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BUSINESSWORKS

Issue 1 August 2022 North East

BUILDING HER FUTURE. BUILDING HER DREAM

The rise and rise of Sunderland's Gillespie Recruitment

GOLDEN TICKET

Local entrepreneur and chocolatier Kevin Reay's mouth-watering creations

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

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WELCOME

Well, this has been quite a year so far, hasn't it? With the end of summer fast approaching, this feels like an appropriate time to launch the all-new BW in the North East of England and take stock on what has been a ferocious and life-changing time for so many of us.

This year so far has already brought with it many extremes and has broken many records, many of which are unwanted.

With rising costs of living, climate change, a substantial rise in child poverty levels and a cold, harsh winter just around the corner, you'd be forgiven for thinking the near future looks a little grim and uncertain up North.

Yet, despite all of the hardships that we've had to endure coming out of the pandemic, I've been inspired by tales of kindness, acts of selflessness and an ability to overcome despite what daily life throws at us.

The North East has always punched above its weight and triumphed in the face of adversity, and I trust and hope you'll find some astonishing examples of this in our first ever North East edition of BW Magazine, of which I'm now the proud editor.

It's been a sincere pleasure meeting so many great minds and captains of industry within my BW journey so far, and I hope, when reading these pieces, you'll get an insightful glimpse into what makes North East entrepreneurs so great, inspiring and unique. Enjoy!



Jon Corbett,
BW Editor



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this magazine please recycle it.

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BUILDING HER FUTURE. BUILDING HER DREAM

The rise and rise of Sunderland's **Gillespie Recruitment**

Laura Gillespie launched her recruitment business in 2021 smack bang in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. Despite the huge challenges of launching a company while the nation got to grips with lockdown, her company soon doubled its expected turnover in the first year of business, grew from a one-woman operation to a six-person team and found employment for over 100 people.

Gillespie Recruitment has grown organically over the past year with no marketing or sales efforts, fostering a solid and assorted client base purely by word of mouth. Under Laura's experienced guidance, the firm is now setting its sights

on further growth, with plans to hire three new employees by the end of the year.

When Laura was at school in Washington, she was told by the school's career officer that unless she moved away from her hometown, the only real work opportunities available to her were within the civil service or the army. A home bird, she knew she wanted to remain close to her friends and family and settled on the civil service. But after 6 long tedious years, she "hated" the job.

Laura's entrepreneurial spirit began to materialise early in life as she embarked on a major career change at just 23. She entered the world of media, which she would work in for the next 22 years.

Initially landing a job in telesales, she recalls her line manager telling her she wasn't cut out for the job. The comment knocked her confidence, and she promptly left the role.

However, over the next 20 years, she proved her former manager wrong time and time again having worked for some of the leading media platforms in the North East and nationally, including the likes of the Sunderland Echo, Trinity Mirror and the Daily Mirror Xtra.

Laura's time working in media saw her involvement in the launch of several niche publications, including working alongside key clients and publishing their in house magazines, as well as business ►



magazines for various publishers, including Trinity Mirror's Enterprise North East. 15 years after being told to look for another job, she found herself managing her former manager!

In 2004, Laura changed direction again, leaving her established career in media to pursue a new role for the charity Young Enterprise.

A natural people person, Laura said she fell into her recruitment career easily.

"While I worked for the civil service, I never got promoted because of my habit of talking and distracting people too much," Laura explains. "Recruitment is the perfect fit for me. I love helping people where I can."

Laura worked in recruitment for various independent and high street businesses for several years but when she reached her 58th birthday, she decided to take the plunge and branch out on her own.

Working for regional and national recruitment companies, Laura was disheartened by the industry's focus on volume and the lack of attention given to candidates. She wanted to approach recruitment in her own way and create a company culture that prioritised the wellbeing of her team and candidates.

"I've worked with nationals and I've worked with some of the smaller local agencies and it's all about volume, volume, volume; traffic, traffic, traffic.

