

# London

Issue 179 | January/February 2022

## Business Matters

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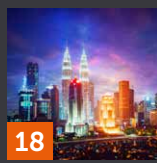
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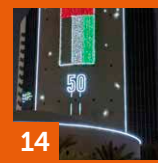
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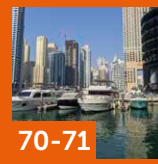
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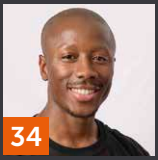
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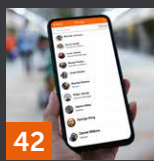
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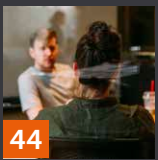
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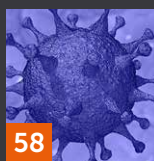
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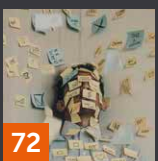
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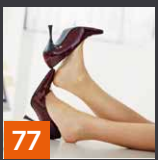
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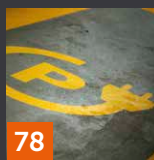
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## STOP PRESS

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levels in firms across the capital show  
that London business leaders are  
gloomy about 2022 prospects  
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## Letter from the Editor



Every other year, following an extensive selection process, a global city chamber of commerce joins with the ICC's World Chambers Federation to host the World Chambers Congress. In 2021 Dubai had that honour and LCCI were there in force with a delegation led by chief executive Richard Burge.

Our special feature (p.10-15) in this first *London Business Matters* of 2022 reports on both the congress and the hugely impressive Expo 2020. Postponed as a result of the pandemic, Expo runs through to the end of March in a specially constructed business area near Dubai's Jebel Ali port zone. I visited this successor to London's Great Exhibition of 1851 and urge LBM readers to do the same if they get the chance.

Staying with the international theme, this issue puts the spotlight on business opportunities in Malaysia (p.18), picks up last month's Azerbaijan feature with the announcement of the establishment

of a British Chamber in Baku (p.20), and congratulates the Hong Kong-British Chamber for their well-deserved award for best overseas chamber (p.19). We also feature the problems related to cross border post-Brexit (p.16) but counter that with details of help on offer to overcome them (p.17).

On the home front we report on the business mood in the capital with survey indications (p.36) that London is the most ambitious UK region post-pandemic and that its SMEs are set to expand this year (p.66). Practical tips for such businesses are provided on winning public sector tenders (p.46-47), apprenticeships (p.38), alleviating stress (p.72) and work-life balance (p.76).

Taking advantage of London's amazing cultural scene can only be good for us and the Whitechapel Gallery's latest offering (p.5) is bound to stimulate. You can also listen to Vaughan William's Pastoral Symphony, premiered 100 years ago (p.40).

Our feature on Wakuda (p.34) and the review of *How People Become Famous* (p.63) should further inspire *London Business Matters* readers.

And in our regular, annual spot where we look back on the previous year through LBM front covers (p.6) we end on what I believe is a suitable note for this column. Our spotlight on Imperial College London, one of the premier universities in the world, was subtitled: *new ways of working and thinking* – an appropriate message for the year ahead.

**Peter Bishop**

**LabyrinthTechnology**

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# Supply disruption weakens UK economic outlook

The UK economy will grow at a slower pace than expected with trade set to lag significantly behind the wider recovery, according to the British Chambers of Commerce's (BCC) latest economic forecast

The business group has downgraded its expectations for UK GDP growth last year from 7.1 per cent to 6.8 per cent. The downgrade reflects the expectation that the UK's economic recovery will have



Suren Thiru, BCC head of economics

stalled in the final quarter of 2021.

However, that level of GDP growth would still be the strongest outturn since official records began in 1949.1 following the historic contraction of 9.7 per cent in 2020.

Following GDP growth of 1.3 per cent in Q3 2021, UK GDP growth was forecast to slow to 0.5 per cent in Q4 2021, as staff shortages, supply chain disruption and rising inflation stifle activity. Concern over the Omicron variant is also expected to weigh on Q4 growth by triggering some hesitancy among consumers to socialise and spend.

Consequently, the UK economy is only expected to return to its pre-pandemic level in Q2 2022, one quarter later than predicted in the BCC's previous forecast.

## UK economic outlook – 2022

GDP growth is now projected to slow down by more than expected to 4.2 per cent in 2022, from the previous forecast of 5.2 per cent.

The 2022 downgrade largely reflects a softer outlook for consumer spending as the squeeze on incomes from high inflation limits the gains from an increasingly robust labour market and the anticipated running down of household savings built-up during lockdowns. That said, consumer spending is still expected to be

the main driver of the UK economy in 2022.

The downgrade also reflects the anticipated squeeze on activity from ongoing staff shortages, supply chain disruption and rising cost pressures. Manufacturing is expected to be the worst hit with output growth revised downwards by 2.1 percentage points for 2022, followed by construction (revised down by 0.9 percentage points).

## Trade

Trade is forecast to make a negative contribution to UK GDP over the forecast period.

UK exports are forecast to decline by 2.8 per cent this year and remain 14.9 per cent (£27.7 billion) lower than their pre-pandemic level by the end of the forecast period in Q4 2023. In contrast, overall UK GDP is projected to be 3.4 per cent higher than its pre-pandemic level by the end of the forecast period.

This reflects the challenging outlook for UK exporters amid the ongoing disruption to international trade flows from Covid and continued post-Brexit disruption to trade with the EU.

## Inflation and interest rates

The rising cost of imported raw materials and higher energy prices, are expected to lift CPI inflation to a peak of 5.2 per cent in Q2 2022, which if realised would be the highest rate since September 2011. However, if the current global supply chain disruption eases in the second half of 2022 as assumed in the BCC's latest forecast, inflation is expected to drift back towards the Bank of England's 2 per cent target by the middle of 2023.

UK interest rates are projected to remain on hold at next week's Monetary Policy Committee meeting with concerns over the impact of the Omicron variant on the economy likely to delay the anticipated rate hike.

Two interest rate rises are forecast over 2022 – 15 percentage points in February 2022 and 25 percentage points in November 2022. A further 25 percentage points interest rate rise is expected in 2023, thereby fully reversing the pandemic response interest rate cuts in March 2020.

The BCC forecast assumes no renewal of lockdown restrictions. The reintroduction of such measures would lead to revisions in the BCC's next forecast.

## Loss of momentum

Commenting on the forecast,

**“Trading conditions for UK exporters are expected to remain difficult over the forecast period with the lingering impact of Covid and Brexit expected to weigh on trade flows for some time to come.”**



Suren Thiru, BCC head of economics, said that the loss of momentum in the third quarter of 2021 was more than just a temporary blip, with UK growth forecast to be more subdued for a sustained period as supply disruption, staff shortages and surging inflation limits activity.

“The downgrades to our forecast reflect a moderating outlook for key areas of the UK economy, including consumer spending and trade. Consumer spending is likely to be more restrained than expected over the near term from a combination of negative real wage growth and stretched household finances amid rising inflation.”

“Trading conditions for UK exporters are expected to remain difficult over the forecast period with the lingering impact of Covid and Brexit

expected to weigh on trade flows for some time to come.

“While our latest forecast suggests that interest rates will rise sooner rather than later, with the current inflationary surge largely driven by supply side constraints and global price pressures, raising rates is likely to do little to curb the current spike in consumer prices.

“The risks to the outlook remain tilted to the downside. The Omicron variant could stall the recovery if it triggers a prolonged reluctance among consumers to spend or a renewed supply shock by exacerbating current staff shortages through a new ‘pingdemic’ and driving more supply chain disruption.”

[www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

# Property and construction



Katherine McCullough, development director and head of UK property at Merchant Land briefed LCCI members late last year on the company's role

as a London-focused SME landlord, investor and developer.

Topics included:

- Merchant Land's current and future projects (residential, mixed use and office) across London
- Meeting the evolving needs of the City
- Challenges and advantages of being an SME developer
- Embracing Net Zero – Merchant Land's sustainability strategy.

[www.merchantland.co.uk](http://www.merchantland.co.uk)



# The artist at work

From mid-February to the end of May the Whitechapel Gallery will be presenting a 100-year survey of the studio through the work of artists and image-makers from around the world



Whether it be an abandoned factory, an attic or a kitchen table, it is the artist's studio where the great art of our time is conceived and created. In this multi-media exhibition, the wide-ranging possibilities and significance of these crucibles of creativity take centre stage and new art histories around the modern studio emerge through striking juxtapositions of under-recognised artists



with celebrated figures in Western art history.

## Modern icons

The exhibition – *A Century of the Artist's Studio 1920-2020* – brings together more than 100 works by over 80 artists and collectives from Africa, Australasia, South Asia, China, Europe, Japan, the Middle East and North and South America. They range from modern



icons such as Francis Bacon, Louise Bourgeois, Pablo Picasso, Egon Schiele and Andy Warhol, to contemporary figures such as Walead Beshty, Lisa Brice and Kerry James Marshall.

The exhibition includes paintings, sculptures, installations and films depicting the studio as work of art and presents documentation of artists' studios by world-renowned photographers and film-makers. A series of 'studio corners' also recreate the actual environments where great art has been produced.

## Three years of research

*A Century of the Artist's Studio* follows three years of research led by Whitechapel Gallery Director Iwona Blazwick in collaboration with a curatorial panel comprising Dawn Ades, Richard Dyer and Hammad Nasar. Standing as the frontispiece



to the exhibition, Louise Bourgeois' (1911-2010) monumental sculpture, *Cell IX* (1999), imagines the studio as prison and portal.



The exhibition then unfolds according to two central themes: *The Public Studio – Artists Together* examines how artists have embraced the studio as a factory, exhibition space, arena, a collective workspace or classroom; and *The Private Studio – Artists Alone* explores how the studio can be a home, refuge, laboratory or site of political resistance.

*A Century of the Artist's Studio 1920 - 2020*  
17 February – 29 May 2022  
Whitechapel Gallery  
77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street,  
London E1 7QX  
[whitechapelgallery.org](http://whitechapelgallery.org)

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# 2021 in *LBM* front covers

A stunning transformation of the Tate Modern combining Hindu mythology, Bollywood imagery, colonial history and personal memories of its creator Chila Kumari Singh Burman was the image that began the year. The article spoke of new beginnings and a brave new world, premature but, we hope, postponed not cancelled.



Our February cover highlighted the need for companies to get the grips with the new import and export regulations between the UK and Europe as the new trade and cooperation agreement struggled to take effect. The struggle continues.



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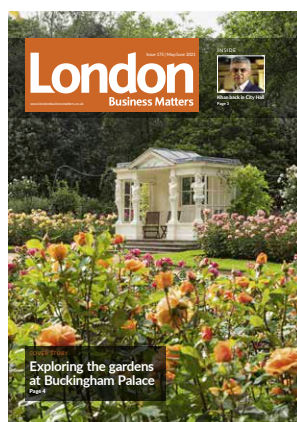


## Challenging

London has always celebrated Chinese New Year enthusiastically and 2020 was no different, albeit with Covid restrictions in place. The Year of the Ox has been a challenging one. What does the Year of the Tiger hold?



The April front cover shone the spotlight on the Whitechapel Gallery which had been celebrating the power of art in London's East End for 120 years. Their latest brilliant exhibition is *A Century of the Artist's Studio 1920-2020*, see article on page 5.

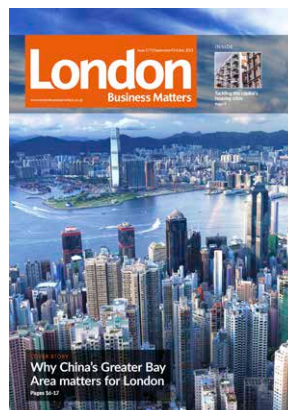


Now bi-monthly, *LBM's* May-June issue ventured outdoors to alert readers to the wonders of the gardens at Buckingham Palace, opened for the first time to the public. Meadows – in the centre of London – carpeted with primroses and bluebells was an enticing prospect.



## Expansive

The July-August issue featured a tour of London Gateway, the UK's most integrated logistics hub, a deep sea port and rail terminal alongside an expansive bank of warehouses and transport facilities – and key player in Thames Freeport which had recently been given the green light by Chancellor Rishi Sunak. London Gateway is part of the renowned DP World family, so prominent at Dubai Expo 2020 and host of one the event's most exciting pavilions.



London is a global trade and investment centre *par excellence* so it is no wonder that *LBM's* next issue was trade-related focussing on the amazing developments in the China's Greater Bay area.



To end the year Imperial College London, one of the premier universities in the world, was highlighted. The subtitle: *new ways of working and thinking* is surely the right message for the year ahead.



# Promoting London's global position

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for London as a Global City held its inaugural reception last December at the House of Commons Terrace attended by the Lord Mayor of London, local MPs and guests across the



Lord Mayor of London  
Vincent Keaveny

world of business, local authorities, politics and think tanks as well as LCCI member businesses.

## Political divide

The group, for which LCCI provides the secretariat, is chaired by Gareth Bacon MP with officers and members including other London MPs across the political divide and members of the House of Lords. The APPG was established to bring together parliamentarians and London business to promote London's global position.

Welcoming guests Gareth Bacon emphasised the importance of stakeholders including parliamentarians coming together to seek London's good.

## Confident not complacent

Lord Mayor of London Vincent Keaveny emphasised the importance of being confident not complacent about London's global position, in no longer assuming

that London will be the "automatic choice" for businesses to locate.

He highlighted the crucial role of continually strengthening the capital's competitiveness – through the regulatory landscape, a securely funded transport infrastructure and an openness to people and talent which a global city requires.

Outlining his vision for his year in office, he announced that he will be focusing on 'People and Purpose' – making sure the city is a place for everyone to succeed irrespective of their social background.



Gareth Bacon MP

## Global responsibilities

The Lord Mayor said there was a need to build on the City's contribution to tackling climate change through sustainable finance and promote London as a centre for impact investment – a global city with global responsibilities.

Minister for London Paul Scully MP spoke of the importance of enabling businesses in London and making London a great place to live and work, while LCCI chief executive Richard Burge underlined the interconnected nature of London and its global links and emphasised the role of business in sharing prosperity.

## The London Agenda

The APPG for London as a Global City seeks to make the case for supporting and investing in London's continued success for the benefit and positioning of Global Britain.

Its programme of work addresses thematic issues focused on key challenges and opportunities, such as the levelling up agenda, London's post-pandemic future and its evolving global trading relations.

Having been set up in the summer of 2020, the APPG has held an inquiry on London's global city status with the launch of a report on the subject to be published in January 2022. The upcoming agenda includes a series of roundtables on reaching net zero and skills in London.

If you are interested in getting involved in the work of the APPG, contact Esenam Agubretu  
eagubretu@londonchamber.co.uk

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# Flexible Working: Hot Topic for 2022



by Jonathan Mansfield

**The issue of flexible working is attracting attention in public discussion. It is also giving rise to more and more legal claims. Research by a law firm, G. Q. Littler, reported in *Personnel Today* on 17 January 2022, indicated that the number of claims arising from flexible working requests had risen by some 52% in the year 2019/20 to 2020/21.**

There is a right for employees to make a flexible working request and not to be subjected to a detriment for having made such an application. A formal process needs to be followed. If the request is refused, only a prescribed reason to justify it must be given such as "detrimental impact on performance" or "inability to meet customer demand".

There is no direct right to flexible working. However, there is a right to have proper consideration of an application. A claim in tribunal will often be paired with a claim for discrimination such as sex discrimination or disability. Things like resistance to returning to the office following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions have likely contributed to the increase. Those with caring responsibilities or suffering from health conditions are more likely to have made claims because of circumstances arising from the pandemic.

It is also likely that there is a change in the level of

expectation on the part of employees for their employers to be flexible. The old arguments for resisting flexible working seem less convincing following widespread home working during the pandemic.

## Four-day work week?

On a related matter, a six-month trial looking into the 4 day working week with no loss of pay is set to start in June 2022. This will be running in collaboration between Cambridge and Oxford Universities, Boston College, the UK 4 day Working Week Campaign and the think tank Autonomy. They are planning to involve some 20 to 30 companies. Certain large businesses such as Morrisons at their head office have already committed to shortening the working week while others are trialling it: *The Guardian* 16 January 2022.

## Flexible working: default position?

In October 2018 the government stated an intention to create a duty for all employers to assess where that job can be done flexibly. During 2021 the government stated that it would consult on making flexible working the default position. Views were invited on whether the employer should be required to suggest alternatives to the arrangement proposed by the employee instead of an outright rejection. The consultation closed on 1 December 2021 and new legislation is likely.

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## The next posture is the best posture

By Simon Garcia  
Owner of Freedom Wellbeing Inc



A pristine desk. ... All-singing-all-dancing chair ... Big monitor on an adjustable arm ... That one team member that's always first to do the coffee-run ... These are things we all took for granted and just seem like a distant memory for now. All the things that made us that bit more comfortable in the workplace. Now, we're all working from home and a lot of us will probably continue to work at least 50% from home, after we return to the new normal.

Pre-pandemic, I remember hearing a lot during assessments, that people go to too many meetings and don't have enough time at their desk to work. After more than a year of working from home, the pendulum has swung the other way and people are missing the physical interaction with colleagues, missing walking up two flights of stairs to a meeting room that you have to wait outside of, because someone has jumped in there to make a personal call, missing the awful coffee from the machine. ... Okay, maybe not the last one.

I have assessed every possible homeworking scenario and they will fall into 3 broad categories;

**The Home Office** – You have a private room, with a desk, task chair, maybe a monitor.

**The Table** – Using the kitchen/dining table, so need to be very light with equipment, as your “desk” also serves as a feeding port for the family, so needs to be cleared of work bits regularly.

**The Sofa** – Using either the sofa or your bed, as you may be in a house share, or studio flat, so space is very limited.

Three very different scenarios, all with practical equipment solutions that can improve posture, mental wellbeing and productivity, but there is one consistent problem that every worker in all of these scenarios faces. Prolonged static postures!

We are all sitting too long, because we have nothing to do, but sit. Not only is our work on that little screen in front, but our meetings are too, even phone calls are making way for “a quick zoom catch-up”. We are all guilty of overlooking the need to move regularly.

The human body is not designed to be static. Our muscles are built for us to be Hunter/Gatherers and function better when they are moving. Here are some tips to help you get out of that seat and get the blood pumping.

- Where possible, do video meetings from your mobile, so you can go for a walk, switch to the sofa, stand and stretch. Anything to change posture.
- Propose to your Line Manager that all meetings are shortened from 60-50mins, so you have a window between back-to-back-sessions to go for a quick walk.
- Drink LOTS of water. We all need to drink more water anyway, but the more you drink, the more natural breaks will be required (Yes, I mean running to the loo!).
- Utilise other areas of your home. If you have a high surface, like a tall chest of drawers, you can stand and work for short spells. Moving from the dining table to the sofa for an hour, then back again.
- Schedule breaks in your diary, so you cannot be booked up. Use this time to exercise in any way. No matter how light, it will be better than sitting static.



As the Health & Wellbeing representative for the LCCI Panel of Experts, I am available for advice and guidance whether you are looking for support for yourself, or your entire organisation. Please feel free to contact me through the LCCI app, or direct on 0203 560 7287 [simon@free-well.co.uk](mailto:simon@free-well.co.uk)

## What big city exodus?

Research carried out late last year by Momenitive (formerly SurveyMonkey) exploring Londoners' changing experience and expectations of work reveals that despite common beliefs, Covid-19 has not caused the end of 'city life' with just 14 per cent working remotely full time



The report reveals that a third of Londoners are currently working on a hybrid basis.

Whilst 37 per cent say they would be keen to have a booster vaccination to avoid further lockdowns, it seems that vaccination hesitancy is higher in the capital than the rest of the UK where Londoners are 50 per cent more likely to not have had a single vaccination dose than the average UK worker.

Covid-19 drastically changed the city working landscape with flexible and hybrid work becoming core benefits adopted by London offices, with 59 per cent now offering hybrid working structures. Momenitive research shows that London employees are also demanding more from their employers, with unlimited holiday and a four-day work week chosen as the top two benefits employed Londoners want that they don't already have.

### Return to hybrid working

Whilst 50 per cent of Londoners would go back to the office if asked to, employers should bear in mind that 46 per cent would rather quit than go back into the office full time. A further 30 per cent believe that working patterns have shifted permanently and hybrid will remain a mainstay of office culture in 2022.

Alongside new work environments, proximity bias is another consideration for companies mapping their future approach. This is the concept where employees with close physical proximity to their team and company leaders will be perceived as better workers, be sought out for

their opinions more regularly, and ultimately find more success in the workplace than their remote counterparts. When asked about proximity bias, 26 per cent of Londoners have worries about missing out on opportunities if they are working remotely. A further 22 per cent expressed concern that their employers will not take their opinions and feedback into consideration when deciding on work policies in 2022.

### Employee feedback

The findings demonstrate that although the return to the office is in motion, employers should still be careful about returning to 'old' ways of working if they want to retain staff during what is now being dubbed the 'great resignation.' For instance, a larger portion of employers are taking employee feedback into account. Fully 60 per cent of Londoners said that they were asked for feedback by their employer during the pandemic, whilst 40 per cent believe that the changing work environment brought about by the pandemic has meant that employers listen to their opinions regarding business policies.

### Vaccination hesitancy

The research also highlights Londoners' attitudes to vaccinations and booster jabs with 17 per cent saying that returning to an office environment would encourage them to get a booster vaccination. Whilst three-quarters of Londoners have received at least one Covid-19 vaccination, 23 per cent admit to not having had a single dose, over 50 per cent higher than the UK average, suggesting that mandating vaccinations for all employees could be a contentious subject in the capital.

With the government pushing for the public to book and receive their booster vaccinations ahead of winter, Londoners said the top four reasons that would encourage them to get a booster vaccination if offered are:

- Avoiding further lockdowns
- Personal health anxiety
- Travel during the holidays
- Wanting to help the NHS.

“While the pandemic initially gave rise to an exodus of city workers, the research shows that it didn't last long,” says Graham Douglas, managing director of EMEA at Momenitive. “In the UK, many businesses have called employees back to the office – with just 14 per cent of Londoners working from home full time. As companies determine working policies in 2022 and beyond, they must be aware of employee sentiment around how and where they work best or risk losing key talent.”

[www.momenitive.ai](http://www.momenitive.ai)



# Crypto Fintech Unicorn Amber Group Partners with Non-Profit Organization Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Amber Group today announced a partnership with a leading non-profit organization, Whale and Dolphin Conservation ("WDC"), to help raise awareness in protecting whales and dolphins across the globe. As part of the partnership, Amber Group officially adopted a 46-year-old female humpback whale named Salt, widely known as the most famous whale in the world.

This collaboration comes on the heels of Amber Group's recent launch of WhaleFin, an "all in one" digital asset platform positioned to empower diverse market participants of all backgrounds to build and manage wealth in a continuously transforming digital era.

As an integral part of Amber Group's larger sustainability initiative, WhaleFin is committed to marine wildlife and habitat protection, supporting the many creatures of our oceans and

the ecosystems that ensure their survival. The WhaleFin community also contributes to the protection of Salt and her family with every login. In addition, Amber Group is committed to leveraging the power of the crypto industry and collaborating with organizations and institutions worldwide to promote industry-wide environmental change and increase awareness for whales and dolphins' protection globally.

"Partnering up with WDC was an easy decision after learning about their mission and all the great things they do. At Amber Group, we strive to maintain supportive and impactable environmental governance standards while concurrently continuing to expand upon our digital asset products with longevity and sustainability in mind," said Michael Wu, founder and CEO of Amber group. "Our company's success is inextricably linked to the sustainability

of the world around us, and we want to utilize our WhaleFin platform to help truly make a difference for whales and dolphins that play a vital role in the marine ecosystem that keep our oceans safe."

Amber Group's recent collaboration with WDC is one of the company's key milestones in helping create a more sustainable planet.

In October 2021, Amber Group solidified a strategic partnership with climate tech company Moss Earth to help combat climate change. As per the agreement, Amber Group purchased \$2 million worth of Moss Carbon Credit Price (MCO2) tokens, approximately enough to offset the cost of over 280,000 bitcoin transactions.

## AMBER

## AMBER

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Amber Group is a leading digital asset platform operating globally with offices in Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The firm provides a full range of digital asset services spanning investing, financing, and trading. Amber Group is backed by prominent investors including Paradigm, Dragonfly, Pantera, Polychain, Sequoia, and Tiger Global.

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# International trade – LBM Dubai Special

Dubai and the United Arab Emirates are key UK trade partners and have figured strongly in London Chamber trade promotion and facilitation initiatives for many years. Indeed three Emirates – Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah – hosted LCCI's biggest ever trade mission, made up of over 80 delegates, in 2016 while Dubai Chamber have been an ever present partner in the World ATA Carnet and Certificate of Origin Councils in which the LCCI has played a leading role.

Last autumn Dubai was a particular focus for LCCI as chief executive Richard

Burge led the Chamber's presence at the 12th World Chambers Congress, where the new LCCI international strategy was announced, and at Expo 2020, the colossal six-month trade extravaganza, taking place for the first time in the Middle East and coinciding with the golden jubilee of the UAE.

This Dubai Special reports on both the Congress and Expo 2020, including LCCI's participation in both, and features *LBM* editor Peter Bishop's diary of a month in a region celebrating the UAE's rise to becoming an economic powerhouse that is helping to shape the course of the Arab world and the global economy.



## Generation Next: Chambers 4.0

The 12th World Chambers Congress took place in mid-November, both physically in Dubai and virtually, and brought together more than 1,000 chamber and business leaders from 110 countries



Under the theme, *Generation Next: Chambers 4.0*, the international chamber and business communities convened to address today's most pressing global issues.

By providing an open forum for discussion and promoting change through cooperation, the Congress acted as a catalyst for socio-economic progress, helping chambers and their respective communities across the globe reach new heights as a pillar of support, inspiration and leadership.

### Opportunity

Co-organised by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the World Chambers Federation (WCF) and Dubai Chamber of Commerce, the biennial event aimed to provide delegates with the knowledge and skills necessary to dig-

ital disruption into opportunity for people and planet.

Launching the event, ICC secretary general John Denton said: "There is a palpable sense of wanting to seize the moment here at the #12WCC and forge a new future for chambers at such a pivotal point in time."

### Survive and thrive

Over three days, the #12WCC featured 44 sessions with more than 80 speakers including LCCI chief executive Richard Burge. Topics ranged from what delegates could do to shape *Chambers 4.0* and how to survive and thrive in uncertain times, to how to innovate to deliver solutions for a brighter future.



Commenting on the pioneering programme, HE Hamad Buamim, president and chief executive of Dubai Chamber and chair of ICC's World Chambers Federation said: "As the first World Chambers Congress to be hosted in the post-Covid era, the #12WCC in Dubai demonstrates how

chambers of commerce are adapting to a new reality, pivoting their services and developing innovative solutions that meet the changing needs of their members." Buamim was confident that Dubai would "deliver a memorable congress like no other that will offer a glimpse into what chambers of the future will look like."

### Connecting

Indeed Buamim and his team were as good as their word. For the first time at a WCF Congress the programme included a playbook which guided delegates through orientation and objectives and included practical advice on digital fitness, interpreting survey results, and getting better at connecting. This would lead, on conclusion of the congress, for each delegate to have had the opportunity to create a tailor-made action plan to develop new value for chambers, businesses and communities.

### Victorious

The event also featured an innovative Moodboard into which delegates could give feedback and create a giant barometer. More conventionally the congress included the regular World Chambers Competition with 16 pioneering chambers competing across four categories: best digital, resilience, climate action, and unconventional projects. East Lancashire Chamber emerged victorious in the climate action section with its low carbon project while Business West, based in Bristol, was shortlisted for the digital award with its *Great British Food* programme.

[www.iccwbo.org/chamber-services/world-chambers-federation](http://www.iccwbo.org/chamber-services/world-chambers-federation)  
[www.dubaichamber.com](http://www.dubaichamber.com)



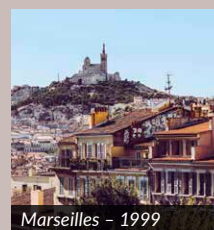


## Geneva 2023

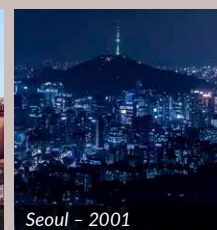
Being selected to host the World Chambers Congress is a hugely prestigious achievement and involves a bidding process not unlike that of the Olympic Games. The #13 Congress will be held in

Geneva in June 2023 – hosted by the Geneva Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services – bringing the event back to Europe as part of the geographical cycle for the first time since 2015.

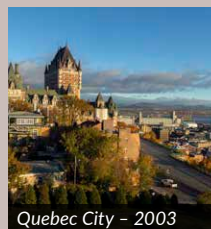
### Hosts of previous World Chambers Congresses



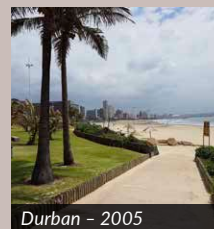
Marseilles - 1999



Seoul - 2001



Quebec City - 2003



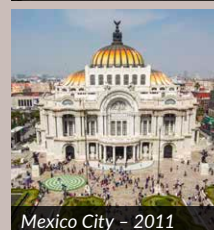
Durban - 2005



Istanbul - 2007



Kuala Lumpur - 2009



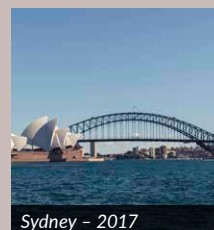
Mexico City - 2011



Doha - 2013



Turin - 2015



Sydney - 2017



Rio de Janeiro - 2019

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# Connecting minds, creating the future

Expo 2020 was launched in October last year in an opening ceremony that more than rivalled an Olympic extravaganza

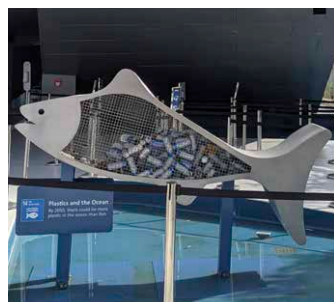
**M**usic and performances from the cream of world music (Andrea Bocelli from the world of opera as an iconic example) plus a light show beamed across the event's centre piece – the Al Wasl Plaza dome, the world's largest 360-degree projection screen.

