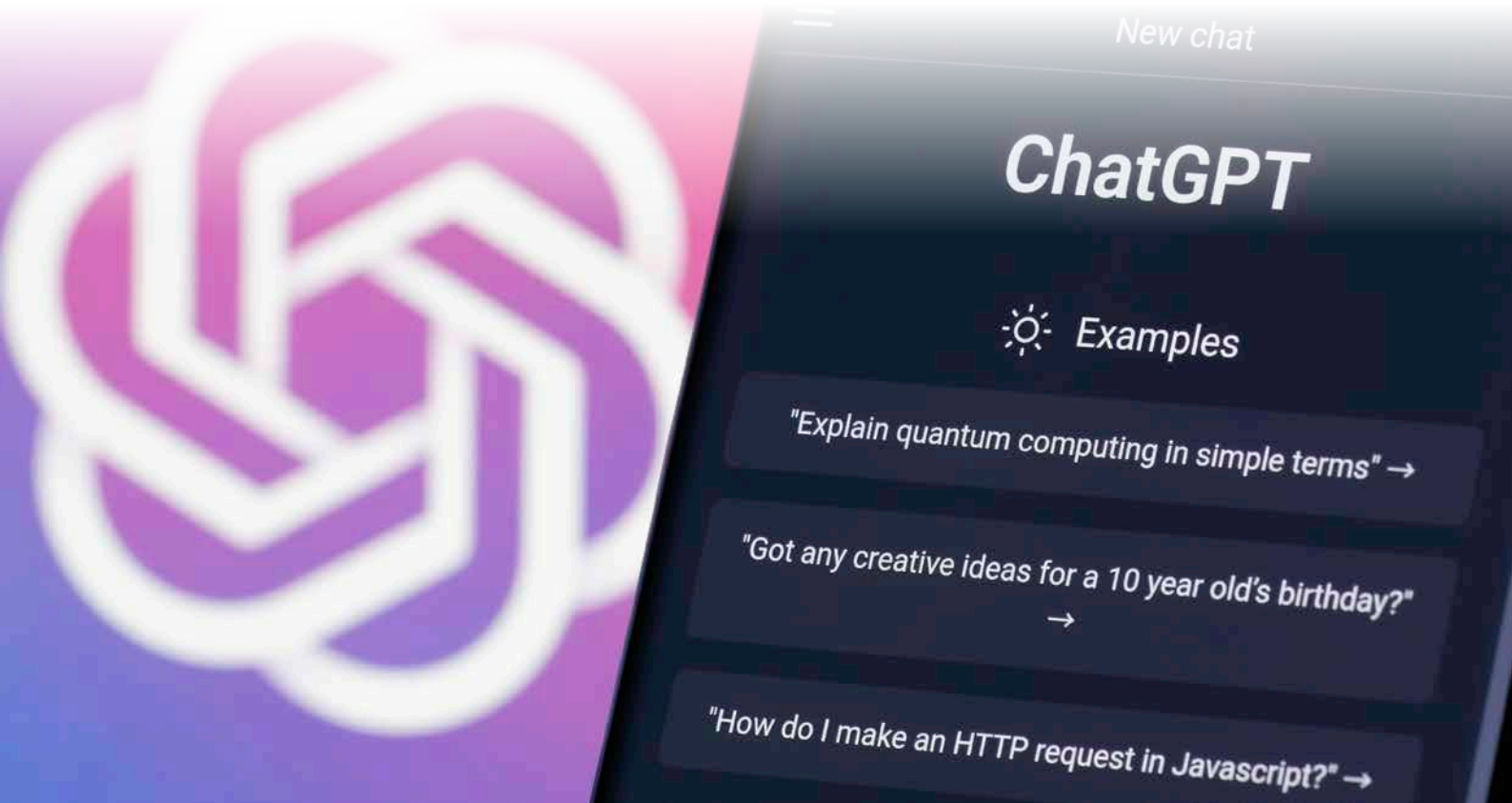
Disruption

The last significant disruption was not technological, it was health - Covid-19. Lockdowns and restrictions disrupted global supply chains, causing shortages in raw materials, delayed shipments, and logistical bottlenecks due to border closures and reduced workforce availability.

What is clear is that we need more innovations in this sector, homegrown. The container has enjoyed dominance for too long.

Adnan Omar is director of Bramex Limited

www.bramex.co.ke



AI on the rise

Caroline Gleeson on the importance of 'humanness' in hiring



Caroline Gleeson is chief executive and co-founder of Occupop

www.occupop.com

AI is advancing rapidly, automating tasks and freeing workers from administrative burdens in the recruitment industry. But it is also essential to recognise that certain aspects of the profession require human intervention. Human professionals excel in assessing cultural fit, interpersonal dynamics and understanding organisational values – facets that go beyond the capabilities of AI and demand the expertise, judgement and empathy that only a human professional can provide.

Recruitment schedule

AI and automated processes are built to help workers achieve tasks quicker and more efficiently. Whether planning a recruitment schedule or through recruitment tracking software, technology can help businesses cut down on administration time – allowing HR professionals to spend that extra time focusing on their employees.

On average, a single online job post can expect to receive 118 applications. Technology can help screen these applicants to find ones that fit specific criteria that suit the job role, saving you time from viewing these individually. Using AI during the working day can also help you write job descriptions, tailored feedback and even personalised messages when outreaching potential recruits. Ensuring there is a human touch in HR is, however, essential for the role.

Screening resumes

While the initial 118 applications can be cut down by software, ensuring that everyone applying has the right level of experience for the role and that you're screening the remaining applications is essential for your business.

Choosing the right candidates for your company could mean looking at more than just their most recent work experience. Having the human touch here can help better determine who you want to reach out to and interview.

Networking and relationships

Automating administration processes can ensure you've got more time for other HR-related tasks. This can include networking and building relationships with customers, other businesses and potential recruits.

While AI can be used to help you write emails and provide feedback for interviews, you will want the human touch if you're considering an applicant for a longer period. This person-to-person approach can be more welcoming and helpful if you plan to maintain contact with a candidate for future roles.

The human touch is also useful for headhunting. If you know someone who would be the perfect fit for your business, it is best to reach out to them personally rather than through a system.

Handling sensitive situations

The recruitment process isn't simply hiring someone new. Sometimes, it is handling sensitive situations which require some humanness rather than technology. This can include during layoffs, for employee wellbeing or during a difficult negotiation.

Using technology during these situations can present your company as unfeeling and difficult to work with, and it could even cause a loss in employees if sensitive situations aren't handled with care. Whether handling the death of a colleague's family member or long-term sickness, ensuring you're caring for your employees means adding the human touch to these moments.

Influencing immigration policy

| by Shuyeb Muquit

Business leaders are concerned that developing changes to the UK immigration system appear to unpick features necessary to address shortages and help nurture their growth prospects. There are calls and many opportunities for businesses to organise themselves to take up such concerns and to influence the direction of immigration policy. Such calls and opportunities should not be overlooked.



Funding

Indeed, the government has promoted the idea that business views are and should be welcome in crafting not only immigration policy but the UK trading environment generally. Take for example the recent increases to immigration fees which were introduced on the basis they would partially fund pay settlements in respect of key public sector workers.

The need for immigration fees and their levels were therefore placed at the heart of the funding regime of the UK's critical services. This puts businesses employing overseas workers among the cohort of civic contributors, entitled to ask for changes that they require as a *quid pro quo* for maintaining their contribution. In this context, businesses can identify where and how the Immigration Skills Charge can be spent, where the stated goal for its collection is to train and develop the domestic talent pool of UK PLC.

Operational specifics

Another example of the government's focus on the intersection of business and immigration is the recent five-point plan announcement, of which crucial operational specifics are awaited. Details include transitional arrangements and qualifications. These may not

be finalised until the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) – the government's independent advisor on immigration policy – concludes two Commissions proposed under the plan – one concerning the Graduate visa route and the other on the constitution and operation of new 'Immigration Salary List' (the new iteration of the Shortage Occupation List). In relation to the review of the ISL, it is understood that the MAC will be asking the government to particularise what it considers the purpose of the new ISL to be. Is it simply to assist the recruitment of occupations in shortage or is it more broadly set up to assist sectors that meet more strategic public value criteria?

Strategic direction

Considered and evidence-led engagement with such reviews is an opportunity for businesses in important sectors falling within cohorts impacted by immigration policy changes, including notably the rise in salary thresholds, to make their case for qualified treatment, suggest new routes or modifications to existing ones, and indeed define the strategic direction of the UK.

Both the UK migration system and its business landscape remain ready for further shaping and businesses can be pivotal in this endeavour. Businesses should take up the challenge and organise themselves in doing so, with reliance placed on established institutions, such as LCCI, to relay their collective voice to government stakeholders.

Shuyeb Muquit is a barrister and senior manager in Fragomen's London office where he is responsible for UK immigration law and developing strategies and material for engaging policymakers.

www.fragomen.com

SPONSORED COLUMN

The need for a common framework to tackle information security threats

Standardisation is not a new concept. It raised decades ago from the need for a common framework to tackle technical incompatibilities across nations.

Similarly, nowadays, a harmonised system to tackle information security threats is needed. These are becoming increasingly sophisticated and may arise from seemingly unrelated circumstances.

An elegant way to overcome that challenge and ensure robust resilience would be implementing ISO-compliant management systems.

ISO/IEC 27001 is widely known for providing requirements for implementing efficient information security management systems, which enables organisations to manage the security of assets such as financial information, intellectual property, employee details or information that might have been entrusted by third parties.

Ideally, ISO 27001 would be integrated into a broader system and would also include ISO 22301 to give reassurance regarding Business Continuity to the extent defined. And it could be parts of the organisation, locations, size, nature and complexity, and products and services.

Resolving information security and cybersecurity-related issues is frequently perceived as a technical challenge rather than a management responsibility.

Traditionally, we have been worried about computer-assisted fraud, espionage, sabotage, vandalism, fire, flood, etc. We have recently, merely several years ago, started

worrying about malicious code, computer hacking and denial of service attacks.

Implementing a management system within a common framework is essential to tackle the threats. Industry leaders are already working towards improving their defence mechanisms.

To be successful, organisations should ensure that: information can flow within the market and across sectors; common rules and ethical values are protected and respected, especially regarding personal data protection and consumer protection; fair access to and use of information are guaranteed.

Another frequent issue that organisations worldwide face is the need for information and cybersecurity professionals to fill in the ever-increasing number of openings. The industry continues to suffer across all sectors from an acute shortage of experts.

This raises particular concerns about how quickly organisations will be able to react and adhere to efficient information security management systems and, most importantly, how efficient the information flows designed will be.

The ISO approach helps organisations be more innovative and agile thanks to planning on business transformation initiatives as part of a solid, long-term digital transformation.

As a result, organisations with integrated management systems effectively reduce technological, legal and financial exposure, direct and indirect costs of disruptions as well as address operational vulnerabilities.



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The logo for ACA International consists of a blue square containing a white stylized 'A' shape formed by two upward-pointing triangles. Below the square, the text 'ACA' is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font, followed by a trademark symbol. Underneath, the words 'INTERNATIONAL' and 'The Association of Credit and Collection Professionals' are written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font.



Projecting the right body language on screen

Teams, Zoom, Google hangouts and online interviews ... in the world of internet working, there's no need to make lengthy journeys to connect with bosses and colleagues. Yet that doesn't mean we can behave as if nobody is watching. In fact, with such up-close scrutiny, we are giving away more than we think, according to Kenneth D Glynn, the brain behind Career Navig8r, the job-specific mentoring website.

Primal instincts

Body language is the non-verbal way in which we communicate with each other - and it is a strong indicator of the way we feel. We may think we're giving nothing away but our innate primal instincts can pick up on a whole spectrum of signals that could mean success or failure in the world of work. This is why it is important to make sure that our virtual body language is on point.

Understanding the way we present ourselves online could be crucial to clinching that job or course. You may have annoying habits which in person don't seem to matter but when someone is focusing solely on your face, are annoying, display your insecurity or even make you look rude and stand offish. Here, for starters, is a selection of body language categories you might fall under.

▪ The shrinking violet

Tell-tale sign: minimal eye contact

Eye contact is extremely important in online interactions, so do not spend the whole meeting gazing at your desk. Not making eye contact can make you look like you're just plain bored so it is important to hold another's gaze.

▪ The flirt

Tell-tale sign: getting too close to the screen and making too much eye contact.

While eye contact is important, being too flirty or making too much eye contact can be extremely off-putting. Put simply the dead stare of a psychopath is not the way to put others at ease. Relaxed eye contact shows that you are listening but you can blink and look away when necessary.

▪ The fidget

Tell-tale sign: messing with things, your hair, pens, moving about in your chair.

Nerves can make us uneasy but fiddling and fidgeting is only going to be distracting for the other people you are engaging with online. Take a deep breath and try to remain composed and calm and remember to clear what is front of you as suggested earlier.

▪ The flamboyant communicator

Tell-tale sign: making hand gestures when talking.

Some of us love to use our hands in conversation but online some gestures can convey the wrong message. For example, pointing can come across as rude or aggressive, while dramatic hand movements can just be plain distracting. OK, you're a creative and artistic person. Then let what you are saying convey the fact. When presenting in person, you want to avoid being a t-rex, with arms stuck to your sides, but online, the t-rex is the exact way to go.

▪ The open book

Tell-tale sign: oh dear! Your mouth is saying one thing, but your face is telling everyone another.

You need to be aware that your face is your representative in virtual meetings, so you need to make an effort to turn frowns upside down. Biting your lip is a classic sign of uncertainty for example and be aware that your 'resting face' might not be conveying the message you want it to.

There is no doubt that communicating messages effectively in online interviews and meetings is important. The truth is we never see ourselves as others see us, so you might not have given this much consideration until now. The good news is that with some thought and a little practice you can make the right kind of impression.

www.careernavig8r.com

Skills and knowledge in the finance sector

Tracy Vegro, chief executive of the Chartered Institute for Securities and Investment, believes that lifelong learning is the financial services sector's business and competitive edge



“**Never one to take anything for granted, or to believe the hype, I was heartened to read in January that the City of London Corporation's global financial centres index shows London maintaining its lead on New York. We rank top in areas including sustainable finance, talent and skills. Our regulatory regime, openness to business through legislation including the Financial Services Markets Act, are additional factors.**

Knowledge curve

New York, whose score fell a little this year owing to market conditions, leads us in tech and wider financial activity. That is a detail on which we at the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment (CISI), the leading professional body and educational charity for those working in the financial services sector, are mindful. We are part of an evolving, fast-moving sector and must ensure our 50,000+ membership community stays ahead of the knowledge curve. So last year we were proud to launch our Certificate in Ethical Artificial Intelligence to champion ethics and transparency in the use of AI and to stay true to our charitable objectives of developing high ethical standards for global finance practitioners. This is crucial to ensuring that the business of financial services maintains its competitive edge for London and all those working in the sector.

Supercharge

Our ethical AI learning programme is part of the Lord Mayor's City of London Ethical AI Initiative, aimed at helping ensure that it is developed and deployed in ways that benefit society and individual clients and consumers. Viscount Camrose, UK Minister for AI & Cyber, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, marked our certificate launch, saying: “There is no doubt AI has the capacity to supercharge our economy but to reap the benefits of this extraordinary technology, we must first understand and mitigate the risks AI poses - including making sure it is safely and responsibly used in the financial services sector.”