"Through the pandemic, while I was working within healthcare, I realised that I had spent years making money for other people."

"On my 58th birthday, I said to my husband, I'm going to have to leave, I'm going to have to do this myself. I don't know what the trigger was, other than I didn't want to be doing this for somebody else anymore."

"I wanted to do it for me where I don't have to work with people I don't want to work with, or work to targets that aren't achievable, or not just be bothered about the bottom line. All those things that recruitment agencies have a bad name for, I didn't want to do anymore. Ultimately, I want to revitalise the recruitment sector."

When she started her own business, Laura was determined to foster a supportive company culture that put people first.

"I'm very people orientated," Laura added. "I care about the candidate as much as I do about the clients. So, when I look at my



day, it's not 'I'm sending 50 CVs today. It's not 'I'm making 100 calls today, it's about which client I'm working on today and how many candidates of quality can I get across to them."

The success of her first year in business was "overwhelming."

"I remember sitting down with my husband and saying 'if I manage to get to a certain figure by the end of the year, I'd be comfortable. I ended up doubling that figure. If current financial forecasts are correct, by the end of 2023 we will increase our turnover by 150%."

"We're now established, and our client base is amazing. They come back to us, and people are continually recommending clients to us."

After deciding to launch Gillespie Recruitment in May 2021, Laura started where many new business owners do, LinkedIn. She posted a call-out for new business and within a day she had already received 14 contracts.

She later set up shop at the BIC (Business Innovation Centre) in Sunderland. She ran

the company as a one-woman operation for just a month before it became clear that the company needed a team behind it.

In the space of two weeks, Laura recruited two part-time staff and soon she brought her husband on board who works as operations director.

There is now a team of six that make up the business, including Laura, her husband Del Rowbotham, senior recruitment coordinator, Adele, recruitment resourcer, Melissa, recruitment consultant, Kirstin and marketing assistant, Becky.

With her first two employees both being mums, the company quickly developed a family-oriented culture built around flexibility, wellbeing and work-life balance.

At the centre of Gillespie Recruitment's work is honesty, good communication and a collaborative work ethic, Laura said. Candidate and client transparency come first, along with candidate wellbeing. Rather than "sell" a candidate into a role, Laura and her team give them time, space and advice before accepting the job.

"If a client was to give me a job ►

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specification and I didn't think the salary was right, I would tell them," continues Laura.

"Equally, if a candidate was offered a job with one of my clients and they weren't sure. I'll say go away and think about it and come back to me because it's got to be right."

Right until the end of the process, Gillespie Recruitment takes a sensitive approach to recruitment that can be a rare find in this fast-paced sector. Even unsuccessful candidates are rejected over the phone and never via email.

"90% of recruiters will sell candidates into the role, but I wouldn't do that, because at the end of the day changing your job is one of the most stressful things in your life. It's alongside moving house," Laura added.

"You've got to get it right. It's no good pushing somebody into a job that they're going to hate two months down the line. It will affect their CV and it will waste the client's time because obviously there's a cost implication."

Gillespie Recruiting covers various industries. Although Laura had a solid grounding in healthcare thanks to her previous role, she could not contractually work in the industry for a year after leaving to start her business.

The result is a client base that spans a disparate range of sectors. For Laura, it isn't so much about the industry but the relationships she and her team have with the clients and potential candidates.

From healthcare organisations to huge retailers and niche companies including a high-end fish and meat retailer, Laura and her team are willing to go where the clients and candidates need them.

Currently serving around 70 clients, Gillespie Recruitment has plans to continue growing its reach in the North East and nationally as it looks to hire new employees.

The company has just appointed two new members of staff, Suzanne - an additional recruitment resourcer with a strong background in healthcare recruitment - and in September it will see the addition of the firm's Commercial Manager.

At 59, Laura is starting to consider a phased retirement with plans to go part-time in the coming years. Before then, she wants to prepare her team to take on the baton and drive the business forward.