## Spectacle

Combine 3,000 lighting fixtures, 1,000 speakers, 1,300 costumes and the passion and emotion of hundreds of participating performers and volunteers and you have a true spectacle worthy of an event that has been eight years in creation.



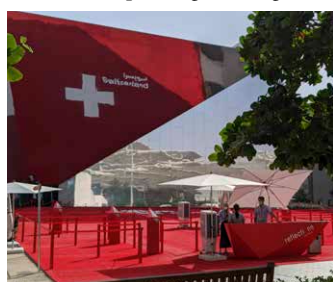
In his welcome speech HE Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan, UAE Minister and Expo 2020 supreme said that the event would provide a platform “for all people to connect, discuss and work together. Together, we will convey, from the UAE to the world, on our 50th anniversary, a message of tolerance, co-existence and peace; a message of progress, prosperity and growth; a message of brotherhood, happiness and an unwavering will to create a brighter future for everyone.”



## Solutions

This is the first Expo to be held in

the Middle East, Africa and South Asia and under the theme *Connecting Minds, Creating the Future* is showcasing the innovations, achievements and aspirations of more than 200 participants – including 192 nations, multilateral organisations, businesses and educational institutions – all with their individual pavilions, collaborating to highlight real-life solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.



The massive site revolves around Al Wasl Plaza – Al Wasl is ‘the connection’ – and has three areas reflecting the sub-themes of opportunity, mobility, and sustainability, flanked by Al Forsan and Jubilee parks. Opportunity is about unleashing human potential; mobility is the bridge that ensures forward movement; and sustainability ensures that the world is kept in balance.

## Extraordinary

Attention to design and detail is extraordinary. A bird's eye view of the Expo site reveals a petal-shaped Venn diagram with the three sub-themes overlapping, encouraging exploration, interaction, and opening one's mind to new possibilities.

### “The world in one place”

The action on the ground is relentless. Over 60 events take place on every one of the 173 days of the Expo (it officially closes in April though there is a huge programme to create a business park legacy) ranging from celebrations of national days to daily parades, world poetry and every genre of theatre, dance and music. Festivals are taken in their stride with Diwali events seamlessly replaced by Christmas ones, including a giant tree, a World Christmas Souk, and what is promised to be real snow! It seems that all countries, religions, cultures and communities are catered for. One visitor when asked why they were



**EXPO  
2020  
DUBAI  
UAE**

attending the event answered: “I came to see the world in one place.” They were surely not disappointed.

## Legacy

With sustainability as a sub-theme it is no wonder that Expo 2020 has a plan for the legacy of the event. It is planned that the site will evolve into District 2020, a smart city infrastructure development which is “a sustainable mixed-use community with humans at its core.” Fuelled by cross-industry collaboration District 2020 is expected to contribute

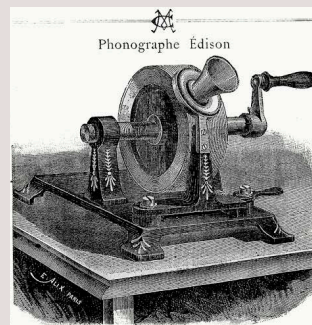
to the growth of Dubai's innovation economy through its focus on key growth industries and disruptive technologies such as the Internet of Things, AI, big data, and blockchain.

Over the six months of Expo, 25 million people are expected to attend, 70 per cent outside the UAE. Next time round – in 2025 – it is the turn of Osaka to host, in their case for the second time having first stepped up in 1970. They will have a hard act to follow.

[www.expo2020dubai.com](http://www.expo2020dubai.com)

# A history of innovation

Expos like Dubai 2020 are successors to London's Great Exhibition in London in 1851. The 33 ‘world expositions’ – as they were originally termed – that have since taken place have been in hosted in a range of big cities from Barcelona, Chicago, Melbourne, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Shanghai and Vienna to the less populous ones of Brussels, Ghent, Hannover, Seattle, and Seville.



## Inventions

Researchers for the Expo 2020 Visitor Guide point out that many Expos have introduced eye-

catching inventions, for example:  
**Elevator or lift – New York 1853**  
**Phonograph – Paris 1878**  
**Electricity – St Louis 1904**  
**Baby incubator – Seattle 1909**  
**TV set – New York 1939**  
**Mobile phone – Osaka 1970.**

These chime exactly with how Marjan Faraidooni, Expo 2020's chief experience officer, summarises the amazing event Dubai has brought to the world. She describes it as: “a worldwide sharing of culture and innovation; a forum to discuss topics that matter to humanity ... through engaging, immersive and thought-provoking exhibitions, events and performances.”







# LCCI in Dubai

Richard Burge got the loudest laugh of the #12 World Chambers Congress when he suggested that colleagues of Chamber chief executives who didn't embrace change should take them out for lunch and encourage early retirement!

Burge led an LCCI team which took in the Congress and Expo 2020 and included Board member Julia Onslow-Cole of Fragomen, a regular business visitor to the region and a recently-appointed member of the Dubai Chamber international trade committee, Liz Henderson, director of membership, making contacts and picking up best practice tips at her first such event, Jonathan Wood, LCAM mediator who took part in the UK's Great Legal Services event at Expo 2020 (see page 43), Davor McKinley, trade documentation specialist, and Cathy Scott, the Chamber's stakeholder engagement manager who bought everything together and hosted the popular LCCI booth in the buzzing exhibition area at the event's Medinat Jumeirah base.



## Free and fair trade

LCCI was a Congress sponsor and its customised London taxi handed out to all delegates was surely the most appreciated in the event 'goody bag'. More importantly, LCCI was representing London as a global city at a major event. As Richard Burge put it: "London cannot be defined simply as a subset of the UK economy or solely as a component of the UK's international projections. It's businesses and culture contribute significantly to economies and societies across the world, and it has a responsibility to defend free and fair trade and promote peace."

## Five pillars



"We are committed to driving recovery, facilitating business, and advocating for not simply for a return to our pre-pandemic world, but to something better."

As part of this ambition the Chamber announced its new, unique London-centric diplomatic ambition based on five pillars:

- Strong relationships with metropolitan chambers in the top 30 world cities
- Internationalisation support services covering opportunity, strategy and trade facilitation
- An international membership category

for overseas companies visiting or investing in UK

- Harnessing innovation for London's ambitious high-growth businesses
- Collaboration with the UK government on international trade.

Interviewed by the respected regional newspaper *The National*, Burge made the point that business rather than "fractured" politics now offered a path to solutions for the world's biggest problems including climate change and trade wars. "Business is now on such a scale – taken in its broadest definition – and is so genuinely interlinked in the way that geopolitics is not, that actually it is only business that can sort it out."

## Tailored visit

In advance of the congress a business programme for delegates included visits to Dubai Silicone Oasis technology park, Dubai Multi Commodities Centre, Jebel Ali Free Zone (the flag ship free zone of LCCI patron member DP World), and the amazingly-structured (even by Dubai standards) Museum of the Future.

Even more arresting though was a tailored visit for LCCI delegates to Expo 2020 which included tours of the Malaysians, Russian, Japanese and DP World pavilions. No surprise to hear of the massive demand for rubber gloves from Malaysia over the last 21 months. Russian representatives confirmed that Moscow was to be a candidate city for Expo 2030 while the Japanese were learning what they could from Dubai (as Dubai had from Milan in 2015) as they prepared for Osaka to host the 2025 event.

## Stunning

DP World's stunning five-storey pavilion traced the history of cargo ships and looked forward to emerging and ground-breaking technologies including DP World Cargospeed, an ultra-fast transportation system for palletised cargo powered by hyperloop technology, and Boxbay, an automated high-rise stacking system for containers, set to transform storage and management at ports worldwide.

Expo Dubai runs until April this year and masterminding the vast business programme is Hamad Hisham AlShirawi with whom the Chamber enjoyed a fruitful meeting. The efforts of AlShirawi and his team will play into the organiser's ambitions to maintain the site permanently both as a business centre in its own right and as a semi-permanent home for country pavilions.

## Strategic

LCCI also co-hosted a dinner with the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers which included BCC chair Sarah Howard and director general Shevaun Haviland, Scottish Chambers of Commerce chief executive Liz Cameron (awarded a CBE in the New Year Honours list) and representatives from the Dubai British Business Group. LCCI also joined with BCC for a special meeting with the Dubai Chamber top team of HE Hamad Buamim, Hassan Al Hashemi, vice president – international relations and Omar Khan, director – international offices. Dubai is one of the key chambers with whom LCCI is planning a strategic partnership.

SPONSORED COLUMN

# HMRC cracks down on employment tax avoidance and fraudulent COVID-19 claims

By Graham Caddock, Tax Director at Lubbock Fine



HMRC is under pressure to increase the number of tax enquiries they carry out each year. The pandemic and related support measures have required epic amounts of government spending and they are keen to claw back some of this money, particularly from those perceived to have abused the various COVID-19 support measures.

## Target areas

Last year, HMRC created a 1,200 strong Taxpayer Protection Taskforce to investigate those (it suspects) have wrongly claimed COVID-19 grants, potentially prosecuting the most serious cases.

In addition, PAYE/NIC non-compliance is also an area ripe for HMRC's gaze. There are thousands of rules and regulations related to employment taxes and it's easy to make mistakes. HMRC know this and significant errors can often lead to them widening their enquiries into the accounts of the business including its VAT compliance.

## What should you be doing to prepare?

Tax advisors should already be preparing themselves and their clients for an influx of Employer Compliance Reviews (ECRs). This should come as no surprise considering that almost 45% of tax receipts for 2018/19 (the last year for meaningful comparison) came from income tax and national insurance contributions.

## ECR challenges

Due to COVID-19 related constraints, ECR's in the short-term are going to be different. HMRC normally prefer to visit a business and interview an employer on site. Though some in-person ECR visits are

likely to take place, HMRC will undertake more "desk-based" reviews and use other methods to gather the information required to thoroughly review an organisation's payroll compliance.

Although HMRC already review and assess information sent to it such as monthly payroll/RTI submissions, P11ds, VAT and corporation tax returns, these sources are prepared by the taxpayer and rarely provides HMRC with sufficient ammunition to challenge any incorrect employment related claims, expenses and benefits.

During an onsite inspection, an inspector can often review other source records such as timesheets, expense claims and actual receipts. They can also interview staff responsible for managing the payroll processes and the authorisation of expense claims.

## What is the Employer Compliance Questionnaire?

To assist the enquiry process in these semi-remote working times, HMRC have taken to issuing a lengthy and detailed Employer Compliance Questionnaire in lieu of in-person visits. This questionnaire is full of traps for the unwary and we strongly advise that it completed by someone experienced in handling employment tax/PAYE matters to help avoid the risk of further enquiries by HMRC.

## How can we help?

If you'd like to discuss any of the matters above, please get in touch with our Tax Director Graham Caddock ([grahamcaddock@lubbockfine.co.uk](mailto:grahamcaddock@lubbockfine.co.uk)).

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# Jubilations and celebrations

## Peter Bishop's UAE diary



to host in late 2013, Dubai had clearly put the time to good use and created a vast campus of country and thematic pavilions around mobility, sustainability and opportunity. Typically efficient Emirati organisation and impressive Covid-security plus the innovative use of a special 'passport' to be stamped on exiting each pavilion encouraged multiple visits.



Visible from the Expo site – and with its opening coinciding with the event – was the Ain Dubai, a Ferris wheel which at 250 metres (and 48 pods) is the world's tallest 'observation wheel'. How does it compare with the London Eye? At 135 metres and 32 pods the London landmark held the record when it opened in 1999 but was subsequently overtaken by a Chinese version. The Dubai Eye is adjacent to the impressive marina, from which one can look north to the Burj Al Arab hotel, the sail-like structure which, two thirds the height of the Eiffel Tower, looms over the coast beyond the Madinat Jumeirah where the World Chambers Congress took place.

### Logistics

LCCI patron member UPS is the official logistics partner of Expo 2020 with an engagement which includes the development of logistics operating plans and the Expo 2020 Dubai Logistics Customs Guide. Loyal and longstanding LBM readers will recognise the name of Alan Williams, company vice president, Expo sponsorships and operations, who played a huge role in the London 2012 Olympics and whom we interviewed at the time on the challenges faced.

UPS took the opportunity at Expo to show how rethinking logistics and sustainability is good for both business and the world by highlighting its sustainable urban delivery vehicles. This included the debut of the Fernhay eQuad. Less than three feet wide, the four-wheeled electric-assist cycle (developed by a UK start-up) is catering to complex urban deliveries allowing the driver to easily move through congested narrow streets and to pedal in cycle lanes.



### Naming rights

The Dubai Metro remains as efficient as ever – frequent services, clean stations and carriages, enviable temperature control, and expanding lines so that more and more districts are covered. It is environmentally friendly as well. Don't spend too long learning the names of the stations though. Since 2009 the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) have been offering private companies naming rights. In 2021 alone five stations were renamed. Fair enough, one might think. But the randomness of names and frequency of change must have caused some confusion. Take the station currently known as Sobha Realty. Originally christened Dubai Marina (where it is located), it was renamed DAMAC Properties, then back to Dubai Marina for less than a year before the next change. Now the RTA are turning their attention to naming rights for bus stations.

The UAE was gearing up for golden jubilee celebrations when I flew into Dubai in mid-November. A lot has been achieved in 50 years and it now ranks as the Arab world's second largest economy and is a truly global market place. Appropriate then that Dubai was hosting Expo 2020, a six-month trade fair with countries vying with each other to showcase their wares and expertise. The event was inescapable – advertising boards on road and rail, TV plugs (including BBC World), a special postal issue, and Expo offers and desks at hotel receptions and restaurants.



### Vibrancy

I spent three days there and acquired over 30 stamps. My highlights included traditional Irish music (and an Irish pub, naturally), Indonesia's ancient tropical forests, DP World's amazing, patterned waterfall, opera recitals at Al Forsan park, the imposing dome of Al Wasl Plaza, the musical vibrancy of the Colombian pavilion, a 'walk-in dinner' featuring *moules frites* on the rooftop terrace at the Belgium pavilion, (courtesy of Belgian chambers of commerce), and Swiss internal landscapes. The British project – showcasing its impressive record in space science and AI – invited contributions of a word to a linguistic experiment to create unique poems and a collective message "to our planet, and maybe even to worlds beyond". However my suggested word was rejected and I was unable to participate.



Having attended Expo 2015 in Milan I had some notion of what to expect. Emerging though from the specially-constructed Expo 2020 Metro station I realised this was something else. Awarded the right





ism-wise sightseeing in Fujairah revolves around mosques and forts, ancient and modern. There is scuba diving and snorkelling for the more sports-minded.



I moved on from Dubai to Fujairah, the most easterly of the emirates, which has a stark, lunar landscape with a coastline bordering the Gulf of Oman. On the way to a Dibba resort for some rest and relaxation we passed the port of Fujairah, quite a success story since beginning operations in 1983. Now it is one of world's largest bunkering hubs, storing huge amounts of oil, and rivals Singapore and Rotterdam. Tour-

### Sporting programme

Back in Dubai I was reminded how much sport had become such an important part of the scene in the UAE, and the wider Gulf region. The recent sporting programme had been packed by any standards. The T20 cricket world cup played mainly in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah came to its conclusion in mid-November. Rory McIlroy, recently defeated by Collin Morikawa at the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai, announced that he would be renewing the rivalry at January's Abu Dhabi tournament. And Andy Murray confirmed that he would be competing in the Mubadala World Tennis Championships in December. Not to mention the enthralling battle between Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton that was playing out in the last three Grand Prix of the season in Doha, Jeddah, and Abu Dhabi. Qatar, of course, is hosting the FIFA World Cup at the end of this year. A Gulf Olympics is surely only a matter of time.



**See more pictures from LCCI's Dubai visit on pages 70-71**

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## Digital Twin technology can change how we understand our customers and the experience we give them

Helen McMillan

Head of Business Consulting



Every time we purchase something online, a digital trail is created. Data captured from our browsing history, our buying habits and our social media posts form a digital version of our behaviour. When we interact online, we add data to our unique profile, and this information helps anticipate our future behaviour. This is a very simplistic view of digital twin technology; an online version of us that continues to evolve and change over time.

Digital twin technology is not a new phenomenon – it has been around for longer than we might realise. In its simplest form, a digital twin is a virtual model of an object in the physical world, which simulates real-time performance. It shows where potential issues and risks might be and gives us insight into behaviours.

The range is limitless, it could be anything from a complex virtual model of a human heart to a simple manufacturing process. It's a powerful tool when you think about all the possibilities it presents. In 2021, all the major cloud providers rolled out significant digital twin capabilities. These have been used extensively in the manufacturing and construction industries and Accenture has predicted that they will continue to be a leading technology trend this year.

Digital twins become really exciting in their ability to predict how people want to experience spaces rather than just focusing on how a physical asset or building might react to changes in the environment. Most hotels already use digital cards to access rooms, but digital twin technology can anticipate our needs without us having to lift a finger. For example, automatically knowing when to turn the heating and lighting to our optimal level or delivering a drink to us regardless of where we are. Digital twins have the power to change how we understand our customers and the experience we give them, but they need powerful data to make them work effectively.

Digital twins are not off-the-shelf technology, they require a lot of investment and not just from a financial perspective. The foundation of digital twins is built on data. We all use lots of data, but it is not always accessible, understood, or even captured. So, before we invest in using digital twins, we need to get better at understanding how people, processes, and systems interact with the data we have, whilst assessing our digital maturity.

If you'd like to learn more about our data and analytics service or any of our other services, please contact us below.

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# UK-EU trade deal – one year on

New data released before Christmas from a survey of businesses carried out by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has thrown sharp focus on the impact the UK-EU trade deal (TCA) is having on UK firms one year from its implementation

The figures show rises in the proportion of firms reporting difficulties with the various changes brought about to UK-EU trade compared to when the BCC last asked the same questions in January 2020. The survey included sections on: buying or selling goods; buying or selling services; moving people; and transferring data.

The BCC has launched its 'TCA – One Year On' report, which explores the experiences of businesses with the new trade relationship over the past year, and ways in which it could be improved in the short, medium and long term.

## Problems

Of the firms who reported that they have faced difficulties in adapting to changes, the survey followed up by asking what the specific problem was. The more than 400 business case studies we collected showed that while problems are occurring across a wide range of areas, the following areas were consistently referenced:

- VAT requirements such as the need for a fiscal representative and delays or returned goods despite VAT being paid
- Additional customs procedures and checks requiring more paperwork and causing delays
- New rules of origin requirements which have required some firms to change production processes or audit complex supply chains
- Difficulty recruiting staff due to EU workers returning home (Covid is cited as another cause for this)
- The rules of the Northern Ireland Protocol causing increased costs and admin-

istration for businesses in Northern Ireland and Great Britain

- The loss of equivalence in areas such as financial services, medical devices, and certification marking has caused increased costs and a loss of competitiveness to EU firms

## Front line

Liam Smyth, managing director of ChamberCustoms, commented: "What these figures, and our experiences on the front line with ChamberCustoms this year, show is that there are several significant and specific issues that must be resolved so that importers and exporters can fully play their part in the recovery from the pandemic."

"At ChamberCustoms we work with companies to help them navigate the complexities of international trade. We've seen a huge demand for our services in relation to trading with the EU since the implementation of the TCA, and we know first-hand what difficulties firms on the ground are facing."

## Mutual recognition

"We need to see government reach an agreement on VAT co-operation with the EU to reduce the number of UK companies requiring a fiscal intermediary to conduct cross-border trade – similar, for example, to the situation in Norway."

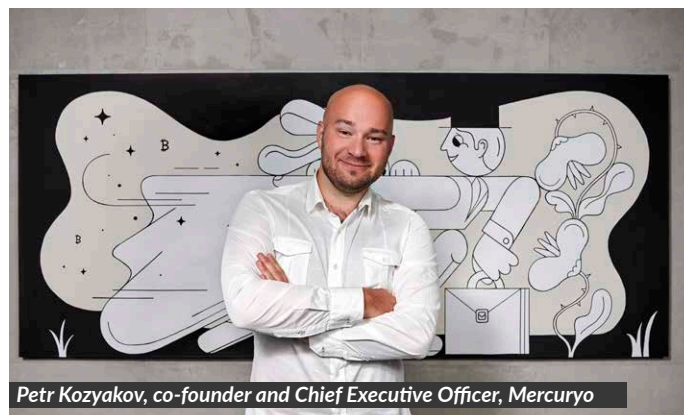
"It would also be advantageous to make agreements with the EU and member states, on widening access for labour mobility and mutual recognition of professional qualifications."

"The two sides must reach an agreed compromise on the Northern Ireland Protocol, ideally early in 2022, to ensure certainty for businesses in NI and for the overall UK-EU trading relationship."

"These actions, as well as the further recommendations listed in our report, will serve to improve trading conditions and let businesses get on with growing our economy and generating prosperity."

[www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)  
[www.chambercustoms.co.uk](http://www.chambercustoms.co.uk)

# Cross border payment fees hinder UK SME growth



Petr Kozyakov, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Mercuryo

A survey published last December found that the average cost of making cross border payments for UK SMEs has reached more than £25 billion a year, or over £7,400 per business, according to new research by global payment network Mercuryo

Almost three in four B2B SMEs currently make cross-border payments, with the most popular choice of payment method used last year varying from bank transfer, PayPal, and wire transfers/SWIFT.

## Pain points

As well as the cost, companies have to deal with lengthy and inconvenient payment processes. The report identifies some of the biggest pain points currently impacting businesses who make cross border payments. These include issues with exchange rate fluctuations, long transaction times due to delays and slow processing and lack of transparency in the payment process.

When asked about the impact of Brexit, almost a third of SME businesses claim that the cost of payments has increased, 25 per cent report slower processing of payments and 26 per cent state they have been affected by increased taxes.

## Business expansion

"This research brings to light increasing pressures on SMEs in the wake of the pandemic, there's never been a more pressing time for them to be able to access cost-effective and efficient ways of making cross-border payments which support business expansion and can facilitate future growth," says Mercuryo co-founder and chief executive Petr Kozyakov. "Quite simply, current payment processes are stifling growth and SMEs deserve better. As the world becomes increasingly digital and businesses start on the road to recovery, this functionality is business-critical."

"Education is key in our journey to overhauling such an archaic model of payment transfers," comments Kozyakov. "Proof of cost savings through blockchain payments will be critical for a mass roll out, as will fostering a culture of acceptance and trust in the technology."

## Innovation

Fifty five per cent of SMEs agree that there is a need for greater innovation in payments while two in five businesses report increased demand from customers and partners for cryptocurrency as a payment option. Finally, 44 per cent of businesses believe cryptocurrency payment methods will give them a competitive edge.

<https://blog.mercuryo.io/post/uk-b2b-report>

## EU Trade Hub

Information and advice on staff employment, business travel, exporting, importing, international trade paperwork, costs, logistics, data protection, e-commerce, accounting and auditing, public procurement, intellectual property and taxation. Plus webinars to join to help companies navigate EU exit.

[www.londonchamber.co.uk/eu-trade-hub](http://www.londonchamber.co.uk/eu-trade-hub)

The EU Trade Hub is supported by re:TRADE



## Hotline and online service for UK exporters

Businesses exporting to Europe can now one-to-one advice via a new phone and online service launched by the Department for International Trade (DIT).

The Export Support Service will provide a single point of contact for queries around rules of origin, guidance on recognising professional qualifications and entering new markets.

[www.gov.uk/ask-export-support-team](http://www.gov.uk/ask-export-support-team)

## Customs declarations – key information for importers and exporters

**LCCI has joined with ChamberCustoms to provide a Customs Declaration service to help exporters and importers to comply with this new requirement for trading with the EU, and indeed with the rest of the world where such declarations will continue to be needed.**

LCCI's unit of Customs Declaration specialists – Customs agents – headed by Sujjeet Sibia is in place and ready to help the import and export community deal with this significant change – the number of declarations needed in a typical year is estimated to rise from 50 million to over 250 million so many companies are bound to be affected.

### Data

When companies register for

the service they will be asked for certain data e.g.

- EORI status and number (economic operator registration and identification)
- Current involvement in import/export
- Goods dealt in; nature and number of consignments; markets served
- Whether a deferment account is currently held
- Ports used – though note that this service covers every UK port for both import and export
- Expected numerical need for Customs Declarations.

Visit [www.londonchamber.co.uk/export-documents/customs-declarations](http://www.londonchamber.co.uk/export-documents/customs-declarations) or contact [ssibia@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:ssibia@londonchamber.co.uk) for further information

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## Employee Mental Health – What are your responsibilities?

Lianne Lambert, Managing Director, Lighter HR



2021 was a hard year for lots of us and, with so much uncertainty around what happens next with Covid, the start of 2022 is also likely to be quite challenging. Even though it is currently looking like we'll be able to avoid another lockdown, that sense of "where is this going?" is still unsettling. The result is that an ever-increasing number of people are facing challenges with their mental health so it's important that employers know what to do when an employee appears to be struggling.

One of the most important things for employers to be doing at the moment is checking in with employees. When everyone is in the office you can quickly see if someone's behaviour or demeanour changes so you can have an early intervention conversation to understand what the cause may be and offer the relevant support and guidance. With remote working, this is lost. To address this, you should make sure that there are one-to-ones in place for each employee and, wherever possible, this should be done with video so that you can see for yourself how someone is really doing.

If you do find yourself speaking with someone who expresses concerns regarding their mental health, it's important that you know

what to do. Your role is to signpost the individual to the places where professional help is available. If you have an Employee Assistance Programme in place, make sure that employees know how to access the service and what it offers. Alternatively, you can guide them towards their GP, or, at the moment, individuals are able to self-refer for talking therapies provided by the NHS.

Keep an eye on the working hours of people who are working at home. It can be very easy for working days to extend, for breaks to be skipped and for stress levels to rise. Encourage people to adopt healthy working practices such as continuing to take a lunch break, getting out for a walk during the day, not scheduling back-to-back video calls for days on end, and to find a way to maintain their relationships with their colleagues.

Employers have a key role to play in employee health and well-being, so additional check-ins and signposting employees towards the right professional services are ways that you can support your team in these challenging times.

**For guidance on this or other HR matters, contact Lianne at [LSL@LighterHR.co.uk](mailto:LSL@LighterHR.co.uk) or call 0203 319 1649, or visit us at [www.LighterHR.co.uk](http://www.LighterHR.co.uk)**

**LighterHR**  
[www.LighterHR.co.uk](http://www.LighterHR.co.uk)





# Malaysia – emerging ecosystem of opportunities



by Nicole Ng Kylie

Malaysia, nestled in the tropical region of Southeast Asia, is the world's 43rd most populous country and 66th largest country by land mass.

It has long been a trading hub, from as early as the 15th century when the nation's west coast was among the world's major seaports. Today it continues to serve as a main artery for intercontinental shipping with the Malacca Straits being one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. Malaysia has also developed into a major air hub for both passenger and air cargo transport.

Known for its eclectic mix of Malay, Chinese, Indian and European cultural influences, Malaysia's identity is built upon diversity – making it an ideal globalisation centre.

## Economic landscape

Just as it is a melting pot of cultures, Malaysia boasts a dynamic economy, ranging from agrarian to a rapidly growing industrial sector. The country's rural landscape is lined with oil palms and rubber trees which yield a large percentage of national GDP. For years, Malaysia has been one of the world's top exporters of oil palm and rubber.

The country is rich in mineral resources, the most valuable being petroleum and natural gas, contributing a large portion of commodity export earnings. Malaysia is also rich in metallic ores and has held its place among the top global suppliers of tin.

While Malaysia's economy is heavily supported by primary production, the manufacturing sector contributes the largest share – accounting for nearly one-third of national GDP.

## Urban centres

In the country's urban centres, industrial structures replace the fanned leaves of the oil palm and slender branches of the rubber tree. Here electrical and electronic assembly lines are plenty along with heavy industries such as automobile production and steelmaking.

In the capital's upscale Central Business District, Kuala Lumpur



City Centre, the skyline transforms into one that reflects the nation's thriving business landscape where the finance and fintech sectors are rapidly growing. KL City Centre is also home to the tallest twin towers in the world, the Petronas Twin Towers, and the soon-to-be completed skyscraper, Merdeka 118, which stands to be the second-tallest building in the world.

## Starting up

Malaysia is set on becoming a regional hub for start-ups. As such, the Malaysian government offers incentives and attractive programmes (e.g. visa benefits, taxation policies and fiscal stimuli) that support foreign investors, entrepreneurs, and start-ups.

In its pro-business efforts, the government has developed an entrepreneurial and innovative economy, with policies that pave the way for businesses to flourish in the nation's market-focused economy.

According to the *Global Startup Ecosystem Report 2020*, Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur ranked 11th out of 250 emerging ecosystems. This is attributed to the country's relatively low costs and supportive government strategies.

One such scheme is the Malaysian Digital Economy Blueprint

(2021 – 2030), which aims to attract 5,000 start-ups by 2030. As the Asia Pacific region emerges with some of the world's leading tech hubs, Malaysia is positioned – geographically and economically – to leverage on this rise.

## Dream destination

Aside from its flourishing business opportunities, Malaysia has made a name for itself as a popular tourist destination. Business travel to Malaysia is vibrant: warm weather all year round, a mix of heritage architecture and a modern landscape as well as some of the world's most beautiful beaches. The country's intermingling of diverse cultures, cuisines and traditions are the basis for its successful economy.

## Safe travels

With the global economy propelling towards recovery, Malaysia has implemented safety measures to facilitate safe and hassle-free travel as its borders reopen.

In October 2021, four of Malaysia's biggest travel-related organizations launched the Travel Safe Alliance Malaysia (TSAM) initiative, supported by the Malaysian government. Under this programme, business and leisure travellers to Malaysia are ensured peace of mind

via travel safe solutions based on standards set by the World Health Organization.