And in the move towards single-day settlement in the securities industry, our

members are playing a critical role in ensuring a smooth transition in this major global exercise.

Lord Mayor Professor Mainelli, a CISI Chartered Fellow, is a wonderful ambassador for the financial services sector and the City of London and has always been an advocate for how skills and knowledge are integral to the finance sector's success.

The report shows, that despite organisations' increasing their focus on skills forecasting and upskilling, demand for these future skills is approximately 20 per cent short of supply, further widening the industry's existing skills gap.

Future skills

The Financial Services Skills Commission (FSSC) published a report in 2023: *Reskilling Everywhere All At Once, Skills for the future of financial services*. This highlights the increasing demand for 13 priority 'future skills' and behaviours, including data analytics, cyber security, software development and coaching, identified by financial services firms as critical for the sector's sustainable growth.

The report shows, that despite organisations increasing their focus on skills forecasting and upskilling, demand for these future skills is approximately 20 per cent short of supply, further widening the industry's existing skills gap. The good news is that firms are listening – improved skills forecasting has enabled the creation of the FSSC's Future Skills Framework. Developed with NatWest, the framework supports firms to identify existing capability gaps and plan investment in upskilling and reskilling.”

www.cisi.org

Taking an holistic approach to sustainability



James Dawson balances economic realities with his company's commitment to sourcing sustainable wines and food. The founder and chief executive of Humble Grape shares his philosophy

“Sustainability, broadly, rests on three pillars: caring for the environment; our people; and our business. This triad shapes our decisions in a landscape shadowed by economic difficulties.

Caring for the environment: the hospitality sector takes a toll on nature, and we're determined to mitigate this. Recycling waste at our venues is just the beginning. Rejecting polystyrene packaging is a significant change, avoiding unnecessary carbon emissions and preventing non-recyclable waste accumulation. Our tree project (over 10,000 trees planted) echoes this commitment, nurturing the environment that sustains us.

Caring for our people: fair prices for our producers bolster sustainability. Within our walls, our employees champion our ethos, educated



and incentivised to participate in sustainability projects. Vigilance ensures authenticity in our sustainable products, while charitable initiatives extend our responsibility to the community.

Caring for our business: profitability is crucial. Our commitment to sustainability complements financial viability. Remaining profitable empowers us to advocate for a sustainable future.

Sustainable food practices: our dedication extends to our food offerings. Partnerships with carbon-negative suppliers like Cheese Geek align with our holistic approach. We prioritise free-range and organic meats, considering their impact on flavour and ethics. Local, seasonal ingredients support our community and enhance dining experiences.

Humble Grape's executive chef's

'green manager' qualification demonstrates commitment. Tangible results include a 20 per cent water usage reduction since 2021 and a pledge to decrease electricity usage by 10 per cent.

Taste and impact: sustainability elevates flavour. Sustainably nurtured vegetables derive richer nutrition and taste. Free-range organic meats offer leaner, ethically aligned options. Every dish embodies thoughtfulness, ingredient respect and the pursuit of excellence.

Amid economic challenges, our triad of principles remains steadfast. Sustainability's intricate web – environmental stewardship, social responsibility and business viability – shapes our journey. Today's challenges refine our resolve, influencing the world we leave for generations to come. ”

James Dawson is the founder and chief executive of Humble Grape

www.humblegrape.co.uk

Building the impact economy

| by Kieron Boyle



Kieron Boyle is chief executive of the Impact Investing Institute

www.impactinvest.org.uk

Over the next 30 years, our economy will undergo an extraordinary change (by many estimates, the largest in centuries). Sustainability will be crucial for the success of every business. If we can manage this change in a way that spreads opportunity widely, it will have far-reaching implications – not just for the planet but also for the livelihoods of the 8 billion people who inhabit it.

This is a global and structural trend. Around the world, more than two out of three consumers are willing to pay more for products and services from companies committed to positive social and environmental impact. Here in the UK, over half of consumers say they have made a conscious effort to buy from companies that are trying to make a positive difference to the world.

Positive difference

The same applies to talent. People's desire to spend their money in line with their values also means they increasingly choose employers whose purpose mirrors their own. Over 70% of professionals worldwide want a job where they feel their work matters, and a similar number believe CEOs should take the lead on change rather than waiting for governments to impose it.

In 2024, most people expect purpose and sustainability from businesses. But this isn't only about being responsible citizens. It's also about creating economic value. We live in a world where it is increasingly clear that a focus on impact drives innovation, commercial opportunity and resilience. As the former Bank of England Governor Mark Carney puts it: firms that align their business models to this change will be rewarded handsomely, those that fail to adapt will cease to exist.

So if we are heading towards an impact economy, the financial system and the investors operating within it need to think along the same lines.

Effective tools

The Impact Investing Institute believes that impact investing - investing with the intention to benefit people and the

planet – is one of the most effective tools to make this transformational shift. It will provide the capital needed to find solutions to some of the most urgent challenges of our time, like climate change and rising inequality.

Yet there is a long way to go still. According to the latest estimates, the global impact investing market was estimated to be worth \$2.3 trillion, a 10 per cent increase from only a year before but still only roughly two per cent of the \$98 trillion global investment market.

What we need is scale, meaning more and larger pools of capital mobilised to solve big and pressing global issues. The City of London is one of the places around the world that drives this ambition and is at the forefront of change.

What we need is scale, meaning more and larger pools of capital mobilised to solve big and pressing global issues.

”

Regulated

For years, innovation, commitment and expertise within the square mile have contributed to impact investing flourishing and growing. The UK impact investing market is expected to reach £100 billion by next year. And there are many opportunities to build on this potential. For example, the UK has the world's first regulated impact investing label, attracting demand from around the globe for investments with a positive environmental and social impact.

Businesses, governments, civil society and investors all hold part of the answer to building the impact economy. We need to work together to move more impact capital, more effective capital and capital where it is needed. When that happens, we will know that we and our partners across London are succeeding in our mission to transform capital markets for a truly sustainable future.



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Cleankill scoops Silver Sustainability title at inaugural awards

Cleankill Pest Control has added to the company's accolades for its efforts to be more sustainable with a win at the inaugural London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Awards.



including the Sustainability Award in the BPCA Member Awards 2023 and Paul was a finalist in the Director of the Year – Social Value and Sustainability Impact IoD London and South Director of the Year Awards in 2020.

Cleankill Pest Control is a member of the British Pest Control Association. The company has been providing pest control for commercial customers for more than 25 years using the most up-to-date technology available and the latest techniques to keep premises pest free.

For expert advice and a free survey contact Cleankill Pest Control on **020 8668 5477**. www.cleankill.co.uk

Cleankill won the Silver in the South Western Railway Sustainability Award category beating companies from a range of sectors based in London.

competition was very strong but the judges recognised the progress that we are making to be as sustainable as possible and we clearly stood out from the crowd.

resources and wildlife alongside compassion for those most affected by the climate crisis, should be."

Cleankill has won several other sustainability awards

Organised by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the awards recognise the talent and dedication that is found in London's small and medium-sized business community. The winners were announced during a gala dinner at the Park Plaza London Riverbank hotel.

"Cleankill strives to differentiate itself from other pest control companies by operating in a way that limits the environmental impact of our services. The programme is also about making a small contribution to global carbon reduction and the issues facing our planet.



"In today's world, an organisation's success should not just be reflected in their profit and loss statements. Rather, to get an accurate, well-rounded perspective of their operations and relationships with the environment, community and economy, businesses must fully account for all costs associated with doing business by going beyond compliance.

Paul Bates, Managing Director of Cleankill Pest Control, said: "To be shortlisted for these prestigious awards was amazing and then to find we had won Silver was really fantastic. With the focus on London businesses, the

"At Cleankill we believe that while generating profit is vital, it shouldn't be the primary motive for pursuing environmentally friendly business practices – protecting the planet's



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Scary specialist or dark strategist?

Executive coach Nick Robinson's new book reveals how to spot tricky colleagues at work and shares practical tips, techniques and advice on how to lead, work alongside and work for each type

Exploring how to shift your mindset to improve working relationships, the book also examines the key factors that lead to someone becoming difficult and how businesses can take an empathetic and pragmatic approach to resolve issues.

According to Robinson, the types of difficult people at work include:

- **The scary specialist** – the expert in their field who isn't afraid to let you know it, demanding instant and perfect results
- **The martyr** – has an extremely strong work ethic and cares for others but often refuses to compromise and judges others they see as less principled
- **The dark strategist** – highly driven and ambitious but can treat others like chess pieces to deliver their plan
- **The worrier** – very detail-focused



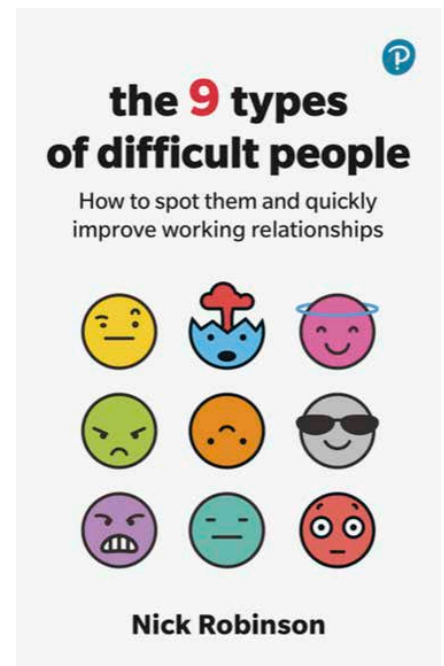
with a good sense of right and wrong but may micro-manage and can drop the ball just at the wrong time

▪ **The revolutionary** – a self-starter who embraces change but often acts without consensus or regard for the fall-out.

Using real-world scenarios, Robinson explores the common challenges people

experience working with each type of difficult person, sharing advice – based on decades of experience – on how to overcome them and how to improve key communication skills.

This is a helpful guide for anyone who has ever worked with a difficult boss, colleague or employee – let's face it, who hasn't? It shows how to manage challenging workplace relationships with empathy and foster a positive workplace culture.



The 9 Types of Difficult People: How to spot them and quickly improve working relationships by Nick Robinson, published by Pearson

www.pearson.com

Silver bullets not available

The challenges facing our business leaders are many and varied – whether it's the disruption wrought by Covid, digitalisation, economic uncertainty or a rapidly changing and disengaged workforce. Much is expected of leaders and plenty of people think they have the 'answer', the 'fix', the 'solution', the 'cure', the magical 'silver bullet' ... this is the myth of fixability.

Complex challenges

But the fundamental truth, according to author Steve Hearsom in his latest book, is that there is no such thing as a silver bullet. There is no quick fix to complex challenges in human systems. If there was, all leaders would be buying the same book or going to the same person or vying for the services of one consultancy. That is not happening, though. Yes, you may have your go-to resources and people, and many are talented, helpful and knowledgeable. The problem is, they

cannot guarantee success and what works in one context, at one time, may not work in another.

Leaders who seek silver-bullet solutions to complex problems will fail. Hearsom's *No Silver Bullet* is an exploration of the psychological phenomenon of seeking so-called silver bullets for complex problems and what we might do about them.

Discomfort

Rather than turning to a silver bullet, a quick fix that simply satisfies leaders' feelings of discomfort and a need to 'take action', Hearsom explores why we are so wedded to the idea that there can be certain solutions to complex problems. He goes on to suggest strategies for shifting leaders' mindsets and experiences, so that

they may start to see and experiment with different possibilities, rethink internal capability building and feel a lightening of the emotional load.

Timely

For those that buy silver bullets (leaders, managers, executive teams) and those that sell them (consultants, solution providers, business schools, thought leaders and gurus), this book is a timely provocation in an age where binary either/or thinking is the order of the day and nuance and ambivalence is eschewed in favour of certainty, when the challenges we face require a more thoughtful and integrative approach.



No Silver Bullet: bursting the bubble of the organisational quick fix by Steve Hearsom, founder of Edge and Stretch. To be published end of March 2024

Elite Business Live 2024



After a year on the road, Elite Business Live is returning to its usual conference format and will take place at the Leonardo Royal, St Paul's, London. Described as the UK's premium business conference for fast-track start-ups, SMEs and high growth business owners, the event has hosted thousands of business leaders and entrepreneurs and featured top level speakers.

Topics covered in the two-day event include:

- Sales strategies
- AI and innovation
- The future of work
- How to get paid
- Growth mindsets and global success
- PR and marketing
- Data and technology
- Attracting, developing and retaining talent
- Expanding into new markets
- Sustainability.

Speakers include:

- Piers Linney – former Dragons' Den Investor, co-founder Implement AI
- Thomas 'Hal' Robson-Kanu – former international footballer, founder of The Turmeric Co.
- Lisa Maffia – former So Solid Crew member, musician and founder of Maffia Rum and House of Maffia
- Allyson Stewart-Allen – founder and chief executive, International Marketing Partners
- Simon Squibb – founder, Helpbnk.

Stewart-Allen, who will be leading the *Expanding into new Markets: international strategies for global growth* session on Day 2 said: "I'll be

sharing my insights drawn from my journey in international business. This event is not just a conference; it's a catalyst for transformation, equipping SMEs with the tools to innovate, expand and excel."



Actionable advice

Attendees can access panel discussions and keynote speeches; a series of interactive breakout sessions are also on offer across the two days. These 45-minute sessions will be held by industry marvels such as TikTok, AdSmart from Sky, while conXhub will provide actionable advice on concepts ranging from marketing to wealth management and beyond.

A record number of attendees are predicted to tune in to this year's Elite Business Live, via a combination of both onsite studio tickets and free virtual livestream viewers, ensuring the teachings of the event are accessible on a wide scale.

Elite Business Live 13-14 March, Leonardo Royal, St Paul's, London

LCCI is an official partner of the event and will be hosting a stand

www.elitebusinesslive.co.uk

Dealing with break-up

Sara Davison – 'The Divorce Coach' and bestselling author and podcaster addressed LCCI's Women in Business group members in a well-attended session earlier this year.

Influence

Following the breakdown of her marriage, the founder of the International Divorce Coach Centre of Excellence, took the lessons she learned to build a service to help others in her situation.



She took a captivated audience through her journey from her lowest points to her prospering career and influence on policy and change regarding domestic abuse.

She now oversees a global community of over 300 coaches spanning 17 countries and five continents.

www.saradavison.com

Creating a thriving learning culture

Dominic Fitch identifies some of the frequent obstacles to employees' personal and professional growth while highlighting ways to overcome these hurdles



Dominic Fitch is head of creative change at Impact International

www.impactinternational.com

Lack of support from leaders and managers

For team members to appreciate the importance of continuous learning and professional development, it is crucial for managers and seniors to support them throughout the journey. The reality is that, if there's a lack of guidance from leaders, employees might fail to understand the benefits of merging work-related learning opportunities with their day-to-day tasks.

Continuous learning is a fundamental aspect of working life, as it allows people to enhance their skills and improve both on a personal and professional level. But without adequate mentorship, team members may be missing out on this opportunity, which in turn can hinder the efficiency and productivity of your business.

So, leaders and managers should always act as role models, promoting the advantages of continuous learning and taking time to allocate resources for training programmes.

Limited time

With so many tasks to carry out during their shift, many employees often have little time to focus on learning activities and professional development. And especially with strict deadlines and targets to meet on a daily basis, they might feel obliged to prioritise scheduled work over training opportunities.