"We will have more people by the time my husband and I retire so the next few years will be about developing and retaining the team," Laura said. "We'll be working on moving people up the ladder and taking over which will allow me to work part-time and oversee the business."

As anyone who has been involved with early-stage businesses knows, the road to success is never easy.

For Laura, having the right people around her along with a passion for her work was central to her business' success.

"Have a good support network and make sure you enjoy what you do because if you don't enjoy it, it's not going to work," Laura concludes.

"If it is something you want to do, give it a go. I wish I'd done it years ago."

Head to www.gillespierecruitment.co.uk for more information. ●



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OUR HOUSE IS YOUR HOUSE

Jeff Lee tells *Jon Corbett* how Wentworth Grange isn't a care home, it's a hotel that cares for you

Nestled in the small Northumberland village of Riding Mill is a care home with a difference. More than just a nursing home, Wentworth Grange is also a hotel, a bar and a restaurant that puts the comfort of its guests first.

With a lifelong family connection with the picturesque facility, Managing Director Jeff Lee considers Wentworth Grange his family home. He grew up there with his mother and father who launched the facility when Jeff was 14 years old.

The 250-year-old Edwardian House occupies 4 acres of land just outside of Corbridge and, having spent his formative years surrounded by the care home's residents, Jeff possesses a unique understanding and empathy for elderly people and their needs.

His childhood memories of living in the home and helping his parents have shaped how he runs the facility to this day.

"As they were so much part of my everyday life, I've gained an amazing

perspective; so much more than a manager working in a care home," he said.

"I've literally grown-up living with our residents as we called them then."

Now, Wentworth Grange refers to its clients as 'guests', offering those who stay at the facility a more personal approach to care centred around comfort, quality and homeliness.

Rather than calling itself a nursing home, Wentworth Grange is branded as a residential hotel for the elderly. ▶

"The day I started working here I remember the feeling of utmost pride," Jeff continues. "Everybody here who lives with us lives with us in our family home and I think that's quite a unique perspective on running a care home."

"I tell our staff that we have to not be a nursing home; this is a hotel that cares for you. Everything we do must add value to the guests' lives."

"We must surprise and delight our customers. When they come here, I tell my team, we have one minute from them coming up the drive to coming in, we have to impress them."

Before starting work at Wentworth Grange 35 years ago, Jeff worked for the NHS as a registered nurse. The job gave him the "best training possible" for his future role running Wentworth Grange, but after several years, he felt his career was "going nowhere". Ready for a fresh challenge, returning to the family business felt like the natural next step.

"I felt like I was jumping into a place that had possibilities," he said.

17 years ago, Jeff's father passed away, leaving him with more responsibility over the care home, working alongside his mother Phyllis. Jeff remembers his father "always working with his hands, fixing or building something", while his mother was always looking to make a difference with her work.

The family moved into Wentworth Grange in 1980, his parent's risking everything to build the business. The couple initially set up the business alongside a partner who expected to be "rolling in money". A year later, the business was struggling to get off the ground and their partner soon left with no notice.

Initially, Jeff's parents considered returning to their former careers, his mother a trained nurse and his father a factory worker. But the family were determined to succeed.

"We decided as a family to risk our shirts. We risked everything on this," Jeff explained. "These two seemingly ordinary people possessed the drive and the ability to take an idea forward - often against the odds - and thrive."

"They transformed themselves from busy professionals with two young sons into successful business people. They were inspirational to me as a young man looking for a way to succeed in life."

The business now employs around 60 people and is considered one of the best care homes, not just in the North East, but in the country as a whole.

Jeff takes a hands-on approach to running Wentworth Grange. Leading from the front, he takes pride in having done "every job role in the business", from upkeep and labouring to nursing and business development. There is nothing he would ask his team to do that he hadn't already done himself.

"I learned from my dad how to work and how not to give up and then my mother had the real passion for care and good practice. "Those things gave me a good start and a good framework to build off of."

"It's very important to me that we are not afraid to be different; to work hard and go beyond standard care and nursing. Coming here my parents always wanted to do things differently and that's still how we work. I'm always hungry for different and hungry for better."