## Star rating

These end-to-end safety measures are adopted by stakeholders across the travel and tourism industry including travel and tour arrangers, hotels, business events and convention venues. One of the driving forces behind TSAM is the Malaysia Aviation Group, which encompasses the national carrier, Malaysia Airlines. Through its *Fly Confidently* campaign, all Malaysia Airlines flights are operated by fully-vaccinated pilots and cabin crew. Additional precautions, such as the mandatory usage of face masks, frequent aircraft disinfections and the utilisation of special aircraft filters (proven to filter out 99.97 per cent of viruses in the cabin) have been put in place by the airline. For the successful implementation of these Covid-19 measures, Malaysia Airlines earned a 7-star rating from AirlineRatings.

Nicole Ng Kylie is executive, Group Communications at Malaysian Airlines [www.malaysiaairlines.com/jp/en/commercial-services/mh-biz-travel.html](http://www.malaysiaairlines.com/jp/en/commercial-services/mh-biz-travel.html)

# Made in the UK, Sold to the World

LCCI welcomed the Department of International Trade's new export strategy – *Made in the UK, Sold to the World* – when it was announced last autumn. Chief executive Richard Burge commented: "Businesses will be pleased to see the introduction of export support services that will help them overcome traditional barriers and kickstart their overseas trading journeys."

"For SMEs in particular, who are the lifeblood of our economy and who make up around 95 per cent of London businesses, it can be

difficult to access the expertise and guidance they need to boost their overseas exports.

## Pivotal

"We are pleased to see the government has included targeted measures to encourage the growth and trade capabilities of SMEs, such as the expansion of the DIT's Export Academy. London has a pivotal role to play in helping Britain become a nation of exporters and LCCI strongly supports this strategy which opens the door to international trade possibilities."

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-trade](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-trade)



## Hong Kong winners

The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong claimed the international chamber of the year award at last December's British Chambers of Commerce's annual Chamber Business Awards 2021 in an impressive shortlist which also contained the business groups in Australia and Dubai.

Award judges said the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong showed just how much their entrepreneurial spirit is a driving force for their chamber and praised them for thinking outside the box.

## Inclusion and diversity

British Chambers chair Sarah Howard commented on "the innovative approach it has taken to engaging younger people in the world of business is truly inspirational, especially during the era of the pandemic. Its strong commitment to inclusion and diversity was also very heartening along with its dedication to promoting Net Zero goals. They are a great advertisement for the benefits that our Global Business Network can bring."

[www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

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## Demystifying third party oppositions to trade mark applications



Adjoa Anim provides an insight into opposition proceedings that can arise during trade mark oppositions.

**A brand can be formally protected by registering it as a trade mark. However, about 5% of trade mark applications in the UK are subject to third-party objection. This article provides a brief overview of the steps involved in an opposition and how to navigate the proceedings.**

### What is a trade mark opposition?

As part of the UK trade mark application process, details of an application are advertised for 2 months in an official online journal. The purpose of advertisement is to notify third parties of the application so they can object if they have prior existing and conflicting rights.

### Notification of an objection

Often a concerned prior mark holder will contact an applicant outlining some or all of the following:

- Requirement to make amendments to the application or to withdraw it; and,
- Requirement to promise to restrict or cease use of the mark.

There are various incentives to settling such matters through negotiation. Mainly this is about avoiding the costs/time involved in entering the formal opposition procedure before the UK Intellectual Property Office (UKIPO). If the parties are able to agree settlement terms, an opposition can be avoided. Many cases are settled at an early stage but not all.

### Opposition procedure

If the matter cannot be settled,

the prior trade mark owner can file an opposition against the application, with the UKIPO. This will state whether the opposition is against all or part of the application and details of the earlier rights relied on.

The UKIPO will review the notice of opposition and forward it on to the applicant, who will be given a period of time to (1) withdraw the application or make amendments that will render the opposition unnecessary or (2) respond with a counterstatement outlining why the opposition should be refused.

Both sides then provide any evidence and arguments in support of their case and the UKIPO ultimately reaches a decision. An oral hearing can be held prior to making a decision, however, the decision is often made based on written submissions only. The decision will accept or reject the opposition in full or in part i.e. allow the application to become registered or not. If no appeals are filed against the decision, the decision becomes final.

If an application is refused, the opponent might also want the applicant to stop use of the mark applied for. An applicant should consider whether to use/continue use of a refused mark very carefully and may need to take professional advice if they have not already.

Opposition proceedings can be a shock to the system involving – time, fees, business uncertainty about rights to use a mark. The recommendation is, often, to resolve these disputes outside of formal proceedings. However, where this is not possible, it may be necessary to fight the case.



If you have any questions about oppositions in the UK, EU or other foreign jurisdictions, please do not hesitate to contact Adjoa at [aanim@hgf.com](mailto:aanim@hgf.com).





# British Chamber established in Azerbaijan



by David Miller

Azerbaijan boasts arguably one of the most successful commercial British-foreign joint ventures in history, the contract between BP and the Government of Azerbaijan signed in 1994, which led to the rapid development of the country, as well as providing business for hundreds of UK companies, mainly linked to the oil and gas industry writes David Miller

Today's government, led by a crop of forward-thinking, technocratic ministers, is looking beyond the oil and gas era, and is using the resources of today to start to build the economy of tomorrow. The government's policies have also meant the country ranks 28<sup>th</sup> in the 2020 World Bank's *Ease of Doing Business* score, one of the top ten improvers in the world.

## Crossroads

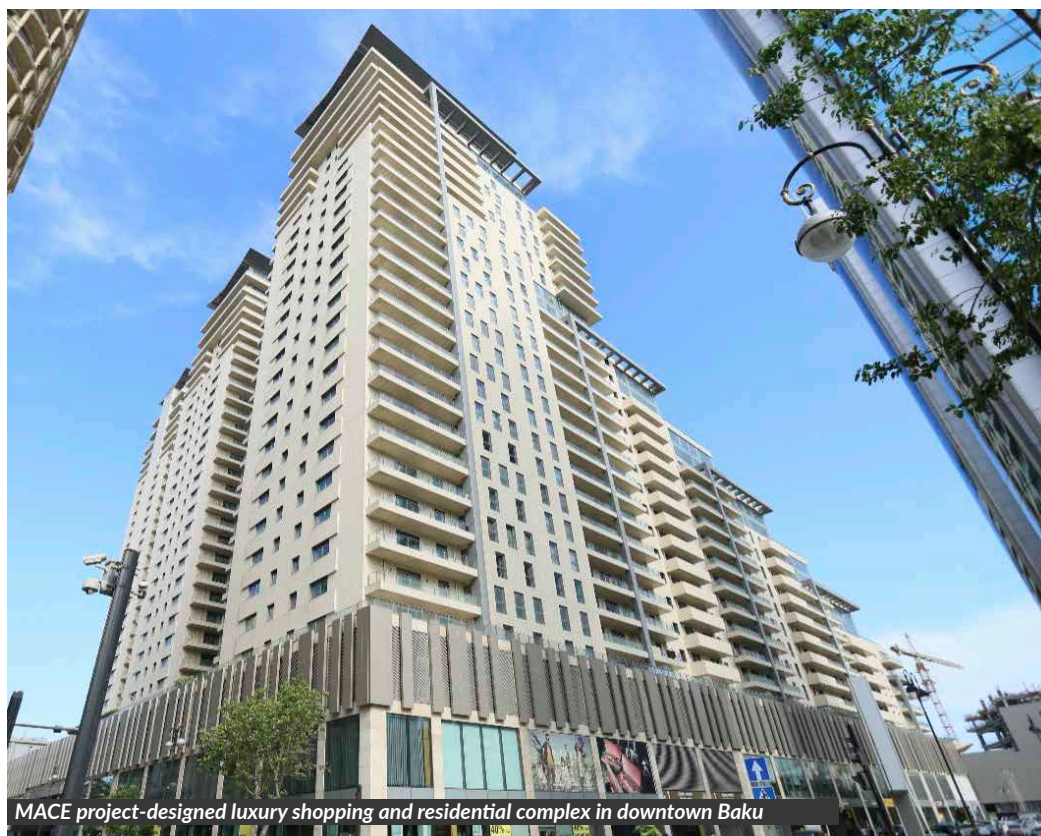
It is in this context that the British Chamber of Commerce in Azerbaijan (BCCA) has been established, in order to take advantage of opportunities in a fast-developing country that is well situated to make best use of its place as a crossroads on a number of different trade routes, including the famed Silk Way.

## Renewables

Demand for British technology and knowhow is high, evidenced by the number of enquiries the UK Trade team receive in Azerbaijan. Top British brands, from Rolls Royce to Ted Baker, are present and with that an interest in what UK PLC has to offer. There are opportunities in many areas, from health tech to agritech and fintech, plus a burgeoning interest in renewables. Partnering with a local firm would not only open the door to the local Azerbaijani market but also to the nine regional countries with whom Azerbaijan has a free trade agreement – a total population of over 270 million.

## Access

The BCCA, launched officially in January 2022, will offer help to those



MACE project-designed luxury shopping and residential complex in downtown Baku

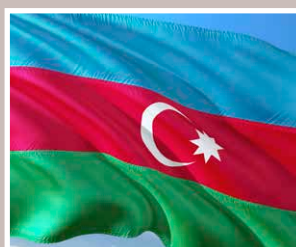
UK companies looking to enter the market based on fifty years of local experience of the two co-founders John Patterson and Howard Lyn. Both have built successful enterprises in Azerbaijan, in the former case a financial firm and in the latter an engineering firm. Between them they have access to a number of key local figures.

One of the main strengths of the BCCA is its ability to make successful representations on behalf of expat companies with the host government on a range of issues such as customs and tax. The BCCA, with the support of the British Embassy, has saved foreign companies millions of USD in customs duties alone. The BCCA offer includes the ability to walk a UK company through a complete local tender process. In March 2022, we will celebrate 30 years of UK-Azerbaijani relations, which will further raise the profile of British business.

David Miller OBE is within the Trade and Investment Executive at the British Embassy, Baku



London electric cabs circulate around the capital Baku, here pictured in the Old Town



If you are looking for business opportunities in Azerbaijan, contact John Patterson and/or Howard Lyn:

**Howard.Lyn@bccaze.org**  
**John.Patterson@bccaze.org**  
 General enquiries:  
**info@bccaze.org**



## Overseas business opportunities

Do you want to access a selection of business co-operation offers made by European companies wishing to work with UK firms?

Every month Enterprise Europe Network publishes a Business Opportunities in Europe Bulletin, which contains the latest co-operation offers from companies across the EU and beyond. To find out more about this issue's listed overseas business opportunities or to subscribe to the bulletin contact Enterprise Europe Network London at [enterprise.europe@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:enterprise.europe@londonchamber.co.uk) or 020 7203 1929.



### Ukraine

Company offers new technology in municipal energy that works with virtually no energy consumption, for production and transportation of ice to air conditioning and cooling systems, and ventilation systems. This technology is cheaper than the known ones and reduces CO2 emissions. The company is looking for partners involved in similar projects under the technical cooperation agreement. REF: TOUA20201214001

### Bulgaria

Company with more than 20 years of experience in cultivation of Rosa Damascena in the Rose Valley of Bulgaria is specialised in production of rose otto, essential oils and floral water. The company is looking for distribution agreements by supplying different industries (cosmetics, perfumery, pharmaceutical, food) with its products. REF: BOBG20191218001

### Greece

This ICT SME has developed a plug-in tool that automated supports the users for highly interactive, web-based interfaces, especially in educational software. The tool is a pluggable component for MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) or courseware platforms. The company is looking for companies or organizations that developing educational software for either joint venture or research cooperation agreements. REF: TOGR20201215001

### Spain

This biotech company focused on the design, development and manufacturing of laboratory assay kits, has developed an innovative portable device line for antioxidant capacity determination. The company is looking for distributors in the biosciences and nutraceuticals research field in order to reach a distribution services agreement or a commercial agency agreement. REF: BOES20201020001

### Romania

This company is specialised in the extraction and processing of zeolite minerals and is looking for a partner to distribute its products for livestock farming: feed additives for birds, ruminants and swine/pigs. The products are 100% natural and eco-friendly. The collaboration would be in the frame of a distribution services agreement. REF: BORO20201204004

### Poland

This craft business is specialised in production of ecological, decorative pillows and bedclothes. The offered products are made of top-quality raw materials and packed in stylish, specifically designed packages. The company is looking for agents and distributors of the products. REF: BOPL20201207001

### Sweden

This startup has developed a Virtual reality (VR) kit that includes a patented VR headset frame, motion sensor and smartphone-based app/games which makes any type of indoor fitness bike into a VR fitness bike.

They are now looking for partners with experience from the consumer electronics and/or sports equipment sector for distribution services agreements on a global basis. REF: BOSE20201202001

### France

The SME has developed a micro-turbine technology for fuel cell applications enabling them to develop and produce extremely efficient, compact and reliable feed air delivery compressors and recirculation anode blowers. The company is looking for further commercial agreement with technical assistance, or technical/research cooperation agreement. REF: TOFR20201109002

### Latvia

This company that produces educational wooden toys, playhouses and children's furniture is looking for commercial agreements worldwide. The company produces a wide range of original and innovative products for children made from the high quality Baltic birch plywood. The company is looking for international sales partners under the frame of distribution services or commercial agency agreements and manufacturing agreements. REF: BOLV20201208001

### Finland

This Research Institute is specialised in food systems and alternative protein sources and is looking for partners in the food industry for licensing agreement, who would be interested in novel plant-based food products in Germany, UK, France, Italy and Poland. The aim is to commercialize the developed snack product or product family using a licensing model. REF: BOFI20201218001

### Germany

This manufacturer of infrared therapy mats provides products in four variations. The heat source is based on carbon fibres and the health benefits are provided by various minerals. Applications are possible in both the health sector as well as in the consumer sector. This manufacturer is looking for a distributor or commercial agent to sell their products. REF: BODE20201120001

### Lithuania

This company is involved in metal processing services. It could offer to manufacture mechanical components, spare parts, special tools, equipment accessories made from all kinds of steel, aluminum alloys, brass, and plastics. The SME is seeking to expand abroad more and is offering its services under subcontracting and/or manufacturing agreement. REF: BOLT20200615001

### Israel

This company, established in 2012, has developed an innovative technological system for growing animal feed. The system allows the plants and their roots to grow in the air, using mainly the water in the air. The company is looking for distributors under distribution services agreements. REF: BOIL20200624001

## ISO implementations reflect changes in organisational priorities

by Maria Dimitrova, MBA, AfCIIS  
Head of Business Development, IMSM



**It is with great pleasure that I am writing about the changes in some organisational priorities in 2021. Those first observed in April 2020 eventually became a sustained in time trend throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. These changes have been reported and analysed in the IMSM quarterly white papers. Our data shows that the organisations interested in implementing ISO compliant management systems more than doubled for a second consecutive year in 2021. Nearly a third of those are SMEs that now seek to implement a broader range of standards and satisfy their stakeholders' requirements and achieve continual improvement.**

This increased interest was to be expected. Dealing with the variety of disruptions in the last two years requires the ability to adapt quickly and efficiently to sudden and gradual changes in an ever more fast-paced environment. It is also critical that organisations can prove they operate according to best practices, which is part of the benefits that ISO management system standards offer to organisations worldwide.

Based on our predictive models, the interest in implementing ISO compliant management systems has now become a sustained trend. Changes within the trend are expected and will be conditioned by current and new challenges to the global organisational environment.

Organisations have started prioritising diversification using the more traditional approach consisting of first implementing ISO 9001, which is eventually integrated with a management system more suited to their operations. Some businesses plan for an integrated system or directly implement the standard that best suits their strategic direction and business objectives.

Blockchain companies are among the organisations that aim to implement Information Security management systems in conformity with ISO 27001:2013. ISO 27001 has long been considered as being more relevant to sizable companies only. In 2021 however, 11.76% of the SMEs manifested interest in ISO 27001, which is only 1.06% less compared to the 12.82% global interest in Information Security registered. This is a clear indication of a significant cultural evolution towards ensuring information confidentiality, integrity, and availability.

It is satisfying to see that environmental management appears to have been further prioritised in 2021. The interest in ISO 14001 increased by three percent during the period. 2021 was a year of remarkable efforts and achievements across all business sectors. Organisations demonstrated their aim to adapt to challenges and overcome disruptions.

Maria Dimitrova, MBA, AfCIIS



Elevate Your Reputation with ISO Certification.  
IMSM Can Help.  
[www.imsm.com](http://www.imsm.com)

iso specialists



# Webinars and events

## What's been on ...

### NOVEMBER

#### ● Helping you Create Confidence in your Financial Future: Passing on your Wealth

Karim Chowdhury and Seb Ridout, Personal Wealth Advisers at Schroders

#### ● Black Business Association Reception at LCCI

Supported by Fiserv and Imperial College Business School

#### ● London Business 1000

Rt Hon Justine Greening (pictured), Founder, Social Mobility Pledge and former Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities, Mark Jenkinson, Founder, Crystal Associates and Cllr Elizabeth Campbell, Leader RB Kensington and Chelsea and Executive Member for Business, Economy and Culture, London Councils



#### ● LCCI Quarterly Skills Survey

Jane Gratton, Head of People Policy, British Chambers of Commerce and Dr Sam Parrett CBE, CEO, London South East Education Group

#### ● Property and Construction Reception at The Londoner

Simon Nevill Commercial Director, Buildings UK, Arup  
Sponsored by Advanced UK and Menzies

#### ● Business Owners Club - Essential Tips for Effective Board Meetings

Paul Stark, Director, OnBoard  
Supported by OnBoard

#### ● Patron Lunch

Nick Bowes, Chief Executive, Centre for London

#### ● My Mindful Worklife

Martin Zetter, Founder and CEO, Mindful WorkLife

#### ● Go Connect! Lunchtime Networking at LCCI

Sponsored by Fiserv

#### ● Asian Business Association Webinar

Rajesh Suri, Managing Director / Restaurant Consultant, Grand Trunk Road

Supported by Fiserv and Trinity College

#### ● Property & Construction Networking and Briefing: In conversation with a SME developer at LCCI

Katherine McCullough, Development Director (Head of UK Property), Merchant Land

Sponsored by Advanced UK and Menzies

### DECEMBER

#### ● Black Business Association webinar - How Thriving UK Black Led Businesses are Building Wealth and Value in Africa

Jude Addo, Founder & Managing Principal, JA Group & Co, Sadiq Edu, Co-Founder, DoGood.Africa and Trevor Masrden, Director, ImpiThings

Supported by Fiserv and Imperial College Business School

#### ● Maximise your Membership at LCCI

#### ● APPG London as Global City Inaugural Reception at the House of Commons

Gareth Bacon MP, Paul Scully MP and Alderman Vincent Keaveny, Lord Mayor of the City of London

#### ● Home Office Briefing: The New Points-Based Immigration System

Minister Foster, Minister for Future Borders and Immigration and Dan Petriello, External Engagement Lead for Future Borders and Immigration Points Based System and EUSS

## Coming up ...

### JANUARY 2022

#### ● Tuesday 11 January at 10.45am – 11.30am

EU Trade - Tackling import border controls and new VAT requirements | How are traders coping with the recent changes? with Charles Hogg, Commercial Director at Unsworth, Artur Sarkisian, Operational Manager at RM Boulanger and Clement Alloul, Brexit Manager at BBL



● **Wednesday 12 January at 2.00pm – 3.00pm**

Capital 500 with Vicky Pryce, Chief Economic Advisor and Board Member, Cebr and James Rentoul, Director at Savanta ComRes

*Sponsored by Haysmacintyre*



● **Thursday 13 January at 10.45am – 11.30am**

Continual Improvement in Public Procurement with Maria Dimitrova, Head of Business Development, IMSM

● **Tuesday 18 January at 10.30am – 11.15am**

Business Owners Club - Business Plans: Uses and Abuses with Mark Froud, CEO, Tempo

*Supported by OnBoard*

● **Tuesday 18 January at 2.30pm – 3.15pm**

Capital Conversation with Nicola Horlick, Chief Executive Officer, Money&Co

● **Wednesday 19 January at 12.00pm – 2.00pm**

Go Connect! Lunchtime Networking at LCCI

*Sponsored by Fiserv*



● **Thursday 25 January at 10.45am – 11.30am**

Black Business Association: Diversity in Supply Chains hosted by Bola Abisogun OBE (pictured), Founder and Chief Executive Officer, DiverseCity Surveyors, BBA Committee Member and LCCI Board Member. Guest speakers Rebecca Rees, Partner, Head of Public Procurement and Assad Maqbool, Partner at Trowers & Hamlin LLP

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● **Thursday 27 January at 10.30am – 11.15am**

Avoiding the Pitfalls of Outsourcing Contracts with Doug Anderson, Sales Director Europe, Newage

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● **Tuesday 1 February at 10.45am – 11.30am**

How To Make Your Business Carbon Neutral – It Need Not Cost the Earth! with Robert Allison, Carbon Solutions Director and Mike Powers, Cost Management Consultant, Auditel

● **Thursday 3 February at 10.45am – 11.30am**

Asian Business Association: Access to Finance for Asian Entrepreneurs with Nimesh Sanghrajka, MD, Mantra Capital, Ghulam Alahi, Investor and VC and Annil Chandel, CEO & Founder, Wurkr Ltd

*Supported by Fiserv*



● **Tuesday 8 February at 10.45am – 11.45am**

LCCI Quarterly Skills Survey Launch

● **Wednesday 9 February at 9.30am – 11.30am**

Smart Cities Briefing and Networking with Assistant Commissioner Angela McLaren, City of London Police at LCCI

*Principal Partner: Avast*

● **Thursday 10 February at 10.30am – 11.15am**

New Ways of Working in a Hybrid World with Stuart Tootal, Partner, Matero Consulting Ltd

● **Tuesday 15 February at 9.15am – 10.15am**

Go Connect! Online Breakfast Networking

*Sponsored by Fiserv*



● **Tuesday 22 February at 10.30am – 11.15am**

Business Owners Club: Creating a Financial Wellbeing Strategy with your Employees in Mind with Mark French, Strategic Partnership Development Manager | Business Development, Shroders Wealth Management

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● **Wednesday 23 February at 2.00pm – 4.00pm**

Connected, Liveable London: In Conversation with TfL with Vernon Everitt, Managing Director, Customers, Communication and Technology, TfL at LCCI

*Principal Partner: Menzies*



● **Thursday 24 February at 10.00am – 11.15am**

Doing Business in Dubai - Streamlining Your International Expansion



● **Thursday 24 February at 11.15am – 12.15pm**

London Chamber of Arbitration and Mediation (LCAM) in conversation with LegalUK



## MARCH

● **Wednesday 16 March at 12.00pm – 2.00pm**

Go Connect! Lunchtime Networking at LCCI

*Sponsored by Fiserv*



● **Tuesday 22 March at 2.00pm – 4.20pm**

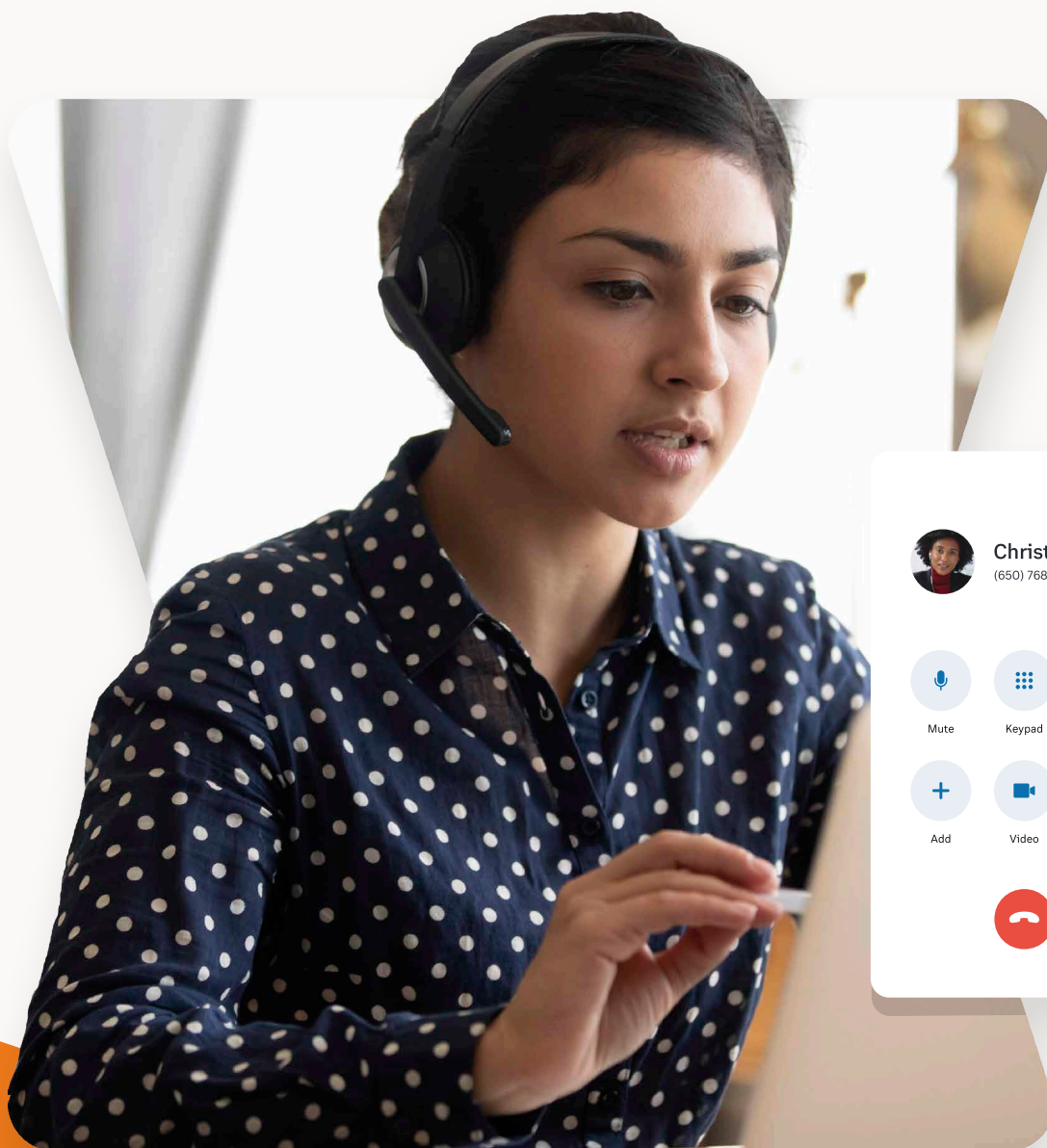
How to Work a Room Networking Training with Heather White, Smarter Networking at LCCI

● **Wednesday 23 March at 2.30pm – 4.30pm**

Connected, Liveable London: In Conversation with Helen Wylde, Managing Director, Lumo at LCCI

*Principal Partner: Menzies*





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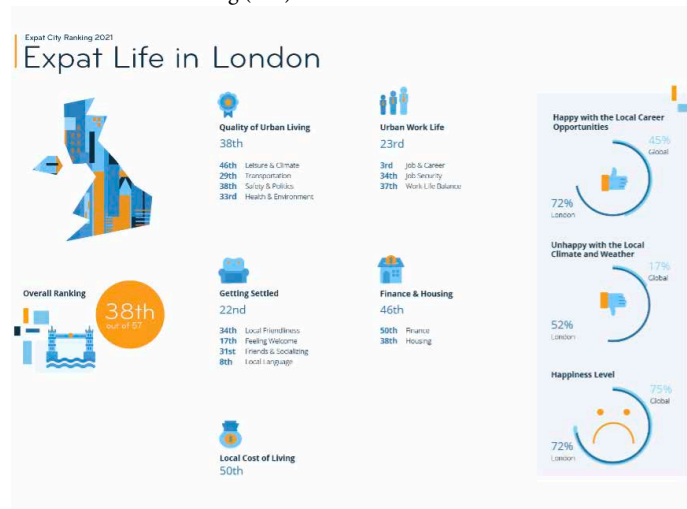
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# What expats think about life in London

London ranks 38<sup>th</sup> out of 57 in the Expat City Ranking 2021. Expats in London are generally happy with their working life and consider the local career opportunities among the best worldwide. While they also find it quite easy to settle down in London (22<sup>nd</sup>), the quality of life is mediocre at best (38<sup>th</sup>). Lastly, finances are an issue since the city does poorly in the Finance & Housing Index (46<sup>th</sup>) and even ranks among the worst worldwide for the local cost of living (50<sup>th</sup>).



## Best and worst cities in the world for expats

Out of 57 cities in the Expat City Ranking 2021, Kuala Lumpur (1<sup>st</sup>), Málaga, Dubai, Sydney, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Prague, Mexico City, Basel, and Madrid (10<sup>th</sup>) are the top 10 cities for expats to live in 2021. On the other hand, expats consider Rome (57<sup>th</sup>), Milan, Johannesburg, Istanbul, Tokyo, Cairo, Paris, Maastricht, Moscow, and New York (48<sup>th</sup>) the world's worst cities to live in.



The Expat City Ranking is based on the annual *Expat Insider* survey by InterNations  
[www.internations.org](http://www.internations.org)

# Revised rail proposals damage levelling up agenda

Chambers of commerce across the country voiced the opinions of local businesses last November after the government announced revised proposals for the rail system and specifically that the eastern leg of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail would no longer proceed as planned

British Chambers of Commerce director general Shevaun Haviland spoke of the huge disappointment to the thousands of businesses that were relying on HS2 and NPR to fire up economic regeneration through the improved capacity and connectivity of the rail network. "While some places will benefit from these revised proposals, many companies have built their plans for the future around what they believed was a firm commitment from government to see these projects through in full.

## Growth opportunities

"The economic benefits that they would have brought to areas across the Midlands and the North would have improved the lives of countless generations and created growth opportunities for businesses across the country.

"There is also grave concern that without more capacity on our railways, any significant progress on shifting more freight transportation off our roads and onto the rail network will be stymied, making it much more difficult to achieve our net zero ambitions."

