

Steer

Issue 36

November / December 2021

STEER YOUR BUSINESS | THE MAGAZINE

Could a 4-day week be good for your team?

Andy Page

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

A USEFUL LIST OF SPECIALIST BUSINESSES

#BuySocial DIRECTORY

COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANIES & CHARITIES

Your visual identity needs to add value, not diminish it

Kathy Marchant-Nel



Editor's Review

As we move into autumn and winter, it's important to keep our businesses moving forward. To that end, building your network of both people who can help and potential customers is as critical as ever.

In this issue we have some great businesses showcasing their expertise. If you haven't spoken to them already, then connect and start a conversation. Collaborations are definitely the way forward and what could be better than collaborating with Steer Your Business contributors.

We have an exciting collaboration in this issue with Barclays Bank and their Eagle Labs. This is a new and exciting initiative which will hopefully be extended to Kent and other areas of the country in due course.

Supporting employees is something we should all be doing. The ILM is suggesting that we should be investing in our whole workforce in a post-Brexit economy. If you haven't done so already, talking to the people in your business is a great place to start. You might be surprised at their skill sets and ambitions.

Talking of ambitions, what about offering a 4 day week? Could it work in your business? Check out Andy Page's article which explores this option to balance the needs of your staff with the needs of the business.

Without customers, you won't have a business so how much time do you focus on customer experience? Businesses can survive or die based on customer reviews so this is an area of your business which you really do need to focus on. Barbara Luna has some great advice to share with us on customer experience and how we can all improve

Enjoy this issue and we look forward to seeing you again in 2022



Sally Marshall

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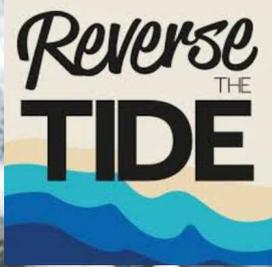
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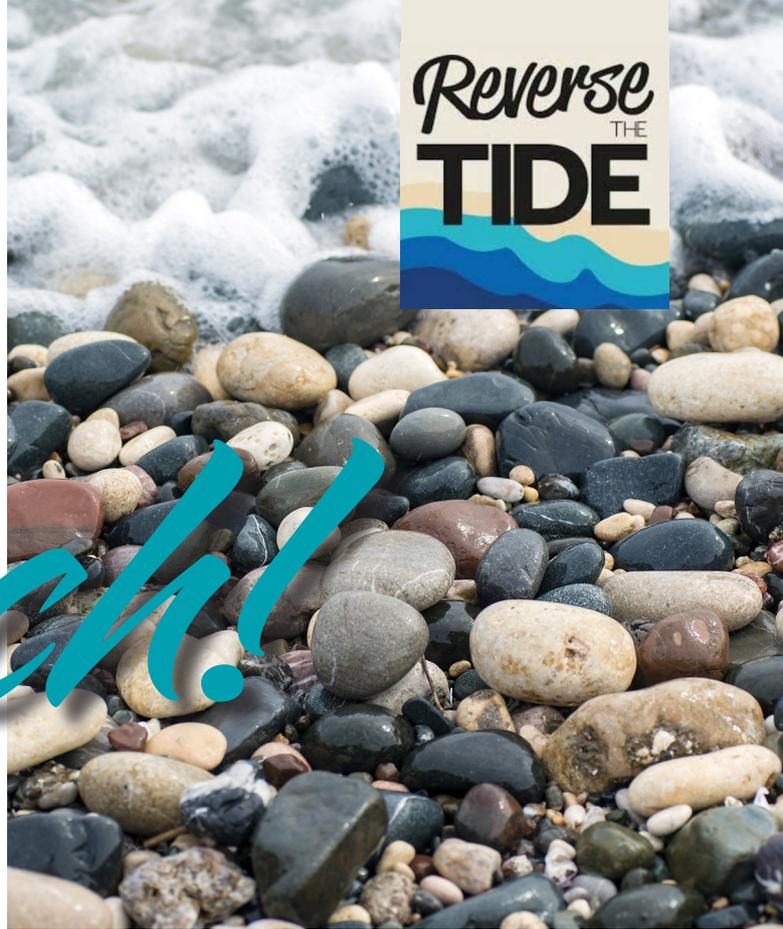
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News From the Beach!