Jeff's commitment to the business, his guests and their families is unparalleled. Constantly looking for new ways to improve the experience of living in his home, Jeff's restless energy to innovate and the genuine respect he has for his clients is infectious.

"Here, there's only one way to nurse someone and that's the right way. "We have a big responsibility to people's mums, dads, aunts, uncles and grandmas and granddads. We've got to do things the right way."

"The team all know that I'm on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Any issue, even from my suppliers, from the families, I'll be there."

When Wentworth Grange first opened, the standard of care for the elderly in Northumberland was poor. Nursing homes continue to get a bad reputation. They can be seen as depressing places; places where 'people go to die'. The residents of care homes are often perceived as being no longer independent or 'losing their identity', Jeff added.

The Lee family were determined to create a care home that proved the stereotype wrong, endeavouring to open a high-end care home that prioritised their guest's comfort.

The facility used fine bone China and was decorated with Italian-made furniture to make their guests' time in the nursing ►





home special. Jeff has continued to pay close attention to the details.

Jeff actively avoids nursing home suppliers, favouring companies that produce more luxurious products. Right down to the towels and bedding, Jeff and his team ensure their guests are provided with the home comforts that can make a huge difference to their quality of life.

If a supplier comes to him pitching that their company supplies all the nursing homes in the area, he quickly looks somewhere else.

"If somebody comes to us and says, 'we supply all of the nursing homes in the area', I say, 'no thanks'. One company that supplies towels came to us and I said no; I wanted lovely, fluffy towels so we've got some lovely Turkish towels and they're stunning."

One of Wentworth Grange's main

attractions is its Italian-themed restaurant which has a reputation for great food extending far beyond the confines of the home.

Its staff bring a wealth of experience working in the region's top restaurants. One of the two managers who runs the dining area formerly worked at the Michelin-starred restaurant Hjem in Hadrian. The care home is now currently installing a six-figure luxury bar which is due to open next year.

Stepping into Wentworth Grange, one of the first things you will notice is the dress code. To avoid the clinical aesthetic of most care homes, the Wentworth's staff are clad in waistcoats, suits and dresses.

The uniforms not only contribute to the home's hotel-esque aesthetic, it also puts a spring in the step of its staff, Jeff said.

"If you look good at work and you're

valued it makes such a difference. "When I walk in with my three piece suit I feel on top of the world. My team are all well-dressed and well-valued and I think people work better as a result."

Looking to the future, Jeff wants to see Wentworth Grange ranked among the top care homes in the country. The business has big plans for the coming months but, for now, he is keeping these projects under wraps.

"We're going to keep on surprising and delighting our guests. "If we can constantly keep surprising people, cared needn't be the way it is."

"It's been a lot of hard work and it's a full-on job but it's worth it when I see my customers smile again and the families are happy."

For more information head to www.wentworthgrange.com ●

“I learned from my dad how to work and how not to give up and then my mother had the real passion for care and good practice.”





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GOLDEN TICKET

South Shields has its very own golden ticket in The Canny Chocolate Company, as local entrepreneur and chocolatier **Kevin Reay** plans to sweeten up the seaside town with his mouth-watering creations

The Canny Chocolate Company only started serving its sweet treats back in 2020, but the business has gone from strength to strength since its spontaneous inception during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based within South Shields Business Works, The CCC is the first of its kind in the town, and the business plans to bring attention to the wealth of creativity and quality present within the region.

From travel agent to trained chocolatier, CCC founder Kevin's portfolio career embodies the entrepreneurial spirit. A Marsden native, the 27 year old has been around the world and back to South Shields again. Straight after completing his A-levels Kevin satisfied his urge to travel, leaving home to travel the world while working in the tourism industry.

He started out as a holiday representative for Thomas Cook before working as an excursions manager for P&O Cruises and

getting his undergraduate degree in tourism and hospitality management along the way. On his return to South Shields, he turned his attention to property, working as an estate agent for Jan Forster. It's safe to say that Kevin is not afraid of immersing himself in new opportunities.