Of course, it may not always be possible to postpone urgent tasks, but it's the manager's responsibility to find ways to ensure their team enjoys much-needed learning opportunities. One solution could be to reserve specific slots each week for training purposes only.

This means that, say, on a Wednesday morning, employees will know that they are booked for learning activities. This way, they can confidently concentrate on enhancing their competencies without having to worry about neglecting other impeding tasks.

Poor or insufficient resources

Another significant barrier to creating

an effective learning culture is not having access to valuable resources. Without the relevant tools, books, documents, seminars or webinars, what are your people actually going to learn?

The truth is that unless your employees are equipped with adequate training materials, they will find it challenging to keep up with innovations and industry trends. As well as limiting their potential and skills, this can have a negative impact on the company's overall performance.

To nip the problem in the bud, invest in tailored learning resources, including training platforms, digital libraries and online courses.

It's no quick fix, and you may have to set some money aside to build your portfolio of resources. But it will be worth it in the long run. In fact, it will provide you with an increasingly skilled team that can drive your organisation forward.

Resistance to new processes and change

Not everybody has a soft spot for change. A majority, in fact, admit they don't like leaving their comfort zone.

Once people are familiar with existing processes and are happy with their current knowledge, they can be reluctant to adopt different tools or methods. This could be because they worry about failing or being unable to keep up. Whatever the reason, if your team is resistant to change, it can threaten the smooth introduction of new training activities.

What can you do to prevent this? The best medicine is clear communication. As a leader, it's important that you guide your people through new initiatives, underlining how these changes will benefit them in the short and long term.

Also, encourage your team to share any concerns and address them individually. This will allow you to highlight the advantages of your new learning culture and, in turn, help reduce people's worries and scepticism.

Charting new paths

Jarell Bempong on the intersectionality of AI-enhanced mental health, DEEI, and cultural consciousness in business innovation



Jarell Bempong is a therapist, coach, AI & DEEI expert, cultural commentator, author & speaker, and writer. This is an edited version of his article

www.bempongtalkingtherapy.com

In London's business landscape, where commerce, arts and technological innovation blend seamlessly, a compelling narrative is taking shape. This weaves together AI-enhanced mental health care, Diversity, Equity, Equality and Inclusion (DEEI), and a concept I term 'cultural consciousness'. In today's diverse society, this integrated approach is pivotal, offering a transformative perspective on mental health deeply rooted in a myriad of human experiences. It is crucial for understanding and addressing mental health issues within the context of our multifaceted society.

Cultural consciousness

At the forefront of this approach is the concept of intersectionality. Typically, intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations like race, class and gender. However, in the realms of mental health and workplace environments, it also includes the intersecting dynamics of mental health challenges, DEEI and 'cultural consciousness'. Cultural consciousness involves an acute awareness and understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds, values and experiences that people bring to any setting. It is about recognising and respecting these differences and integrating this understanding into how we approach mental health and workplace inclusivity. In a city as diverse as London, embracing these intersecting dimensions is both a moral necessity and a strategic business decision.

Crucial role

The well-being of employees, especially their mental health, is increasingly recognised as a vital driver of productivity and overall business success. Workplaces that appreciate and support their workforce's diverse mental health experiences benefit from heightened employee engagement, creativity and loyalty. DEEI plays a crucial role in fostering an environment where diversity is valued and equity and equality are practised, making every employee feel respected and understood.

Innovation in mental health care, mainly through the lens of

intersectionality and DEEI, involves embracing technology. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming mental health care; offering new methods to diagnose, treat and support mental well-being.

Informed decisions

AI and data analytics are crucial in understanding and supporting employee mental health, cultural consciousness and well-being. This approach extends beyond using data for customer sales; it's about leveraging insights to enhance and support our workforce. Analysing data on employee well-being and cultural consciousness enables businesses to make informed decisions that improve the work environment and contribute positively to the bottom line. Recognising that a mentally healthy, culturally aware workforce is more productive and committed is a savvy business strategy.

Productive workforce

London-based companies adopting intersectional and AI-driven mental health strategies report a more engaged and productive workforce, with a decrease in absenteeism and workplace conflict. These businesses exemplify the benefits of an intersectional, innovative and inclusive mental health strategy.

For business leaders and entrepreneurs, the message is clear; embracing the intersection of mental health, DEEI and technological innovation is essential for a thriving, sustainable business environment. This approach enhances employee well-being and drives business success in an increasingly competitive and diverse global market.

Innovation and inclusivity

As London continues to evolve as a global business hub, integrating intersectionality in mental health, DEEI, and cultural consciousness into business practices is vital for future-proofing businesses. This approach aligns with the modern, diverse workforce's values and expectations, ensuring that London's businesses remain at the forefront of innovation and inclusivity.

Digital Innovation in the Enterprise

Businesses in the UK understand the importance of digital transformation to stay relevant as well as ahead of the competition today. Following its 15-year track record of success in North America, [x]cube LABS has launched its operations in the UK region to help UK enterprises with digital innovation.

Who We Are

We offer a range of IT services that cover all aspects of digital product development. As a company specialising in digital product engineering, we focus on our target markets, understand the domain, and build assets that deliver value faster, more consistently, and effectively for our clients.

We Leverage Latest Technologies to Drive Results

From IoT and Cloud services to mobile apps and immersive technologies, we have crafted solutions for diverse industries, as well as for startups. The outcomes are usually seen in the form of higher customer engagement, robust performance, unlocking of new capabilities, and more.

Innovation and Customer-Centricity Drive Us

We specialise in creating seamless customer experiences that empower businesses to be future-ready. Our commitment is not only to technology but to crafting innovative solutions that enhance customer engagement.

Collaborative Problem Solving For Every Stage

We work closely with clients to understand their needs and challenges. We stand with you at every step of your product development cycle, from ideation, to execution, to launch, and beyond. We deliver impactful solutions across a diverse range of sectors, including healthcare, manufacturing, agritech, clean energy, and finance.

Transforming the Healthcare Sector

We have delivered digital solutions for leading healthcare companies such as Dr. LalPath Labs, Pulsara, THIM, and Lansinoh. Our solutions resulted in enhancing operational and clinical decision-making, and improved patient experience.

Smarter Solutions for Industrial Manufacturing

We have leveraged emerging technologies to deliver solutions that helped trim operational costs, optimize resource utilization, and boost efficiency. Some of our clients in manufacturing include Mann Hummel, Ryobi, and Tesoro.

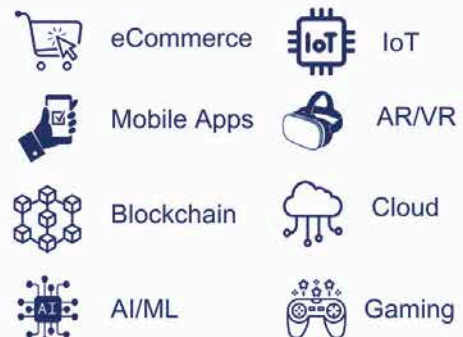
As businesses in the UK navigate the intricacies of the digital era, we look forward to embarking on the journey of transformation by being the partner of choice for businesses in the UK.

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Transform Your Business with [x]cube LABS' Digital Expertise

End-to-end software services provider covering all aspects of digital product development and software engineering



GET IN TOUCH



Helping London companies go digital

**BUSINESS
FOR LONDON**
Building Better Businesses

A new £2.8 million scheme, the LONDON E-Business Support Programme, was launched by Business for London in February to give free advice and support to over 1,000 SMEs in the capital to help them grow by improving their use of digital technology

The support consists of one-to-one advice sessions with e-business experts tailored to the needs of the companies, as well as a range of webinars and networking events. This will enable businesses across London to maximise their use of digital tools and online marketing to attract more customers and clients, boost turnover and productivity and improve the efficiency and resilience of their operations. It will be open to participants until March 2025.

Free support

The free support will help small businesses:

- boost their online marketing including social media content and activity
- enhance their website / online sales platforms and search engine ranking
- improve their ability to trade electronically
- use digital tools effectively to save time and money
- strengthen their cyber security and IT back-up systems.

The programme will be delivered by Business for London's support organisations operating across the capital including Centa Business Services, Enterprise Enfield, London Business Partnership, Small Business Research and Enterprise Centre, South East Enterprise and StartUp Croydon.

Empowering

By empowering businesses to increase their sales and adopt useful digital tools in their day-to-day practice, it is

anticipated that the scheme will help to create 100 new jobs and safeguard 825 jobs across the capital.

Howard Dawber, deputy mayor for business, commented: "This important programme is helping to ensure all London businesses can embrace digital technology to boost their online marketing and protect themselves against cyber crime. Businesses across the capital have faced significant challenges as they recover from the cumulative effects of the pandemic, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis. It is vital that we continue to offer them as much support as possible to navigate these challenges, as we continue building a fairer, more prosperous London for everyone."



Howard Dawber



Despina Johnson

Bespoke

Despina Johnson, chief executive of Business for London, said: "Most small and medium-sized firms can benefit hugely from making better use of online marketing and adopting digital tools and technology.

"The bespoke advice and guidance from experts in their fields, along with online learning, will help owners to make these vital changes to maximise their potential and transform their businesses for the digital age – enabling them to grow and thrive."

To be eligible for the LONDON E-Business Support Programme, businesses should be registered for over one month (with Companies House or HMRC), have no more than 249 employees and be trading from a London borough.

www.businessforlondon.co.uk

In harmony

Guiseppe Pollifrone, founder of Italian kitchen and wine bar Symposium London, based in Bow, a beneficiary of the programme knows that rising up search engine optimisation rankings is vital if micro-businesses like his want to grow digitally.





How do I build confidence at work?

Deborah Green explores the power of music alongside five other tips to help boost your confidence, and the confidence of those around you, in the workplace

Recognise good work

If you're looking over the work you have done, note down your successes and recognise your own abilities in your job. Consider creating a 'smile file' that you could look back on in moments of self-doubt.

If reviewing a colleague's work, make sure to let them know about the quality of their work and use reassuring language to boost their confidence in the work they are doing.

Use positive language in the workplace

If you find yourself talking down on your work, practise talking yourself up. For example, changing from 'I don't think I can do this' to 'I will try my best even though this is my first time'. Changing your perspective on your own work will lead you to feel more confident in the work you do.

Listen to music

When looking at what helps employees feel more complete confidence in themselves, listen to music. A survey reported that 90 per cent of respondents stated that music helped them to feel more confident. Almost two-thirds of people answered that contemporary pop got them ready for the day's work, with RnB and Rock following as confidence boosters.

Almost three-quarters of employees would say they're confident in their work but there are still situations that arise at work that could use that extra push

of confidence to get them working to their full potential. Nearly half of the respondents said they need a confidence boost before performance reviews, and 39 per cent said that starting new projects also requires extra confidence. These are both anxiety-inducing tasks which may benefit from confidence-boosting background music.

You could invite your team to anonymously write what their favourite tune is and what about it lifts them up. Put these songs into a Spotify playlist for them, which could then be played at different times during the team's day, and watch their mood and confidence soar.

Set confidence KPIs

Having confidence goals to focus on will help you monitor your progression into a more confident worker over time. Seeing your changes will help you realise your full potential. Some confidence KPIs could be looking at how many times you've been proud of a piece of work you have produced or tallying the compliments on the work you do.

Find your cheerleaders

We all know it can be a struggle to see the best in yourself, so find your cheerleaders at work, whether it's a manager or a colleague you trust. Having a person who can lift you up in your moments of feeling low confidence will

make a big difference in your outlook on your work.

Find enjoyment in your work

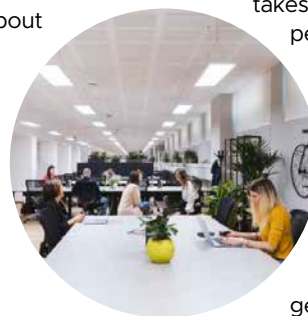
If you're someone who finds starting a project makes you feel undue stress, find a way to make it fun. Doing work that you enjoy will improve your relationship with your work and lead you to feel more confident in what you're producing as you're enjoying making it. The process takes time but changing how you perceive the work you do will make you feel more capable and confident.

For employers, when considering playing music in the workplace, keep in mind that different employees will react differently to some genres, so make sure to keep a good mix on the playlist to accommodate your employees and boost everyone's confidence. You should also try to foster an environment of praise and progression amongst your employees to make sure they feel confident in the work they're doing.

Debbie Green is leadership coach at musical licensing company PPL PRS

www.pplprs.co.uk

Note that, in accordance with The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, permission is needed from the relevant copyright holders - those people who create music - in order to play or perform music in public. TheMusicLicence allows you to legally play music for employees or customers in your business through the radio, TV, other digital devices and live performances.



Writing the perfect press release

| by Gareth Hoyle

A great press release can help open your brand up to a whole new audience and connect with your customers. But they can be difficult to write, particularly if you want to cut through the noise and make sure you get coverage.

Journalists don't have a lot of time and receive thousands of press releases. This means that, unless you grab their attention quickly, your press release may just end up straight in the bin.

But how do you get yours noticed? Here are my eight top tips for grabbing the journalists' attention and writing the perfect press release:

1. Find your angle

Before writing anything, you'll need to find your angle as it will provide a main focus for the story. It's perspective that your story will take and will give you the hook that grabs the attention of the reader. Some common angles include:

- Does this have any impact on a particular community?
- Does it add another argument or offer another side to a conflict?
- Does it highlight progress towards a problem?
- Does it evoke an emotional response?

2. Writing a headline

Your headline needs to grab the attention of your audience and shouldn't be longer than 12 words. It should briefly summarise the story, ask a question, include a location for a regional release or feature an interesting statistic. Remember not to use clickbait as you'll only annoy the reader and destroy any trust in any future content.

If you're struggling to write the headline or the title of your press release, it might help to do this at the end once you've written everything out. You don't want to waste any time struggling to write parts of the release. If you're at the end and still can't figure it out, you could always take a break and it might come to you when you've had some space.

3. Write your lede

The lede is the first paragraph of the press release and shouldn't be too long – 30 words or fewer. Only the most critical information should be included.

This is the angle or the hook to keep your audience interested, and generally answer the five W's: who, what, when and why. This keeps only the relevant information in your main paragraph, and provides a reason for the journalist to care about your story. This could be a link to anything currently happening in the world, anything they've previously written about or a reason as to why

your story is interesting and needs to be covered right now. To save time, try writing out your five W's and from this you can write your lede quickly.

4. Write the story

For the body you'll need two to five strong paragraphs of supporting information which should tell the complete story but in a concise way. Eliminate any fluff

as the journalist can add this when they're writing the story. To help save time, write out the main points as bullet points and then you can turn these into paragraphs as you go. This will also help eliminate any irrelevant information as you'll be able to see what doesn't fit.

5. Use a quote that adds value

The perfect quote for your press release should serve a purpose; it should either help tell the story or add value. If you can remove the quote and it doesn't change the story then it's unnecessary information and should be removed or changed.

6. Add 'notes to editor'

This section needs to include contact information for journalists so they can find out more information either from the information in the release or about the company. Make sure to include a name and a point of contact, whether it's by phone or email. By phone is always best but an email address is fine too.

Next you should include a short section about the company which includes their name, mission statement, founding dates, company size and any other information that is relevant but doesn't fit in the press release. This includes dates and times of events or information about a methodology if you've featured survey results.