## Compromised

LCCI chief executive Richard Burge said the 'watered down' proposal was not just a blow to the north of the country. "It is a betrayal of the much-hyped levelling up agenda. It is hugely disappointing that after the positive announcement of a new export strategy, the government's commitment to invest in productivity gains for the future has been compromised. Coming right off the heels of COP26, the announcement that moves the country away from infrastructure projects that deliver a more sustainable future for British transport is especially disconcerting.

"It is difficult to understand how

the government expects the UK to compete globally with the most advanced economies when we cannot deliver decent connectivity between our own cities. Delivering a 'high-wage' economy, which the Prime Minister has made a stated aim, will require significant investments. The Integrated Rail Plan falls well short of what is needed to deliver the infrastructure necessary to secure Britain's economic future."

## Vision

Chamber chiefs were unanimous in their criticism of the government's shift. Scott Knowles, chief executive of the East Midlands Chamber covering Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, said: "Make no mistake, this is a job half done. This has always been so much more than just a transport investment for the communities of the East Midlands and no matter how this is now spun, the vision that encompassed economic, environmental and societal benefits has been massively desecrated.

"At a time when the Prime Minister is shouting from the rooftops about levelling up and saying no place will be left behind, this is a slap in the face to a region that already receives the lowest level of public expenditure on transport and economic affairs in the UK."

## Competitiveness

East Lancashire Chamber boss Miranda Barker commented: "Dialling back the investment in the north on the HS2 eastern leg and NPR will severely limit the economic benefits of the plan and its contribution to levelling up, for both the North's and the UK's benefit.

"This decision will limit the boost to northern supply chains' from building the system, hamper the ability to broaden the economically active area for the local workforce, hold back plans to increase freight capacity on the rail network, restrict the decarbonisation benefits and damage the UK's competitiveness for our global exports."

This reaction from business leaders may well have influenced the postponement of the mooted 3.8 per cent rise in rail fares, the biggest for nearly a decade.

[www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

# Tips for a pest free 2022



Many New Year's resolutions revolve around diet and exercise – fitness. Equally, pest control should be seen as a central part of fitness for your property.

## Your five resolutions for 2022

### 1. Declutter

Pests such as mice and cockroaches love clutter because it gives them a place to hide and nest. Clutter often also means food, especially in kitchens.

Declutter your kitchen, cellar, attic, storage areas, etc. Remove and recycle unused and unnecessary items and make sure the things you do need, especially food, are stored in airtight plastic boxes.

### 2. Clean

This applies to the whole property but especially any kitchen areas. Pests love kitchens because there is food – on the floor, on worktops, in cupboards, under the toaster, etc. There are also plenty of places to hide – behind

kickboards, under fridges, etc. Kitchens also have easy access points – around pipes etc. (see our recent rodent control video.)

Regularly clean and vacuum your kitchen. If there are crumbs on the floor or fat on your work surface, clean it up. The same goes for sitting rooms and office desks.

### 3. Deal with your rubbish

The smell of rotting food is like nectar to a pest – think of it as a dinner invitation.

Make sure your bin lids fit tightly to ensure the smell stays inside the bin. Also, don't let rubbish and recycling build up. Instead, make the effort to remove it every day to sealed outside bins.

### 4. Tidy garden areas

It's winter and so you are not spending much time in your garden, but pests are!

Make sure you tidy compost heaps, piles of leave, wood piles, etc. and ensure they are kept well away from

your property. Try to see it from the perspective of the – e.g., a rat. Think about what they want – food, water, harbourage – and, if you remove this, they will move elsewhere.

## 5. Stop access

Our buildings are full of holes – doorways, under eaves, around pipes, badly fitting windows, etc. If a pest is attracted to your property, they will try to find a way.

Look for access points and then seal them. This might mean door sweeps for gaps under doors, cement or wire wool around window frames and pipes, and interceptors in drainpipes.

A sensible solution is to get a professional to survey your home or business premises. They will know where to look and what is the best method to keep the pests out.

Have a happy, pest free 2022!



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# Two minute interview

Daisy Ip, director of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC)



## Who are you?

I am the director (for the UK, Benelux and Ireland to be precise) for the HKTDC. I was born and bred in Hong Kong, I came to the UK 12 years ago on my own and now I'm an adopted Londoner.

## What work experience do you have?

I'm fortunate to have worked in both public and private sectors, predominately in the PR and marketing fields. Prior to my ten years at HKTDC London Office, I worked for six years in the private sector in both Hong Kong and London.

## What are your priorities for the next three years?

We face challenging times, yet I do believe the worst of times can also be the best of times, showing businesses in London the vast opportunities in Hong Kong, the Greater Bay Area and ASEAN in the new normal.

My goal in the next three to five years is to inspire the office with passion and positivity, to help business navigate the pandemic and succeed. I hope to grow with the office and HKTDC; bringing success not just to ourselves but also to the businesses in the regions.

## You have a young daughter. What has been the biggest challenge and opportunity for you as a working mum?

The biggest struggle is finding time and energy to be a good mother. Scarlett, my eight-year old daughter, is my main source of inspiration. Every day I am inspired by her positivity, kindness and inquisitive mind. She made me a better person

and I'm learning from her every single day.

Always try to listen to and learn from your children, it's fascinating.

## What do you enjoy the most in your job?

I love what I do. Firstly, I'm Hong Kong born and bred – promoting trade for Hong Kong and knowing what it can offer makes me feel very proud and honoured.

Also, I meet people from all walks of life and from every indus-

dinary and contribute to the city's efficient and dynamic working and business environments.

A great thing about my job is to meet so many interesting and inspiring people across all sectors. I continue to learn from their knowledge, and this exposure is invaluable.

## What are the key performance Indicators (KPI) so you know you and your team are performing well?



Credit: Rustan Bardash/Unsplash

try and professional sector. Listening to their stories, experiences and aspirations is very inspiring and I also learn something from these people every day.

## What do you enjoy most about working with Hong Kong and HKTDC?

Hong Kong is a great city: the vibrancy and energy are extraor-

ly, setting 'win-win-win' positions for ourselves, our stakeholders and businesses is something I strive for. But achieving your KPIs is not

We do have many KPIs, despite what people might think about the public sector!

Achieving KPIs are of course crucial for any organisation. Equal-



**"I love what I do. I'm Hong Kong born and bred – promoting trade for Hong Kong and knowing what it can offer make me feel very proud and honoured."**

enough. Work is also about showing your heart and soul. It is about believing in the true values of life.

I hope any form of collaboration with our partners will create better prospects for all parties involved in both the short and long term, not just to fulfil KPIs.

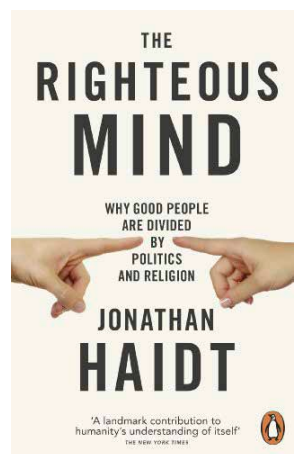
## Tell us about your favourite film, book, food, cocktail ...

My all-time favourite film is definitely *Gone with the Wind*, I love it so much that my daughter is named after the inspiring main character.



I cannot pick a single book as there are so many. However, the most inspiring one I read recently was *The Righteous Mind* by Jonathan Haidt. I read it twice, its discussion of politics, religions and behaviour is so comprehensive and multi-dimensional.

I prefer red wine, and I think among colleagues and friends it's common knowledge that my favourite cocktail is – Lychee Martini!



ly, setting 'win-win-win' positions for ourselves, our stakeholders and businesses is something I strive for. But achieving your KPIs is not

# Digital tools to boost employee efficiency and morale

What makes a business profitable and successful? Is it hiring the right people? Focusing on your most profitable products and services? What about productivity?

In today's digital world, we have tools at our fingertips that allow us to do more in our workday, making our people and ultimately our businesses more productive. But where do you start? *Chris Shields* explains why improving productivity is key to your business performance and how you can use technology to increase productivity, efficiency, and profitability.



***"One of the biggest barriers to productivity is manual, repetitive tasks that get in the way of the really valuable work that requires a human touch."***

***"Employee satisfaction and productivity are intrinsically linked. Happy workers are more productive, but workers who are given the necessary tools to be productive are also happier."***

## Why is productivity essential to your business?

Productivity refers to how efficient your personal, team, or business output is. Poor productivity, especially in service businesses, can lead to poor profitability because the cost of delivering your services is higher.

A OnePoll survey found that over a quarter of an employees' working day is taken up with avoidable administrative tasks. Based on an average workweek of 36.1 hours, eliminating these tasks can give workers over nine hours a week back.

Not only is productivity key to your business, but it's also important to your employees. If your ability to do your job is hindered by unnecessary processes, outdated technology, or repetitive queries that you have to deal with, you'll find yourself frustrated and lacking motivation.

Employee satisfaction and productivity are intrinsically linked. Happy workers are more productive, but workers who are given the necessary tools to be productive are also happier. Slow or outdated technology affects worker productivity and morale, with one in five saying they lose focus as a result.

The good news is that technology can also be used to increase employee productivity and morale. Here are three digital tools you can implement to improve your employees' efficiency.

### 1. Utilise cloud technology for documents

Have you ever worked collaboratively on a docu-

ment with colleagues only to end up with multiple versions, not knowing which one is correct? Not only is this hugely frustrating, but it also wastes a lot of valuable time. A public sector employee survey found that 15 per cent of employees say this is their biggest frustration with collaborative working.

As recently as a few years ago, collaborating on a document was difficult – you'd email it out to the relevant people, and they'd all send back a different version with their own amends. But that doesn't need to be the case any longer.

With solutions like OneDrive, you can store key documents in a shared cloud location and work on the same version either simultaneously with your colleagues, or separately. These tools also come with version control, so if something goes wrong, you can always roll back those changes.

### 2. Give your people the power of automation

One of the biggest barriers to productivity is manual, repetitive tasks that get in the way of the really valuable work that requires a human touch. If your business processes contact or application forms from customers for example, manual reviews and approvals can take a lot of unnecessary time.

A tool like Microsoft Power Apps allows your end users to create automation workflows without the need for coding. Once, any sort of automation would either require an expensive plugin solution or coding from your developers, but this is no longer the case. This means your IT team can create automated workflows to reduce manual tasks that are regularly impacting your workforce. Your employees could also create their own solutions, so you can empower them to make their role-specific tasks more productive.

You can create anything from small workflows that automatically assign new leads to the relevant salesperson to larger-scale end-to-end solutions that approve a customer's housing application and automatically generate the legal documentation. Think about how much time all of this would save and what your people could do with that time.

### 3. Give your people time back with customer self-service

Human interaction is still critical to customer service. As the use of chatbots has risen, we've seen a backlash from customers who want the option to speak to a human. Eighty-five per cent of customer interactions online are now answered by a robot, highlighting the massive increase in chatbot usage. However, it's key that you balance customer demands with business resources.

Many businesses have jumped in with two feet and implemented chatbots on their websites with no option to speak to a human operator, and that's one of the most frustrating things for customers. But it doesn't mean chatbots and automation don't have a role to play in customer services.

Your approach to customer service should be blended in order to provide your clients with the right support at the right time. Implementing self-service options, like the ability to log a support ticket and chatbots with multiple options for routine queries, will help take repetitive tasks off your customer service team. This, in turn, will allow them to focus on the customers who really do need to speak to someone.

You could start off online enquiries with a chatbot that guides customers through common queries. Then, if their query isn't on this list, you can transfer them instantly to a human operative. A huge 73 per cent of people find it difficult to continue their query when switching from one channel to another, so this allows you to meet their needs seamlessly.

Productivity is a buzzword that's thrown about a lot, and its meaning can get lost in the surrounding jargon. Ultimately, it's about giving your people the tools they need to be able to do their job in a timely and efficient manner. Not only will these productivity tools improve your employees' output, but they'll also make your business more efficient and profitable.

Chris Shields is the sales and marketing director at Perfect Image, a UK-based IT consultancy services company  
[www.perfect-image.co.uk](http://www.perfect-image.co.uk)



# Two minute interview

Paul Critchley, PCM Solicitors LLP



## Who are you?

I'm Paul Critchley, senior partner at PCM Solicitors LLP, a firm I started in September 2009. We are located at Bank, City of London.

## What is your connection with the London Chamber of Commerce?

We joined the London Chamber of Commerce because we feel that we have much to offer the local business community. We very much hope members will be interested to hear all we have to say!

## What was your first job in London?

I left university in 1995 and started working for Express Newspapers at Blackfriars. They had a brand new, state of the art, digital photograph database designed and built by my father. I was one of the poor souls tasked with manually scanning the paper archived photographs onto that system.

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

We have successfully weathered the storm and continued to invest in great people despite the wider economic turmoil. We are well on our way to building a top-notch niche legal practise for those in need of Family Law and Property Law services.

## "If there is one thing I hate about my job it's ..."

As a solicitor my role can be stressful and the hours brutal. However, as Leonard Bernstein once said: 'To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan and not quite enough time.'

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

Aspiring entrepreneurs should only attempt the hardest thing they will ever do if they have a proper plan. Major dollops of passion, enthusiasm, energy and expertise are also essential ingredients. Look after your great people too. Richard Branson, in his autobiog-

exit the pandemic and look forward to a brighter future.

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

As a Kent commuter, I do not use Transport for London services so I cannot comment. However, I would like to see the congestion charge relaxed at weekends as it was before the pandemic. Train services are slower and less frequent at those



raphy *Losing My Virginity*, explains that his philosophy has always been to put his teams first, customers second and shareholders third. In the end, the shareholders do well, the customers do better, and the teams are happy. Many businesses do the opposite.

## How is the pandemic affecting your business?

Owing to a lack of activity in the City throughout the lockdowns, we experienced a downturn in the number of new enquiries for Family Law services. Of course, those embarking on emotional, expensive and life changing journeys such as divorce often prefer to meet with their solicitor in person. There has been a marked improvement since the general return to the office from September 2021.

## What measures have you taken?

We have continued to invest in great people. We are therefore very well placed to assist clients as we

individuals can be convicted for innocently being duped into a fraud and which must pay substantial percentages of their turnover in insurance premiums. All of this is untenable and change is urgently required.

**"We have continued to invest in great people. We are therefore very well placed to assist clients as we exit the pandemic and look forward to a brighter future."**

## What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

I have travelled to many cities in over 50 countries. Very few offer so many freedoms with just about all activities imaginable available to so many. In normal times, this does tend to draw the crowds which can spoil the experience but that is all part of the show.

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

Public and private sectors alike need to offer clients a great experience. I would like to see public authorities throughout London improve efficiencies within their operations.

[www.pcm-law.net](http://www.pcm-law.net)

times. Driving to the office is often the only sensible option.

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

Solicitors are very heavily regulated – the list is endless. Anti-money laundering legislation and professional indemnity insurance in particular spring to mind. I cannot think of any other industries where



# London firms top UK profitability league table

Businesses in London are leading the way in profitability, according to a league table published by accountancy and business advisory firm BDO

The study of 220,000 UK businesses shows that London's businesses are on average the most profitable in the country, operating with average profit margins of 8.1 per cent, above the national average of 6.7 per cent.

The profitability of businesses in London is boosted by the financial services industry, which has an average profit margin of 14.4 per cent and employs 750,000 people.

Mark Lamb, business advisory partner at BDO, says that the figures demonstrate the need for progress on the government's 'levelling-up agenda' so businesses outside London can catch up with those in the capital. Lamb also remarked that it was heartening to see City businesses still performing so well



Mark Lamb, business advisory partner, BDO

after the turbulence of the past few years particularly with concerns around the financial services sector post-Brexit.

"But outside of London other industries are seemingly lagging behind when it comes to profitability. The 'levelling up' agenda is central to what the government wants to achieve, however there is a real difference in the type of businesses that survive and thrive in each region. The recovery from the pandemic is the perfect opportunity for targeted policies and investments to make a big impact on regional economies and support the overall recovery of the UK."

Looking at regional variations in profitability, the South West and North East lead the way after London, reporting average profit margins of 6.2 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively. The West Midlands lags behind at 2.8 per cent, perhaps reflecting a reliance on manufacturing in the region, an industry with lower average profit margins of 3.1 per cent.

## Challenges

Mark Lamb added "The last 18 months has brought a myriad of challenges for businesses, not least of which are a global pandemic and Brexit uncertainties.

"As businesses look ahead to their post-pandemic recovery and growth, they should be considering how to maximise profitability. Driving down costs like rent and utilities, increasing sales from existing customers and minimising the holding of unnecessary stock are steps that should be automatic. Beyond that, incentivising sales staff on the basis of

margin rather than volume and an increased focus on improving governance can have an impact on profitability in the longer term."

[www.bdo.co.uk](http://www.bdo.co.uk)

## Business profit margins by region, accounts to September 2020 – the UK league table

	Region	
1	London	8.1%
2	Scotland	7.5%
3	South West	6.2%
4	North East	6.1%
5	South East	5.9%
6	East Anglia	5.9%
7	Northern Ireland	5.0%
8	East Midlands	4.9%
9	North West	4.8%
10	Yorkshire & Humberside	4.6%
11	South Coast	4.5%
12	Wales	3.3%
13	West Midlands	2.8%
	UK average	6.7%



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# Home and abroad – getting London's business views heard

The last quarter of 2021 brought all the news we had hoped to avoid at this stage of the pandemic. Rising cases and a new variant are once again threatening London's perilous recovery. LCCI was working hard to call on the government for sensible measures to arrest the rise in cases without restricting businesses' ability to operate, and make the case for greater support for businesses should things get worse.

## Uncertainty

As winter closed in, a growing sense of uncertainty once again hit business confidence. Tighter restrictions have been re-introduced to curb the spread of the Omicron variant. Covid-19 dominates the press and weighs on business leaders' minds. Hoping to stave off another disastrous winter for London's businesses, LCCI chief executive, Richard Burge, made a number of media interventions to urge the government to take measured yet decisive action to avoid a possible lockdown which would spell further devastation for businesses.

In October, the Health Secretary warned that coronavirus cases had the potential to hit 100,000 over the winter which put many businesses on high alert. LCCI responded with a statement that strongly recommended that the government learn from previous mistakes and introduce measured restrictions at an earlier stage. Burge's comments were published on the front page of the *Evening Standard* and online with the attention-grabbing headline, 'Bosses tell PM: Act now to avoid tougher curbs.'

## Proportionate

In response to rumours about the implementation of Plan B measures, which would have seen Covid certification introduced and mandated working from home, LCCI was quick to emphasise the disastrous impact this would have on businesses and their economic recovery. On Nick Ferarri's *LBC* breakfast show, Richard Burge called for mandatory mask wearing on public transport and in enclosed spaces in the hope that early, proportionate restrictions would reduce the likelihood of harsher restrictions being introduced later. *Express.co.uk* published a full write up of his appearance online, which included a video clip of the radio broadcast.

More recently, LCCI responded

## TfL funding crisis: Business chiefs and unions unite to demand long-term deal to protect services

Transport for London's latest bail-out expires on Saturday

## Business not 'fractured' politics offers world solutions to biggest problems

Richard Burge of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry is in UAE for World Chambers Congress

## Divided UK feels the pain of a splintered jobs market

## Revealed: London businesses the most profitable in the country

LILY RUSSELL-JONES



London businesses are leading the way

## Mayor of London tells COP26 leaders to be 'doers', not 'delayers'

to the reintroduction of measures including home working guidance and vaccine passports in higher risk environments, stating that businesses must be given flexibility in working-from-home decisions and that The Chancellor should consider announcing support for businesses. LCCI also supported the British Chambers of Commerce's letter to the Chancellor, saying, "If the government truly cares about business, the Chancellor must consider the reintroduction of targeted support for the private sector. London is a resilient city but it can't weather another festive period of restrictions without support."

## New findings

The results of two LCCI surveys were published in October – the *London Business 1000* and the *Quarterly Skills Survey*.

The *London Business 1000* report, published jointly by LCCI and London Councils, surveyed over 1,000 London businesses, providing in-

sight into the challenges faced by employers as the capital enters the new normal of the post-pandemic economy. The survey found that over half of respondents considered a potential national lockdown as the most significant risk to post-pandemic economic recovery. *City AM* published the headline findings of the report, while the *Evening Standard* published the results in a front-page article reporting West End bosses' appeal to Londoners to make the most of shops, pubs and theatres in the crucial run up to Christmas.

The *Quarterly Skills Survey*, which interviewed over 500 London business leaders from micro to large-scale companies, revealed how the pandemic has fundamentally changed skills demand for London businesses. *OnLondon* published an extensive report on the survey which shed light on the use and impact of remote working and how the pandemic has changed businesses' skills needs, looking in detail at the

digital skills gaps in the city.

## Autumn Budget

A snap poll by Savanta ComRes found there was significant approval for the Chancellor's Autumn Budget across the political spectrum among UK adults, with 53 per cent giving their approval. The announcement outlined a series of measures to support the UK economy's post-pandemic recovery. LCCI welcomed sector specific support, such as the simplification of alcohol duty and amendments to business rates, but felt that the overwhelming focus of government spending was on cities outside of London, with the capital set to receive less than two per cent of spending earmarked for levelling-up projects. Richard Burge has repeatedly stressed that the levelling up of the UK must not mean levelling down London, particularly given that the capital suffered a disproportionate share of the economic hardship from the pandemic. *BusinessLive* published

## London Business 1000

On behalf of London Councils and the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry

October 2021

Prepared by:  
John Paine, Associate Director  
PFI Services, Research Manager

YouGov

LONDON COUNCILS

LONDON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



**Autumn Budget 2021: Live updates and reaction as Chancellor Rishi Sunak announces business rates reform and cuts to alcohol and air passenger duties**



## Chamber leaders share expectations for 12th World Chambers Congress in Dubai

LCCI's budget reaction in full and MyLondon included part of LCCI's response in an article on Gatwick Airport's reaction to the Budget. The piece included Burge's comments that the increase in costs to international travel seemed at odds with the government's ambitions for 'Global Britain'.

### International events

Following a tumultuous build up, Glasgow played host to the COP26 climate summit, which had the world's attention for the two-week round of negotiations. Giving a speech on the penultimate night of the conference, Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, criticised national governments for being 'delayers' not 'doers' in tackling climate change. LCCI responded to the Mayor's speech with a statement arguing that while it agreed with the sentiment that cities have an inherent agility countries do not, it felt the speech exacerbated division and encouraged a narrative centred on

blame. LCCI called for greater co-operation between national and municipal governments and City AM published Richard Burge's statement in full.

The return to travel also meant that Burge was able to attend the 12th World Chambers Congress and the Dubai Expo. Media coverage of the event included an interview with him in *The National*, the leading English-language newspaper in the Gulf. In the piece, Burge emphasised the leadership role chambers must play in international trade and stressed the importance of strengthening ties between cities. LCCI also provided comment for a *Khaleej Times* article on Chamber leaders expectations for the congress. Richard Burge said: "Meetings of powerful global networks have to take place in global cities. It is essential that the standing and drive of the city reflects the purpose and ambition of the event. Dubai does just that."

# More concern for directors

**Stephen Blair, Partner, Head of Corporate, RadcliffesLeBrasseur LLP**



**When a company has served its purpose, the question arises how best to close it down. A restructuring exercise can often end with a company whose continuing existence serves no useful purpose. A company may, for example, no longer hold any assets or its business may have been transferred. Options to close the company involve winding up, voluntary strike off, or removal by the Registrar of Companies.**

Formal winding up incurs cost. An application to remove a company from the register of companies could be a more cost effective way to dissolve the company. Subject to a requirement for the company to meet certain criteria, including notifying known creditors, once the company has had its name removed from the register, the company ceases to exist. For those wishing to avoid that procedure, failing to file a confirmation statement or accounts within the prescribed period of time is likely at some time, to lead to the Registrar of Companies taking action to remove that company from the register.

For the unscrupulous, leaving a company to be removed by the Registrar, or using the voluntary removal procedure, were previously seen as ways to limit a director's potential exposure to a disqualification action.

Historically the Company Directors Disqualification

Act enabled the court to disqualify a person from being a director, if the person had been a director of a company which had become insolvent, and the director had behaved in a way making him "unfit to be concerned in the management of a company". The term "insolvent" meant liquidation, administration, or having an administrative receiver appointed. The power to disqualify did not apply if the company had otherwise been dissolved, notwithstanding the seriousness of the director's failings.

In times of increasing claims against directors, the Rating (Coronavirus) and Directors Disqualification (Dissolved Companies) Act 2021 ("2021 Act") passed on 15th December 2021, widens the sphere of possible actions for directors' disqualification.

The 2021 Act provides a former director of a company dissolved without becoming insolvent, may now be subject to a disqualification order and extends provisions so compensation may be sought where a director's conduct within a dissolved company has caused loss to creditors. Whatever the route a company takes to restructure, directors must continue to be aware of their duties, and in particular should continue to minute their decisions and commercial rationale (in this respect see - <https://www.rlb-law.com/briefings/corporate/may-just-take-minute-protect-director/>)

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## Spotlight on Wakuda



# Connecting black-owned business to the mainstream

**Nathaniel Wade is the co-founder of Wakuda, an online marketplace which specializes in black-owned brands. Here he describes the origins, methods and mission of the company**

“Disparities in society means many of these businesses and creators are overlooked by the wider mainstream audience. These persistent disparities are indicated by the latest figures from British Business Bank showing black entrepreneurs having a median turnover of £10,000 and £15,000 less than white, and Asian and other ethnicities respectively.

There has been a major shift in consumer awareness around the impact of their spending and this is growing rapidly. One example of this is some recent research from the Co-op which shows that ethical consumer spending has quadrupled over the past 20 years to over £41 billion in 2019. Though this is great news, shoppers still mainly use mainstream brands, with major factors being ease and accessibility.

### Celebrated

Tragedy often has a unique way of birthing innovation and in moments of crisis there usually lies opportunity. In the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020 we noticed the global shift in awareness of the disparities faced by the black community which we saw being celebrated and spotlighted in a way we'd not seen in our lifetimes.

We saw the hashtags. We saw organisations making bold statements of support. Speaking about supporting the black community and buying from black-owned businesses quickly became a form of social currency. Based on what history has told us we knew a lot of this was performative and that it would naturally ebb over time.

### Galvanising moment

We wanted to do something different. We wanted to utilise this galvanising moment to connect the wider mainstream audience to

black-owned businesses consistently. We wanted to create an ecosystem where, rather than people shopping with black-owned businesses as a knee jerk reaction, it actually forms part of their lifestyle. Through doing this we also wanted to help to narrow the income gap that currently exists between black entrepreneurs and their peers of other ethnicities. However it is not only black entrepreneurs' incomes that are affected. Through transforming access to these businesses we are enriching wider society and empowering them to spend with impact.

Both myself and my co-founder Albert Larter were childhood friends and have been entrepreneurs for over 10 years. We were always very aware of the lack of representation and support for black business owners in our respective industries and discussed what we could do about it.

We wanted Wakuda to be a hub of support on top of being a marketplace where business owners can get more eyes on their products.

### Masterclasses

We have various methods of support such as monthly drop-in sessions where Wakuda sellers come to share anything from wins, losses, struggles or strategies. Wakuda is also a space for sellers to find support via knowledge and resources to help develop and grow their businesses. This is often done through masterclasses and training from industry experts. Topics can range from pricing structures to marketing campaigns or the best ways to optimise their product listings and increase sales online.

### Wider mainstream audience

Our mission is twofold; firstly, to challenge the status quo by bringing black-owned brands to the wider mainstream audience. Secondly, to help to narrow the income gap that currently exists between black entrepreneurs and their peers of other ethnicities. We were selected for a Pro-bono for Economic Eq-



Nathaniel Wade, co-founder of Wakuda

uity programme a few months ago to work on customer segmentation. Through the data we gathered, we learned over 70 per cent of our audience identify as white (fairly reflective of the UK). This confirmed our hypothesis and that there is a need for the platform and that our mission of inclusivity resonated with the wider UK audience. Our ultimate vision is to be the online mar-

ketplace that connects overlooked (yet amazing) black-owned brands to the global, diverse and ethically aware audience.