Now that we are all focussing more on our businesses and getting back to some sort of normal, for many their business model has changed.

Changes mean thinking differently about your business and that doesn't always come easily to everyone. Have you taken on a new employee from the Kickstart scheme for instance? For many, this is the first time that they've had staff.

Going from a "one man band" to a team is a big mindset change and if you're not ready, can cause problems. Have you thought about the culture you want in your business. It's no longer about you and what you want but how the team react to you and to each other as well as clients.

Personally, I want to work in a place where there is trust, confidence and aligned thinking so that we're all on the same page. That isn't as easy as it sounds but the vibe that you give out will be picked up by those around you and behaviours adjusted accordingly.

One of the criticisms I hear often is that managers micro-manage. As an employee, how does that feel? Managing staff is more about trust, allowing people to get on with their jobs, delegating, training and coaching. It shouldn't be about checking someone constantly, doing their work for them and then complaining that you have too much to do!

Culture and management go hand in hand with leadership. Not everyone is a natural leader, a visionary and a motivator and that's OK.

The key is knowing your weaknesses and getting the help and support that you need either to learn those skills or to bring someone in who can fill that gap. Again, not easy when you've been used to working on

your own, making all the decisions and doing most of the work.

A quick Google search for "what makes a great leader" brought up this:-

"Great leaders are great because they have the ability to cast a vision of a future that compels a group of people to chase that future and passionately drag that future into the present because the vision makes their lives better. Great leaders are great because they attract and build great leadership teams."

I think that says it all really. Being a great leader is more than just running a business. It is the culture in the business that drives everyone to be the best they can possibly be and to contribute to the bigger picture.

I recently spoke at a conference where the theme was partnerships. My closing words were Together Everyone Achieves More and I think that is the key. Working together towards the vision delivers better results than trying to do everyone on your own.

If you need to have a chat about your business and where you want to take it, please give me a call on 0333 224 4521 or email me at Sally@sallymarshallgroup.co.uk



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Could a 4-day week be good fit for your team?

I often say that your team is your most important asset and keeping them motivated and happy is essential to your success.

I am going to first blow my own team's trumpet. In September, we won the NatWest South East Business Award for Customer Service. This is some achievement and is down to the whole team.

Later, we were featured in the book 'The World's Most Inspiring Businesses'. Another great achievement which is again, down to the team. Do bear in mind though that an awesome team needs an awesome leader, and if you are not an awesome leader, you can be taught how to be. We are finding that we are being asked by more and more business owners to help them in this area of the business.

Anyway, back on topic.

One main thing that has come about since the pandemic is working a 4-day week. This has had business owners saying, "It's impossible, it can't be done", which is their knee jerk reaction, without looking into it further.

The Pandemic has acted as an impetus for reflection, with many workers and business owners reassessing the hours they work, as well as the priority that work has in their lives.

A survey from Slack showed that 72% of respondents would prefer a hybrid approach to work, i.e. a mix of remote and office work. However, there is also a growing belief that we should be working fewer hours too and aiming for a '4-day week'. This would mean less time in the workplace and more time with our friends and families, with a greater level of underlying happiness as a result.

But do your team want to work fewer hours? Is the company ready to cope with a reduced staff on hand to get the job done? And what is the overall impact of working a shorter week?

The advantages of a 4-day week

The suggestion of a 4-day week is something that's been around for a while, but there's been an increasing groundswell of support for the idea of working shorter hours and achieving a better work/life balance as a result.

In Iceland, 2,500 workers (1% of the total Icelandic population) took part in a trial of the 4-day week between 2015-2019. Most workers moved from a 40-hour week to a 35 or 36-hour week, giving them one extra day to focus on things outside of the workplace. The trial was a big success and has resulted in 86% of Iceland's workforce now working reduced hours.

As a business owner, you are no doubt already thinking 'But how can my business still function if my employees are working less hours and are being less productive?'. But the interesting outcome was that productivity was not negatively affected by this move to reduced hours. So, could a 4-day week actually be a good fit for your team?