To save time, have this as a template that you can copy and paste into the

end of each release. This information doesn't tend to change much so having it ready as a template will save time on any future releases.

7. Use the inverted pyramid method to make the process smoother

When writing a press release I like to follow the inverted pyramid method to help provide a structure and make the process much smoother. Once you have the structure, it makes it easier to write the press release as you know what you need to include and when. Using this method also helps hook readers and enables you to get your point across quickly.

This format means you put your most important and newsworthy information first. This includes the five W's and should always be in the top two paragraphs. Next you'll have your secondary details including other significant pieces of information and any quotes, and then at the end you'll include additional information. This would include a boilerplate copy, any information they might need to know about times or dates if it's an event, along with contact details for further information.

8. Craft the perfect pitch

This can be tough but is probably the most important, as it's what the journalist will see before they even reach your press release. Make sure it's similar to a headline – it needs to be concise but highlight your main angle. If they don't think it's for them or they're too busy, and your subject line isn't engaging enough, your email may simply be deleted or ignored.

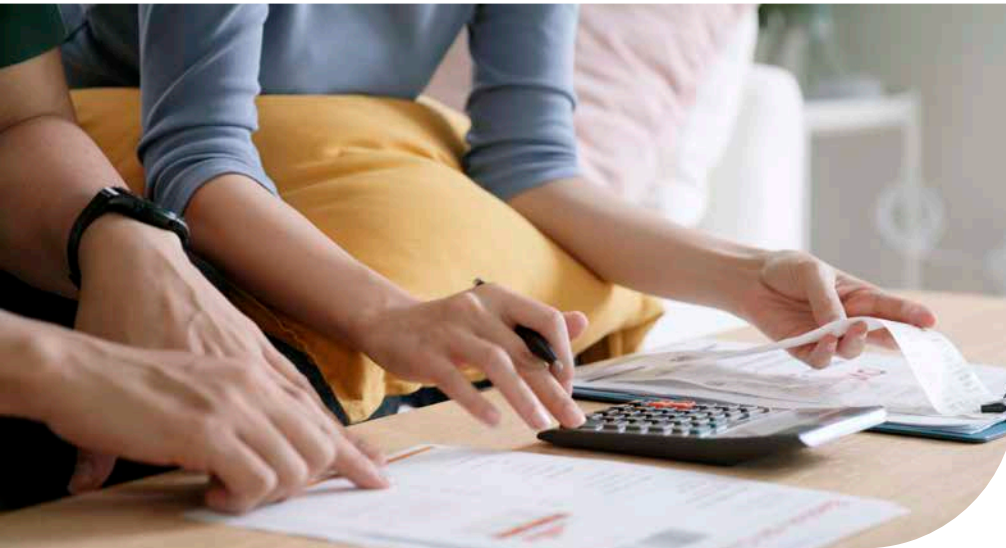
I find a/b or split testing a different set of subject lines can work with bigger campaigns, and also tweaking the subject line to suit the journalists' style or the publication they write for. This can be time-consuming but a well targeted campaign is always better than a 'spray and pray' approach - where you send the same pitch to hundreds of journalists. You should also read their previous work and if possible, refer to those articles in the pitch, along with how your story is relevant to them in the first couple of lines - showing that you've taken the time to check what they cover and how your pitch fits.

Gareth Hoyle is marketing director at Marketing Signals

www.marketingsignals.com



Supporting employees through the cost-of-living crisis



Employees and workforces across the UK are feeling the strain of the cost-of-living, with the Office for National Statistics finding that nearly half of households throughout the country have experienced their living costs increasing compared to the previous month. Not only can this have a huge impact on expenses for commuting but can have a significant knock-on effect on mental health and morale.

This is where employers and businesses can support their workforces during these difficult times to help keep morale and well-being boosted, as well as providing options that can help relieve some of the financial pressure that they're under.

Impacts

Before providing solutions to the issue, it's important to understand the reality of this crisis and how the ripple effects impact millions of workers in the UK. The rise of consumer goods and services by 9.6 per cent in October 2022 and the inflation rate staying at 4.2 per cent at the end of December 2023 means that workers are forced to reevaluate how they manage their money and the resources available.

Financial insecurity has a huge impact on mental health, leading to increased levels of stress, anxiety, burnout and depression. In fact, a survey from the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists found that 61 per cent of therapists had reported clients experiencing anxiety over being able to pay household bills, 52 per cent losing sleep due to their financial anxieties, and 49 per cent cutting meaningful activities out of their schedules due to cost worries, including gym memberships.

Adding the costs associated with commuting, which can range from paying for petrol (which has also seen increased fluctuations in price) to train and bus tickets, can mean another level of concern for workforces.

Practical solutions

While businesses can't provide every solution for their employees, there are steps that can be taken to ensure that they're supported where they're able to. Commuting costs is one area that can be focused on, such as by promoting alternative transportation options.

This can be through organising car sharing for drivers in your workforce to pick up non-drivers and save on petrol or offering a cycle-to-work scheme to provide workers with bikes and encourage the embracing of more sustainable transport.

Ben Mercer from road bikes business, Leisure Lakes Bikes has outlined the importance of considering a cycle-to-work scheme for workers: "Not only does it help with sustainable transport outlooks for commuters but it also encourages a healthier approach to journeys to and from work. Cycling promotes a boost in both physical and mental health. The endorphins experienced through cycling can help improve mental health and allow employees to enjoy their commute more."

Another option for businesses to offer is flexible scheduling or remote working which can help workers avoid peak times for commuting and reducing associated expenses. This can also contribute to greater support for employees to strike an improved work-life balance,

while also saving considerably on costs related to work travel.

Financial options

Commuting costs are not the only financial area that businesses can assist their workers with, as reviewing financials with some adjustments could help keep workers' wages in line with inflation. Regular pay reviews with the chance of increases and bonuses can also improve retention of talented employees within businesses, as it shows a level of commitment to supporting them in difficult economic periods.

However, the cost-of-living crisis is also affecting businesses, meaning that financial options may not be as available as they would be usually. Instead, giving workforces the knowledge and resources to make more informed financial decisions around their spending, saving and investing can equip them with skills that result in greater financial freedom. This could be done through the distribution of financial literacy resources or hosting seminars and workshops given by experts or financial controllers to offer more insight into the best way to keep your finances balanced.

Morale

Finding a way to support employees through the challenges presented by the cost-of-living crisis is crucial to helping improve their financial well-being, mental health and the morale of the workforce. Implementing initiatives that aim to be more cost-effective and providing knowledge can help build solid foundations to get them more engaged and considering their own finances. This also helps to demonstrate their commitment to your employees and their well-being, developing a more compassionate environment to work in.





Working out in the kitchen

The Gym Kitchen, a member of LCCI's Black Business Association is one of five Black-owned businesses which is benefiting from free TV advertising worth more than half a million pounds, as part of Channel 4's Black In Business initiative in partnership with Lloyds Bank.

Bespoke

From the beginning of the year and continuing through to spring, bespoke adverts made with the businesses by Channel 4 have been featuring across its platforms. Each 30-second commercial stars the business founder alongside comedian Judi Love.

Last September, The Gym Kitchen, Treasure Tress, Dalgety Herbal Teas, The Turmeric Co and LØCI were picked out from over 1,000 applicants from across the country to receive support from the Black In Business initiative.

Business support

In addition to each receiving £100,000 worth of airtime and a TV advert made for them, the five business owners also had six months of tailored marketing and business support from Channel 4 and Lloyds Bank.

Founded by Segun Akinwoleola, The Gym Kitchen makes clean eating affordable, accessible and tasty through a range of healthy meals, pizzas and grain pouches.

Founded by Segun Akinwoleola, The Gym Kitchen makes clean eating affordable, accessible and tasty through a range of healthy meals, pizzas and grain pouches.

Starting with a shot of a chicken curry coming out of the microwave, the advert cuts to Segun sitting on a director's chair in a production studio explaining the nutritional benefits of the Gym Kitchen's meals.

Grabbing

He's then interrupted by a phone call from Judi Love, who is getting ready in her dressing room, to tell him how much she loves Gym Kitchen's food and asks for the recipe. It ends with a top-down shot of the clean eating company's colourful product line with Judi grabbing the banoffee pie yogurt at the end!

**www.thegymkitchen.com
www.channel4.com/blackinbusiness**

Segun Akinwoleola



Scottish celebrations

Integrity International Trust, Oracle Cancer Trust and the Lord's Taverners were the nominated charities at a Burns Night celebration at The Skyline at Tower Suites in January, with initial reports that over £30,000 had been raised.

Authentic

Integrity's Tony Matharu, organiser of the event, quoted Edmund Burke, statesman and philosopher, to encourage donations: "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little." The event was MC'd by Gordon Kennedy who gave a beautifully authentic version of Burns' *Address to a Haggis*.

www.integrityinternationalgroup.com
www.lordstaverners.org
www.oraclecancertrust.org



LORD'S TAVERNERS
Empowering young people through cricket



Owning it

Members of LCCI's Business Owners Club were hosted by St James's Place Entrepreneur Club in the City in January for a New Year celebration.

Attendees heard from Nick Charles, LCCI head of membership, Robert Palmer, Palmer Wealth Management, Neil Rowland, Rowland

Wealth Management and Martin Brown, chief executive of Elephant's Child.

LenovoPRO, the business club's programme partner, were represented by Jennifer Watts, senior online sales manager who also gave an address.

www.lenovo.com

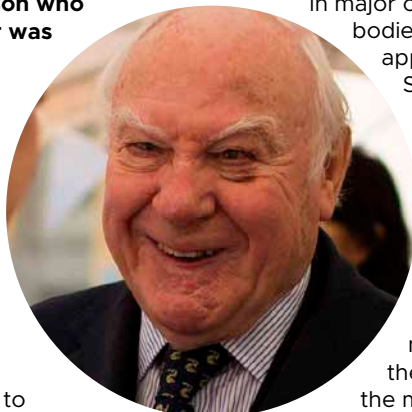


Sir Christopher Benson – man of drive and diplomacy

Sir Christopher Benson who died earlier this year was a hugely respected chair and president of LCCI for an 18-month period in the early 2000s.

Portfolio

A chartered surveyor by training, he came to lead the chamber at a time when he was in great demand to chair or play leading roles



in major companies and public bodies. His portfolio of such appointments included Sun Alliance, Boots, the Costain Group and London Docklands Development Corporation.

In his time at LCCI, he presided over a period which included the largest trade mission programme in the UK, the chamber being the most quoted London business organisation in the

media, and the inaugural dinner of the Asian Business Association.

Modest and unstinting

After his LCCI appointment he moved on to assume chairmanship of Crossrail. Its eventual successful completion owes much to his drive and diplomacy, two characteristics which were evident in both his business and charitable work in which he was modest and unstinting.

Sir Christopher was knighted in the 1988 New Year Honours for public services.

Sir Christopher Benson DL 1933-2024

David Senior, former deputy director of LCCI

It is with sadness that LBM records the death of David Senior, a stalwart of LCCI for many years from 1958 when he was recruited to the Overseas Department, rising to becoming deputy director from 1983-89. He retained his link with the Chamber as a valued consultant on international affairs right up until recent times.

Respect

Having read Modern Languages – French and German at Keble College, Oxford, David was an enthusiastic European and his work in the North Sea Ports, Eurochambres and the *Groupe de Travail* of European chamber chief executives gained him huge respect both in the UK and the other side of *La Manche*.

For many years at the Chamber though

he specialised in ‘home affairs’ and led early campaigns to develop the Crossrail project – it was rightly a source of some pride when it finally came to fruition.

He also played key roles in the important Docklands development, air transport and regional policy, using his forensic brain to ensure business cases were well understood.

David had a great interest in the history of chambers of commerce and was a ‘go-to’

source of information on the subject – both generally and specifically related to LCCI and its archive. David’s work was recognised with the award of an OBE in the 1982 Birthday Honours List.

Clarity and conviviality

Deb Jarvis, who worked with David as director of operations at the Chamber, recalls what he was like as a colleague.



“Nothing was too much trouble for David and his knowledge of business – especially transport and European affairs – was incredibly wide and detailed, and always shared with clarity and conviviality.

“Moreover” she adds, “despite having one of the fullest desks I have ever seen, with pile upon pile of documents and papers, he always knew exactly where to locate the right information!”

“I also remember David’s passion for encouraging and developing junior colleagues – many of whom moved on to impressive external careers – and how proud he was to appoint the Chamber’s first female executive.”

David’s interests outside the Chamber included industrial archaeology, tramways (he played an important role over many years in the Tramway Museum Society) and walking – many of his holidays were taken in Scandinavia where, like everywhere, he was greatly interested in its transport system.

David JH Senior OBE MA 1935-2023

Coffee and connect



LCCI teamed up with Logic Vending earlier this year to provide first-class networking and luxurious coffee to a keen audience.

Taking place in the Members' Lounge in the heart of the City, over 70 companies enjoyed a mid-morning networking session, alongside barista-made coffee, single-origin tastings



and an informative talk from the team at Logic Vending.

www.logicvending.co.uk



Answers to The Knowledge

On page 23

1 Jomo Kenyatta, First President of the Republic of Kenya. He was studying at the London School of Economics at the time.

2 Michael Foot. He was appointed editor in 1942 (aged 28) and stayed for two years.

3 Our Mutual Friend, published in 1865. It was Dickens' last completed novel.



4 It is reputed to be the only one in the capital showing a man with an umbrella.

5 Cheapside in the City of London. 'Cheap' meant 'market' in mediaeval English.

6 Chelsea FC. He made 183 appearances (1966-74) and scored 73 goals.

7 Ho Chi Minh, later president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, washed dishes at the Carlton Hotel in the 1910s. The hotel was demolished in the Blitz.



8 The Mercers, first in precedence of all the Livery Companies. Whittington served as its Master in 1395, 1401 and 1408.

9 Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) in Peter Bell the Third, a satirical poem which parodies one of William Wordsworth's.

10 The former palace of Cardinal Wolsey is in the London Borough of Richmond.

Work trends – collaboration, culture climate and commercials

Experts from *International Workplace Group* on how hybrid will impact every part of working life

1. Big business will turn to chief hybrid officers

The widespread adoption of hybrid work has led to the emergence of a new C-suite role – the chief hybrid officer. Companies such as Meta and Doist have already hired their own, and we will see more companies appointing CHOs in 2024 to oversee and optimise the hybrid work environment. They will balance the needs of in-office and remote employees, ensuring productivity and navigating logistical challenge.

2. Renewed focus on culture

In a hybrid working world, companies must find a balance between empowering employee flexibility and ensuring regular and adequate time for collaboration. This balance needs to ensure that there is a cohesive framework encouraging open communication and a shared commitment to the company's mission. Embracing hybrid working not only provides flexibility but also encourages a dynamic and inclusive culture, allowing diverse perspectives to thrive and contributing to enhanced innovation and employee satisfaction.

3. Greater employer expectations

Innovative benefits packages will

become mainstream and will be pivotal in the race for talent. Benefits such as fertility support, pet care and time off for caring responsibilities may become commonplace, as employers are forced to take a more holistic look at the needs of their hybrid workforce.

There will also be heightened expectations from employees that businesses provide benefits packages and company policies that support the wellbeing of their workforce. Whether it's increased parental leave, progressive childcare policies or taking action to address burnout with appropriate mental health support, businesses will need to be more attuned to the evolving needs and demands of their workforce if they want to retain their best people.