At Wakuda we welcome any opportunity for collaboration that will help to support and further empower black business owners. ”

[www.wakuda.co.uk](http://www.wakuda.co.uk)

### LCCI BLACK BUSINESS ASSOCIATION



The LCCI's Black Business Association (BBA) led by chair Lord Michael Hastings

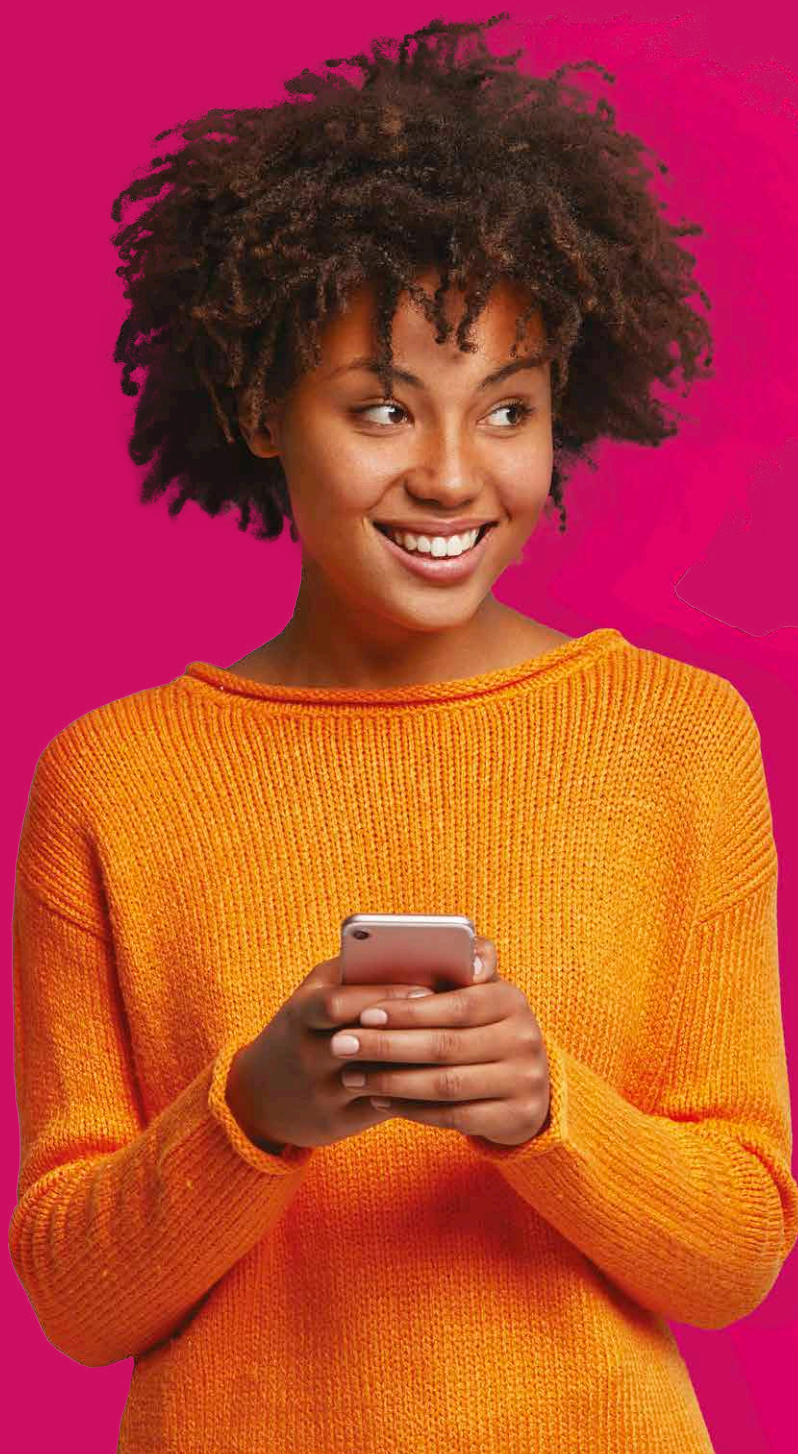
and supported by Menelik Shillingford (pictured) brings together Black business owners and employees to create a purposeful outlet enabling networking and promoting Black entrepreneurs and business

ownership. BBA also provides a forum to collectively address barriers to equality in London's economy.

Since its establishment BBA highlights include:

- Showcasing of a range of inspiring Black businesses through events, introductions and features in *LBM*
- Partnering with Executive Education at Imperial College Business School and Fiserv who are offering grants for ethnically diverse businesses
- Promotion of UK Black Business Week
- The appointment of Lord Michael Hastings to the newly-formed All Party Parliamentary Group for London as a Global City.

[www.londonchamber.co.uk/membership/black-business-association](http://www.londonchamber.co.uk/membership/black-business-association)



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# London is the UK's most ambitious region post-pandemic

London business leaders are emerging from the pandemic the most ambitious – despite also feeling the greatest levels of loneliness during Covid, research by law firm Shakespeare Martineau has revealed

**W**hile ambition among the capital's bosses plummeted by almost 20 per cent during Covid – and loneliness nearly doubled (from 36 per cent to 62 per cent) – it has since bounced back to 90 per cent.

One thousand senior decision-makers in UK businesses, including 229 from Greater London, were surveyed by Censuswide on behalf of Shakespeare Martineau as part of its annual Ambition Index.



Kavita Patel, Shakespeare Martineau

## Struggles

London respondents also spoke about how their struggles with maintaining a work-life balance and a lack of time was holding them back as leaders.

Kavita Patel, regional head for the south and head of investment funds at Shakespeare Martineau, said: "People move to London to make their name and follow their ambitions, which is clear from our research, with leaders in the capital feeling the most driven following the pandemic.

"London was hit first and, with high mortality rates and a sharp slowdown in every aspect of city life, arguably the hardest by Covid. Like other places, whole sectors – such as tourism and culture – were severely impacted by the pandemic, but others continued to remain active, albeit some while working remotely.

## Resuscitated

"With people returning to their offices and a travel boom looming, London has certainly been resuscitated and it is positive to see leaders from the capital emerging from the pandemic brimming with ambition."

When given a list of options of what could be holding them back as a leader, the highest proportion of respondents selected maintaining a work-life balance, closely followed by struggles with time and confidence.

With a fifth of the vote, a lack of skills came in fourth place, which was significantly higher than other regions, most notably in the North West where just five per cent of respondents selected this option.



## Learnings

Kavita said: "Rightly, there is a big focus on the levelling up agenda in boosting the north with investment, but are we missing a trick by not sharing learnings and lifestyle changes experienced outside of the M25 in order to level up productivity and job satisfaction too?"

"In the midlands and the north, businesses are moving towards more agile ways of working and London and the South regions are taking more time to catch up. This is likely having a negative impact on work-life balance and time.

## Support system

"London is home to very skilled leaders running extremely successful businesses, so I believe the high number of people stating a lack of skills is holding them back is likely linked to those struggling with confidence. Business leaders should make sure they are cultivating a reliable and safe support system of trusted advisors to help them reach a more confident place."

London leaders also plan to invest more into their organisations in 2022 when compared to this past year, with almost half of leaders surveyed stating they will be ploughing money into technology to improve efficiencies within their business. Just seven per cent of the capital's bosses say they do not plan on investing in their companies over the next year.

## Technology

Kavita said: "This is a very encouraging sign.

***"In the midlands and the north, businesses are moving towards more agile ways of working and London and the South regions are taking more time to catch up. This is likely having a negative impact on work-life balance and time."***

While we need business to invest to grow and support economic recovery, it's pleasing to see that leaders are also looking inwardly and building business resilience. There is also a shift in focus to technology, IT, and learning and development – rather than product development, fixed assets and property – which will support businesses become more efficient and agile.

"It is also clear that businesses have understood the impact an inability to focus on training during Covid had on their workforce. Now we're back face to face, companies are ensuring people development is continuing at pace so there isn't a generation whose skillset isn't up to scratch. They are trying to rebuild a base level of appropriate skills and knowledge within the business."

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# The benefits of apprenticeships for fledgling enterprises



by Andrew Richardson

Getting the right workforce is crucial for any fledgling business. Traditionally, companies have often looked to the younger end of the talent pool when recruiting, but with more young people now going to university straight from school, the recruitment market can be highly competitive.

However, for growing businesses, the benefits of apprentices are becoming apparent. The ability to train your staff and integrate them into a working culture has its obvious advantages. But the reasons for creating on-the-job training courses for new talent are increasing every day. Here we look at how businesses are benefiting from apprentices, and how they can grow in the future.

**A**pprenticeships are one of the best opportunities for young people to learn valuable workplace-related skills. Where once the idea of apprenticeships was saturated by jobs in sectors such as engineering, construction, and care, a growing number of courses now compete with higher-level education and degree level careers.

## Workplace training

The government introduced an apprenticeships levy in 2017, forcing businesses with payrolls of over £3 million to reserve five per cent of wage costs for training in the workplace. The levy was expected to create three million more apprenticeships in the UK by 2020. It is essential for large businesses to generate high skilled employees from apprenticeships.

This is demonstrated by the growth of high-level apprenticeships over the past five years. A level seven apprenticeship is considered equivalent to a post-graduate course. A 2019 report found that only 30 people enrolled at this level in 2015, compared to 4,500 people in 2017 when the levy was introduced.

The growing number of high-level apprenticeships is reflected in the

variety of roles available to those who want to learn in a workplace. Some examples include apprenticeships in aerospace engineering with the MOD, digital marketing, and as a police constable. UCAS advertises apprenticeships that pay £30,000 a year, over 25 per cent more than the average graduate salary in the UK.

## The pros

Apprenticeships are not just an alternative to further or even higher education. Courses often contain useful skills that act as introductory workshop into specific sectors.

Grace started an apprenticeship in digital marketing in July 2019 with Mobile Mini, who offer storage containers for sale. She explains why an apprenticeship course appealed to her: "I chose to do this rather than going to university because I wanted to continue in education at the same time as learning on the job."

For Grace, being able to work while earning had obvious advantages. But most importantly, she believes that it will benefit her career in the long run. She continued, "An apprenticeship really prepares you for the world of work, as you are not

only continuing education, you are also gaining so much valuable experience of a real workplace."

This reflects the growing need for sector-specific skills over generalised, particularly in digital and high skilled roles. For businesses, the prospect of moulding the ideal worker through work and education creates the perfect employee, ingrained within the culture of the company.

## And the future?

While apprenticeships are becoming increasingly prevalent in workplaces, the future will depend on them. The World Economic Forum noted that changing technology and business practices will mean that up to 42 per cent of skill requirements will change by 2022. Consequently, reskilling is becoming not only necessary but difficult to do on a large scale as well.

The turnover of essential skills means that they can only be learnt in the workplace, and often, if practical skills are taught in higher education, there is an expectation that they will be redundant by the time a student enters the workplace.

Only through apprenticeships

can a business move with the era of accelerated and digital innovation. With young people engrained in a culture of digitisation, they will adapt to changing scenarios and technology. Businesses will compete for talent from a pool of young apprentices. As the number of apprentices increases, opportunities must adapt to meet the needs of an intelligent workforce, where education occurs throughout their working lives.

As apprenticeships become more common and attractive for both students and businesses, are we likely to see a shift in post-school education? With the cost of university becoming an unattractive prospect for young people, will apprenticeship schemes become the best way to prepare people for a working future? Only time will tell, but the benefits are evident.

Andrew Richardson works with Mobile Mini, the UK's largest supplier of storage containers, providing site accommodation and secure storage solutions

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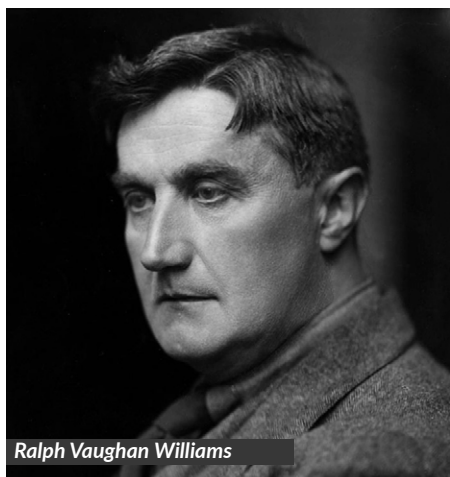
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# Performance of Vaughan Williams' *A Pastoral*

On 26 January 1922, Ralph Vaughan Williams' Symphony No. 3 '*A Pastoral*' was performed for the first time at the Queen's Hall in London by the Orchestra of the Royal Philharmonic Society

**A** *Pastoral* was Vaughan Williams' third symphony and was completed in 1921. It comprises four movements, all of which are slow and lyrical yet melancholy and with an underlying tone of disturbance. The work begins with two slow movements. In the middle of the second movement, a trumpet cadenza reminds the listener of a battlefield bugle call, which seems out of place in a pastoral. The third movement is dominated by much faster dance rhythms, albeit unbalanced, while the fourth returns to the slow, pensiveness of the first two movements.



Ralph Vaughan Williams

## Battlefields of Europe

It is arguable that Vaughan Williams intends the scenes to be reminiscent not of the bucolic English countryside but of the horrors of trench warfare on the battlefields of Europe in World War I where an entire generation of young men lost their lives. Taken in this context, the idea of '*pastoral*' is almost ironic.

Vaughan Williams described the symphony as wartime music. "A great deal of it incubated when I used to go up night after night in the ambulance wagon at Ecoivres and we went up a steep hill and there was wonderful Corot-like landscape in the sunset. It's not really lambskins frisking at all, as most people take for granted."

## Major figure

Born in Gloucester, Vaughan Williams came to London in 1890 to study at the Royal College of Music. After his first marriage in 1897, he settled in London, first in Westminster and then in Chelsea from 1905, although he also spent much time in Paris until 1908. He lived in Cheyne Walk in Chelsea between 1905 and 1929. In the seven years leading up to the World War I, Vaughan Williams became established as a major figure in classical music in Britain. His successes included



Queen's Hall, Langham Place, Regent Street. The building was destroyed in the blitz of 1941

**It comprises four movements, all of which are slow and lyrical yet melancholy and with an underlying tone of disturbance.**

*Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (1910), the first version of *A London Symphony* (1914) and *The Lark Ascending* (1914).

At the outset of war in 1914, Vaughan Williams volunteered for military service, despite being already aged 42. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private, driving ambulance wagons first in France and later in Greece. His duties included driving at night through dangerous terrain in the mud and rain, which must have been particularly gruelling, given that he was much older than the average soldier. The wholesale slaughter of World War I took its toll emotionally on Vaughan Williams who lost many of the people he knew, including his friend the composer George Butterworth.

After the war, Vaughan Williams produced no more work for some time and, indeed, his next major arrangement was *A Pastoral Symphony*.

## London links

*A Pastoral* could be described as a piece of London classical music, given the central part London played in World War I. The national war effort was directed from London, as was that of the British Empire. A large proportion of munitions

## Pastoral Symphony.

I

R. Vaughan Williams.

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were manufactured at various locations around London, namely at the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich, the Royal Small Arms Factory in Enfield, at Willesden Lane in Perivale, Hayes in Middlesex, Sumner Street in Southwark and in Abbey Wood. Almost every British soldier passed through London while on active service.

Vaughan Williams composed a total of nine symphonies during his lifetime, as well as writing many songs. Yet none of them could be described as 'wartime music' in the same way.

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

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# Making business connections on the LCCI Community App



**Vee Bharakda, founder and managing director of Navigate Business Recovery Limited shares why she downloaded the LCCI Community App and keeps connected.**

With over 30 years of experience with top 10 national firms, Vee specialises in all types of insolvency-related disputes and helps directors with advice and practical guidance on company and bankruptcy legislation across the whole insolvency spectrum focusing specifically on getting directors out of tricky situations.

**Navigate Business Recovery (NBR) was started in June 2017 with the objective of providing mediation service to business holders and limited companies. The company provides advice and guidance in relation to all aspects of insolvency related disputes.**

**What was your first impression of the LCCI Community App?**

I was very excited! I love technology and how it brings people and businesses together instantaneously. The app is so easy to use and functions very easily on my mobile phone.

**What have you found you like the most about the app?**

I like that I am able to find members and detailed information about what they do and the services they provide. The app has so much useful information about the London Chamber and how it works to bring all its members together regularly. It really is a great way to engage with new and existing members

to collaborate with them with no more than a couple of clicks on your phone. The desktop version is just as easy to use.

**Do you have a favorite feature on the app and why?**

My favourite feature is how quickly I can post educational blogs and articles and read posts from other members which I find useful. I have learnt so much from the articles posted by the LCCI staff and the members.

**Have you been able to connect with members and the Community Network on the app?**

Yes absolutely! Very easily! I have reduced the amount of time I spend on LinkedIn and use the LCCI app more frequently.

**Share with us how the app has benefitted you so far?**

It has allowed NBR to post articles and information which is useful in the current economic climate. It has also benefited NBR by having so many new connections which we

would not have been able to connect with online. It has generated fee income for NBR and I am very confident that it will do so in the coming years.

**What has made the new app stand out for you?**

The fact that it is on my phone, at my fingertips and easy to navigate. When I go to a networking meeting and I hear a name being mentioned which I recognize I will in the first instance look at the LCCI app to see if that person is a member and how to quickly connect with them. The app makes it easy to do that.

**Would you recommend using the app to others and why?**

Absolutely! It's a no brainer! It lets you engage and connect with other members and it has so much useful information which we have used at NBR.

**Is there anything you would like to add?**

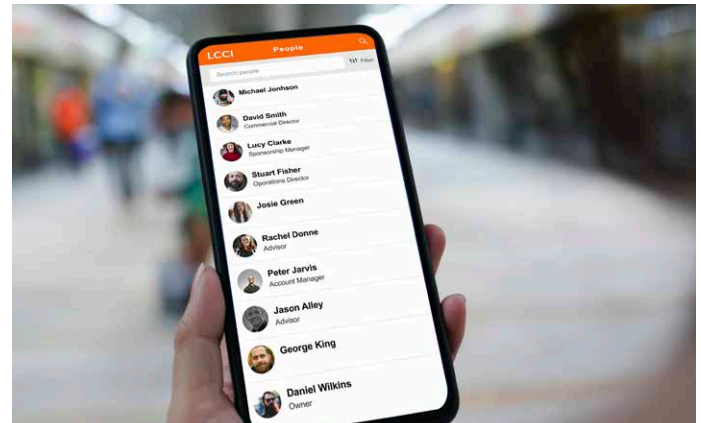
I am excited about how the app will evolve over the next couple of years. It has great potential.

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## How to download the LCCI Community App

LCCI Members can download the app on Android and iOS by scanning the QR code:



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# LCAM at EXPO 2020

Jonathan Wood, key figure and mediator at the London Chamber of Arbitration and Mediation (LCAM), chaired a panel as part of the Great Legal Services theme at the UK pavilion at Expo 2020 during a week-long trade mission to Dubai led by Justice Minister Lord Wolfson QC



Jonathan Wood

The event at Expo 2020 – essentially a dedicated legal services day – brought together 90 Middle Eastern legal experts with UK counterparts to help boost trade between the two regions. The

mission was organized as part of the UK's international brand marketing campaign, GREAT, to promote the best of the UK abroad. Lord Wolfson, who featured on Wood's panel, pointed out that legal services contributed a massive £22 billion to the UK economy "and will be crucial to ensuring we build back better from the global pandemic."

## Collaboration

The mission builds on wider efforts from the government to boost trade with the region, supporting the Global Britain agenda. It follows the UK-GCC Joint Trade and Investment Review which confirmed that the respective economies complemented each significantly with great scope for collaboration and growth.

The hugely experienced Wood – he is also chair of CIARB Board of Trustees and Head of IA at RPC as well as an LCAM director – covered much ground in his session linking the UAE's hosting of COP28 in two years' time with the UK's Glasgow experience, making the point that as UK trade grew in the region so would legal business, and championing the economic value of English law.



Jonathan Wood speaking in Dubai with Justice Minister Lord Wolfson QC

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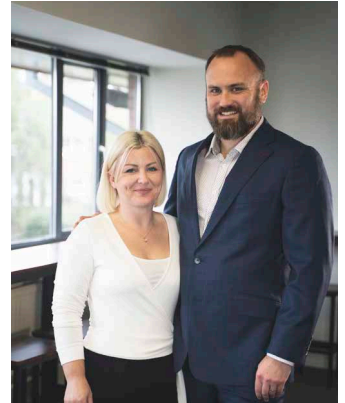
Rhino Safety Ltd are a multi award-winning health and safety consultancy, operating nationwide from their head office in Cheshire and a London satellite office. The company work with hundreds of large, multi-site clients as well as SMEs and third sector organisations, and can take care of all aspects of businesses' health and safety obligations; including training, documentation, ongoing support, risk assessments and fire risk assessments.

Since winning their first award, Start Up Business of the Year in 2015, the company has grown significantly; with a directly employed team of 14, including 7 expert health and safety consultants and 2 highly qualified trainers. In November 2021, they won 'Business of the Year (<25 employees)' for the second time.

As well as the in-person accredited and bespoke training that can be held in external venues or organisations' own premises, Rhino also offer a wide range of accredited online training courses. These usually take 2-3 hours to complete, and do not have to be completed in one session, so they are an extremely popular choice for companies who need more flexible training options. Courses range from 'Working at Height' and 'Manual Handling' to 'COSHH' and 'Workplace Health and Safety'.

Director Simon Walter says "As well as working with some well-known larger organisations, we also enjoy working with small firms who simply can't justify having their own dedicated Health and Safety team.

The beauty of what we do with smaller clients is acting as their fully outsourced H&S department. With new regulations and ongoing changes to existing ones coming from the government and HSE, small companies



simply can't afford to ignore their H&S obligations; a small mistake could end up costing them a huge amount of money or even bankrupt the company."

Rhino Safety work with a wide variety of industries, from office and retail through to construction, manufacturing and engineering. Working with such different clients has benefits both to their consultants and clients, as Director Cate Walter explains; "Lots of H&S consultants specialise in one industry, but we firmly believe that experiencing variety keeps us at the forefront of H&S developments, and alert to various risks rather than becoming 'nose-blind' due to familiarity. Our consultants could be working airside for an airline operator one day, in an ice-cream factory the next, and a hair salon the day after, so it certainly keeps them on their toes!

Rhino are offering fellow chamber members a free online training course; to redeem, simply send an email with the subject line 'LBM FREE TRAINING' and they will arrange the rest!

For more information on any of Rhino Safety's services, contact [info@rhinosafety.co.uk](mailto:info@rhinosafety.co.uk) or Head Office: **01270 440 341**, London Office: **02036 332107** or visit [www.rhinosafety.co.uk](http://www.rhinosafety.co.uk)





# Mediation – a cost-effective method for SME dispute resolution



by Marcus Bowman

Today one hears a lot about mediation. This must be bewildering for anyone not conversant with the process and in particular, the benefits of it in comparison with legal (court) proceedings or arbitration. In this series of articles I'm going to paint a picture of why mediation is a good process to help businesses resolve disputes, how the process can be brought about and what needs to be done to achieve a successful resolution of a dispute using mediation.

## Management time

Businesses, particularly SMEs, lacking as they often do significant in-house legal capacity are often faced with legal issues which can take up huge amounts of management time and drain cash when legal fees escalate. Once a dispute arises it is sometimes already too late to put a lid on it as the parties positions are entrenched.

This is where mediation really earns its keep – if the parties do wish to resolve their issues it can be set up quickly, with minimal cost and may, but needn't, involve outside lawyers.

Mediation is a form of dispute resolution, however in contrast with court proceedings or arbitration (which is a form of litigation conducted privately) it is extremely quick to set up and conduct as well being very cost-effective. Moreover, close to 90 per cent of mediations are successful in leading to a settlement of the dispute.

The main advantages of mediation are that it is usually a short process (from set up to resolution it can take a matter of days (if the parties want to get on with it), is very low-cost when compared with legal costs in litigation, private and has few rules.

It is very easy to set up – all the parties need to do is decide who they want to appoint as the mediator and once the proposed mediator has accepted appointment (mediation is usually before a single mediator) the process can commence.

Lawyers do not need to be involved, especially for low-level disputes – in more complex cases, parties do involve their lawyers in



mediation but this may not be necessary.

## Streamline

Mediation has been made even more accessible during Covid times as many mediations are conducted online using platforms like Zoom and Teams, which helps to streamline the process significantly.

Also, because mediation is private and confidential, nothing said in the mediation can be disclosed outside of the process, nor can any statements made in the mediation be used in any dispute between the parties unless they agree. This means that the parties are free to talk through the mediator and to make admissions and concessions without worrying these will then be used against them in any legal proceedings.

Indeed the fact that a mediation took place (even a failed one) is private to the parties who cannot even disclose this to a judge in legal pro-

ceedings between the same parties unless all the parties to the mediation agree.)

## Tactics

But why mediate when I can negotiate with the counter party? There are several reasons: the parties are often

***“Businesses, particularly SMEs, are often faced with legal issues which can take up huge amounts of management time and drain cash when legal fees escalate.”***

unable to communicate easily due to their history (i.e. being in dispute with each other) and in many cases they have already tried and failed to negotiate; the mediator is acting as a go between thereby enabling the parties to speak openly with the mediator who (where permitted by the parties) may convey their position to the other party; and since the mediator is not 'bound up' in the dispute, it enables the parties to engage but without any (or with much less) emotion and tension.

Even if the mediation process fails it is worth considering starting with this before litigating although in many cases the parties will use the litigation process to find out everything they can about their opponents case before proceeding to mediation. This is largely a matter of tactics and personal preference of the lawyers based on their own experience.

Marcus Bowman is a mediator at the London Chamber of Arbitration and Mediation  
[www.lcam.org.uk](http://www.lcam.org.uk)

## The mediation process

This is the first of a series of articles on the whole mediation process. In subsequent issues *LBM* will cover:

- Resolving a commercial dispute, the options available to parties – benefits of each to SMEs and how does mediation differ from negotiation, arbitration and litigation
- What rights parties have to mediate, how much will a mediation cost, arranging and participating in a mediation
- The role of the mediator; why mediation is a good option for commercial disputes
- “Mediation is private and confidential” – what does this mean?
- What happens next? Whether the parties succeed or fail in reaching agreement at a mediation.

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# Key considerations for public sector bidding success

The UK public sector tenders out more than £290 billion annually on buying goods and services, and in 2022 aims to increase the SME share by 21 per cent, from £76 billion to more than £96 billion.

However, research shows that less than half of UK SMEs are currently successfully bidding for public sector contracts. Here *Andrew Morrison* and *David Gray* share 10 key considerations that will help businesses in their public sector bidding efforts in 2022

## 1. Covid-19 and business resilience

2022 will be the third calendar year where Covid-19 will loom large. Though we are all learning to live with the constraints, uncertainties remain around further strains, more lockdowns, etc. Bidders will need to have clear answers in their bid responses for how they will cope financially, with service delivery, with sickness absences, and other potential disruptions. There is increased scrutiny now of business resilience and business continuity plans.



## 2. Sustainability/net zero

Following COP-26 and the declared climate emergency, the UK Government now necessitates in-scope public sector organisations to require a Carbon Reduction Plan for suppliers on all contracts over £5m per annum. Procurement is being used to assist the drive



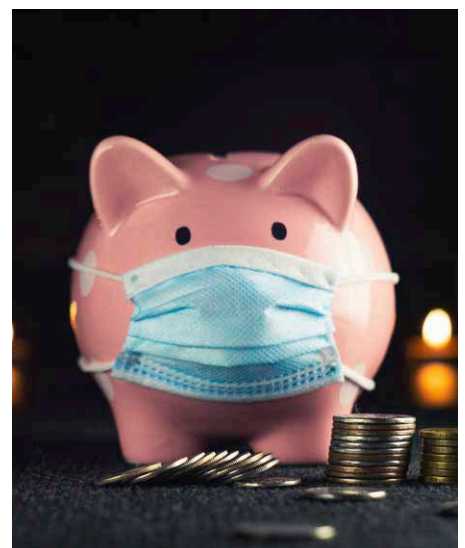
to UK Net Zero (by 2050) and Scotland (by 2045), so bidders need to demonstrate how they will assist buying organisations to meet their strategic net zero objectives; how the bidder will achieve it themselves; and how they will assure it via their own supply chains. Measuring, reporting and evidencing the delivery of sustainability outcomes will be at least as stringent as social value reporting.



## 3. Supply chains and logistics

We've seen some very significant issues with supply chains and logistics this year, such as

the fuel supply crisis, lorry driver shortages, supply chain delays due to the triple whammy impacts of Covid, and Brexit and labour shortages. If supply chain (e.g., materials, etc) is important in your bids (and it is in many public sector bids), then make sure you can evidence how you will ensure security of supply, including what contingency plans you have in place.



## 4. Costs

We are seeing cost increases virtually across the board but especially in fuel, energy, la-

bour and materials costs. It's very important that bidders make commercial assumptions, look carefully at the price increase/change control provisions in the contract and consider detailed (and in some cases tactical) clarification questions to ensure that all bidders are aware of the factors and constraints involved. Allow time within the bid window to stress test your commercial model ensuring you have a robust internal adjudication process. Enlisting the services of an external cost consultant can be hugely beneficial with their insights into market rates, current trends etc. They may also have some good cost saving and value engineering suggestions.

## 5. Connection to buyers' strategies

More attention is now being given to alignment with buyers' overarching strategies (e.g. NHS bids requiring bidders to overtly align themselves with strategic objectives such as reducing waiting times/lists etc and state how their solution will help them achieve these). It is very important that your bid research goes further than just reading the tender documents. Give attention to the buyer's strategic documents, stated policies and even to recent news releases/press coverage – all of these elements could have a bearing on your tender quality/technical scoring especially in the areas of standing out i.e. differentiation.

## 6. Knowledge management

We are seeing enhanced requirements to provide back-up evidence in bids, with any client quotes/testimonials/proof points relating to previous delivery needing to be accompanied by contact details of a source who can verify them. Having not just testimonials, but evidence such as statistics, measured outcomes, case studies, examples of resolved complaints, innovations, added value and social value is becoming too important to just be picked up during a bid window. We recommend that bidders give thought to having someone responsible for curating the knowledge within a business and marshalling it together into a library that is kept updated. This will be a great resource for the bid writers to draw upon; it will be time-saving, reducing the calls on other staff to continually be providing similar information for different bids and importantly will also increase bid success rates.

**Research shows the vast majority of SMEs find the public procurement process challenging, and while the sector is already trying to encourage greater SME engagement, it is not easy to do well.**



## 7. Cyber security

Both the public and private sectors continue to experience some significant data breaches and system hacks. Many public sector contracts mean that a bidder has access to confidential personal service user data, meaning buyers are often now requiring Cyber Essentials accreditation at minimum, and ISO 27001 Information Security Management for larger contracts. Keep up with – and in some cases get ahead of – your competition by improving your cyber security arrangements and securing external validation at the highest level your business can afford.

## 8. Thought leadership

People who sit on evaluation panels and make or influence procurement decisions are not in a bubble, they are increasingly consumers of digital/social media. Whilst we may think that none of this could have any effect on public sector procurement decisions, as long as these decisions are made by human beings, then the subliminal and emotional elements of decision-making should not be overlooked. Give thought to how you can pique the interest of decision-makers, especially by creating content in places where they are likely to consume it. For example, look to follow your target organisations and decision-makers on social media and connect with them where this is possible. Like

some of their content and in this way help you and your business get on their radar.

## 9. Procurement events

There has been some return to in person events in 2021 and a mixed bag of virtual events. Depending on the progress in combating Covid-19, we expect to see more in person events in 2022. We are also seeing some event organisers looking at innovative hybrid models of simultaneous in-venue and live streamed options. Bidders who make the effort to connect with their markets, for example at in person events, may get ahead of other bidders who choose to hang back. However, risk assessments and Covid-secure arrangements need to be given important attention by all involved.