- Your employees are just as productive – a 4-day week was trialed by New Zealand company, Perpetual Guardian and the results were surprising. After spending two months testing a 20% shorter week, they found that their employees were 'happier, more focused, and producing the same amount of work'. The Icelandic trial found the same

result, that workers were equally as productive, with no drops in output, when working for only 4 days in the week.

- Your team still earns the same money – one potential worry for your employees is a drop in pay if they are working less hours. But under a 4-day work scheme, you continue to pay your team the same wages or salaries. So, although your employees are working less hours, there is no drop in their income and no resulting money worries.
- Your team is happier and more engaged – results of 4-day week trials globally have shown that employees on reduced hours are happier, more engaged and more energised for their work. So, rather than pushing your team to work a 40+ hour week and risking fatigue, burnout and disengagement, you ease off on the throttle. This gives your employees a less pressurised work environment and a better level of happiness. And as we know, a happy workforce is also a productive workforce.
- A more sustainable business model – with your people spending less time in the office, factory or workspace, your business will be using fewer resources and having less of an impact on the planet. Your utility bills will reduce, you will need fewer office supplies and your team will not be commuting as frequently – all of which is great for your carbon footprint and the overall sustainability of your business.

Talk to us about the financial impact of a 4-day week. Adopting a 4-day week does have a range of different benefits for your team. And creating a happy, productive and engaged workforce is always a good thing to achieve.

But can your business still turn a profit while adopting a reduced working week? If you are concerned about the financial impact of a 4-day week, come and talk to us. We can look at your sales and revenue figures, alongside your staff utilisation numbers, to show you how your margins can remain the same (or even higher) by adopting a reduced working week.



Andy Page



If you would like to book up your complimentary session, please phone or email me and I will take care of the rest. **Andy Page** can be contacted at a.page@mphaccountants.co.uk
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What is customer experience?

For you (the business owner) Customer Experience is your system for communicating with your customer, specifically with the goal of retaining these customers. It is how you provide the information your customer needs to make a purchasing decision, complete the transaction, and remember you are the best provider of your product/service.

A GOOD Customer Experience is a system made up of repeatable processes using well developed tools, all focused on the needs of the client as they move through the purchasing process.

Your client will have a combination of facts and emotional impressions of your business (products & services) which make up their complete experience with you. This Customer Experience determines if your client will purchase now, purchase again in the future, and what they will say to friends and colleagues about your business. For you and your client, customer experience is the different stages of your relationship as they move through the purchasing process and beyond.

Customer experience is how you retain the clients you've worked so hard to get.

Why do you need to care?

Modern consumers increasingly expect more immediacy and more personalization. These two criteria make things especially difficult for the independent business. But some things have not changed :

- It is still 5 to 6 times more expensive to obtain a new customer as it is to keep an existing one.
- Increasing client retention by 5% still increases your bottom line by 25% to 95%.

What Customer Experience is NOT

Most independent business owners are put off by the idea of Customer Experience for two reasons:

1. Customer Experience is costly in both time and money.

No. Developing a Customer Experience process saves you time and increases revenue. A properly documented, repeatable process ultimately means 1. less time and money getting new customers because you have so much repeat business. 2. avoiding confused customers who require hand holding 3. avoiding unhappy customers who need time-consuming customer service.

2. It sounds like they are going to have to hug their customers, or some other such touchy-feely business practices.

No. Designing a Customer Experience is not a touchy-feely endeavour. While it does involve thinking about your customer's feelings, this is done in aggregate and it is applied to repeatable processes. It can involve technology, or not. But there need be NO hugging or touching of any kind!

The Luna Method

I have worked in businesses from hi tech to high street retail. In every business, I have found that the success & profitability are directly correlated to how consistently the business focuses on their customers. Based on my experience, I developed a streamlined way for any business to evaluate and rebuild the experience they provide their customer. The Luna Method uses chronological indicators and the business owner's own market knowledge to help build a unique, exceptional Customer Experience—one that will not only have your customers returning again & again (improving your bottom line), but would make any business owner proud.