However, it was the pandemic that spurred him on to take the biggest leap of faith to date, in which he took a lockdown hobby and transformed it into a successful business.

As we all know, the pandemic left many of us homebound and in search of something to occupy our time and exercise our brains. For Kevin, an internet search led him to an online business called Learning With Experts, which offers a range of courses for the public to purchase in the hopes of learning some new skills or finding a new hobby.

During his search, Kevin came across a

chocolate-making course led by award-winning English chocolatier Paul A. Young. As Kevin says himself, "chocolate is a feel good thing", and during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic he realised how much he and everyone else needed to enjoy that type of escape. So, from a corner of Kevin's kitchen, a homegrown chocolatier was born.

At the heart of The Canny Chocolate Company, is Kevin's passion for uninhibited creativity. Despite years of travelling, it was a global pandemic that gave Kevin the confidence to move outside of his comfort zone.

Since his first chocolate-making course, Kevin has invested around £50,000 into his so-called "hobby", where he has worked alongside experts and honed his craft into a true artform. After moving into its business premises in September 2021, The CCC has established itself as a beacon of success ►

within the local independent business community, but even Kevin admits that he has “completely and utterly surprised” himself.

Diving head first into an unfamiliar industry while having to navigate new roles and responsibilities, Kevin knew that he could only be as strong as the people that surrounded him. With tremendous help from his sister Lynzie, an integral £12,000 investment from good friend and local entrepreneur Paula Fowler, as well as continued support from the local area, Kevin has been able to cultivate his passion into a “canny” regional success story.

In the North East, it’s a widely known fact that people love to celebrate and support their own. It’s this commitment to the region that has created a space for small businesses to thrive and survive in the wake of a pandemic.

As a small-batch chocolatier, Kevin is well acquainted with the highs and lows that accompany the role of a small business owner. But instead of letting fish/pond comparisons scare him away, Kevin decided to build his brand around the exclusivity and undeniable charm that only an independently-owned company can offer.

“Business is tough,” Kevin said. “It’s hard. You’ve just got to take each day as it is. Some weeks are really good weeks, some weeks are terrible. This might be a selfish thing to say, but I’m thankful for the pandemic in some ways because I wouldn’t be where I am now without it. The time and the money I wasn’t spending on petrol and tunnel fares meant I had the disposable income to learn a new skill and launch this business.”

The Canny Chocolate Company focuses on exposing customers to new experiences and tastes, while providing them with an ethically-sourced, additive and preservative-free take on their favourite comfort food.

With no strict recipes or menus being followed, no batch is the same. However, what never changes is Kevin’s dedication to fairtrade, sustainability sourced and 100% traceable ingredients.

“Everything that I make is all different each time,” he explained. “I’ve learned very quickly not to follow a recipe. The chocolate you taste today might be a little bit different next week because I make things in small batches and I don’t ever stick to the same menu. I’ve got to constantly keep it fresh



“Make sure to find a good work/life balance, because to find your own slice of success you need to find time to enjoy the process.”

for my customers and that also keeps it fresh for me.

The Canny Chocolate Company offers a variety of chocolate treats including bonbons, bars, truffles, lollipops and vegan blends, which is supported by Kevin’s informative and hands-on workshops and bookable interactive demonstrations.

Kevin’s delectable creations are attracting customers from far and wide, expanding beyond his local community. With a social-media focused strategy combined with word-of-mouth community support, Kevin has been able to convert potential into profit.

The Canny Chocolate Company has even caught the attention of British businessman Steven Bartlett of Dragon’s Den, who chose Kevin’s company as one of ten UK businesses to be awarded the Vodafone Small-Business Shout Out Award 2022.

The win earned The Canny Chocolate Company hundreds of new followers and customers from across the UK. But in spite of his growing national reach, Kevin prides himself on being a local lad, whose DIY mindset and subsequent success has turned the spotlight onto the legions of entrepreneurs who are making a difference within the North East. ▶



Ultimately, Kevin believes that “the pandemic motivated people to start shopping locally”, and without such a shift, The Canny Chocolate Company would not be what it is today.