## 10. Training

The UK government Cabinet Office and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all would like to see SME businesses getting a greater share of the public procurement pie. However, there remain some barriers to achieving the maximum potential from this. Research shows the vast majority of SMEs find the public procurement process challenging, and while the sector is already trying to encourage greater SME engagement, it is not easy to do well. When asked, 78 per cent of SMEs said they would be interested in online tender training to help win more tenders, so at AM Bid we set out to use our bidding expertise to provide a solution. Ultimate Tender Coach is an online public sector training programme which covers the end-to-end bid process. It is made up of flexible online video modules that they can work through at their own pace and is supported with live weekly coaching calls with a Bid Director and a private LinkedIn members group providing the opportunity to network and share information, ideas and opportunities.

Andrew Morrison is founder of bid writing specialist firm M Bid; David Gray is the company's managing director  
[www.ambid.co.uk](http://www.ambid.co.uk)





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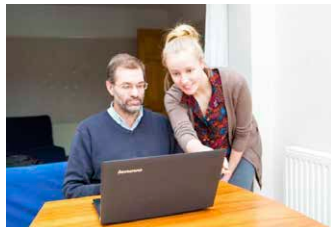




# News from the EU



Compiled by  
Angelina Markousi



## Commission to improve lifelong learning and employability

■ At the Porto Social Summit last year, EU Leaders welcomed the EU-level target of 60 per cent of all adults taking part in training every year by 2030. The Commission has taken a key step in helping Member States meet this target by presenting proposals for Council Recommendations on individual learning accounts and on micro-credentials, as announced in the Skills Agenda and in the European Education Area Communication of 2020.



## Strengthening human rights and democracy

■ On the eve of Human Rights Day and coinciding with the Summit for Democracy, the European Union launched the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme. This programme, worth €1.5 billion, steps up EU support in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law and the work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders around the world during the period 2021–2027.



## Improving working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms

■ The European Commission has proposed a set of measures to improve the working conditions in platform work and to support the sustainable growth of digital labour platforms in the EU. The new rules will ensure that people working through digital labour platforms can enjoy the labour rights and social benefits they are entitled to. A common set of EU rules will provide increased legal certainty, therefore enabling digital labour platforms to benefit fully from the economic potential of the Single Market and a level playing field.



## Brexit Adjustment Reserve: Commission approves €920.4 million pre-financing for Ireland

■ The European Commission has adopted the decision to allocate funding from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve to Ireland, for a total of €920.4 million. Ireland is the biggest beneficiary of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve and the first Member State to receive its pre-financing. This funding will help Ireland's economy in mitigating the impact of Brexit, through support to regions and economic sectors, including on job creation and protection, such as short-time work schemes, re-skilling, and training.



## EU additional humanitarian funding to fight the pandemic

■ The European Commission has presented an Action Plan to help the European social economy thrive, tapping into its economic and job-creation potential, as well as its contribution to a fair and inclusive recovery, and the green and digital transitions. Social economy organisations are entities which put social and environmental purposes first, reinvesting most of their profit back into the organisation. There are 2.8 million social economy entities in Europe that employ 13.6 million people and which offer solutions to key challenges in our societies.



## New rules on VAT rates to support the EU priorities

■ The Commission welcomes the agreement reached by EU finance ministers to update the current rules governing value-added tax (VAT) rates for goods and services. These new rules will provide governments with more flexibility in the rates they can apply and ensure equal treatment between EU Member States. At the same time, the updated legislation will bring VAT rules into line with common EU priorities such as fighting climate change, supporting digitalisation and protecting public health. The European Parliament must now be consulted on this final text.



## The European Union works with G7 partners to promote investments

■ The EU is working closely with its G7 partners to promote sustainable investments worldwide, in line with its newly adopted Global Gateway strategy. The Statement on Partnership for infrastructure and investment issued by G7 leaders sets out a new approach and concrete steps to narrow the existing infrastructure investment gap at global level.



## EU and WTO members strike major deal to simplify trade in services

■ A group of 67 World Trade Organization (WTO) members, including the EU, have concluded negotiations on a landmark agreement to cut red tape in services trade. The so-called Joint Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation will simplify unnecessarily complicated regulations and ease procedural hurdles faced by SMEs in particular. This agreement will help reduce the costs of global services trade by more than USD 150 billion every year.



## CulturEU: Commission steps up support to the cultural sector

■ The Commission has launched a new interactive guide mapping all funding opportunities available at EU level for the cultural and creative sectors. CulturEU, a one-stop shop for EU funding, gathers a total of 75 funding opportunities from 21 different EU programmes, from Creative Europe and Horizon Europe to structural funds and InvestEU. In just a few clicks, the interactive online tool can direct any European cultural entity to the most appropriate EU financial support available to it.

## EVENTS



27 January 2022 - 28 January 2022  
Graz, Austria

Health Tech Hub Styria  
Pitch & Partner 2022

**Registration Deadline: Wednesday 26 January 2022**  
**Location: Online and in-person event**

This is a hybrid event focusing on health and biotechnology. It offers you international keynotes, a corporate call, an investor pitching, pre-arranged B2B meetings and more. This event aims to offer participants of this year's HTH Styria event access to many relevant players in technology transfer, academia/industry collaborations as well as early-stage innovations on a hybrid basis.



1 February 2022 - 9 February 2022  
L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain

ISE Open Innovation  
Challenge 2022

**Registration Deadline: Monday 31 January 2022**  
**Location: Online, Spain**

This audio-visual congress will celebrate its 2nd edition in Barcelona in February 2022. ACCIÓ will organize ISE Open Innovation Challenge 2022 is a B2B international meetings event among 7 audio-visual corporates, looking for new technologies or solutions providers. Participants can choose to have physical meetings, online meetings, or both. Physical meetings will take place in the venue of ISE Congress in Barcelona on 1-4 February and online meetings will be held on 8-9 February.



9 February 2022 - 10 February 2022  
Leuven, Belgium

Life-on-Chip Conference  
2022 | Hybrid edition

**Registration Deadline: Tuesday 8 February 2022**  
**Location: Belgium**

The Life Sciences community in Flanders invites international researchers and companies to the Life-on-Chip Conference: 'Initiating Convergence in Health Technologies'. Micro- and nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, robotics, novel manufacturing technologies and big data are making major impacts across all industries, but perhaps their greatest potential impact is in health and life sciences. Combined with ever-growing biological insights and discoveries, resulting innovations enable fascinating applications that accelerate and transform the healthcare system.



1 March 2022 - 8 March 2022  
L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain

MWC Open Innovation  
Challenge 2022 - B2B hybrid  
event.

**Registration Deadline: Sunday 20 February 2022**  
**Location: Spain**

This is a B2B international meetings event targeting all agents of the innovation ecosystem: corporations, investors, and solution/technology providers. Participants can choose to have physical meetings, online meetings, or both. Physical meetings will take place in the venue of MWC/4YFN congress in Barcelona on 1-2 March. Online meetings will be on separate days between 3 and 8 March.



6 April 2022  
Graz, Austria

ISEC 2022 | B2B Meetings

**Registration Deadline: Monday 4 April 2022**  
**Location: Austria**

This event is seen as a promoter for innovative ideas in the areas of renewable energy systems and resource efficiency and is intended to be a forum for research, industry, and energy policy. With this, ISEC 2022 intends to contribute to the challenges of phasing out of fossil energy supply.

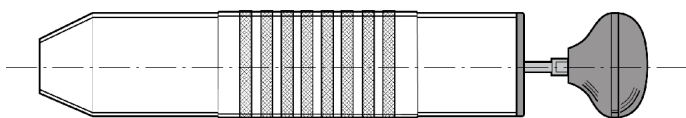
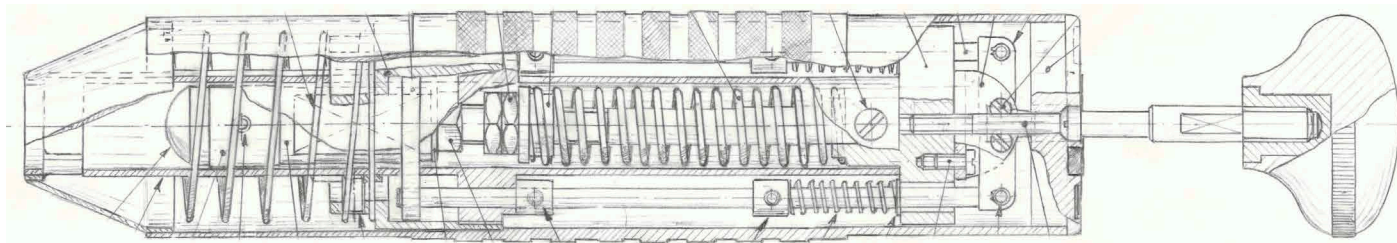


**Registrations for all events are now open**

For further information contact the Enterprise Europe Network London office at [enterprise.europe@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:enterprise.europe@londonchamber.co.uk)



# Spring Impact Test Hammers Making an Impact Worldwide!



## History

Back in the 1960's, a BSi Technical Committee was seeking a solution to a requirement for repeatable impact testing of commercial products to ensure that plastic housings didn't expose live wiring when damaged.



## Manufacture

An engineering company near Woking took on the British Standards Institution challenge.

## "Made in England"

The company already produced electrical switches for domestic appliances including washing machines and hair-care products.

They also had a requirement for product testing and had the resources to design and manufacture spring impact hammers, meeting the BSi specification. Spring Hammers were produced in-house until 1980 when the sales, assembly and calibration operation was continued by Lansbury International and the component production was by a series of local engineering companies from Knaphill, Old Woking and West Byfleet, so all produced locally.



0328

## Calibration

To calibrate a spring hammer and provide traceability of results, a compound pendulum is

used which is calibrated by a falling weight. The Impact energy of a falling mass is known from first principles:  $\text{Energy} = \text{mass} \times \text{gravity} \times \text{height}$ . Traceability was initially provided by Local trading standards, however, customers soon required better traceability, so the internationally recognised NAMAS accreditation was achieved in 1990. During the accreditation application, it was necessary to determine the precise local value of gravity at the calibration bench and "g" was established to 5 decimal places. The quality systems, equivalent to ISO9001, have now morphed into an ISO17025 UKAS accreditation for impact energy calibration.

## Customers from A to Z...

Following BSi as the first customer, thousands of spring hammers have now been sold around the world... to national standards institutions and product test houses, including:

AMP, BSi, Canadian Standards, Dimplex, ERA, Fluke, General Electric, Hewlett-Packard, Indian Standards, JVC, Kingfisher, LEC, Mitsubishi, National Panasonic, Osram (GEC), Philips, QA Testing, RS Components, Sri Lanka Institute, Testing Certification Australia, Underwriters Laboratories, Valor Heating, W.H. Smith, Xerox, York EMC, Zannussi.



## Lansbury International

The Spring Hammer manufacturer  
[www.SpringHammer.co.uk](http://www.SpringHammer.co.uk)  
Knaphill, Woking, GU21 2EP



**What is it?** Spring Impact Test Hammer  
**What does it do?** Delivers a repeatable impact energy  
**Who uses it?** Manufacturers of commercial electrical products  
**Why does it need calibrating?** To deliver a consistent impact

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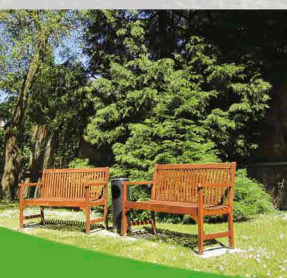
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# The struggles of returns for ecommerce businesses



by Nate Burke

Brands right now are doing everything they can to cater to the concerns of consumers in turbulent times, such as increasing returns windows. However, this can create logistical and financial difficulties, particularly given ever-rising return rates, with estimates placing this at 20 per cent for ecommerce businesses

**B**rands are also having to cater to evolving shopper practices, particularly with clothing, with multiple 'options' often bought so that customers can pick and return items that are least preferential.

For many products I find, it is a question of profitability or not. If return rates are too high, the product or company will not be viable. Customer satisfaction will improve with better rates, reviews will increase, staff dealing with customers receive a morale boost, sales increase, and re-orders become better.

However, I find that many companies focus all efforts on the sales side, but do not spend the same energy reviewing all the returns and how to make the experience better, which can result in an improved return on investment than simply increasing sales and marketing.

It's about finding a balance between nurturing consumer relationships with fast, simple and reliable returns processes, while ensuring business operations do not directly suffer as a result.

## Introducing sustainability into returns processes

Of course, it's also imperative for brands to seek more sustainable practices when it comes to managing online orders and returns. With more online orders comes more returns, increasing carbon footprints as parcels are exchanged across the country.

To combat this, consumers should be offered sustainable returns processes, such as the option to combine multiple returns within one parcel, or be provided with returns packaging that is made from recyclable materials.



**Customisation in the online experience is crucial, and so smaller brands can utilise this to provide some form of incentive for those customers that have to pay for their returns.**

ASOS is a fine example of a brand that ditched traditional paper returns forms and instead, dedicated an entire portal to returns on their app, allowing consumers to not only make returns quickly and easily for free, but also without the use of excess paper, directly catering to the sustainability-focused consumer. Today there is a huge amount of emphasis placed by customers and regulatory bodies on sustainability.

Both sustainability and ecommerce come hand in hand. Businesses need to monitor all reasons for returns and resolve issues at the core, such as quality issues, product descriptions on the website, packaging problems, photography, better fitting guides, consistent measurements and phone support.

While customers always want free returns, sometimes putting in a charge for returns can help optimise return rates, although there is still a need to monitor the impact on sales.

With everyone working towards carbon reduction goals, combined with the regulatory pressures and customers becoming more keenly aware, it's imperative that brands ensure their returns are ethical.

## How can paid-for returns still be used?

For smaller, boutique businesses, it isn't always feasible to offer free returns, and it can pose a serious drain on business resources.

However, there are ways that smaller retailers can provide paid-for returns without losing customers.

Customisation in the online experience is crucial, and so smaller brands can utilise this to provide some form of incentive for those customers that have to pay for their returns.

For example, brands could offer a realistic discount on the consumers next shop, or even invite loyal customers to exclusive events to demonstrate your thanks and appreciation for their custom.

Luckily, with around 54 per cent of Gen Z shoppers willing to pay

more for sustainable products over mass-produced items, stores that cater to these demands may be more likely to get away with a paid-for returns model than others.

For example, a consumer may be more willing to pay for returns for items purchased from a boutique apparel store that provides hand-crafted items, over a chain store that does not offer the same level of customisation and personalisation. Here the hands on 'human touch' is more transparent than a mass-market conglomerate, offering a way for owners to more easily connect with consumers.

No longer can returns simply be regarded to as an 'extra' – instead, they should be integrated into business practices from both a general and sustainability point of view to allow brands to stay relevant in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

While returns are often considered the most 'unsexy' part of the business, they are also an area where you can learn the most in how to improve.

Nate Burke is chief executive and founder of digital marketing and ecommerce specialists Diginus [www.diginus.com](http://www.diginus.com)

# Celebrating 21st Century icons

The 21st Century Icon Awards, launched in 2017 by Tarun Ghulati and Preeti Rana of Squared Watermelon, was created to draw attention to the work of exceptional entrepreneurs, philanthropists, tech pros, and media personalities and recognise their work on a global stage.

Last December at an event in London hosted by Olympian Denise Lewis OBE and actor Nitin Ganatra this year's 11 winners were announced, whittled down from 30 finalists and 300 submissions from South America, Africa, Europe, Indian Sub-Continent, North America, Middle East and Asia.



## The 2021 winners are:

**Magnificent Performing Arts Award:** Terry Stone (UK) has starred in 33 films and television series over the past 18 years and produced 30 films to date working with the major Hollywood studios.

**Exquisite Art Award:** Amish Tripathi (India) is an author and a senior diplomat. His Shiva Trilogy is the fastest selling book series and his Ram Chandra Series is the second fastest selling book series in Indian publishing history.

**Outstanding Media & Entertainment Award:** Amit Goenka (India) is the President, Digital Businesses & Platforms, Zee Entertainment Enterprises with a presence in over 190 countries. Under Amit's leadership, ZEE5 has become the biggest publisher of digital content in India.

**Squared Watermelon Award:** Adema Sangale (Kenya) at just 27 became the youngest regional chief ex-

ecutive of Procter & Gamble. Since 2005, she has worked with governments across Africa and globally on Keeping Girls in School her initiative to remove taxes from sanitary pads.

**Innovator Technology Award:** Diana Paredes (Peru, UK) founded Suade in 2014, a technology company providing RegTech solutions to the financial services industry. Diana has recognised the untapped potential of innovation in the use of standards and automation technology in regulatory reporting.

**Savvy Luxury Award:** Nick Bassi (UK) founded Childsplay in 1990 which has since grown from a small Essex boutique to a global online destination for luxurious fashion for kids, carrying designer labels, serving a host of A-list celebrities from around the globe.

**Relentlessly Resolute Award:** Per Wimmer (Denmark, UK) is a finan-

cier, entrepreneur, philanthropist, space advocate, astronaut and author. Through Wimmer Space, he supports various charities in the UK and Denmark.

**Ardent Techie Award:** Simay Dinc (Turkey) is the co-founder of Recontact Games and game producer of Recontact: Istanbul, a mobile game. The game has won several awards and featured in 153 countries.

**Competitive Sports Award:** Ramla Ali is a model, author and racial equality activist. She is the first Somali boxer in history to compete at the Olympic Games and the first female to become a professional boxer.

**Generous Philanthropist Award:** Rakesh Tikait is a prominent farmer leader in India. In 1994, he joined the Bharatiya Kisan Union founded by his father. He has focused his life on advocating and uplifting farmers.

**Competitive Sports Award:** Ronnie O'Sullivan OBE (UK) is a six-time World Snooker Champion. A record seven-times Masters Champion, and a record seven-time UK Champion. He has won a record 20 triple crown titles.

Partners of the awards include Coca-Cola, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Jack Barclay Bentley. The judges included Baroness Verma, David Sayer of KPMG, Nick Ogden of ClearBank, and Denise Lewis

[www.21stcenturyiconawards.com](http://www.21stcenturyiconawards.com)



David Syer, Denise Lewis, Preeti Rana, and Tarun Ghulati



## Tech tips: 5 things your telephony provider should be doing for you in 2022

By Helena Belcher, CRO at Windsor Telecom

People love to talk. And although we have more ways than ever to communicate – email, chat, social – conversations with customers and colleagues remain at the heart of good communications.

So, what should your phone provider be helping you with to make this easy and enjoyable for everyone?

### 1. An anywhere, any device experience.

Lots of us are no longer tied to a single desk, so your phone system should support PC and mobile apps, as well as desk phones in multiple locations.

### 2. Control and visibility.

You need real-time access to easy-to-understand reports and wallboards so you can properly plan and respond to your staffing and customer needs.

### 3. Integration with other apps.

Your comms are part of a wider set of tools, like Microsoft Teams and your CRM, so they should all integrate as closely as possible.

### 4. Ability to scale easily.

There are lots of reasons you may need to flex the size of your team up or down, so you should be able to add and remove users easily, on flexible terms.

### 5. Supportive service.

It's not enough to just resolve your queries. Your supplier should be proactively reviewing your worker styles and your end customers' needs, ensuring they have everything they need at a good price for the business.

There are plenty of telephony providers out there, some great, some not so much. If you're not getting all five of these and more, maybe it's time to talk to someone new.



Talk to a partner who makes technology easy and enjoyable.

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# Omicron variant brings tougher measures

Late autumn saw Covid-19 infection levels of up to 40,000 cases per day nationwide. However, the arrival of a new variant named Omicron has seen a sharp rise in infections. On Wednesday 22 December, recorded Covid-19 cases topped 100,000 for the first time, with a record 106,122 new infections reported. At time of writing, just over 8,000 people are in hospital with Covid-19, the highest number since 22 November

The first case of Omicron was announced on 24 November by South Africa with the first case there dating back to 9 November. Since then, it has spread to at least 89 countries around the world, including the UK. The first UK Omicron cases were reported on 27 November in two people who had travelled from South Africa. As of 19 December, the UK cumulative total of people infected by Omicron was 45,145 although the true number is believed to be much higher due to infected people not being tested and delays in reporting.

## How serious is Omicron?

Omicron is believed to be far more infectious than the Delta variant although it is unclear whether it is more severe. The most comprehensive study of the variant to date suggests that Omicron could be considerably milder than Delta, although much uncertainty remains. Cases in the UK are said to be doubling every two to three days. Overall Covid-19 cases rose by 60 per cent in one week nationally as Omicron starts to be the dominant variant. Omicron is believed to be rapidly taking over from Delta in London which has a younger population than the rest of the UK and a higher proportion of unvaccinated people. At time of writing, there has been a moderate increase in hospital admissions with Covid-19 (although 25 per cent of patients are said to have been admitted for other illnesses and then diagnosed with Covid-19 in hospital – so called ‘incident’ cases). To date, deaths remain flat and have not yet begun to rise again. However, many experts believe that the sheer transmissibility of Omicron, even if it is less serious, will lead to increased hospital cases and deaths.

The South African GP, Dr Angelique Coetzee, who first identified Omicron in her patients, reported they were showing milder symptoms than those infected with Delta. The five top symptoms reported with Omicron are a runny nose, headache, fatigue (can be mild or severe), sneezing and a sore throat. This compares with a fever, continual cough and loss of sense and smell for Delta and earlier Covid-19 variants. It has been suggested that Omicron might be milder in South Africa because of its young population and the fact that many people had either been previously infected with Delta or vaccinated. There are signs that Omicron may already have peaked in South Africa, including in Gauteng province which was the epicentre of the outbreak. Cases in South Africa

*The most comprehensive study of the variant to date suggests that Omicron could be considerably milder than Delta, although much uncertainty remains.*

reached a high of 27,000 new cases on 16 December but fell to under 15,500 cases five days later.

**Daily Covid-19 cases in the UK exceed 100,000 for first time**

■ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59758757>

**Omicron symptoms: Covid variant could be much milder than Delta, suggests first real-world study on severity**

■ <https://inews.co.uk/news/science/omicron-symptoms-covid-variant-much-milder-delta-first-real-world-study-severity-1364942>

**Is Omicron ‘mild’ or not? Why severity of this variant is the missing piece of the data jigsaw**

■ <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/is-omicron-mild-or-not-why-severity-variant-missing-piece-data-jigsaw-1364561>

**The Atlantic: Is Omicron milder?**

■ <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/12/omicron-mild-covid-variant-severity/621090/>

**Case drop may show South Africa's omicron peak has passed**

■ <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/south-africas-case-drop-show-omicron-peak-passed-81888933>

**How has the government responded to Omicron?**

On Tuesday 14 December, Parliament voted to introduce Plan B in England following the rise in Covid-19 cases. However, this move was highly contentious, with 99 Conservative MPs voting against their own side, the largest rebellion in this Parliament and numerically greater than the Conservatives' own Parliamentary majority. Plan B was only passed with the support of Labour, the main Opposition Party. It came into force on Friday 10 December and will expire at the end of January 2022.

- Compulsory face coverings in most public indoor venues, including shops, theatres and cinemas, as well as on public transport.
- Proof of vaccination (currently two doses but this will change as boosters are rolled out) via the NHS Covid Pass on the NHS app will be mandatory for entry into nightclubs and venues where large crowds gather. This includes crowded indoor settings with 500 or more attendees such as music venues; crowded out-

door settings with 4,000 or more attendees, such as outdoor festivals; and any settings with 10,000 or more attendees, such as large sporting or music events. Given the evidence since the emergence of Omicron, proof of a negative lateral flow test will also be accepted.

- All frontline NHS staff must be fully vaccinated by April 2022.
- People should work from home if they can. (However, this is advisory, not mandatory and did not form part of the Plan B vote).

**Gov.UK: Prime Minister confirms move to Plan B in England**

■ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-confirms-move-to-plan-b-in-england>

**MPs back all ‘plan B’ measures amid large Tory rebellion on Covid passes and mandatory vaccines – as it happened**

■ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2021/dec/14/uk-covid-live-lateral-flow-tests-unavailable-online-england-boris-johnson-booster-coronavirus-latest-updates>

At time of writing, there is considerable speculation as to what other measures might be introduced to help combat the rising number of Covid-19 infections. On Tuesday 21 December, the Prime Minister stated that there would be no further restrictions before 25 December and that families could celebrate Christmas as planned, although caution is urged. However, he did not rule out putting more limits in place after this date. As of 22 December, the three devolved UK administrations have already put further restrictions in place. In Scotland, public Hogmanay celebrations and other large events have been cancelled. In Wales, ‘the rule of six’ has returned, meaning that groups no larger than six people will be able to meet in pubs, restaurants and cinemas as from Boxing Day. In both Wales and Northern Ireland, nightclubs will be shut as from 27 December.

**Covid: No new restrictions in England before Christmas – Boris Johnson**

■ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59747966>

**Boris Johnson says no further restrictions before Christmas – but situation remains ‘finely balanced’ due to Omicron**

■ <https://news.sky.com/story/boris-johnson-says-no-further-restrictions-before-christmas-but-situation-remains-finely-balanced-due-to-omicron-12501575>

**New restrictions in England could be avoided if hospital admissions in London do not soar this week**

■ <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/new-restrictions-england-avoided-hospital-admissions-london-do-not-soar-this-week-1364554>

**What medical progress is being made?**

It is believed that two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine are insufficient to combat the Omicron variant. At time of writing, more than 30.8 million doses of the third or ‘booster’ Covid-19 vaccines

## Rising numbers of Covid-19 infections are deterring people from visiting pubs and restaurants, with many venues seeking mass booking cancellations in the run-up to Christmas.

have been given in the UK to those aged 18 and over. The Government is now aiming to give all adults over the age of 18 a booster vaccine by the end of December, not the end of January 2022 as originally planned. The target is to vaccinate one million people a day. A record 968,665 doses were given on Tuesday 21 December. On 22 December, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommended that Covid-19 vaccinations be given to clinically vulnerable five to 11-year-olds.

The UK has purchased another four million doses of antiviral drugs with the aim of keeping infected people out of hospital. The two drugs, molnupiravir and Paxlovid, are considered to reduce the risk for people who test positive for coronavirus becoming seriously ill. However, it is uncertain when the drugs will be rolled out more generally on the NHS, with Paxlovid still waiting for approval from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

In addition, as from 22 December, new guidance allows for the ten-day self-isolation period for people who have tested positive for Covid-19 to be reduced to seven days in most cases.

### UK booster jab rollout to increase to 1m a day to battle Omicron 'tidal wave'

■ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/dec/12/uk-booster-jab-rollout-to-increase-to-1m-a-day-to-battle-omicron-tidal-wave>

### UK buys another 4m doses of Covid-19 antiviral drugs to try and keep infected people out of hospital

■ <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/uk-covid-19-antiviral-drugs-keep-infected-people-out-hospital-1364882>

### Gov.UK: Self-isolation for COVID-19 cases reduced from 10 to 7 days following negative LFD tests

■ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/self-isolation-for-covid-19-cases-reduced-from-10-to-7-days-following-negative-lfd-tests>

### What financial support is being given to affected businesses?

Rising numbers of Covid-19 infections are deterring people from visiting pubs and restaurants, with many venues seeking mass booking cancellations in the run-up to Christmas. Almost 50% of West End theatres have cancelled their performances, due to both reluctance among theatre goers to attend the shows and outbreaks of Covid-19 infections among performers.

In response to the growing financial crisis in the hospitality and leisure industries, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has announced a range of business support measures, including:

- Hospitality and leisure businesses will be eligible for one-off grants of up to £6,000 per premises
- More than £100 million of discretionary funding will be made available for local authorities to support other businesses
- The Government will cover the cost of Statutory Sick Pay for Covid-related absences for small and medium size enterprises
- Further funding of £30 million will be made available through the Culture Recovery Fund so that more cultural organisations in England can apply for support during the winter

### Almost half of London's major theatres cancelled shows at weekend as Omicron fears grow

■ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-west-end-shows-theatre-cancelled-covid19-omicron-b973026.html>

### Simply Business: Grants of £6,000 to support hospitality and leisure sector impacted by Covid-19

■ <https://www.simplybusiness.co.uk/knowledge/articles/2021/12/new-grants-and-coronavirus-support-for-hospitality-and-leisure-businesses/>

### What financial support is now available for businesses?

■ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/covid-business-support-grants-omicron-b1980728.html>

Covid-19 Q&A is written and researched by Alexa Michael, member research executive at LCCI

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## The perfect time for a reality check

By Yogesh Shah, CEO, iResearch Services



Happy 2022! Plenty of business gurus talk about the need for new resolutions, goals and practical planning for the new year, but it's also the perfect time for London's leaders to carry out a much-needed reality check on the truth about effectiveness and how their businesses are viewed.

We all have an idea of our business and industry reputations, but is this reality, or wishful thinking? For a truer idea of how each is perceived, we need to measure against how our clients, partners and rivals see us.

With the rapid changes for all businesses and sectors during the pandemic, all organisations can benefit from new benchmarks and discovering gaps between perception and reality across all operations.

This came into focus for financial services in our latest sustainability survey of 550 industry leaders. How Sustainable is Financial Services? showed a wide gap between perception and reality on the sectors most embracing sustainability.

70% of Investment Bankers believe they are embracing sustainability practices; only 41% outside the sector agree. Similarly, 69% in Corporate/Commercial Banking say their sector leads the way, while a mean of just 38% from all other sectors agrees.

The survey highlights gaps over greenwashing – misleading claims over how sustainable a product or service actually is. Greenwashing is a major issue, not just for the financial services sector, but for

driving forward sustainability initiatives across all sectors globally.

How can thought leadership help? By bringing perceptions into line with reality – crucial for sustainable change.

Here are four ways you can bridge the reality gap on sustainability and other important issues:

1. **More honest communications on initiatives and progress:** Being upfront about the status of sustainability measures and admitting when there is still progress needed is the first step. Opportunities for further action will follow.
2. **Establish new cross-industry partnerships:** You can involve thought leaders, including agencies, business advisors, thinktanks, trade bodies and policymakers. Communicating effectively while backing up words with action makes the difference.
3. **Move forward with sustained, consistent steps** – not just a “big bang”. Cross-industry partnerships provide support, credibility and accountability to drive initiatives forward at pace and scale.
4. **Consistency of reporting and governance.** This should be embedded into business strategies and communications to ensure transparency and build a more level playing field for sustainability reporting and other areas of accountability.