Want to learn more about Customer Experience and how it can improve your bottom line?



Contact Barbara on
barbara@
lunacustomerexperience.co.uk

Visit my webpage
www.LunaCustomerExperience.co.uk



Barbara
Luna

Your **visual identity** needs to **add value** to your brand **not diminish it**

Clients make a decision to use your services within the first couple of minutes of seeing your companies branding. Are you making the right first impression?

Your company has a personality. It's your "baby", you've spent many nights working, worrying and celebrating your business. Your business deserves to be seen in a positive light considering all the blood, sweat and tears that went into it!

So why allow all this effort to go to waste with bad branding, a terrible logo that does nothing to show the business for what it is and how good it is!

A brand is much more important than you may have initially thought. Your business has a face and that face shows potential clients, staff and customers what your business is all about.

And I'm not referring to just the logo. The logo forms just one part of the whole. The brand your company adopts is a collection of elements including the logo, signage, quotes, proposals, in fact anything you business does or is involved with.

A good brand can make or break a business. With good branding, comes a positive feeling that they (customers) have chosen the right company for the job.

If your visual branding doesn't represent your company well, the value of your brand decreases. Not only that, if your product or service is high end and your logo looks elementary, customers lose trust in you. You miss out on repeat business. And word of mouth stops spreading.

But there's a problem. You didn't get a degree in graphic design and neither did anyone on your staff. You're not sure what the difference between serif and script is and you have no idea how to use a vector.

And here's the thing: you don't have to. You should be able to focus on your business and what makes your company grow, and that's where we come in.

Can a logo add economic value to your brand? We believe it can, but only if you do it right. To do that, it takes hours of tedious research to ensure that every element we design elevates the value of your brand and makes word of mouth spread. Most people think visual branding is just another necessary cost. But we believe it's an investment that gets you a return. With a beautiful visual brand that helps you stand out in a crowded marketplace, word of mouth starts to spread like never before. You get more repeat and referral business because customers are proud to do work with you. And they are even prouder to introduce others to you.



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Visit: www.graphickat.co.uk



Kathy Marchant-Nel



BARCLAYS Eagle Labs

Barclays' deep commitment to transform itself, the banking industry and the communities they serve through innovation to ensure that the UK economy can thrive in an increasingly digital world is evidenced by it establishing Barclays Eagle Labs – a national platform that connects and supports the entrepreneurial ecosystem by creating opportunities for ambitious business founders and by giving them access to a broad range of skills and services to help their business grow.

Eagle Labs started by taking over under-used Barclays branches and offices and converting them into thriving spaces that are tailored to the needs of the local business community by creating a hub for sharing ideas and experiences and encouraging collaboration and innovation. Alongside this, they provide access to a network of mentors, partners and experts - all positioned to help their members' businesses to grow. They also provide exposure and access to the technologies that make up Industry 4.0 to enable future skills development and to support businesses and individuals with rapid prototyping and product development to help get products to market quicker.

Each Lab is managed by a dedicated Ecosystem Manager whose role it is to support Lab members and introduce them to our wider network and to mentors who will help them scale their businesses faster. They also create and build relationships with local community, academic and business groups to embed their Lab as an important community hub.

Eagle Labs are set up to give entrepreneurs and business founders access to the right people, knowledge, and opportunities to scale and succeed and run a series of educational growth programmes, virtual events and an online support hub to help founders develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

Eagle Labs also specialises in positively disrupting key industries by bringing together key corporate players, industry bodies, leading universities and start-ups to enable rapid innovation and investment by asking them to collaborate and currently have dedicated LawTech, HealthTech, EnergyTech and AgriTech industry-aligned programmes.

As well as providing business incubation, Eagle Labs also partner with local authorities and local UK Government initiatives and help them to revitalise the local economy by setting up and running incubators and dedicated business growth programmes that support the local tech sector and drive economic growth in the region.

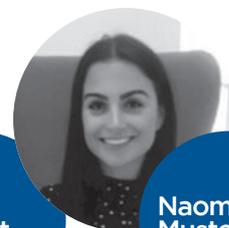
They have grown to 24 Labs in key locations in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland by partnering with like-minded organisations who are equally as passionate about creating thriving digitally-enhanced local communities.