For Kevin, one of the main reasons that small businesses are able to thrive in the North East is the region’s community-first attitude and willingness to support local people. The support he has received from his local customer-base and council has been invaluable to his success, he said.

This continued support has allowed Kevin to explore his craft and discover new flavours, shapes, colours and textures. It’s this endless inventiveness that remains at the heart of the business. In Kevin’s words, The Canny Chocolate Company maintains a focus on “quality over quantity”.

This outlook is unlikely to change in the near future, Kevin said. While many ask him if he has aspirations to follow in

the footsteps of international brands like Hotel Chocolat, Kevin is content making a comfortable living while doing what he loves and producing the end product with his own hands.

“I’m comfortable with my small business infrastructure,” Kevin explained. While he has no concrete plans for expansion, the Canny Chocolate Company is certainly growing as Kevin prepares for his 2022 Great Taste Award submission and what he is expecting to be another busy Christmas period.

As Kevin hinted, “you never know what the future holds”, but as life happens chocolate helps. We can’t wait to see what The Canny Chocolate Company gets up to next, but for would-be entrepreneurs in the region, Kevin has some wise words of advice.

“Research and know your market,” he adds. “I can’t stress enough how important

it is to be prepared. However, you also have to make sure that you have enough time to commit to a project, as well as the subsequent marketing needed to get your idea out into the world.

“And remember, make sure to find a good work/life balance, because to find your own slice of success you need to find time to enjoy the process. I know people who run businesses who are run off their feet and they don’t have time for themselves. But I make sure to draw the line between work and leisure.”

Whether you’re a North East native, a travelling tourist or simply a gift-buyer looking to support a small business, for more information, online bookings or purchases head to the Canny Chocolate Company website, or head in-store to experience the well-deserved hype for yourself (open Thursday, Friday and Saturday). ●





KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Gateshead sisters open community coffee shop, **Pelaw Coffee**



Gateshead has a new cafe, bringing speciality, barista-style coffee to the Tyneside community or Pelaw for the very first time. Having been open for just three months, the freshly renovated cafe is proving a hit among the residents and beyond.

Prior to the cafe opening, Pelaw's coffee lovers had to travel to Newcastle and other larger towns to find great coffee. Identifying a need in the local area for a modern, stylish cafe with barista-style brews, Amy Aiken teamed up with her sister and enlisted the help of other family members and colleagues to launch Pelaw Coffee.

Amy and her team spent months renovating the cafe which was "in a state of disrepair". With a blank slate to work on, they transformed the space into the area's first specialty coffee shop.

Since opening in April, the response from the local community has been "amazing", proving that a high-quality cafe was long overdue in Pelaw. The area's residents were stunned by the modern interior design of the cafe, Amy said.

"So many people have said just how lovely it is to have somewhere to come and just sit or catch up with friends," she explains. "The response has been really lovely and made all the stress worth it."

The shop is inspired by the hip artisan cafes found across Newcastle while paying homage to the local area and Pelaw's rich history and industrial past.

"We're similar to the likes of Starbucks and independent specialty cafes, but we also give a nod to what it's always been, a community-focused cafe," Amy explained. "We're basically somewhere that everyone, old and young from the community, can come, meet or have a chat, have coffee, have cake or have a meal."

The interior walls are steeped in nostalgic photos of the area and the local industry, including images of the old shirt factory, the printing works and the factories and shipyards that lined the Tyne River.

"I've put up a lot of photos of what Pelaw used to be in the past and also what Pelaw Coffee used to be," she continued.

"It means people can come in and look at it and reminisce. I've got a picture of it when it was Miss Confectionary in 1930. So there are loads of old pictures dotted

around that give a real nod to the past, but the interior is very modern."