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Find out more on how to bridge the reality gap in the *iResearch Services Sustainability Snapshots: How Sustainable is Financial Services* report.  
[www.iresearchservices.com](http://www.iresearchservices.com)



# Three reasons why your strategy isn't working

Why is it that while all firms have strategies, some are more successful than others?

Certain firms do have a first-mover advantage in offering services and products to their customers and extracting value that competitors cannot. Others are able to reinvent themselves in a way that competitors are unable to match.

Whatever the approach taken, an important learning point for managers is that formulating or just having a strategy direction tends to be a relatively easy first step in terms of planning and commitment. It's the execution stage, when a change in beliefs and behaviours is often required, that is the greatest challenge - requiring a strategic journey that adapts to a dynamic environment.

So, once you have your initial strategy for a new, innovative service or product and are ready to launch, what are the factors that could prevent it working?

## 1. Deep-rooted beliefs

Why should your innovative service or product be something your firm should commit to, or your customers be interested in?

This is a tough one to crack as deep-rooted beliefs about what makes a product or service work in a particular market can mean even your closest allies might need some convincing.

For example, in our research on IT firm Hewlett-Packard we found that CEOs tended to use past successes and the history of the firm to situate and build their storyboard, which could lead to missed opportunities.

One way forward is to consider where these beliefs come from; how they can be constructively challenged and what changing them would achieve. You should also consider how you engage and communicate the need to change these beliefs.

Customers and investors are also increasingly influenced by what they think you stand for, so an alignment of the company's ethos with that of target capital and consumer markets is of growing importance.

## 2. Getting the right talent in place

When there is a new plan to execute most firms consider employing fresh talent, as well as reviewing existing staff to make sure they are up to the job.

This might involve bringing in new skills and leadership from outside or other parts of the firm, or upskilling employees.

You might find that you need to engage with consultants or bring in new tools to help find the talent pool you need. Staff are increasingly attracted by a corporation's vision rather than simply financial remuneration, which may require a broader positioning of the company. But this varies between and within countries, regions and demographics.

Also be mindful of just following the latest fads or fashions. The key challenge here is to customise these new ideas to make them work best for your own strategic needs.

## 3. Finding your digital pathway

Firms such as Facebook, Google, Amazon, Apple, Tesla, Netflix and Alibaba use digital technologies not only to innovate with new products and services, but also to pave new ways for new markets or digital platforms to be created.

In this space, it is important to set out a clear pathway about how you intend to use digital technologies – both to assist in supporting your products and services to reach your customers and also as a way to support your strategy.

Consider whether you have an overarching digital strategy in place that brings agility to your business model and helps enhance the ways you engage with your employees, stakeholders, suppliers and customers.

For example, could your suppliers hold some important piece of data or information that would help identify early signals of changes in your customers' needs or a disruption that

could have important implications for your offerings?

Setting a plan for the future is only the beginning of a strategic journey. The execution is an ongoing process that requires commitment, persistence, and constant readjustment.

It's not a linear or calendar-driven process, but a dynamic, unfolding one involving multiple iterations and interactions with stakeholders within and outside the firm.

Learning to embrace this dynamism and fluidity in strategy creation and execution can help firms become better attuned not only to financial or market needs but also to wider, societal challenges.



This article was written by Sotirios Paroutis and originally appeared on the Warwick Business School (WBS) website. For more information on WBS at The Shard, please visit [wbs.ac.uk/go/london](https://wbs.ac.uk/go/london)

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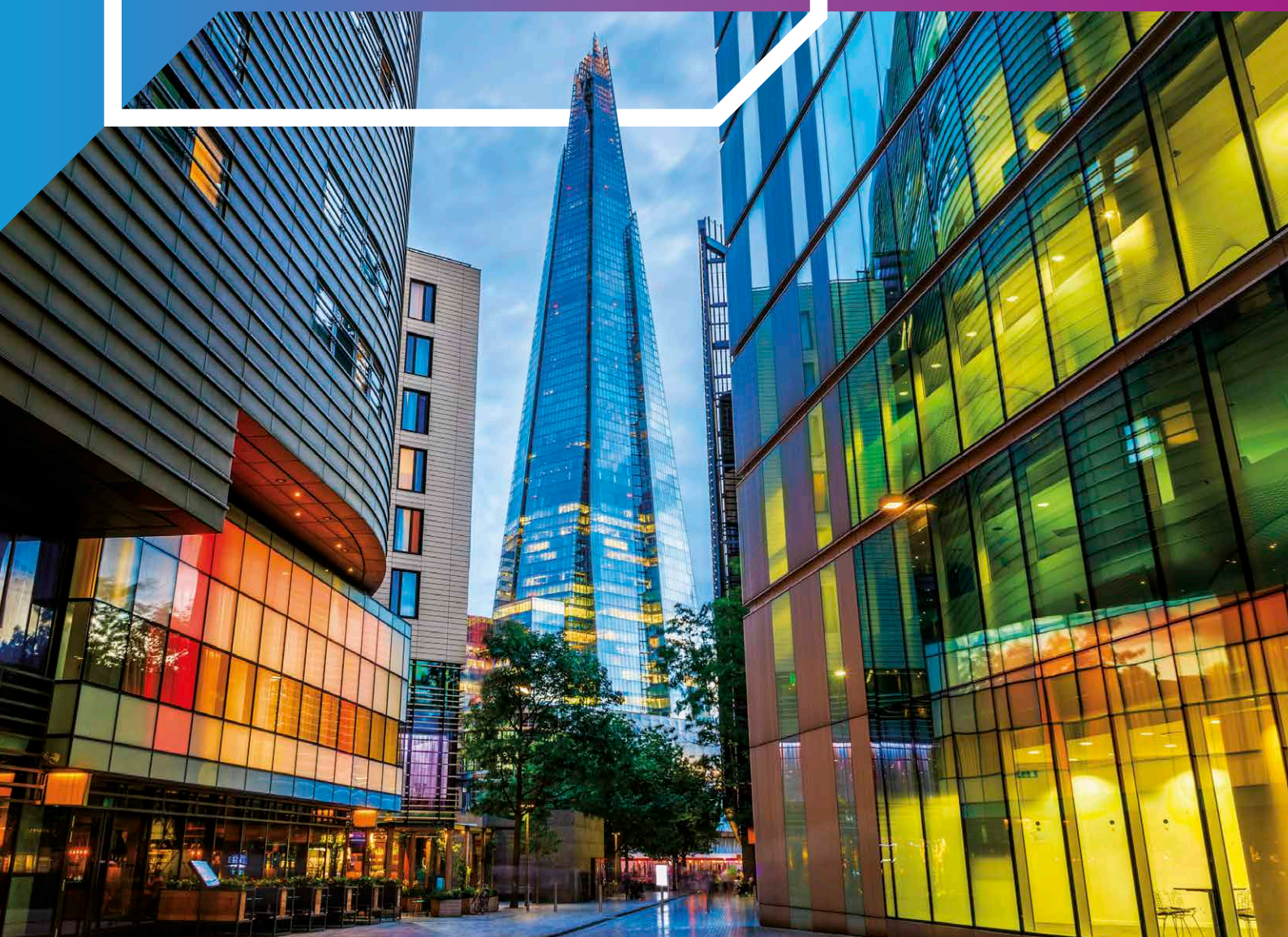
# For the Change Makers

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# Pandemic has changed the skills demand for London businesses

LCCI's Q3 2021 Quarterly Skills Survey results shed light on the use and impact of remote working and how the pandemic has changed businesses' skills needs, with a detailed look at the digital skills gaps in the city. The report also reveals that the majority of businesses are reluctant to engage with training and apprenticeship schemes, even those with government backing such as the Kickstart Scheme.

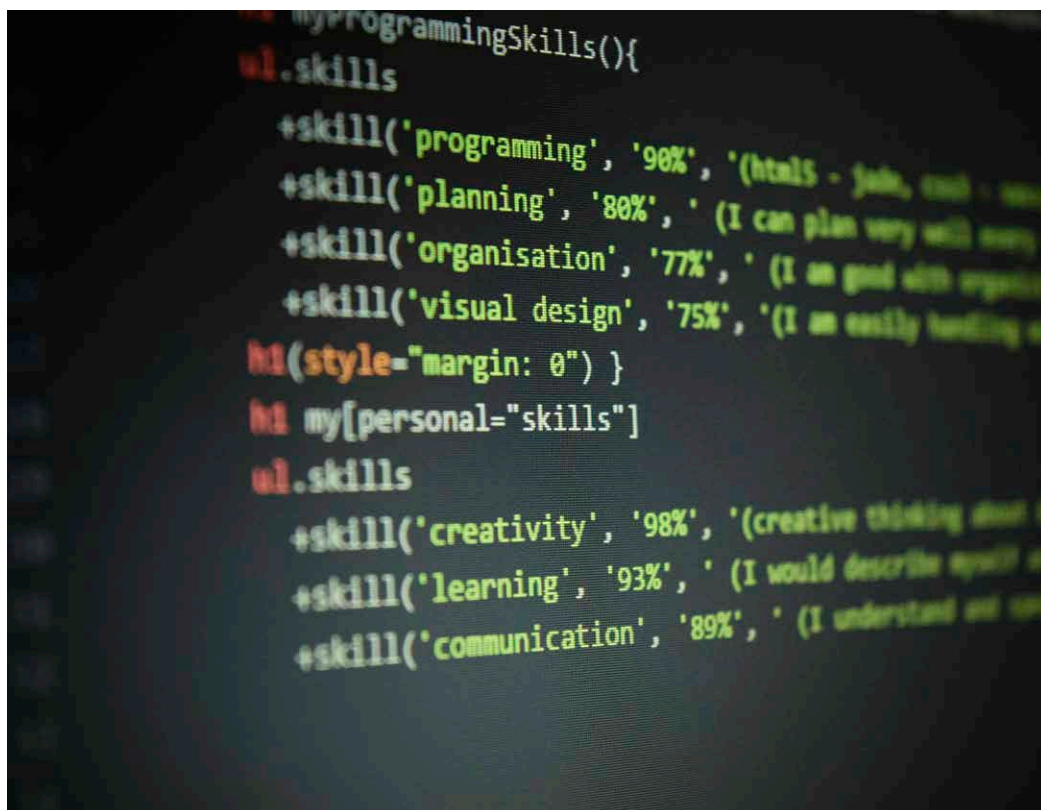
## Key findings

With the shift in working patterns post-lockdown, working from home or hybrid working has continued to be the 'new-normal' for most businesses in London.

- 47 per cent of businesses said their organisation had been making greater use of remote working/working from home since March 2020.
- 58 per cent of businesses whose employees have worked remotely more since the start of the pandemic said it had had a positive impact on their employees' work/life balance, with 14 per cent saying it had worsened as a result.
- However, when considering employees' mental health, businesses were much more divided in terms of the perceived impact: 34 per cent said remote working had a positive impact, while 25 per cent reported a negative impact and 39 per cent thought there was no change.
- Companies' recruitment activity suggests that business optimism in the labour market is returning.
- Recruitment strengthened in Q3 2021, with 17 per cent of businesses saying they had sought to hire over the previous three months – this was up from 11 per cent in Q2.
- Businesses reported stronger hiring intentions in Q3, with over half of large companies saying that they were looking to recruit new employees.

## Adapt

Many businesses had to adapt how they operated during the pandemic, which has resulted in a change in the skillsets businesses look for and value in their employees.



- When asked to consider which skills businesses had greater need of now compared to March 2020, sales or business development was the most cited. This was the case in both micro and larger companies.
- Businesses also identified the gap in digital skills, with two-thirds of firms said they had at least one type of gap in digital skills, a challenge that was exacerbated for 'larger' businesses, rising to 76 per cent.

## Investment

Despite the ever-growing focus on 'levelling up' and upskilling, especially given the high rates of unemployment and furlough in London, the survey found that most businesses in the capital are unlikely to hire trainees, interns or apprentices or to participate in government-backed schemes such as Kickstart. The survey also asked businesses about their investment in training.

- Two thirds of businesses have no intention to employ staff under apprenticeships, traineeships, internships, the Kickstart Scheme (for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit) or T-levels.

**Many businesses had to adapt how they operated during the pandemic, which has resulted in a change in the skillsets businesses look for and value in their employees.**

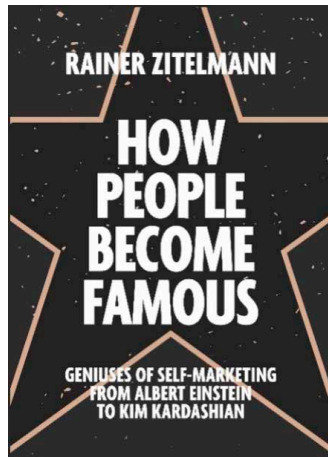
- Over half of micro businesses cited the costs, administration or management required with employing someone in these schemes as a barrier to engagement.
- Although larger companies were more likely to hire from these schemes, almost a third said the schemes did not meet the needs of their business.
- Firms' investment in training was moderately higher in Q3 2021, with 12 per cent of firms saying that had raised spending compared to the previous three months, growing to almost a third of larger companies saying that they had increased spending in Q3 2021 over the previous three months.

The Quarterly Skills Survey aims to outline the pandemic's effects on businesses of all sizes across London. This year's survey shows that most businesses are focussed on growth and business development, which chimes with the findings of LCCI's London Business 1000 report released earlier this month. It is encouraging to see that working from home continues to have a positive perceived impact on employees but it is clear that business must continue to invest in upskilling and training their employees in vital skills such as digital and that they should look to invest in employees from traineeships and apprenticeship schemes.

[www.londonchamber.co.uk](http://www.londonchamber.co.uk)

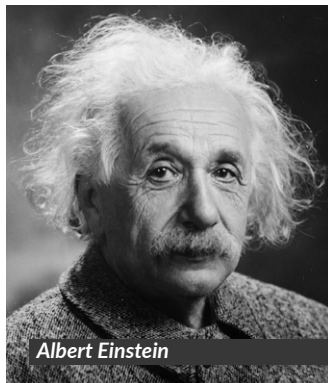
# Shortcuts to fame

According to *Rainer Zitelmann*, historian, sociologist and author, pursuing fame is a difficult task, and those who succeed at it are masters of self-marketing, showcasing themselves effectively and attracting media attention



**H**ow *People Become Famous: Geniuses of Self-Marketing from Albert Einstein to Kim Kardashian* explores how the 12 celebrities profiled in the book have propelled themselves to fame through self-marketing rather than focusing on financial success.

## Self-marketing



Albert Einstein

Zitelmann shows the importance of understanding the art of self-promotion to achieve maximum exposure. He showcases celebrities from politics, sport, fashion, show business, finance and science. The chosen profession doesn't matter. What binds these diverse and talented individuals together is their ability to understand the importance of self-marketing and to use it effectively.

"Entrepreneurs, artists, athletes, and even regular employees have to be able to sell themselves. It's just not enough to be good in your field," says Zitelmann. The individuals

**"Entrepreneurs, artists, athletes, and even regular employees have to be able to sell themselves. It's just not enough to be good in your field."**

mentioned in the book knew exactly why and what they were doing to achieve their goals and become famous. Modesty did not factor into their game plan.

In this book readers will discover how these superstars built their brand and capitalised on what they had to offer, how discipline played a part, and what strategies worked for them.

## Provocative behaviour

Zitelmann states that one of the keys to becoming famous is being self-disciplined. "Without exception, the celebrities portrayed in his book were not good at obeying others, nor did they want to be. But they were very good at obeying themselves." He points out that the public is less shocked by provocative behaviour than it once was so it is more difficult to be a rebel today, however, "the geniuses of self-marketing will find a way to be noticed."

Readers will find several shortcuts to fame in the book.

## Shortcut 1: Don't forget to cluck if you lay an egg

Do what chickens do! Chickens cluck when they lay an egg. They follow a basic principle of self-marketing: First, abandon the sets of beliefs that prevent you from doing so, such as Quality will always prevail on its own, Modesty is a virtue, don't be a show-off, don't blow your own trumpet. If you live by these outdated 'virtues,' others will pass you by in a hurry.

## Shortcut 2: Don't hide your rough edges

Don't waste time worrying about rubbing other people the wrong

way. Geniuses of self-marketing such as Madonna and Muhammad Ali knew that it's not just about being better, it's about being different from others. Karl Lagerfeld repeatedly drew attention to himself with his cutting or cheeky statements.

## Shortcut 3: Outward appearances do matter

Every brand has a trademark. Think of Coca Cola, McDonald's, Apple or Mercedes-Benz. If you want to turn yourself into a brand, you need to make sure you are instantly recognisable. For example, several celebrities turned their hair into their trademarks. Think of Einstein's unkempt white hair.

## Shortcut 4: PR, PR, PR!

If you want to be famous, you need to be a master of public relations. Celebrities devote a great deal of time and energy to media and public relations work to build their brands. They know exactly how the media works, give countless inter-

views, and deliver the stories that journalists are interested in.

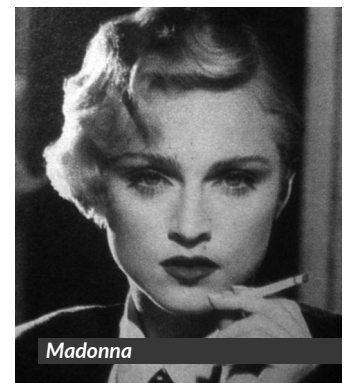
## Shortcut 5: Say things people will remember

Celebrities understand the importance of memorable one-liners and poems as an aid to standing out as a brand. Everyone has heard Ali's quote, "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" and Lagerfeld's "If you wear sweatpants, you have lost control of your life." Perhaps you, too, have *bon mots* to hand down to celebrate your brand.

To succeed at becoming famous says Zitelmann, "it is necessary to understand your brand and make it work for you. The celebrity-geniuses in this book retain their status in the hall of fame even after death thanks to their ability to market themselves effectively."

*How People Become Famous: Geniuses of Self-Marketing from Albert Einstein to Kim Kardashian*  
Management Books 2000

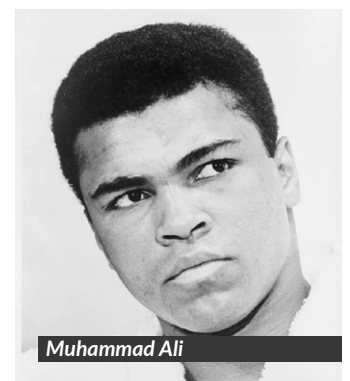
**Zitelmann shows the importance of understanding the art of self-promotion to achieve maximum exposure.**



Madonna



Kim Kardashian



Muhammad Ali





# Innovative. International. Inspiring.

"One thing that really stands out is the innovative mindset here," says Björn Rathjens, Engineering Manager at Klarna in Hessen. Klarna was founded in Sweden and came to Hessen, the state in the centre of Germany, in 2014. Björn is right: Hessen is a top location for international entrepreneurs who are able to think outside the box. For people who want to use their passion and great ideas to reach new horizons. For people just like you.

Hessen is a central hub for Europe's transportation and logistics network and offers ideal conditions for sustainable economic success. All European economic centres can be reached within a few hours by car, train and plane and our leading-edge infrastructure is developed continuously as needed, protecting the environment, and cutting costs. We are home to domestic and international market leaders. From here, many business headquarters tap into new markets and reach their existing customers. Throughout Germany. Throughout Europe. Worldwide.

Hessen has always been a leading destination for foreign direct investments in Europe. In total, over

13,000 international companies have already opted in favour of this location – especially in the ICT, life sciences and finance sectors. By the way, Klarna recently announced its plans to create 400 new jobs at its tech hub in Hessen.

## Home of Talent and Ideas

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*Welcome to Hessen.*

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# Digital confidence empowers expansion – London SMEs set to expand

Despite the challenges of the past 18 months, new research from Google shows small businesses in London are poised to grow in the next year, with 70 per cent surveyed planning to expand nationally and/or internationally for the first time in 2022. Twenty-nine per cent of those surveyed intend to expand both nationally and internationally in 2022

**S**MEs' expansion plans in London are being driven by the growth of digital during the pandemic: 29 per cent say their decision to expand nationally and/or internationally was driven by their increased uptake of digital tools following lockdown, while 27 per cent attribute this to opportunities created by online platforms. In addition, 23 per cent say opportunities created by social media played a role in their decision.

Businesses in London have already invested in the growth of their companies - of the 74 per cent who received government funding in the past year, 26 per cent used this to invest in new physical premises while 24 per cent invested in new digital software and hardware, such as laptops. Almost a third used this funding to hire new staff.

## Pivot

Allergy-friendly bakery Vida Bakery first opened its doors in Brick Lane, before opening a second store in Kings Cross in 2020. A third store in Soho was in the pipeline when the pandemic hit - forcing them to close the two stores, put the third on hold, and pivot to online sales. Co-founder Vanessa Miquilena worked on setting up a website in less than 24 hours, learning to use Google Ads and amending the company's Google My Business account to keep customers up to date.

Speaking about their new strategy, Vanessa says: "Google Ads helped us not only reach customers who wanted cupcakes and cookies but also the allergy-friendly market. Being able to target niche Search terms around allergies was super-useful in stretching our spend and reaching our target audience. I'm now running campaigns for both online orders and to drive visitors to the shop — we get a lot of



Allergy-friendly Vida Bakery

customers through Google Ads."

As small businesses in the region grow, the research shows almost three quarters of small to medium businesses in London surveyed will take on more staff next year, creating more local employment opportunities. And despite increased use of digital over the pandemic, physical premises are set to remain - among those with a physical presence, only 18 per cent intend to scale this back.

## Reliant

The findings come as Google launches its independent *Economic Impact Report for London* - published by independent research specialists Public First - quantifying its impact on the local economy as businesses became increasingly reliant on digital to continue operating.

The report shows that as a result of the pandemic:

- Over 50,000 London businesses started selling online for the first time
- Over 53,000 London businesses started taking online payments for the first time
- Over 49,000 London businesses started advertising online for the first time.

By helping businesses shift to online sales for the first time during 2020, the report estimates that Google helped support £948 million in economic activity.

## Sustainable and inclusive

Ronan Harris, vice president and managing director (UK & Ireland) at Google comments: "With more small businesses across the capital on the brink of expansion, we must make sure that everyone has the digital tools and skills needed for

the next phase of business growth. It's inspiring to see people gain confidence through our Google Digital Garage skills training. Encouraging greater adoption of digital technology could be one of the most powerful ways of driving a sustainable and inclusive recovery."

However, the road to growth is not always easy. SME owners and decision makers say the most common barriers to growth in London

are potential future Covid-19 restrictions, falling customer demand and staff shortages/cashflow issues. And when asked what advice they would most like to receive about growing their business using digital in 2022, SME owners and decision makers cited social media and on-line advertising.

<https://googleimpactreport.publicfirst.co.uk/uk-cities-london>

## How to grow business in a post-lockdown world

### Tips for SMES from Google Digital Garage expert trainer Christine Braithwaite

**Social media** - It's important to measure the impact of social media. Virtually every social media site offers some sort of insights, so make use of them.

**Online advertising** - Focus on who you want to reach and what you want to achieve to help you work out where to start. Make sure that you build in a measurement system to any ad campaign you use - Google Analytics can track all of the traffic on your website including where it came from and how well it met your objectives.

**Online security** - Think carefully about data storage. Portable data sticks can easily go missing or fall into the wrong hands, so I'd advise storing your files securely in the cloud.

**Website content and development** - Don't make people work too hard - every

time you make them click forward, you run the risk of them clicking 'back' instead.

**E-marketing** - Focus on your audience, if you try to reach everyone then you'll end up diluting your messages so much that you are unlikely to reach anyone.

**E-commerce** - Finding a way to transact online can really help your business expand outside its local footprint and it's easier than you might think to get started. Start by identifying the reasons why somebody would buy from you.





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# Management skills a route to higher productivity in London



Anthony Impey, chief executive of Be the Business

**Micro businesses and SMEs believe the business environment improved last year, enabling increases to productivity, according to new research published by Be the Business**

The London Productive Business Index increased from 111.43 in Q1 2020 to 116.9 in Q3, driven by operating conditions easing and the financial position of businesses improving. This is behind the national Index score of 119.0

The Index is built from a number of inputs, however it is notable that London had the lowest figure (23 per cent) reporting that general business conditions had improved in Q3, and the second highest (28 per cent) reporting a worsening of general business conditions.

The Index tracks reported business performance, expectations and changes to five areas of business activity, each of which has consistently been shown to impact on productivity. The five areas are: management skills; technology adoption; training and HR; operating efficiency; and innovation.

## Significant

London's business leaders identified management skills as the most significant influence on improved productivity, with nearly half of leaders and managers intending to

invest in increasing management skills in the next year - significantly higher than the national average of 36 per cent. Increased management capability can be transformative for business performance. Even small improvements in management skills are associated with a five per cent improvement in the growth rate of firm productivity.

Despite the positive headlines the index also reported significant increases to business costs with over a third forecasting an increase in selling prices over Q4 2020 - a rise from 26 per cent in the previous Index.

## Hiring challenges

More than half of companies are seeking to hire new employees currently. However, of those seeking to hire, around a third are finding this more difficult than before the Covid-19 pandemic began.

Measures taken specifically to improve the attractiveness of their company to new recruits include introducing flexible working practices, increasing pay, introducing remote working and adding new employee benefits. Meanwhile, 57 per cent of companies expect average pay of their employees to increase across the rest of 2021 as inflation and the war for talent intensify.

## Focus

Anthony Impey, chief executive of Be the Business and chair of the LCCI's London, Fostering Skills,



Innovation and Entrepreneurship committee, commented: "London's business leaders are confident their productivity is heading in the right direction and see management as the key to delivering this. However, they are also keenly aware that input costs, rising inflation and wage demands will mean they must redouble their efforts. Transforming our productivity outlook won't happen overnight. It will require sustained focus from government and the entire business community to change our long-term trend of underperformance."

## Innovate

Small Business Minister Paul Scully MP said: "I know from my own

experience of running a small business that boosting skills is crucial to a successful enterprise, and supporting this will be integral to our plans to level up and build a high-wage, competitive economy.

"We launched the Help to Grow: Management scheme to help UK businesses realise their potential, with practical training on how to boost profits, innovate and get the most out of a team - and I would encourage any business leaders looking to invest in their skills to sign up."

[www.bethebusiness.com/research](http://www.bethebusiness.com/research)



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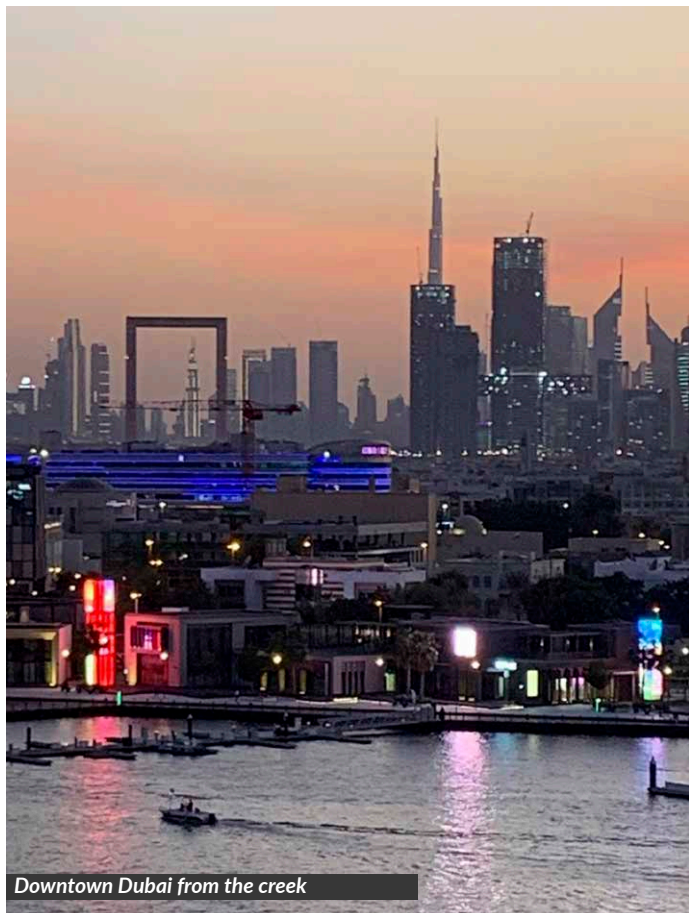
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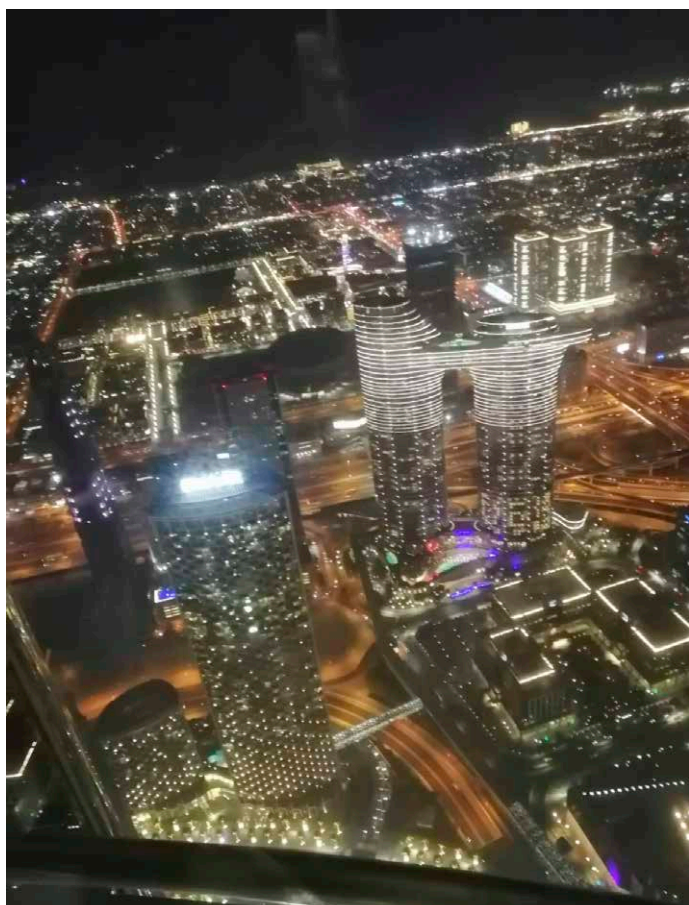
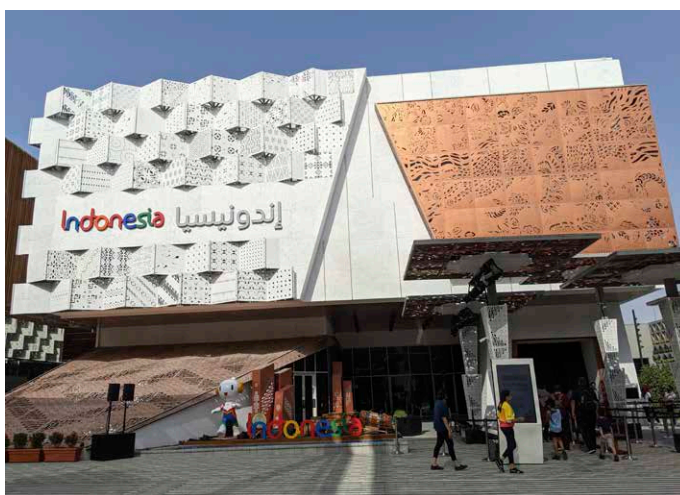
# Dubai photo gallery



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# The Blockchain Puzzle

By Winnie Mosioma, a director at Blockchain Legal Consultancy



Dubai Marina



Expo 2020



**Blockchain? Never heard of it? Have heard of it but have no idea what it actually means? Maybe you have read about it and have a vague understanding that it's something to do with... umm.... Bitcoin?**

**Well, yes and no. Blockchain is not the same thing as bitcoin, but the two are intimately linked because most cryptoassets currently depend upon blockchain technology.**

## So, what is blockchain?

Apparently, blockchain is nothing entirely new. In a sense, it is an old concept that has been greatly upgraded by technology.