4. Company role in childcare

As hybrid work continues to gain momentum, increased employer support for families will be a game-changer for parents seeking more balance between their professional and home life.

Businesses will increasingly have a role to play, recognising the challenge of childcare and providing more support more for working parents is essential

to maintain a diverse and skilled workforce. Research has highlighted how greater flexibility is allowing workers to spend more time with family and on hobbies, with three in four hybrid workers using time previously spent commuting on more meaningful activities.

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”

5. Return of the lunch hour

With an increasing number of workers seeking a healthier work/life balance, the year ahead will witness a resurgence of lunch breaks dedicated to in-person interactions.

The flexibility of hybrid work will help more workers reclaim their lunch hour to grab food with co-workers and clients and rekindle in-person





collaboration and relationships, in turn fostering a more positive workplace, creativity and camaraderie amongst hybrid working team members.

6. Making space for neurodiversity

Accommodating neurodivergent team members will be an important pillar of employer Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) strategies. This shift is reflected in the evolving design of office spaces, which now takes into consideration the specific needs of neurodivergent workers, including addressing issues such as noise and lighting, acknowledging the significant impact these factors can have on the well-being of these employees. As companies adapt for greater inclusivity, a proactive approach to inclusive design will ensure that workplaces are supportive and comfortable for all employees, improving productivity in the process.

7. Unretirement becomes a reality

Hybrid work has given more flexibility to older generations in particular, allowing them to stay in the workforce – or coming back from a previous exit for ‘un-retirement.’ Bain and Company estimate that by 2030, around 150 million global jobs will shift to workers aged 55 and over. In 2024, this phenomenon will gather pace, with a growing number of experienced professionals from older generations embracing this concept and, for the first time in their careers, exploring the benefits of hybrid working, helping establish more diverse workforces and inter-generational collaboration.

8. Even greener ways of working

Robust hybrid working policies are playing a pivotal role in cutting carbon

emissions; recent research by IWG and Arup suggests that hybrid working can reduce carbon emissions by up to 70 per cent in the UK as a result of a dramatic reduction in commuting.

In an era where sustainability is paramount, we are going to see businesses looking for more innovative ways to cut their carbon emissions in 2024. Businesses are increasingly looking for buildings with green leases, aiming to reduce carbon emissions and enhance their environmental performance. In 2024, we will see these leases go beyond energy efficiency, encompassing water conservation, waste reduction and indoor air quality.

9. Hybrid work as the top employee benefit

The commercial benefits of hybrid

to businesses, given the meaningful savings companies can make by adopting the working model, are clear. Stanford University’s Professor Nicholas Bloom has long talked about hybrid working being a win/win for both employers and employees, commenting that it’s a “no brainer to increase profit”.

In addition, hybrid working is becoming the most sought-after benefit for employees too, already impacting business’s ability to access and keep the best talent. IWG’s own research shows that almost three quarters of workers would only consider a job that offers the ability to work flexibly, while 71 per cent would be unwilling to accept a position that involved a long commute.

10. Increasing presence of AI

2024 will see a clear shift in adoption and usage of AI in everyday life, and companies who invest in helping their people understand how AI can be a benefit to hybrid working, will reap the rewards. Preparing employees for unforeseen roles and technologies should become a priority for businesses, while helping them understand that using AI effectively can lessen time spend on administrative tasks, leaving more room for thinking and collaborating together.

www.iwgplc.com

IWG International Workplace Group



First Mile outlines what the 'Simpler Recycling' reforms mean for your business

The UK government has recently unveiled a groundbreaking set of reforms aimed at transforming the waste management landscape in England.

There has been a substantial increase in the overall recycling rate in the UK from just 17% in 2008 to around 44% today. However, recycling rates have plateaued in the last few years, so more needs to be done to make recycling and waste collections simpler and standardised across the whole country.

The reforms aim to streamline recycling streams, decrease landfill waste, and combat illegal waste activities, creating a more sustainable and environmentally conscious society through better recycling.

What do the reforms mean for businesses?

All businesses and non-household municipal premises, such as schools and hospitals, will need to make the same arrangements as households to recycle. This includes a legal requirement to separate recycling streams when it comes to food waste.

This means that businesses will require at least both mixed recycling and food recycling bins as they must recycle food waste, glass, metal, plastic and cardboard.

The changes are coming into effect in March 2025.

How can businesses prepare?

Businesses in the UK can prepare for the changes by setting up separate recycling streams for mixed recycling and food recycling collections and working with a trusted waste partner.

First Mile customers are already saving money and recycling more through establishing a dedicated food recycling stream, and we can help all of our customers – new and old – introduce food recycling at their businesses.

This not only helps businesses cut recycling costs, but also achieve their sustainability goals as they know none of their waste is sent to landfill.

First Mile recycling for businesses

Over 30,000 customers choose First Mile because of our range of reliable, flexible recycling and waste collections. At First Mile, we have a zero-to-landfill guarantee, with clear, transparent end destinations so customers know exactly what happens to their waste once it's been collected.

In addition to mixed recycling collections (for materials such as paper, cardboard, cans

and plastic bottles) we also offer one-off single-stream collections for hard-to-recycle items, such as coffee cups so, no matter what your industry, we have a solution to help you recycle more.

For large quantities of waste, we offer same-day, zero-to-landfill bulky waste clearances. Once your bulky waste is collected by our fully licensed and insured team, you'll also receive a waste transfer note detailing exactly how your waste is recycled and disposed of.

Progress towards a more sustainable future

The government's reform plans represent a significant leap towards a greener, more sustainable future. If you want to ensure your business is ready for the changes, get in touch with us today and one of our recycling experts will help with a tailored solution for your needs.

For more information visit thefirstmile.co.uk



first mile

Join 30,000 London businesses who recycle with First Mile

First Mile makes it easy for businesses to reduce, recycle, track, and close the loop on waste.



Scan to find out more
thefirstmile.co.uk
0333 300 3448



Two minute interview



Clive Buckley of First Office Hub

Who are you?

I am the founder of First Office Hub which I set up to help companies find flexible workplace solutions in the serviced office world.

What was your first job in London?

I started out as a junior executive at the British Bank of the Middle East which is still going strong as HSBC Bank Middle East.

Which one business achievement over the last 12 months are you most proud of, and why?

It has to be helping companies back to work and encouraging staff members back to the office, through a flight to quality. I believe that providing staff members with access to a well-located first class office space with lots of amenities is helping the *Back to Work* movement.

If you were advising a young entrepreneur which business person would you suggest as a model?

Jamie Dimon of JP Morgan Chase.

How do you think the transport system in London can be improved?

This is a tough one as I think the tube service is already first class, compared to all other major cities in the world.

Which piece of red tape causes most problems for your company and why?

Assisting our international clients secure bank accounts is challenging because the system can be very cumbersome.

What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?



I love the business diversity, international community, great restaurants and lots of green space. Too busy for a senior citizen!

If you were Mayor of London for the day which one thing would you change?

I would re-purpose existing buildings and stop building new ones.

Who would you consider an appropriate person to play you in a movie of your life?

Tom Hanks.



By Dick Thomas Johnson, Tom Hanks, CC BY-SA 2.5

What is your favourite quotation?

"Life isn't a dress rehearsal so enjoy it."

www.firstofficehub.com



Coming up...



MARCH

Practical strategies for supporting your organisation during redundancy

Monday 4 March, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

Future Unveiled: An Interactive Introduction to Robotics and Artificial Intelligence at LCCI

Tuesday 5 March, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

Wine Tasting – Women in Wine

Tuesday 12 March, 4.00pm – 6.00pm
LCCI

As part of LCCI's Women in Business Programme and in celebration of International Women's Day, Elizabeth Hawthornwaite, Founder of Elizabeth & Wine, will skillfully lead you through a wine-tasting experience, showcasing wines crafted by talented female producers. Taking place on Wednesday 7 March at LCCI HQ, tickets are £18.00 inc VAT for Premier Plus members.



How To Do Business with the United Nations
Thursday 7 March, 2.30pm – 3.30pm

Understanding and Reducing Import and Export Cost
Tuesday 12 March, 10.00am – 11.00am

Networking Reception with Natalie Campbell MBE, Co-CEO Bleu and Chancellor University of Westminster at LCCI
Tuesday 12 March, 5.30pm – 7.30pm

Go Connect! Networking

Wednesday 13 March, 4.00pm – 6.00pm
Clayton Hotel

Join up to 60 LCCI Members and guests to network whilst enjoying complimentary drinks and nibbles kindly hosted by Clayton Hotel City of London on Tuesday 13 March.

Rwanda: Business Briefing and Networking at LCCI
Thursday 14 March, 5.45pm – 8.00pm

Property, Construction and Infrastructure Networking Club with guest speaker Nick Platts, Managing Director, Luton Rising at LCCI

Tuesday 19 March, 12.00pm – 2.00pm
Programme Partners: Goodstone Living, Menzies, and Thames Freeport

Black Business Association Spring Networking Reception at LCCI

Wednesday 20 March, 5.30pm – 8.00pm
Programme Partner: University of Westminster
Sponsored by: Be The Business and Jacaranda

Bidding for Public Sector Tenders Surgery

Thursday 21 March, 9.45am – 12.00pm
LCCI

Join us for an insightful surgery where bidding expert, Mike Raynor, will demystify the world of public sector tenders. Gain a comprehensive overview of bidding and position yourself for success in this competitive landscape. Taking place at LCCI HQ on Thursday 21 March tickets are £24.00 inc VAT for Premier Plus members.

Selling Services Overseas - what you need to know
Tuesday 26 March, 10.00am – 11.00am

How to Navigate your pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) when applying for Contracts
Tuesday 26 March, 10.30am – 11.15am

APRIL

Employment 'Red Flags': Key Tips for Employers to Mitigate the Risk of Tribunal Claims

Monday 8 April, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

Common Transit

Tuesday 9 April, 10.00am – 11.00am

Cross Cultural Negotiation - what to look out for?

Thursday 11 April, 2.00pm – 3.00pm

Business Owners Club Spring Reception with Will Fraser, Managing Director & Founder, 100 & First at LCCI

Wednesday 17 April, 5.30pm – 7.30pm

Business Owners Club Spring Reception

Wednesday 17 April, 5.30pm – 7.30pm

LCCI

LCCI members are invited to join us at the Business Owners Club Spring Reception on Wednesday 17 April for an evening filled with networking opportunities and an exclusive chance to hear from Will Fraser, the Managing Director & Founder of 100 & First. Taking place at LCCI HQ tickets are just £12.00 inc VAT for Premier Plus members.

Asian Business Association Spring Networking Lunch

Thursday 18 April, 12.30pm – 3.30pm

Chourangi Restaurant

Back by popular demand we are returning to Chourangi Restaurant on Thursday 18 April for the LCCI ABA networking lunch where we will welcome members and guests from a variety of sectors. The networking lunch will start at midday with drinks, followed by a two-course lunch. Supported by our programme partner, University of Westminster, the event always sells out so book early to avoid disappointment. Tickets start at £78.00 inc VAT for Premier Plus members.

Programme

Partner: University of Westminster



SUMMER DATES FOR DIARY

Property and Construction Summer Reception at No4 Hamilton Place

Tuesday 25 June, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

Annual Summer Party at Westminster Abbey Garden

Thursday 11 July, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

LCCI Cricket Day at the Kia Oval - Surrey v Yorkshire in the One Day Cup

Thursday 25 July, 10.30am onwards

Maximise Your Membership at LCCI

Thursday 18 April, 3.00pm – 5.00pm

Sales Optimisation: Preparing to Scale

Monday 22 April, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

Capital 500 with Vicky Pryce, Chief Economic Advisor and Board Member, Cebr, James Rentoul, Director at Savanta ComRes and Ian Daniels, Property Partner at Haysmacintyre

Tuesday 23 April, 1.00pm – 3.00pm

Sponsored and Hosted by Haysmacintyre

Women in Business Networking Lunch with Kali Hamerton-Stove, Managing Director, The Glasshouse at LCCI

Thursday 25 April, 12.00pm – 2.30pm

Building a Mentorship Program in Small Businesses

Monday 29 April, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

MAY

Go Connect Networking at LCCI

Wednesday 1 May, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

Employee Turnover: Causes and Solutions for SMEs

Monday 13 May, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

Accelerating Business Growth with Salesforce

Tuesday 14 May, 10.00am – 10.45am

Deal Velocity – 5 Strategies to Shorten Your Selling Cycle

Monday 20 May, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

Artificial Intelligence: integration and regulation

AI adoption has been slower among UK SMEs compared to large companies. However, the potential cost savings of AI are becoming too significant to ignore. From marketing automation to supply chain optimisation, AI can drive efficiency and provide competitive advantages. For smaller business owners looking to the future, an AI strategy is vital. But, as AI becomes more powerful, accessible, and affordable, will tighter regulation and governance stand in the way of progress?



By Will May, Solicitor in Birketts' Corporate Team

Artificial Intelligence today

One of the hottest topics of recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming an increasingly valuable tool for businesses of all sizes. UK government commissioned research (published in January 2022) found that c. 15% of all UK businesses have adopted at least one AI technology.

However, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the UK have been slower to adopt AI technologies compared to their larger counterparts. Of the large companies sampled, 68% already use a form of AI. This is a much higher proportion than the 34% of medium sized businesses and 15% of small businesses who use the technology.

A further 10% of companies sampled plan on implementing AI in the future, increasing use of AI in business to c. one in four companies across the UK. By following the right strategy and investment, AI could provide major competitive advantages and cost savings for SMEs across all

sectors. Particularly as both basic and tailored "off the shelf" AI products are becoming more affordable and readily available.

As the exponential growth of AI as an industry in and unto itself continues, the number of solutions and applications available to all UK businesses will also inevitably increase.

Regulation & governance

UK businesses currently spend £16.7 billion (2020) a year on AI, with this predicted to rise to £83.5 billion by 2040. The UK's AI market as a whole is predicted to grow to \$1 trillion (USD) by 2035. As such, the UK Government has taken a proactive stance toward governing AI ethics and safety without hampering innovation.

In 2021, the UK Government released its National AI Strategy. The third pillar of the strategy committed to govern the use of AI effectively. In the 2022 progress update, the Government confirmed it had published one of the world's first national algorithmic transparency standards, requiring public sector organisations to provide clarity about what AI algorithms they use, how they work, and why they are using them. Consideration was also given to how the UK's data protection regime interacts with the use of AI, with emphasis given to fairness and bias mitigation in AI. There are plans to introduce legislation to enable the processing of sensitive data for monitoring and correcting bias in AI systems.

In 2023, the Government's AI White Paper highlighted its pro-innovation approach to AI regulation. Appropriate regulation is deemed necessary to create an environment for AI to flourish, with a proposed pragmatic and proportionate approach to governance. Cumbersome rules are deemed to be

harmful to innovation, and instead the Government seeks to ensure regulatory measures are context and outcome based, focusing on the use of AI rather than the technology itself. By building public trust in AI, including extinguishing concerns about bias and discrimination, efficient governance is seen to be the best way to maximise economic and social benefits.

In 2024, the Government response to the AI White Paper reaffirmed its pro-innovation approach to regulation, pledging over £100 million to help support innovation and regulators' AI technical capabilities.