Eagle Labs



Pete Tomsett



Naomi Muston



Find out more about Barclays Eagle Labs at labs.uk.barclays or get in touch with **Naomi Muston** on 07818527518 or email **Naomi.Muston@barclays.com** or our local Business Development Director **Pete Tomsett** on 07917 504 166 or email: **peter.tomsett@barclays.com**



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3 Ways to Generate more leads and increase Sales: Digital Marketing



There are a lot of marketing channels that can lead to increased success for your business. Digital marketing is one channel that many businesses neglect, but it's actually quite an effective way to generate more leads and increase sales.

There are 3 foolproof ways you can use digital marketing to improve the performance of your company.

1) Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a quick and easy way to boost interest in your product or service. It's relatively inexpensive to set up, and the hard work is done for you by users who are sharing content on their own. You can track what people are saying about your brand online using tools like Google Alerts or Mention.

Social media marketing is still a new field. We expect our customers to find us through social media channels because it's so much more accessible than other marketing channels. If we want to increase our visibility and gain new customers, social media is a key channel for us.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn are very useful as promotional tools. We can set up accounts on these sites and post information about our products or services there as well as monitor what our customers are saying about us.

2) Paid Advertising

Paid advertising is a quick win for any business if done correctly! You can pay for ads that appear on other websites, or you may choose to use advertising platforms like Google Adwords where your ad is shown along with search results.

It's important not to just run an ad campaign and forget about it. You should be monitoring the performance of each one so you know what works well for your business and which ones.

3) SEO or Search Engine Optimization

SEO is a longer term strategy but often is a more cost effective alternative once set up and running. There are a number of factors that go into SEO, but most importantly you need to have high quality content on your website. Your site should be well designed and easy to navigate so visitors will want to return again in the future. Optimizing a webpage for search engines is an art form, which takes time and dedication to master!

One way to stand out from the crowd is by writing your own blog posts about topics related to your business. You can optimize each post for keywords, and make



sure it's well written with engaging content that people will want to share on social media channels! Not only does blogging allow you to promote your company in a more organic way but also helps Google.

Your strategy

A combination of the three channels above will give you the most effective marketing plan. If you are struggling with which one to prioritize first, I would recommend starting out with paid advertisements. It's easy to set up and track the success of your campaigns so it won't cost too much money if it doesn't work well for your business.



Matthew Dorrington



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CIPD Warns Budget still leaves glaring gap on skills investment



UK HR body warns that Chancellor’s ‘skills revolution’ at risk of being an evolution of practices that already aren’t delivering effectively for employers or jobseekers

Responding to the Chancellor’s budget, Peter Cheese, chief executive of the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, said on skills investment:

“There is still a glaring gap between the Government’s ambition to transition the UK to a high-skill, high-wage economy and its current policies and investment priorities.

“Piecemeal interventions like those announced today are unlikely to amount to a skills revolution, more an evolution of things that already aren’t hitting the mark for many employers or jobseekers.”

“There needs to be an economy-wide, joined-up strategy to encourage and enable more firms to adopt strategies where the workforce is recognised as something to be invested in and drives value, rather than a cost to be minimised.

“Today’s announcements focus heavily on the supply-side and giving money to existing programmes, but it’s unclear if these initiatives deliver on what employers need or if they are creating positive work opportunities. There was also little on how the Government will incentivise and encourage employers to invest more in skills themselves. After a decade of underinvestment in skills we need employers and government to be looking not just at routes into work but in-role development too.

“Increased investment in T-levels is a step towards improving technical skills but many employers simply don’t know enough about them or fully understand them. Given current pressures on businesses, there’s also concern over whether enough employers will be able to offer the work experience element.

“Equally, if the Government wants to work in partnership with business to create a high-skill, high-wage economy, it must listen to business and reform the Apprenticeship Levy into a more flexible training levy. The Levy in its current form has failed on every measure, coinciding with a reduction in apprenticeship starts overall, a fall in the proportion of apprenticeships going to young people and a reduction in employer investment in training. Failure to reform the Apprenticeship Levy continues to hold back employer investment in skills at a time when this has never been more important.”