In simple terms, blockchain is a shared database capable of ensuring a robust record of commercial transactions without relying on a central authority. Instead of an entry being recorded on one computer, it is simultaneously recorded on hundreds of thousands of computers spread out across the world ("the distributed network").

## How does blockchain work?

Once any particular block of data is full, a new block is created. And the old, complete block is inextricably linked to the new block by means of a mathematical "fingerprint", a unique and chronological representation of all the information in any unit of blocks. This unique "fingerprint" appears at the bottom of a completed

block and is reproduced at the top of the next block.

## The legal response

Cryptoasset transactions, in common with all other commercial transactions, can lead to legal relationships, and that means that a more appropriate legal and regulatory framework is required.

Not for the first time, lawmakers and lawyers find themselves scurrying to keep up with technological challenges. However, some progress is being made in the form of the European Commission's proposed Regulation on Markets in Crypto-Assets (MiCA), the FCA guidance, and most recently, The Law Commission's update on Smart Legal Contracts.

## How can we help you?

Businesses looking to participate in the cryptoassets market can expect greater regulation in the months and years ahead. Blockchain Legal Consultancy can guide and support your business.

For more information, please contact our team by emailing [info@blockchainlegalconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:info@blockchainlegalconsultancy.co.uk).







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# Hybrid Working – A Combat to Commercial Approach



It's too early to claim we are edging closer to normality, although vaccination levels and greater resilience to severe illness offer some optimism. Regardless of future virus outcomes, hybrid working will be an enduring legacy of Covid-19. While many bosses who saw remote working as an aberration, now accept that many staff will not return to the office full time, businesses still need to bring people back some of the time to harness the spontaneous creativity, learning, and collaborative benefits physical colleague engagement brings. However, there is a pressing need to think beyond the emerging standard of making IT improvements, enhancing workplace safety, and offering in-work employee inducements, such as free meals and other benefits.

If businesses are to optimise the benefits of hybrid working and attract, retain, and grow the staff they need, companies also need to empower colleagues with a greater sense of purpose to motivate them and improve their productivity, resilience, and well-being, whether at home or in the office. This requires providing them with the following six things:

1. A clear **Mission**, which has a unifying intent and runs as a single organisational narrative, where every colleague knows their part in the company plan.
2. **Empowerment** tools, skills training and processes to harness creativity, initiative, and accountability.
3. Effective **Communications**, which clearly lay out what they are being asked to

achieve and why, while offering them a right to reply and permission to challenge.

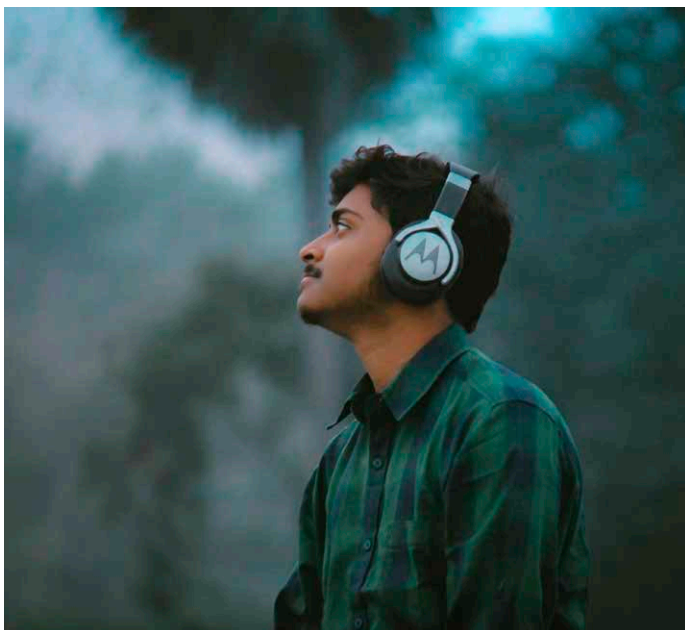
4. **Collaborative** mechanisms, which allow teams to cooperate across silos to harness their diversity of thought and breed individual and collective accountability.
5. An **Agile** decision-making methodology that devolves authority and supports timely and appropriate decisions, which are both auditable and flexible to change.
6. The **Right behaviours**, stemming from codifying leadership and culture as embedded practices, regardless of environment or location.



These 'MECCAR' principles have been drawn from the military experience of devolving leadership to empower teams, which operate remotely for survival, to succeed in the most challenging circumstances, where managing crisis, while mitigating risk, team fatigue, and managing mental health, are norms. Like businesses, armies have to deal with exponential technological change, proliferating disruptors, and increasing regulatory and media scrutiny. Unlike business, the military have been framing their responses to these challenges over seven decades, which provides a powerful learning perspective for those companies now finding themselves in uncharted waters of hybrid working.

Matero Consulting use a new way of working methodology called MECCAR.

[www.matero.co.uk](http://www.matero.co.uk)



***"You may be the owner, but you should be able to delegate tasks to the people around you. If you treat your staff with respect and kindness, they will care about the success of your business and will be happy to help."***

will prioritise the most important jobs and reduce the risk of you working late or panicking at the end of the day. After all, there's nothing more satisfying than a successful day's work.

Also, it's important to remember you don't need to take on every responsibility. You may be the owner, but you should be able to delegate

tasks to the people around you. If you treat your staff with respect and kindness, they will care about the success of your business and will be happy to help. Actually, if your staff are eager to progress in the company, they will go out of their way to take on more responsibility. So let them!

## Brighter future

There are many more ways to alleviate stress, but these three steps can help begin the process of making life more manageable. By recognising your success, taking the time to care for your well-being, and organising and delegating tasks, you stand a better chance of running a business that makes you happy. Help yourself, improve your business, and look towards a brighter future.

This guide was produced by Snowshock, the slush machine supplier  
[www.snowshock.com](http://www.snowshock.com)



# London business leaders gloomy about 2022 prospects

One in five London business leaders expect the economic prospects for their companies to worsen this year, according to results from the LCCI's Capital 500 2021 Q4 survey which gauges business performance and confidence levels in firms of various sizes across the capital

The survey, which interviewed leaders between 28 October and 11 December 2021, highlights the lack of confidence felt in the capital which correlates with the emergence of the Omicron variant and subsequent concerns around Christmas trading. Nearly two-fifths of firms said they expected the UK's economy to worsen in the coming 12 months, while a third felt that the economic prospects for London would worsen.

London businesses were evidently less optimistic about domestic sales in Q4 than they were in Q3. Respondents were asked to assess the last three months compared with the third quarter of 2021 in terms of domestic sales, cashflow, business domestic orders and employment. While 26 per cent of businesses reported an increase in domestic sales in Q3, this trend reversed in Q4 and a quarter of respondents reported a decrease in domestic sales. This was true of micro and larger firms.

## Cost pressures

The survey found that businesses' cost pressures were intensifying. Firms were asked to indicate the extent to which costs of energy, fuel, raw materials (domestically and internationally), wages and borrowing had varied in the past three months and nearly two-thirds reported an increase in their fuel and energy costs, while nearly half said their domestic raw material costs had risen in Q4.

## Stark reminder

LCCI chief executive Richard Burge, commented: "Our latest Capital 500 survey shows the severity of Omicron's impact on London business and business leaders' outlooks on the local and national economies. Against the period of growing opti-

mism witnessed in the third quarter, the results of this survey are a stark reminder of the tumultuous conditions businesses are trading in.

"While London businesses have proved their resilience and adaptability, we encourage the government to recognise this and stand ready to provide additional support where necessary."

## Cost pressures

Burge also said that the survey showed that businesses were feeling the effects of employees forced to self-isolate, which was impacting their ability to operate to their full potential. "At the same time" he added, "firms are facing soaring cost pressures, with utility bills continuing to rise quickly. Supply chain issues continue to persist, which may be exacerbated further by the new import rules introduced at the start of 2022.

"Even if the worst-case scenarios of the new variant are not borne out, the pressures on the health system and London businesses will increase. London businesses have proven their willingness and ability to adapt to rapidly changing events. They will be tested again in the coming months, and the government should stand ready to provide additional support where possible."



## Key findings

**Cautious forecasts for growth reflected businesses' uncertainty around the implications of Omicron for the labour market:**

- Less than one in five of firms expected the size of their workforce to increase over the coming months, falling from 20 per cent in Q3
- However, the majority of firms expect the size of their workforce to remain the same.

**The proportion of businesses looking to recruit and invest in training increased marginally in Q4:**

- The number of larger businesses actively hiring increased from 55 per cent in Q3 to 69 per cent in Q4
- Firms in inner London were more actively recruiting than those in outer London (22 per cent vs 15 per cent respectively), and there was no change to the number of micro businesses looking to hire (13 per cent)
- Nearly one-fifth of London businesses reported an increase in investment in training in the last quarter
- There was no change to the percentage of firms who said they were operating at full capacity (43 per cent).

**Overall, the expectations for the UK economy took a notable downturn:**

- Nearly two-fifths of firms said they expected the UK's economy to worsen in the coming 12 months, up from 22 per cent in the Q3 2021 Capital 500
- The proportion of businesses that expect the economy to improve was 30 per cent in Q4, down from 44 per cent
- In a notable reversal of the trend in Q3, respondents were more likely to predict worsening than improvement in the economic prospects for London and the UK.

[www.londonchamber.co.uk/LCCI/media/media/QES4-2021-Report.pdf](http://www.londonchamber.co.uk/LCCI/media/media/QES4-2021-Report.pdf)

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# Setting a balance goal – how to manage your work life balance without it impacting your career



by Lorna Dunning

**D**uring a 20-year career in senior roles within global organisations, I've been fortunate to work with top performers and exceptional leaders. I made it a habit to observe and learn from others' successes and mistakes.

Today I help individuals to take their career and life to the next level and to achieve this they often need to overcome all sorts of hurdles and for so many of my clients, as their careers accelerate, they find it increasingly hard to manage their work life balance.

Throughout my senior leadership career, better work life balance was a reoccurring goal. I thought this meant that I needed to spend more time enjoying things away from work. In my mind I saw a pie chart labelled 'Work – 80 per cent,' 'Everything else – 20 per cent.'

I've since learned that what I really wanted was for my life to be filled with all the things I wanted to experience. It was not simply a case of allocating the pie more evenly between work and life, a 50/50 split.

In work, I was positive and enthusiastic but at home I was numb and lacked enthusiasm, so I was literally spending my emotional and physical energy in one direction. Without doubt, I was out of balance.

Now that things are different, I understand what I really meant by work life balance. To have enough time and emotional capacity for the people I care about, to do the things I enjoy and pursue goals I wanted to achieve outside of work.

## Are you out of balance?

Through the work I do with my clients I recognise some of the signs:

1. Loss of enthusiasm
2. Spinning plates
3. Worrying (about small things)
4. Multi-tasking (badly)
5. A cluttered mind (lack of focus)
6. Living on adrenaline
7. Frustrated that you don't have time to try new things
8. You're self-critical
9. Saying no to things you wish you had time to do
10. Unable to 'switch off'.



Number 10 caused me to miss out on real enjoyment. I'd be present physically, but not mentally. I'd go on holiday, but be 20 per cent niggled about something work related, even if there was nothing wrong.

These days my pie chart is filled with colour:

- I laugh easily and genuinely
- I get excited and absorbed by events in my personal life (as much as my professional life)
- I don't have to remind myself to be present
- My heart feels lighter and the niggles have gone.

With busy lives and jobs, how do we achieve this? Managing your balance means two things:

1. Peace of mind (feeling at ease).
2. Doing what brings you joy and distributing your pie chart how you want to, rather than accepting the cards you're holding in this moment.

Sometimes we assume that changing certain circumstances in our life will lead to happiness, but without serenity of mind, your cup will never truly 'runneth over'.

When you achieve balance in our mind, it expresses itself everywhere and circumstances naturally shift in your favour.

## Simple steps to peace of mind

- Spend a few minutes at the start and end of each day thinking about everything that's going well for you.
- Use an affirmation and repeat regularly, such as:
  - "I love how I move through each day feeling calm and confident."
  - "I feel poised and totally at ease."

## Simple steps towards joy

1. Think of one thing you love to do and do it immediately or schedule it in your diary to guarantee it. For example, listen to a podcast about something you're interested in even if it has nothing to do with your work, walk outside for 20 minutes to chat with a friend who you never see, play tennis, read, draw, play an instrument ...

2. Schedule a day off work to do something totally random. For example, buy a canvas and paint a picture, walk in a totally different part of town, feed the ducks.

Doing something random activates some important mental muscles:

- Imagination – to come up with a random idea, requires the use of your imagination.
- Perception – to open yourself up to doing something different, you must have an open mind and be able to see things from different perspectives.

Inserting activities into your life that light you up can only ever be a good thing. These light-hearted strategies that will shake things up, help you become more aware and more mindful.

Lorna Dunning is a professional development coach  
[www.lornadunning.co.uk](http://www.lornadunning.co.uk)

# Ten most annoying habits in the office



Stealing other people's food from the fridge was voted the biggest workplace annoyance. Image courtesy of Shutterstock.

The number one most annoying office habit has been revealed as stealing other people's food from the fridge. Next in line is clearing out the office by microwaving strong-smelling food.

The *Office Charter* lists ten of the most annoying habits and Furniture at Work is encouraging employers and employees to share the charter, adding their own personal suggestions for the worst office habits.

The top ten worst office habits that made the charter are:

1. Stealing people's food from the fridge
2. Microwaving smelly food
3. Having loud phone calls at your desk
4. Chewing loud food at your desk
5. Encroaching onto your 'desk neighbour's' desk
6. Listening to loud music
7. Opening windows/turning on the air con without asking
8. Loud typing
9. Tapping feet or hands constantly
10. Taking your shoes off at your desk.



Eating loudly at your desk and taking your shoes off in the office also made it, despite being things we've become used to working from home. Images courtesy of Shutterstock.

***"Who else remembers the waft of someone's smelly feet coming across their workstation? Or the freezing breeze of an open window in December hitting you?"***

A spokesperson from Furniture at Work commented on the office charter: "With offices around the country beginning to spark back to life over the last few months, we wanted to do something to help make workplaces around the country a better place! We're used to providing the office furniture that helps keep employees comfortable, but we've decided to take it a step further and create an office charter that aims to finally banish those awful workplace habits!

"Who else remembers the waft of someone's smelly feet coming across their workstation? Or the freezing breeze of an open window in December hitting you? Well, we're determined to help get rid of those habits forever and help to make the office a more comfortable place."

[www.furniture-work.co.uk](http://www.furniture-work.co.uk)



## Growth Idea's HPEX Programme Recognised as Global Top 10 Management Development Programme

Growth Idea's business growth programme, the High-Performance Executive (HPEX) Board Programme, has been voted as one of the world's best management development programmes for SMEs by GlobalGurus, a global research organisation.

The innovative HPEX Board programme is underpinned by a board of directors, a world class peer-coaching experience and a strong non-executive leadership team to work alongside SME business leaders, providing a higher level of support and accountability to those who may not have the resources or experience for it otherwise.

It aims to help business owners and senior management executives formulate effective strategies to achieve personal, professional, and business growth. Through the HPEX programme, management teams gain access to experts in a range of fields who work alongside them to devise a business strategy and identify areas that are constricting potential growth. It focuses on increasing the value of businesses and on average have helped clients experience a 168% increase in business valuation over an 18-month period.

Growth Idea is led by Shweta Jhajharia and guides top business leaders in attaining the next level of growth for their businesses.

On winning the award, Shweta said, "the programme seeks to provide practical guidance to help business executives manage their roles and the business effectively

and scale up to desired success. We're pleased that HPEX has gained universal recognition for the value it brings to clients."

GlobalGurus awards are voted for by the public and website audience.



### About Growth Idea

Growth Idea was founded in 2008 with the aim of helping businesses realise their full potential and help businesses scale up and increase their profitability. Growth Idea's Founder, Shweta Jhajharia is widely recognised as one of the top business coaches in the UK, having won 70+ awards, including CEO Monthly's Outstanding Businesswoman of the Year, Top 20 Global Trainers, and Influencers, and 2 prestigious International Stevie® Awards.

You can discover more about her 6M business growth model in the Amazon best-seller, SPARKS: Ideas to Ignite Your Business Growth, a complimentary copy of which is available at [growthidea.co.uk/sparks-book](http://growthidea.co.uk/sparks-book).

To learn more about the HPEX programme and how it can help you grow your business and improve its asset valuation, contact [info@growthidea.co.uk](mailto:info@growthidea.co.uk) or 020 7627 1234.





# EV charge points: three quick wins we can realise with technology



by Alok Dubey

With increasing sales of electric and hybrid vehicles in the UK, charging stations have become a hot topic. The government, manufacturers, and installers simply can't build charge points fast enough. However, Alok Dubey argues that, in the rush to build new charge points, we're overlooking what we can do right now with the existing technology for EV charging infrastructure

**W**e've all seen in recent months the large number of stories on how the charging infrastructure for electric and hybrid cars is criticised for lagging behind.

The criticism stems from the belief that the installation of charging stations is still too slow. While the sale of electric vehicles has skyrocketed, the increase of charge points has failed to keep pace.

The result of this has seen queues at charging points along motorways, city centres, and even on public roads, as well as growing the insecurity and hesitation among potential EV buyers.

While some see the building and installation of new charging stations as the solution, there are plenty of other areas we can look into to help address the problem right now.

The solution lies in technology. Although it is a completely overlooked point in the debate about charging stations, there are three obvious ways existing technology can provide EV drivers with more charging options in the UK.

## 1. Intelligent queueing system for charging stations

For EV drivers, the instances of having driven for hours in a vain search for a vacant charging station lingers long in their memory. So why not introduce an intelligent queueing system where electric drivers in densely populated areas can line up in a virtual queue and be notified when it's their turn?

Not only would this ensure equal access for all, it would also signifi-



cantly increase the occupancy rate of charging stations while relieving congested charging points.

According to one survey, UK drivers travel an average of 23 miles per day. It would take approximately 30 minutes to reach this level of charge with a standard charge point, which means that just one charging station can fuel around 48 electric vehicles within one day.

This is just as relevant in the big cities as it is for businesses and organisations with their own charging stations. With the same numbers from the above example, a company only needs one charging station to charge 16 cars during a working day, offering a lucrative opportunity to reclaim investments made in chargers.

## 2. Semi-public charging stations

The same charging stations can be programmed to be publicly available outside working hours, where companies and associations with charging stations can help other electric drivers and earn the investment



back home.

The charging stations can be made private and public as needed, working as a kind of semi-public charging station. Companies can ensure that only employees can charge during the working day, while the general public can use the charging points during the rest of the day.

If we can activate company- and association-owned charging stations, we will open up a completely new charging network that can increase the total number of charging stations within a certain area. Now if we could book the available charging stations, we could potentially find a cure for the dreaded range anxiety.

## 3. Reserve a charging stand

The third solution has to be a booking system of charging stations. Even with a top-of-the-range electric vehicle, long trips often require filling up on a public charge point.

Unfortunately, it is all too common to encounter long, uncoordinated queues at public stations.

Quite often the rules are as if you're in the Wild West, and drivers risk sitting in a queue without ever knowing when they will eventually get to charge.

If we had a simple booking system, we could solve the queueing problem at chargers and make it easy to cross long distances in an electric car without fear of a lack of charging options.

This could be a game changer for businesses and consumers alike. Instead of only ever finding out if a point is in use until they drive up to it, smart queueing features can let drivers queue up virtually. Organisations can therefore reduce the total investment and number of charge points they install while allowing drivers to book a charge point while on their journey.

With the recent fuel crisis still fresh in everyone's memory, can you imagine what this type of virtual booking system would have done for the mile-long queues of petrol and diesel cars?

## Do more with less

Of course, these solutions are not without reservations. They demand that we work with electric cars, help each other, and acquire new habits. But the impression I get is that we are already pretty good at that.

When the charging stations have such a crucial impact on the transition to green transport, it amazes me that no one has yet pointed out the illogical in the way we as a society operate them right now.

Everything in the green transition is about us using our resources in the best way possible and utilising the full potential of what we have available. This applies to food that is in surplus demand, glass that is recycled, clothes that are recycled, so why not also make sure that all of the charging stations that stand by companies and associations are in use instead of simply building more?

If we do not attack the charging station debate from a new angle, we risk being left with an abundance of charging stations in a few years, making it harder, not easier, for the UK to reach its electric vehicle and Net Zero targets.

Alok Dubey is UK country manager at EV charging App Monta  
<https://monta.app>

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## Members' noticeboard



### ■ PINNACLE GROUP

Pinnacle Group (Pinnacle), one of the UK's leading multi-tenure residential service providers, is expanding its geographical footprint and service capability nationwide through the acquisition of residential and social housing specialists Orchard & Shipman. This acquisition will integrate the whole of Orchard & Shipman within Pinnacle, including their Registered Provider (Orchard & Shipman Homes), and will continue to be led by Chris Shipman, Executive Chairman.

Pinnacle Group has announced that it has acquired AM Services Group (AMSG) in a deal that extends its service capacity, technical skill set and expert knowledge across new FM sectors including retail, manufacturing, and chemical industries. This acquisition expands Pinnacle's service footprint across the North of England and Midlands as well as bolstering its business-to-business offer.

Importantly, this acquisition also enhances Pinnacle's ability to deliver holistic seamless services to a broader range of communities in accordance with their commitment to community stewardship.



### ■ ACE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

**ACE Travel ATG UK CEO, Sarah Wilson, nominated for three awards at the IOD Awards**

Sarah Wilson has been selected as a finalist for three awards at the 2021 Institute of Directors (IOD) East of England Director of the Year Awards. Sarah has been nominated as Director of the Year in the Innovation, Social Value and Sustainability Impact, and Small - Medium Business categories.

A celebration of success and leadership talent, the IOD awards gives the business community a chance to acknowledge the excellence of directors across the UK.

"I'm very grateful to be nominated for three awards by the Institute of Directors, especially given the challenges we've had to endure as a business the past 18 months. It's been incredibly tough at times but recognition like this makes it all worth it" said Wilson.

The awards will take place on 7th January 2022 at the Radisson Stansted Hotel

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**Dec-Assess Ltd are Construction Training Providers delivering NVQ On Site Assessment and Training (OSAT).**

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Our clients are individuals and leading employers, ranging from trainees to experienced workers requiring the Skilled Worker status CSCS card for compliance on regulated construction projects.

We have recently developed a brand-new course in Damage Repair and Resurfacing that we will start delivering next year in North London.

This course will benefit office installation companies, hotels or property management companies looking to train their maintenance staff in this specialist area. It may also be of interest for Finishing Contractors who want to set up in-house cosmetic repair teams or simply anyone who wishes to re-train as a Damage Repair Technician.

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### ■ GERALD EDELMAN

**The Property Services Industry Report by Gerald Edelman reveals expected optimism in revenue and profitability recovery in 2022**

Although the property industry has experienced volatility in the past 16 months, the sector has recovered relatively well.

Since the opening of the UK in spring/summer 2021, the property industry continues to remain in a strong financial position with record breaking valuations, however in recent weeks the announcement on the UK inflation rate surging has increased speculation and anticipation of the inevitable rise of interest rates, and consequently the cost of borrowing ("cost of debt").

Gerald Edelman's latest industry report by Sonal Shah, Richard Staunton, Hiten Patel and Deval Patel, partners at Gerald Edelman, provides key insights into this industry sector.

The report includes a full industry overview, insights into the housing market and commercial sector, as well as property services trends.

The report can be downloaded from Gerald Edelman's website: <https://www.geraldedelman.com/insights/industry-update-property/>



### ■ SHAKESPEARE MARTINEAU

**London is the UK's most ambitious region post-pandemic**

London business leaders are emerging from the pandemic the most ambitious – despite also feeling the greatest levels of loneliness during Covid, new research by Shakespeare Martineau has revealed.

While ambition among the capital's bosses plummeted by almost 20% during Covid – and loneliness nearly doubled (from 36% to 62%) – it has since bounced back to 90%.

One thousand senior decision-makers in UK businesses, including 229 from Greater London, were surveyed by Censuswide as part of Shakespeare Martineau's annual Ambition Index.

London respondents also spoke about how their struggles with maintaining a work-life balance and a lack of time was holding them back as leaders.

Kavita Patel, regional head for the south at Shakespeare Martineau, said: "With people returning to their offices and a travel boom looming, London has certainly been resuscitated and it is positive to see leaders from the capital emerging from the pandemic brimming with ambition."



### ■ CYBERGUARD TECHNOLOGIES

CyberGuard Technologies (an independent company within the OGL Group which has been in the technology business for over 45 years) provides the very best in IT security for UK businesses looking for premium IT performance in a protected, secure environment. Our cyber defences protect against the potential devastation of an attack from cyber-criminals including defending your finances, identity, reputation, data and your customers' confidential information. CREST-accredited, we protect our customers from end-to-end through; Security Testing, Managed Detect & Respond Services, Security Awareness Training and Cyber Certification, and provide reassurance in the event of an attack through fast and effective Cyber Incident Response, built upon sound threat intelligence gathered by our own team of cyber analysts coupled with intel from various global sources.

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Additionally, APlanet provides solutions to manage social action programmes such as corporate volunteering, donations, and community projects allowing organisations to save time and energy whilst understanding the impact of their initiatives in real-time.

**To find out more about how to take your organisation's sustainability to new heights, contact us at [contact@aplanet.org](mailto:contact@aplanet.org) or visit [www.aplanet.org](http://www.aplanet.org) and request a demo of our products.**

# Your data has value to criminals. Do you protect it?

By Matt Dunn

Typically, roles such as business owners, employers, property owners, landlords, company directors or major shareholders involve sensitive data, and a failure to protect this data could have a **severe financial, reputational, and legal impact**. So, if you pay a specialist security firm to protect valuable possessions, why would you not do the same for your valuable data?



In the same way as a security company advises on physical security, a good IT Managed Security Services Provider (MSSP) can advise on data and cyber security. The MSSP can review all virtual security settings

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But it does not end with technology alone.

Many MSSP's will only offer technological protection such as firewalls, multi-factor authentication and network security. But **complete cyber security can only be achieved through an ongoing and evolving holistic approach**. Processes should be audited regularly as part of a gap analysis, and a culture of awareness in staff and even family must be cultivated. The life of

the HNWI is not straightforward and incurs a complexity that only a good MSSP can respond to in a proactive and agile manner.

**Your sensitive data is valuable**, so if you value the security of that data do not leave it to chance, or a poor MSSP. Contact Labyrinth Technology today to find out more.



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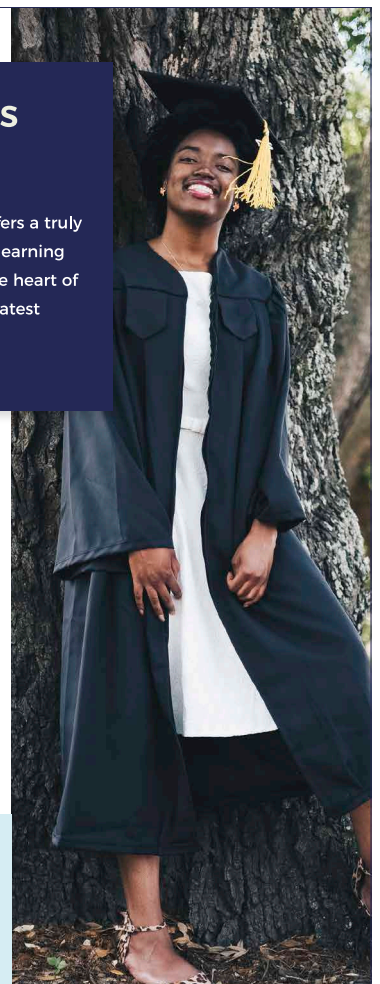
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