The Government's view on AI is quite clear. It is a staple of the future that will transform all areas of life and stimulate the UK economy by unleashing innovation and driving productivity. As such, any early investment in AI by SMEs who have as much of a use-case as large companies, but who have not yet implemented the technology, is unlikely to be impeded by tightened regulation.



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Bim Arofami MP



Alderman Prem Goyal



Chris Hayward, Lord Mayor Michael Mainelli, Liz Henderson and Prem Goyal



The art of business

The Guildhall Art Gallery recently provided the perfect backdrop for networking to celebrate the first anniversary of the City of London Chamber (CoLC) and forge new and valuable business relationships.

Select

Lord Mayor Michael Mainelli and Bim Arofami MP Economic Secretary to the Treasury and City Minister addressed a select audience alongside CoLC founding chair Alderman Prem Goyal MBE and Liz Henderson, LCCI director of membership and events.





LCCI Member News

ALCON MADDOX

More Than Consultants | Partners In Growth

Alcon Maddox

Sales Optimisation Reinforced with Revenue Intelligence

Alcon Maddox and Ebsta announced today that the two companies have entered into a strategic partnership that will enable them to provide an unrivalled level of sales strategy expertise and data driven guidance to B2B clients and their Private Equity and Venture Capital investors.

The agreement brings together the wealth of operational knowledge and experience Alcon Maddox has in sales optimisation, with Ebsta's ability to surface the data points needed in order to successfully scale revenues, offering sales optimisation and predictable growth, reinforced with revenue intelligence.

Alcon Maddox is a boutique Management Consultancy specialised in Sales Optimisation. It builds solutions to evolve business strategy, transform sales organisations and develop leadership. Their Sales Ops Review helps companies optimise their sales set-up and attract investors by becoming more data driven with predictable revenue. Founded in Dubai, but now headquartered in London, they work with clients across Europe and the Middle East.

For more information, please visit: www.alconmaddox.com



Brain Tumour Research

Staff take inspiration from brain cancer death for charity of the year

Employees of a London firm have chosen Brain Tumour Research as their charity of the year in support of a bereaved colleague.

Lee Davies, who looks after marketing and data science for Skylight IPV, put the charity forward following the death of his mum to brain cancer.

Brain Tumour Research funds sustainable research at dedicated centres in the UK. It also campaigns for the Government and larger cancer charities to invest more in research into brain tumours in order to speed up new treatments for patients and, ultimately, to find a cure. The charity is the driving force behind the call for a national annual spend of £35 million in order to improve survival rates and patient outcomes in line with other cancers such as breast cancer and leukaemia.

To support Skylight IPV's fundraising, visit www.justgiving.com/page/skylight-ipv

<https://braintumourresearch.org/>



MHA

MHA aids AdvancedAdvT Ltd's move to AIM post acquiring five software businesses from Capita plc. Focused on AI and digital transformation, ADVT seeks mid-cap acquisitions in a rapidly growing landscape. Chairperson Vin Murria highlights a strategy centered on lasting growth through M&A and platform businesses, leveraging £97.9 million in assets. MHA's team, led by Rob Dando and Robin Stevens, provided reporting accountants' services for the AIM transition.

To read the full article please visit <https://www.mha.co.uk/about-us/company-updates/mha-acts-as-reporting-accountants-on-the-transition-of-advancedadvt-ltd-to-the-aim-market>



Thought Agile

Thought Agile is proud to announce our new accreditations with PeopleCert, enabling us to offer PRINCE2, PRINCE2 Agile, and Lean Six Sigma courses. This expansion enhances our portfolio, including Project Management, Product Management, Business Analysis, and Agile courses. At Thought Agile, we pride ourselves on our unique blend of instructors, who bring both academic excellence and real-world experience to the classroom. Our teaching methodology is centred around scenario-based learning techniques, designed to engage students, and enhance their understanding through practical application. This approach ensures our participants not only gain theoretical knowledge but also develop the skills necessary to excel in their professional lives.

We're offering an exclusive 15% discount for London Chamber of Commerce (LCCI) members. This limited-time offer is our way of contributing to the LCCI community's professional development. Contact us at info@thoughtagile.co.uk to take advantage of this opportunity and join our enriched educational programmes designed for professional growth.



Birkbeck - University of London

Birkbeck Business School, in partnership with the Small Business Charter, is proud to be part of the **Help to Grow** scheme that is designed to provide learning and knowledge to businesses and entrepreneurs that is focused on creating new opportunities, improve processes, innovate, and be a better leader.

The **Help to Grow** Management Course is designed to give you new insight and practical capabilities in digital marketing, strategy, leadership, innovation, responsible business, and financial management. The course lasts twelve weeks, is 90% subsidised by the government and is delivered through online and in-person sessions.

There is opportunity for personal development through one-to-one mentoring and access to other Birkbeck support. Full details are available on the Small Business Charter website.

This innovative course is designed for senior decision makers in the organisation. For further details just go to register for our next cohort now.

www.buckinghamfutures.com



University of West London

Here at the University of West London, we are proud to have a reputation that produces talent on a local, national, and international scale. We are delighted to announce that the UWL Graduate Internship Programme is now officially open for applications to support SME's and start-ups in the West London region.

If you are looking for innovation, fresh ideas, and additional resources, please consider how our Graduate Internship Programme can help you and your company. If you meet the criteria, the UWL Graduate Internship Programme may be offered on a match-funded or fully funded basis.

Please see our webpage for further information and how to apply: **UWL Graduate Internship Programme | University of West London**

If you'd like to speak with one of the team before applying, feel free to contact the Graduate Internship Programme on 0208 231 2700 or email gi@uwl.ac.uk.



AJ Products UK

AJ PRODUCTS UK AWARD ARROWXL WITH DELIVERY CONTRACT AS PART OF THEIR GROWTH STRATEGY

ArrowXL, the UK's largest and longest established two-person home delivery specialist, has been awarded a contract by AJ Products UK, the workplace furniture & equipment supplier, to store and deliver over 800 orders a month to workplaces across the UK.

Goods will be delivered from AJ Products' Swedish warehouse to the ArrowXL Wigan depot where they will be receipted and sorted for onward despatch by the ArrowXL delivery team. Customers will be kept updated throughout the delivery journey and will have access to the ArrowXL's 'askAXL' tracking web app, providing real time updates.

With a focus on innovation, efficiency and ergonomics, AJ Products UK create smart designed solutions for the modern workplace and they view this partnership as an opportunity to expand their UK market share and customer offerings.

To find out more visit www.ajproducts.co.uk



Bridgehead

International growth... guaranteed. Bridgehead is an international growth agency helping scaleups expand into new markets.

We empower scaleups to conquer new markets in the UK, Europe, ANZ and North America. With our tested blueprints and methodologies, we can accelerate your market entry - all within 90-days. Guaranteed.

Our global product development team thrives on creating category management solutions, pioneering product innovations, and enhancing brand offerings across a wide spectrum of consumer sectors.

Let us help you achieve your global growth ambitions through our brand licensing services. Using your brand's value as a basis for licence agreements, we can create high quality, creative gifting and lifestyle products for your brand.

Bridgehead also provides value-added distribution services. Our fulfilment solutions accommodate customers of all sizes from different countries and industries. A true 'business-in-a-box' solution, we enable brands to sell to a wide range of European retailers, trade partners, and online sales channels.

t: 01865 589507

e: success@bridgeheadagency.com
bridgeheadagency.com

Two minute interview



Catalina Cotoara of Finance Director London

Who are you?

I'm the managing partner of Finance Director London, a financial and accounting advisory firm. We specialise in partnering with founders from professional industries, guiding them through complex financial landscapes to steer their businesses for sustainable growth.

What is your connection with the London Chamber of Commerce?

Finance Director London joined the Chamber after a recommendation from another member. It's been a fantastic platform for us to forge valuable connections, engage in meaningful dialogues with other industry leaders and contribute to the thriving business community in London.

What was your first job in London?

My London journey began at Marvellous, a pioneering agency under Dentsu's Isobar network, specialising in creative mobile and social marketing. This was back in 2008, when the mobile advertising was just starting. I loved the vibrant culture, and I was fortunate to be able to use my financial background to bring a fresh perspective to such a dynamic environment.

Which one business achievement over the last 12 months are you most proud of, and why?

Last year, we onboarded a new client that was

grappling with cashflow challenges and inefficient financial controls.

I'm particularly proud of how we turned their situation around. Our strategic financial management not only stabilised their business but also set them on a path of robust growth.

It gives me immense pleasure to see that this approach has been a game changer for the client, and their turnover has since doubled.

If you were advising a young entrepreneur which business person would you suggest as a model?

Don't limit yourself to just one role model. Every one of us is unique and every journey to success is different. You have to find your own path in life. By cultivating a mindset of continuous learning from everyone around you, you can shape your own remarkable path to success.

How do you think the transport system in London can be improved?

It is great having such a comprehensive public transport in London. I use the transport system regularly and don't feel the need to own a car. A potential game-changer would be introducing a new ring line, akin to the Circle Line but in the outer zones, possibly zones 3 or 4. This would significantly ease congestion in central London and

streamline commuting for everyone.

Which piece of red tape causes most problems for your company and why?

The evolving landscape of R&D tax relief schemes, particularly the merger of the RDEC and SME schemes and varying relief rates that apply from April 2023 onwards and for accounting periods starting on or after April 2024, significantly impact small companies. These changes have introduced a layer of intricacy into the planning process for several of my clients and necessitate frequent adjustments in financial forecasting, budgeting and strategic planning.

What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

I love the vibrant and entrepreneurial culture of London. However, the city's widespread appeal draws in considerable crowds, which can occasionally feel tiring. Nevertheless, the city's dynamic atmosphere

offers an incredible array of experiences and you can never feel bored in London.

Who would you consider an appropriate person to play you in a movie of your life?

Emily Blunt as I find her truly inspirational. She has overcome challenges throughout her life and taken a wide range of roles that required her to step out of her comfort zone, something that I challenge myself to do regularly as well.

What is your favourite quotation?

A guiding principle in my life, passed down from my grandfather, is: "No one has the ultimate answer, so embrace the challenge and do your best." This was a response my grandfather often gave whenever any of us grandchildren found ourselves uncertain or stuck. It's a saying that has resonated with me from childhood, shaping my perspective on life.

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I provide sales consulting, training and coaching to small business owners/ leaders, solopreneurs and sales teams. I am unique in that I use a holistic approach to developing sales skills, strategy and mindset in order to exponentially affect sales performance and results. I am an award-winning salesman, and speaker, an international best-selling author, an accredited high-performance coach and I have helped my clients generate over £12 million in additional revenue.

Contact

Email - navinjaitlycoaching@outlook.com if interested.

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The Sales Impact Academy has been created for small business owners and solopreneurs who want to significantly grow their sales. It has been designed to develop sales skills and mindset. It ordinarily is priced at £300. However, members can access for just £149.



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Please contact us at +44 0800 246 5958 or via email at info@counter-ransomware.com quoting the code 'LCCI24'. When you do, we'll be happy to send you a copy of our *C-RW Dos & Don'ts Guide on Ransomware Attacks*.

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For any queries on features or advertising in *Capital Matters*, contact:

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Q&A with Dr. Jacob Habgood from Sumo Digital

Jacob is Director of Education Partnerships for Sumo Digital, Educational Advisor to The Independent Game Developers' Association and a Royal Academy of Engineering Visiting Professor at the University of Sheffield



Dr. Jacob Habgood

There are lots of exciting opportunities in the tech sector but the shortage of skilled professionals has been a challenge for many employers. Director of Education Partnerships at Sumo Digital, Jacob Habgood, believes one way to address the skills gap is to invest in technical education initiatives like apprenticeships. These tailored programmes are something the company has gained great value from, most notably in terms of training people to have the skills they need most, whilst simultaneously creating a strong talent pipeline.

WHY DID YOU INVEST IN THESE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEME(S)?

As a business, we had ambitions to take on apprentices for a while, to help us bring on board talent who could be upskilled to help us plug skills gaps. To bring this to fruition, we registered as an employer-provider, which has allowed us to deliver all our training for our apprentices in-house. I have a background in education, which has helped with this process, and I work with fellow staff and professional engineers who help with the delivery of training on the scheme.

The gaming industry has previously struggled to engage with apprenticeships – which is a shame as there are real benefits to doing so. We're pleased we did our research to understand what the best way in, for us as a business, was as it has helped to create a pipeline of staff who are being trained in the right technical skills for their roles.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOUR LEARNERS HELPED YOUR BUSINESS OVERCOME?

One thing that is especially important to us, but always requires room for improvement, is ensuring our workforce reflects our consumers. We have a diverse

audience, so it is vital we have a diverse workforce who are able to ensure we are developing and selling games that meet demand and account for different perspectives.

Our apprenticeship scheme gives us access to new talent and opportunities to hire people from different backgrounds. This means we can increase the diversity of thought amongst our developers, whilst onboarding individuals who are passionate to learn. We have already seen the value of this – for example in 2023, 40% of our graduating cohort were women – something we're really proud of in a male-dominated industry. This is significantly higher than female representation in the UK gaming industry, particularly in programming roles, so we're making encouraging progress on the path to more equal representation and we hope our continued work in this area will take us even further.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MAIN BENEFITS OF THE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEME(S) YOU PARTICIPATE IN?

So far, there are 27 apprentices working across Sumo Digital. 15 of those have just started, having joined our January 2024 cohort. The apprentices work on-site five days a week, and have the opportunity to develop their own games, in conjunction with other departments at Sumo Digital. They're able to work closely, and learn from, our professional engineers and our publisher, Secret Mode. Our programme is designed to teach all those involved the key programming tools they'll eventually use to create games to give them a strong foundation for their careers. The ability to provide this training for learners has meant we're able to really focus on hiring the people we feel have the innate skills to thrive as programmers, the rest we can achieve through training.

Additionally, this means we can welcome people of all backgrounds, and we're not limited to those from STEM related degrees. For example, in the past, we've had an apprentice who started with us after studying for a degree in fashion and who brought new ideas and perspectives that we otherwise wouldn't have had access to. The average age we have in our current cohort skews towards those in their twenties, in line with the typical age of a graduate, but we're open to people of all

ages, and welcome older people to apply too, whether they are looking to change industry or are really passionate about gaming and looking for a place to start.

The success of the scheme is reflected in the numbers. To date, our apprentices have had a 100% pass rate and employment rate. From feedback we've received in the past, our apprentices have praised the exposure that the scheme has given them to new experiences and skills, and also noted how they were given the opportunity to work on exciting projects with great mentors. There's also been appreciation for the soft skills as well as practical skills, which have helped them understand the nuances of the workplace, which in turn has boosted confidence. We've also had apprentices tell us they don't think they would have been able to break into the industry without their placement.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EMPLOYERS CONSIDERING USING A TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEME FOR THE FIRST TIME?

We have really felt the benefit as a business, so we're pleased we pursued it and would definitely recommend other employers in the field do the same if they can. Thanks to Sumo Digital being employer-providers, we've also found that the control we have over the curriculum makes a real impact – we're literally shaping the future workforce that fits the needs of the business.

I would say that apprenticeships aren't as scary as they sound, and the benefits definitely make it worth it. If you're considering taking the plunge, don't be put off by the process being unfamiliar, just try it!