On pay increases:

“Increases to the National Living Wage and pay increases for the public sector are welcome. However, for this to be sustainable we need to fix Britain’s stubborn productivity problem. There must be more support and encouragement for businesses, and SMEs in particular, to invest in people management, skills and technology to improve productivity and create more, and better quality, high-paid jobs.

“Equally, higher pay in itself isn’t enough to retain and recruit staff. Businesses must also be looking at providing sufficient training, development and progression opportunities. And now, more than ever, support people’s wellbeing and respond to people’s increased expectations for flexible working practices.”

CIPD



For further information, please contact the CIPD – www.cipd.co.uk

Investing in Leadership Training for your whole workforce could pay dividends in the post-Brexit economy

By Nick Cutland, Executive Director of ILM (City & Guilds Group)

In the post Brexit world when we are likely to see more challenging trading conditions and find it harder to recruit, it will be more important than ever to ensure that businesses have highly motivated and skilled workforces that are able to be agile to manage in a rapidly changing business landscape.

All too often businesses focus all of their attention on training their senior members of staff. Recent research by the City & Guilds Group found that developing management and leadership skills -no matter at what stage of the career the employees are - is a brilliant way to encourage teams to progress and remain loyal to the business.

The Learning Insights research, found that employees who have been entrusted with leadership responsibilities tend to be more positive about their employer, their own skillset and their ability to do their job than those without leadership skills.

The study surveyed 6,500 employees across 13 countries, who were at a range of different levels of seniority, to give their thoughts and experiences of training in the workplace. It found that 80% of those with leadership responsibility stated that training and development activities had a positive impact on their performance at work, while 68% stated that it made them more likely to stay with their current employer.

In contrast, only 69% of employees without leadership responsibilities, believed that Learning and Development activities had an impact on their performance and 57% stated that it would affect whether they remained with their current company. This insight should be a great incentive to employers to start thinking about upskilling the future leaders in their organisation now so that they are not only skilled but also

In addition, a robust training program can ensure that employees fully understand the organisation and the sector in which they work. According to the research, the majority of workers with leadership responsibilities believed that current training had a positive impact on their understanding (76%), whilst only 65% of employees without leadership tasks agreed with the statement.

And the results suggest that providing some leadership training in the workplace encourages people to invest in their own training outside of work too. 76% of employees with leadership responsibilities were interested in investing their spare time in education, compared with 62% of employees without leadership responsibilities. More than half of the leaders we surveyed were willing to pay for training themselves, whilst only 32% of their teams would do so. Finally, almost 7 out of 10 leaders were more likely to seek



online and e-learning solutions compared with only 55% of those without leadership responsibilities.

The research also reveals that employees with leadership responsibilities were more willing to be offered training (such as coaching) by their employer than those without leadership responsibilities. This shows an inequality that must be tackled if we are to see those high levels of engagement and confidence in staff throughout organisations.

The research highlights that it is essential to introduce new tools to develop talented workers at all stages of their careers giving them the skills to make a real difference in their organisation and beyond. For this reason, it is crucial to provide programmes, that develop core skills such as teamwork, creativity or strategic planning, that can focus on those skills that employees most urgently need.

As we head into uncertain waters as we depart from the EU in 2020 those businesses that have motivated and highly skilled teams, who are able to be agile and responsive, are likely to be the ones that flourish and succeed. The future looks less certain for those that do not.

ilm



Nick Cutland



For more information contact

press@cityanguildsgroup.com

#Buy Social DIRECTORY

Since we've all been working from home, there has been a big push on buying local but have you thought about "buying social"? There are some amazing businesses who do fantastic work not only locally but for the community. "Buy Social" is a campaign to support them and help them do even more amazing things.

Even Ebay has a "buy social" option and also a "sell for charity" place so that you can support your favourite charity online too.

We are putting together a "buy social" directory for community interest companies and charities so that we can all see who they are and what they do.

If you'd like to be included, please get in touch with Sally on sally@steeryourbusiness.com for more information.

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