Amy has taken her experience as the owner of the popular Newcastle pub North Terrace to reinvent the cafe as a coffee spot that can rival some of the best brews found in nearby Newcastle.

Amy and her sister Rachel Owen grew up with the rest of their family across Gateshead, Hebburn and Bill Quay. As a fourth-generation, family-owned business, the sisters are proud of the shop's legacy which has taken on numerous different forms since coming into the family's hands in the 1930s.

It started off as a grocery store before being converted into a hairdresser run by the sisters' mother, Brenda Aiken. For several years, the family rented the building out to other businesses before Amy took over and reinvented the space as a cafe.

"I love thinking about how my family, including my great-grandmother, grandmother and mother have all stood where I'm standing and served people," Rachel said.

The building's heritage as a family-run, community-focused business has seeped into Amy's approach to running the company. After bringing her sister and North Terrace chef Craig Turnbull on board,

Amy looked to the Pelaw community to fill the remaining roles.

"I advertised in the Pelaw community because I felt it was really important to have people who are from Pelaw," Amy said. "It not only provides employment opportunities but they're also going to know everyone in the area and recognise familiar faces."

Amy's son also assists when he's not managing the bar at North Terrace. Having her family by her side along with people who care about their community is central to the success of both North Terrace and Pelaw Coffee. And as an entrepreneur, it's the people around her - both customers and staff - that keep her moving forward.

"I've been really lucky that all my staff are so lovely and so amazing; they work so hard and really care about the business," she went on. "If they can put the effort in and really care about it then I can keep going."

"The hardest part of the business is undoubtedly finding the right staff. If you've got good staff you can definitely do it. They're brilliant and that's what keeps me going aside from loving the job."

"You have got to love hospitality to be in it," she added. "I love chatting with customers, especially older people coming in who tell tales of Pelaw and what they remember of the shop. It's these lovely ▶



customers that keep me going as well because you have people that rely on it; people who come in every day. It's a bit like a family."

Despite only opening its doors three months ago, Pelaw Coffee has already become a hub for the local community, with the likes of running clubs, dog walking parties and pensioner groups setting up shop for social gatherings on a regular basis.

Community is at the centre of what Amy and her team do at Pelaw Coffee. She wants everyone to feel welcome in her shop and will "bend over backwards" to

meet her customers' needs. One of her first priorities was making the cafe accessible. For years, the shop was inaccessible for many disabled people, parents of small children and the elderly.

She started by knocking down the original front doors to make room for a wide glass entrance that opens directly onto the pavement, making the cafe accessible to all. Extensive facilities for babies and children have also made the cafe a popular haunt for young families.

"We really pride ourselves in excellent customer service; you've got to start there," Amy continued. "Before we renovated, the

cafe wasn't fit for purpose, especially in this day and age, but it is now.

"It's a real community place where everyone is welcome," Amy said. "We have a lot of people in wheelchairs who will come in and say, 'gosh, I couldn't get in here before because I've never been able to get into the shop'."

The hospitality industry was one of the hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Amy was forced to shut North Terrace for the best part of a year and the fallout of lockdown is still impacting her business today.

While she relished in the extra time she ►





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had to spend with her children while the pub was closed, inflation and the strain it's having on consumers' wallets isn't going unnoticed by Amy and her team.

"People are saying we're not in it anymore, we're not in lockdown anymore, things are open again, but it's not that simple," Amy said. "People saved a lot of money in lockdown by not going out for food every day. And now they've got less available money to spend, it's changed the way people operate; it's changed their habits."

Despite the challenges, she is optimistic about the future and is confident that Pelaw Coffee's dedication to quality and customer service will pay dividends as the world slowly emerges from the shadow of Covid.

While expansion is certainly on the cards

for her businesses, right now Amy's priority is seeing both businesses continue to flourish while having time to spend with her young family.

At the heart of her strategy is continuing to provide great coffee in an area where a perfect flat white is hard to come by. The staff are trained by Tynemouth Coffee Company, one of the North East's leading small-batch artisan coffee roasters.