For anyone looking for more information, there are lots of different online resources which offer an understanding of the options available as well as details of how to get involved. One great place to look, for example, is the Skills for Life website, which offers a range of flexible technical education initiatives that can be tailored to your business's needs.

To find out more apprenticeships click here: https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk?utm_source=LondonChamberMagazine_medium=editorial&utm_campaign=rev&utm_term=und&utm_content=SumoDigital

New City College collaboration with Segen Ltd

New City Trade Skills, a part of New City College Group, has partnered with Segen Ltd, a prominent provider of renewable energy solutions, to introduce innovative courses in renewable energy. The collaboration aims to prepare individuals for careers in the expanding renewable energy industry, addressing the rising demand for clean and sustainable energy sources.

Training will be conducted at New City College's Rainham and Hackney campuses, both equipped with state-of-the-art renewable energy labs. Endorsed by MCS, the standards body for the low carbon energy industry, these labs ensure industry-relevant training in installation, maintenance, and retrofitting of green energy solutions.

Dan White, Market Development Director at MCS, praised the partnership, emphasizing the importance of quality training in supporting industry growth. The Hackney and Rainham centers promise significant benefits to learners, employers, and the future workforce, crucial for achieving net zero targets and global transition to green energy.

Through this collaboration, New City Trade Skills seeks to align education with industry demands, bridging the gap between academic institutions and the renewable



energy sector. Gerry McDonald, Group Principal and CEO at New City College, hailed the partnership as a model of effective collaboration between academia and industry, with the potential to shape skills policy positively.

Courses offered to Segen Ltd customers include Solar Photovoltaic (PV), Electric Vehicle Charging Point Installers, and packages covering Solar Photovoltaics and Electrical Energy Storage Systems, and Electrical Energy Storage System: Battery Storage. These courses aim to equip

individuals with the skills and qualifications necessary to thrive in the renewable energy field.

The collaboration between New City Trade Skills and Segen Ltd represents a concerted effort to prepare individuals for careers in renewable energy, addressing the pressing need for skilled professionals in the sector. Through industry-led training initiatives, they aim to contribute to the growth and sustainability of the renewable energy industry while meeting the demands of a changing job market.



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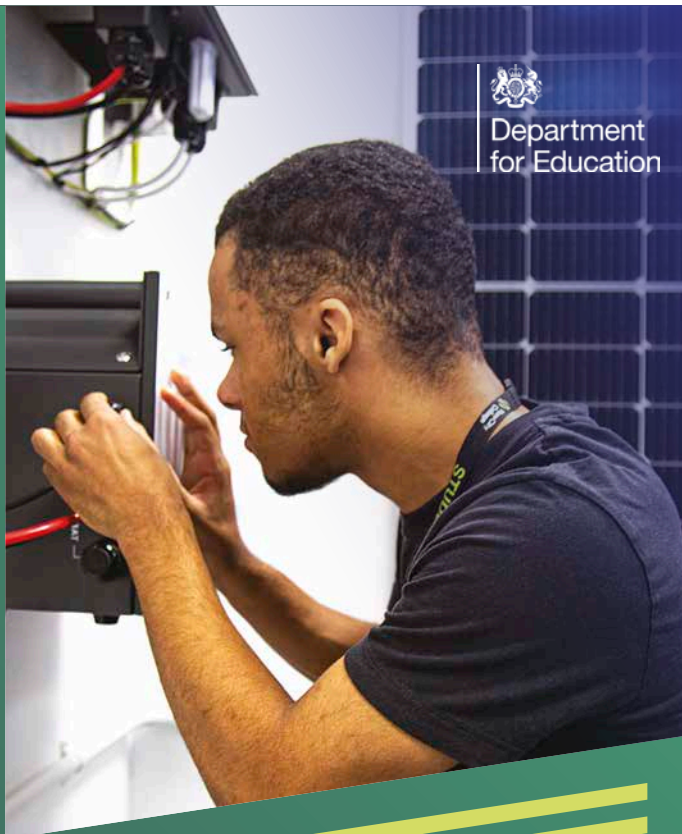
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Hire an Apprentice With Croydon College

Croydon College is one of South London's leading providers of apprenticeships, with a growing reputation for its focus on the employability of students. The college ensures that students leave education not only with top qualifications, but work-ready and equipped with the skills employers really want.



The college works closely with local, regional and national businesses to gather valuable expert advice to inform the teaching and curriculum, and to provide students with the opportunity to interact with some of the best employers in the country. This keeps staff and managers up to date with employer requirements and industry standards, and allows local businesses to advise on curriculum and courses.

Employers are regularly invited by the college to participate in "Learning walks", giving them the opportunity to experience - first-hand - the skills, techniques and workplace-readiness that are prioritised in the learning offered to students. College managers and staff take part in "Employment walks" on local business' sites to refresh skills and upgrade their commercial awareness and expertise.

A cornerstone of the employability offer at Croydon College is the large number of apprenticeships on offer, including opportunities in the following professions and industries:-

- Accountancy
- Building and construction
- Carpentry and joinery
- Digital marketing
- Engineering
- Hospitality
- HR
- IT
- Plumbing and heating
- Project management
- Property maintenance
- Teaching

Apprenticeships are offered at Intermediate, Advanced and Higher (degree) levels, depending on the applicant's existing qualifications and experience. There are no tuition fees due by the student, since training costs are funded by the government and employer.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) acknowledged Croydon College's



focus on employability in their review of the provision and stated, "There is strong evidence of the development of employability skills." At its most recent inspection, Ofsted noted, "Initiatives introduced by the college to develop students' employability skills have been successful in exposing students to the world of work in a number of different ways, including through imaginative projects and live briefs."

Croydon College continually works to maintain and improve its relationships with employers to ensure students leave with the skills they need, and employers want.

If you are interested in working in partnership with Croydon College, please contact apprenticeships@croydon.ac.uk or telephone **020 8686 5700**.

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* Data from apprenticeships.gov.uk
* Smaller employers are eligible for government funding which will pay between 95% and 100% of the apprentice training costs. Larger employers can use the levy to pay for training.

To find out more, email apprenticeships@croydon.ac.uk



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LMC – Keeping your business moving

Specialist provider of apprenticeships for project delivery.

We are living in a volatile and uncertain world, which creates a challenging environment for businesses operating today. At London Metropolitan College (LMC) we understand the challenges London businesses face and have proudly supported our cities employers to recruit, develop and retain top talent since 2018. With over 70% of London employers experiencing difficulties recruiting staff, LMC are supporting businesses to grow talent from within.

Did you know that there is now government funding available to cover 95% of the cost of staff development, from entry level roles, right through to senior management. Apprenticeships create a unique opportunity to develop your people capability, creating a productive working environment for your staff, by offering pathways to development, that will allow your employees to grow with the business.

There are many longstanding misconceptions about apprenticeships, that they are for 16–18-year-olds and suited to trade professions but the reality is in stark contrast to this, in fact in 2022, 47% of all apprenticeship starts were over the age of 25, compared to just 22% aged 16–18 years, furthermore the largest growth area for apprenticeships is seen in the higher and advanced apprenticeships, with health, business, law and STEM leading the field. The recent London Skills Survey, noted that top skills needed within the capital included, data handling, project management and administration, and at LMC we deliver apprenticeships across these key areas, from entry level Business Administration to Degree Apprenticeship Programmes in collaboration with the University of West London.

As a specialist provider LMC bring even greater efficiencies to your business, embedding project management principles into all our programmes. Project management is more than just a simple qualification, it is your key to ensuring your business is as efficient and productive as it can be, and that your employees are delivering the best work they can, with the resources they have.

Apprenticeship prices start at just £250, with our degree programmes just £1,100, for the entire duration. If you are a London based SME, you may also find support through the London Progression Collaboration, to cover the full cost of funding for your apprenticeship.

Our Apprenticeship Programmes

- ▶ L3 Business Administration + APMPFQ Project Fundamentals Qualification
- ▶ L3 Project Controls Technician + ECITB L3 Diploma in Project Controls Practice
- ▶ L4 Information Manager
- ▶ L4 Associate Project Manager + APM Project Management Qualification
- ▶ BSc (Hons) Integrated Degree Apprenticeship in Project Management + APM Project Management Qualification
- ▶ L6 Project Controls Professional Apprenticeship + Enhanced degree option available.

In Partnership with



Apprenticeships Align to UEL's Careers First Ethos

The University of East London (UEL) began its higher degree apprenticeship provision in 2016 with the Digital and Technology Solutions apprenticeship, and our first employers included well-known names, such as Accenture and the NHS. It has grown significantly since then.

Today we support over 900 learners across 20 Apprenticeship Programmes ranging from Civil Engineering to Teaching providing

“The University of East London has been pioneering futures since 1898, from the 2nd Industrial Revolution through to where we are now, the 4th. We are a careers-led university. Our mission is to prepare you for the jobs of the future.”

Professor Amanda J. Broderick
Vice-Chancellor & President

opportunities for learners to gain a higher education degree while also improving their knowledge and skills at work.

Apprenticeships help employers upskill their workforce, while also improving recruitment and retention at almost every level within an organisation from new starts to senior leaders.

For UEL, the tripartite relationship between the apprentice, the employer and the University embraces the very ethos of the University's "Vision 2028" transformation strategy, a mission to prepare our students for the jobs of the future.

Our apprenticeship programmes produce graduates with the skills, tools and competencies sought by employers in a rapidly changing world. Apprenticeships also align with UEL's long-standing commitment to inclusion and social mobility.

UEL stands out from other providers by ensuring apprentices are embedded in the same high-quality education experience as our traditional courses. As such, we have dedicated teams across the University that work



in partnership with our six Schools to pioneer a high-quality apprenticeship experience for both our apprentices and employers.

We strive to keep our courses innovative and current with the changing pressures of careers-centric learning and it is our goal to solidify a position as one of the leading apprenticeship providers in the country.

As part of our commitment to innovation growth, we are proud to announce the development of the Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability. The perfect place to discover the endless possibilities of transformative research. UEL's centre provides learners with the necessary expertise, resources and innovation to support their academic endeavours in various fields, with sustainability embedded in everything that we do.

In September 2023, UEL underwent its first full inspection of its apprenticeship provision, receiving a judgement of **Good** across all four themes: quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management. Inspectors commended the high levels of satisfaction in all areas of our apprenticeships: apprentices highly value their training and have a positive attitude towards their studies; academics teach apprentices extensive new knowledge which prepares them well for their work responsibilities; employers are caring and helpful; and management escalates relevant issues to the university board. UEL's inspection also marks the first ever inspection of the level 6 Geospatial Mapping and Science Specialist apprenticeship, commended for staff's guidance on effectively using professional surveying equipment and software to calculate traverse lines.

For more information about how your business can benefit from degree apprenticeships, visit us at www.uel.ac.uk/study/apprenticeships. Both apprenticeship levy paying and smaller non-levy paying organisations can benefit from apprenticeships and we can guide you through the process.



APPRENTICESHIPS



Invest in your team and develop a new generation of experts.

Hiring an apprentice is an effective way to grow talent and develop a motivated and qualified workforce. They are an exciting option for both apprentice and employer: as well as filling skills gaps, our research shows that they boost morale and staff retention.

You can hire someone new or upskill an existing employee. Our dedicated team of apprenticeship managers will support you and your apprentice through the entire journey.

INVEST IN AN APPRENTICE

CONTACT US TODAY

Find out more about the Apprenticeships delivered by the University of East London. Email degreeapprenticeships@uel.ac.uk or visit www.uel.ac.uk/apprenticeships



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Step into the future with us as we delve into the Fourth Industrial Revolution – an era where technology seamlessly merges digital, physical, and biological systems. This is not just a wave of innovation; it's a strategic imperative for businesses.

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Let's bring knowledge to life:

Unlocking potential – Coaching's role in optimising workplace L&D



Is content really king when it comes to effective workplace learning and development? With City & Guilds' Training Trends report saying 99% of large employers have experienced the failure of in-house training programmes over the last five years, is there a better way of supporting your L&D strategy with a means of embedding learning more successfully?

Coaching in the context of adult learning is a powerful form of scaffolding that supports learners as they acquire new skills, knowledge and perspectives. Scaffolding refers to the temporary support provided by a knowledgeable mentor or trainer to help learners reach higher levels of understanding and independence. Similarly, coaching serves as a structured framework that aids learners in achieving their learning goals in a personalised and effective manner.

The scaffolding theory is based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept of educational psychology. It represents 'the space between what the learner is capable of doing unsupported and what the learner cannot do even with support. It is the range where the learner is able to perform, but only with the support of a teacher or a peer with more knowledge or expertise.'

It's a useful lens to apply in the context of workplace learning. For example, colleagues working in a learning circle on a shared



problem provides each individual access to support that can assist them in performing beyond what they can do on their own. Group coaching offers similar supportive opportunities.

Building on Vygotsky's work, Jerome Bruner created the scaffolding theory in the 1950s to describe the process where the learner is given support from an instructor which is then gradually removed as the learner's skills increase. The idea being that the scaffolding provides enough support so that the learner feels challenged, but not beyond their current level of capability.

Both theories shape learning experiences and resources that focus on the skills development and coaching can function as effective scaffolding for many reasons.

The first is personalisation in that coaching considers the individual learner's needs, preferences and learning style. Coaches tailor their approach to match the unique characteristics of each learner to ensure support is relevant and engaging.

Coaching also serves well with goal clarity. Coaches work with the learner to set clear,

achievable learning goals. This is the foundation for the learning journey and helps the learner to stay focused and motivated.

The use of reflective practice is also part of the coaching approach. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and progress. This enhances self-awareness and allows the individual to make connections between theory and real-life application.

Through one-on-one interactions, coaching can assist learners in developing specific skills. Breaking down complex concepts into manageable steps enables the learner to build up their expertise and confidence.

A coaching approach fosters accountability for the learner and their own learning journey. Making space for regular check-ins and progress updates helps the learner stay on track. It also helps build crucial soft skills like problem solving because the learner is encouraged to find their own solutions, so this is pivotal in building independent thinking and decision-making skills.

In-house training programmes can be beset with challenges around planning, design,

delivery and evaluation. By augmenting them with coaching, challenges such as ensuring that the programme is engaging and keeps learners invested in their own development can be overcome. It can help create meaningful progression pathways and enable L&D professionals to assess the impact the training has had. It can also help bolster statistics like take-up rates, satisfaction levels and improve completion versus dropout levels.

Coaching provides a structured, flexible framework that scaffolds the learner's growth by offering a personalised approach, targeted skill development and continuous improvement and support. It creates a dynamic learning environment which encourages independent thinking, self-directed learning and lasting transformation. So whether it is acquiring new skills or navigating career transitions, coaching plays a valuable role in facilitating and embedding learning.

For more information visit www.aeec.com



*By Karen Smart,
head of consultancy, AoEC*

AoEC supporting organisations with coaching based solutions

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Clarity and Beyond: Understanding the Importance of Eyecare

Our eyes are the windows to the world, providing us with the invaluable gift of vision. It's easy to take this gift for granted until it starts to diminish. The importance of eyecare cannot be overstated, as it plays a vital role in preserving our vision and overall quality of life. To shed light on this critical subject, we turn to the insights and expertise of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), which has been at the forefront of advocating for optimal eyecare. In this article, we will explore the significance of eyecare and the vital role of eyecare professionals in protecting your sight.

THE HIDDEN EPIDEMIC OF EYE HEALTH PROBLEMS

While the importance of eyecare is often underestimated, it is essential to recognize that eye conditions and vision problems are widespread. In the UK alone, there are over two million people living with sight loss, and around 50% of these cases could have been prevented with timely eyecare, according to the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

This statistic underscores the importance of regular eye examinations, as they can detect and address potential problems early on. Early intervention can significantly reduce the risk of permanent vision loss and enhance the quality of life for countless individuals.

EYECARE BEYOND CLEAR VISION

Eyecare encompasses much more than simply ensuring clear vision. ABDO President Daryl Newsome FBDO R SMC(Tech) CL says, "At your eye test the eyecare practitioner can also detect signs of health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancer." In other words, regular eye examinations can serve as a preventive measure for broader health issues.

What's more, healthy living can benefit your eye health as well as your body.

Studies show smoking increases the risk of age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy and Dry Eye Syndrome. ABDO's EyecareFAQ campaign has been sharing good eye health information with the

public for almost 10 years. As part of this campaign., Healthy You, Healthy Eyes looks at the research behind how to keep your eyes healthy. Daryl adds, "Eat a balanced diet to stay healthy: it has benefits for your whole body as well as your eyes. Being overweight

can put you at risk of health problems including high blood pressure, stroke and type 2 diabetes which can have adverse effects on the eyes. Leafy green vegetables and certain kinds of fish can have a positive effect."



This interconnectedness between eye health and overall well-being emphasises the need for proactive eyecare. A regular eye check can serve as a valuable tool for identifying potential health concerns, allowing for timely intervention and treatment.

PROTECTING OUR MOST PRECIOUS SENSE

Our sight is a sense we rely on daily, making it invaluable. Daryl Newsome emphasizes this point, stating, "Our eyes are a vital part of how we experience the world, and taking care of them should be a top priority." The importance of eyecare is rooted in safeguarding our most precious sense and preserving the world as we know it.

"Through regular eye examinations and proper eyecare practices, we can minimize the risk of vision problems and ensure that we continue to see the beauty and wonder of the world around us."

EYECARE FOR ALL AGES

Good eyecare is essential for people of all ages. Children need regular eye examinations to ensure that their vision develops properly, and adults need them to monitor changes in their eyesight as they age. This underscores the lifelong commitment to eyecare that everyone should adopt. Whether you're a child, teenager, or senior citizen, your eyesight deserves attention and care throughout your life.

Whether you're a child, teenager, or senior citizen, your eyesight deserves attention and care throughout your life.

Different ages have different issues to watch out for. As a new parent you should be aware that your child doesn't need to be able to read to have a sight test. While health visitors will carry out a basic check, Daryl Newsome says, "Do make sure that you take your toddler for an appointment at your local opticians. Ask around for recommendations of a practice that is good with little ones. By getting this test in early, any developmental problems such as squint and lazy eye can be picked up and treated before they

start affecting your child's learning."

As you enter your forties, it's like that even if you haven't had any issues with your eyes before, small print may get a little harder to see. This can be a particular issue in the Autumn as days get shorter and light levels lower. Daryl Newsome says, "It's perfectly normal for your vision to change as you get older. Make sure you book a visit to your local optical practice where not only will you be able to get eyewear to help, you will also have a vital health check on your eyes." Not everyone is aware that the risk of eye disease increases as you get older, and as you enter your forties it is important to have at least biannual eye tests including a check of the pressure inside your eyes and your field of vision if required. Problems with these can be an early sign of glaucoma. Glaucoma usually starts without any symptoms, so an eye examination is key to early detection. Once detected there are a range of treatments that can help protect your sight for the long term.

DISPENSING OPTICIANS: THE GUARDIANS OF VISION

Dispensing opticians are highly trained clinical professionals who are dedicated to ensuring that people receive the best eyecare possible. They provide expert advice on eyewear and can help you choose the right glasses or contact lenses for your needs. When you visit your local opticians ask to speak to the dispensing optician. Daryl Newsome says, "A dispensing optician can assist you in getting the right service for you, and making sure you get the best frames and lenses if you need them. Their expertise in selecting and fitting eyewear ensures that you not only see clearly but also receive the best possible eye health advice, visual comfort and protection for work, sports and hobbies."

EYEWEAR AS A FASHION STATEMENT

Eyewear is more than just a vision correction tool; it is also a fashion



statement and a protective shield for your eyes. Daryl Newsome says, "Choosing the right eyewear can enhance your style and protect your eyes from harmful UV rays, dust, and other environmental factors." Dispensing opticians specialise in eyewear guidance and can help you discover the perfect range of spectacles for you. What's more there are now sustainable frames made from recycled plastic, wood or bamboo meaning you can match your ethics with your eyewear. And if you have a job where eye protection is needed, a dispensing optician can supply that too.

RAISING AWARENESS FOR EYECARE

ABDO is actively involved in raising awareness about the importance of eyecare through EyecareFAQ. This campaign aims to ensure that people are well-informed about the significance of regular eye examinations and eyecare practices. At the same time, the Association provides professional qualifications and ongoing professional development for its members to ensure that they maintain high standards and provide excellent eye care and eye wear.

In conclusion, eyecare is a fundamental aspect of maintaining our overall health and well-being. Remember the advice in this article and make eyecare a priority in your life, ensuring that you continue to see the world with clarity, vibrancy, and wonder.

Find out more about your eye health by following EyecareFAQ on social media or visiting <https://www.abdo.org.uk/eyecarefaq>

Making vision a pillar of employee wellness strategies

8 in 10 UK employers have reported a rise in requests for more wellbeing benefits in the workplace - This is where Specsavers can help.

Looking out for eyecare

A comprehensive employee wellness strategy should support employees' physical, mental, and financial health, and champion a preventative rather than reactive approach to risk factors at work and when working remotely. Being able to see properly is crucial to most people's ability to do their job but eyecare and eye protection are often overlooked as a wellness benefit.

A clear impact

There's no blurred vision when it comes to the impacts of poor eyecare on productivity in the workplace – our recent survey found that eyestrain is the top reason for poor productivity caused by physical discomfort. This demonstrates that it's not just employees' health that's harmed, but also business performance. Whatever the size of the business, from start-up to market leader, the impacts of absences or drops in productivity are real and will have an impact on the bottom line as well as employee wellbeing.

Whether eyestrain is caused by an undetected change in someone's prescription or simply fatigue, prolonged effects can include double vision, a sore neck and shoulders, and an increased sensitivity to light.



There are other more acute dangers for tradespeople who work without the right eye protection for their roles. Our research found that, of tradespeople who require prescription glasses, 60% wear these without added eye protection when on the job. Others are forced to wear goggles over their glasses, causing discomfort and impairing their vision.

Time to test

Almost a third of office workers consider eye tests too expensive and 1 in 5 struggle to find the time. When it comes to tradespeople, 20% didn't know that prescription safety glasses were available at all.

"Employers can remove these barriers by recognising how important vision is to not just the health of their employees but also to the proper functioning and ultimately the health of their business and giving it a central role in their wellness strategy. Convenience is key with these things, people are much more likely to take an action, even one to help themselves, if they have a clear path to doing it," said Giles Edmonds, Clinical Services Director at Specsavers.

The right programme

Providing that path is easier than ever with Specsavers Corporate eVouchers. These take the hassle out of the process of providing eyecare benefits to employees, offering access to essential services including free eye tests at nearly 1,000 stores in the UK, as well as discounted frames and lenses when it's time to choose some glasses.

Tradespeople can use vouchers on prescription safety glasses, so they never have to settle for their regular frames when on the job, nor deal with the discomfort of fitting goggles over their glasses. Specsavers safety glasses feature scratch-resistant lenses, robust frame materials and anti-fog ventilation, ensuring they're ready for action, whatever the job at hand.

Eyecare is central to working life for most employees, so vision should be equally prominent in wellness strategies. No matter the size of your business, Specsavers is here to help.



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REWARDS



BRINGING WORLD-CLASS OFFICE SPACE TO WATFORD

Oak House, Watford, presents over 50,000 sq ft of unrivalled Grade A office accommodation with available space ranging from 3,000 sq ft to 13,000 sq ft. Leading property and asset management firm, FI Real Estate Management (FIREM), carried out a £3m refurbishment of the development, upgrading the reception area and office space to Grade A and introducing a café.

Designed to service a range of businesses, from single desk users to SMEs to global companies, FIREM provides excellent office amenities in a desired location. Oak House is home to a number of local, regional and national businesses, which have taken advantage of the high-quality workspace and the opportunity to flex and adjust workspace to individual requirements.

Unrivalled facilities available at your fingertips

Oak House benefits from

a range of amenities, expertly designed by FIREM to enhance productivity and provide convenience to tenants. Configuration of office space is tailored specifically to each occupier with the opportunity to adapt as business needs change; floor plates for the 3,000 sq ft to 13,000 sq ft units can be designed to accommodate individual preference and usage. Throughout the consultation period, tenants have the ability to liaise with the FIREM team on configuration and design preferences to ensure they secure the best possible space for their team. This process reflects FIREM's commitment to ensuring each business has the workspace they need to thrive, from SMEs to multinational corporations. Amenities include a dedicated concierge to ensure all tenants securely receive any post and parcels with the added convenience of the concierge being available to accept deliveries on behalf of the tenant.

Real-time troubleshooting and on-site connection is available to all occupiers, guaranteeing high-speed online connectivity for all for calls, meetings and day-to-day activities.

The on-site café is fully equipped to provide breakfast, lunch and refreshments with the added convenience of being available to occupants inside the building. An app is also available to tenants to order from the café to collect with additional catering services where required for meetings and conferences.

Location, location, location

Location plays a huge role in attracting and retaining employees, especially those who look to optimise their work-life balance as a result of where they are based for work. Oak House is ideally located for commuters, just a seven minute walk from Watford Junction railway station where users can travel to London Euston in as little as 15 minutes. Nestled in its position in close proximity to Watford town centre, tenants at Oak House also have access to a range of local amenities, including the Intu Shopping Centre, which offers a wide range of shops, restaurants, an IMAX cinema and bowling alley.

The office development is also surrounded by a selection of green spaces, enabling occupiers to

prioritise wellbeing. Both Radlett Road and Knutsford playing fields are just a short walk from the development for tenants to take advantage of. Cassiobury Park, a Green Flag award-winning park, is also a short drive away from Oak House with 250 acres of green space, leisure facilities and wildlife.

Building a sustainable future

Building office space that is suited to business needs right now, but that is also future-proofed for change, is always top of the agenda for FIREM. Oak House has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) B rating, demonstrating a good efficiency performance. Not only this, all energy supplied to the building is renewable, helping to meet government requirements for energy efficiency.

Lowering energy consumption is known to appeal to a range of prospective and existing tenants as it presents businesses with the opportunity to reduce its carbon footprint and save on energy costs. Securing this for the present and future can give businesses peace of mind and creates a mutually beneficial situation for all.

For further information on available office space at Oak House, please visit <https://fi-rem.com/property/oak-house-office-to-let/>.





Shield Pest Control's Guide to Protecting Older Buildings from Pests

Shield Pest Control is one of London's longest running and highly regarded pest control organisations. Operating for almost fifty years, the company is renowned for providing incredibly high standards of pest control services to both domestic and commercial clients across Southeast England.

While many businesses in London are located within modern, industrial establishments, there are also a vast number of companies that are operating inside buildings that are considered architectural treasures, from storied commercial buildings to classic Victorian properties. Although traditional English buildings hold a lot of charm and character, they can, unfortunately, also be prone to pest infestations if effective measures are not put in place.

Below, the team at Shield Pest Control discusses the pests that they commonly encounter within older buildings and reveals how these can be dealt with and prevented moving forward.

Common Pests in Older Buildings

If you are a business that operates within an older building, it is crucial to be aware of what common pests you could be up against due to your building's ageing infrastructure and unique construction.

One of the most common pests that like to invade older buildings are rodents such as mice and rats. Rodents are notorious for making their way through small nooks and crannies within buildings, which can

lead to damaged items and contribute to the spread of disease.

Certain ant species, such as carpenter ants, can also be attracted to decaying wood, which can often be found in older buildings, as well as woodworms that can wreak havoc on the structural integrity of historic buildings if not dealt with properly.

Cockroaches can also be found in dark and damper areas of older buildings, such as the basement, and these can be very difficult to eradicate once they establish a presence.

Prevention of Pests

Prevention is key when it comes to pest control in older buildings. Embracing preventative measures not only protects your business' building from potential damage but also avoids the hefty cost of restoration.

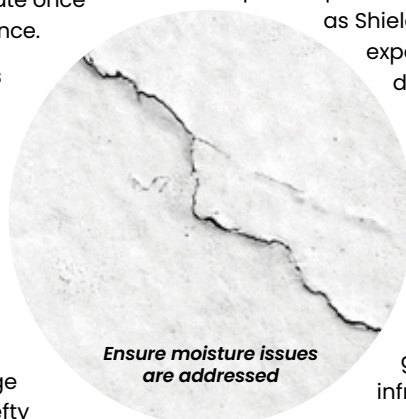
One of the most important proactive measures that you can put in place to prevent pest infestations is to seal entry points. Your building should be regularly inspected for any gaps, cracks, or holes that pests could use to gain entry. These openings should be sealed with appropriate materials to block out any unwanted pests.

Another step is to ensure that moisture issues are addressed promptly. Any leaks should be repaired as quickly as possible, and effective drainage systems should be in place. It is also fundamental to ensure that proper ventilation is in effect throughout your building to keep moisture levels in check.

Early detection can prevent pest issues from escalating, so it is recommended that your business schedules regular pest inspections from professionals such as Shield Pest Control, who have

experience dealing with the delicate approach that is needed when applying pest control methods to historic buildings. These experts will use targeted pest control treatments that are least intrusive and both effective and gentle on the building's infrastructure.

Shield Pest Control is dedicated to protecting the legacy of the past while securing a pest-free future for older buildings. With pests just as common in rural areas as they are in urban locations, Shield Pest Control's qualified technicians can be available quickly across the entirety of the Southeast.



Ensure moisture issues are addressed

Get a free quote today by calling Shield Pest Control on 0800 954 8098.



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We're exceptionally proud of the quality of work that we do, and this quality is reflected in our Royal Warrant. Since 2008, we have held a Royal Warrant, indicating that we regularly work alongside the royal family to ensure that their residences and workspaces are pest-free and safe.

Pest Control Service

We have a wealth of experience under our belts, which means that we know the best ways to help you protect every element of your home or business. No matter the pest you're facing, we are certain we've seen it before, and that we'll be able to help out completely.

As one of the leading companies offering pest control in London, we have to work in a number of distinct and unique environments. From flats to offices, we're familiar with the intricacies of residential pest control in a range of different spaces, as well as commercial pest control services, too.

We're certain that we have the specialist knowledge to **help you in the most effective way possible.**

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-  FOX PEST CONTROL
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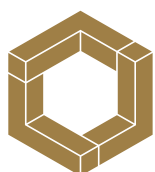


EPC B

Oak house is a prestigious three-storey building, offering grade A offices for lease across all three floors, just minutes from Watford Junction Station and on the edge of Watford town centre.

Following a complete refurbishment in 2023, this is now Watford's premier office space and is ideal for ambitious companies looking to upgrade their head office or expand to a site which offers fast and frequent access to London Euston, Birmingham and Clapham Junction.

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