The food, meanwhile, is hearty and traditional and comes with a modern twist thanks to its creative and passionate kitchen team. Not just your normal cafe scrum, head chef Craig Turnbull is dedicated to using top-quality ingredients on the cafe's menu and word is clearly spreading fast. Since its opening, Pelaw Coffee is increasingly finding that customers are willing to travel to sample its coffee and food offering.

"I just want both of these businesses to thrive. I would love another coffee shop and that's something to think about in the future but it's important to us that we do this right."

Pelaw Coffee can be found at 15 Shields Road, Gateshead and is open from 7am-4pm on weekdays, 8am-4pm on Saturdays and 10am-4pm on Sundays.

The cafe offers a range of high-quality specialty coffees and serves up an extensive menu of breakfast classics such as full English, breakfast sandwiches and American-style pancakes. The lunch menu includes tasty crowd-pleasers like toasties, lasagna, loaded baked potatoes and burgers.

Head to Pelaw Coffee's Facebook page for more information. ●



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SOLVING THE PEOPLE PUZZLE WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

Talent attraction and retention has always been a key challenge for businesses, but in recent years, the competition for people has intensified. In this article, UMi Chief Executive *Nicki Clark OBE* shares what she has learned about finding and keeping a company's greatest asset – its people

In the last few months, the recurring theme when I've been talking to other business owners and leaders is that for the first time, finding the right people and not finance has been the number one challenge. For many years, we have talked about the skills gap in certain sectors but today, the challenge of not just finding the right skills and attitudes but keeping hold of them is top of the list for pretty much all businesses regardless of size, sector or location. A recent survey of a network I am part of found that circa 100 businesses had around 900 vacancies and are forecasting to have 1700 in the next 12 months.

As a wholly employee-owned business, ranked in the top 100 best business to work for, and on the journey to becoming BCorp

certified, we like to think we are a great team to join at UMi and a pretty compelling point of difference from an employment perspective. In today's world though, even those credentials are not enough to tackle the lack of people looking for work and the escalating competition between businesses to retain the talent they need just to stay in business. The pressure of the cost-of-living crisis is also driving individuals to focus on securing the highest possible salaries even if it's not the kind of business they want to work for long term.

So, how can we tackle what feels beyond our direct control? Here are some things that I've picked up on my travels, some of which we are exploring ourselves at UMi or that I think are definitely worth considering.

RETENTION BONUSES

Rather than inflate your overall people costs on a permanent basis, some owner/managers are creatively applying retention bonuses. These can be applied over a 12-month period or, where there are cost of living pressures, applied quarterly or even every two months.

LONG TERM INCENTIVES

More and more businesses are looking at some form of employee ownership i.e., placing a proportion of shares in Trust structures rather than distributing them to employees. Another option could be more traditional LTIP (Long Term Incentive Programmes), which are contractual and triggered based on strict performance criteria

ENHANCED FLEXIBILITY

In today's world, employers are having to be much more open minded to greater flexibility in where and how people work than they otherwise might feel comfortable with, so the message is – stretch your thinking beyond your comfort zone.

SALARY SACRIFICE SCHEMES

There are a number of HMRC-approved salary sacrifice schemes that can really enhance the benefits you provide to your team and can have a direct impact on reducing the cost of living for them without increasing cost to the business. ●



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LS LIFESTYLE

ISSUE 1

FASHION ■ DINING ■ PROPERTY

Watch in a name

Josh Sims takes a look at some of the adventurous names in watchmaking

Once a watch was a watch was a watch - the brand might be a draw, but invariably one was chosen on function and aesthetics. It was only with the post-WW2 consumer boom - with it the very notion of mass consumerism and marketing as a commercial discipline - that watches, as with other products, began to get names.

And, much as the few decades of this pre-Quartz era benefitted from an abundance of more boutique independent watchmakers, able to find a market for quirky designs, so the 1960s and 1970s in particular offered some of the most arresting and adventurous names in watchmaking. Just think of the intriguing Golden Horse (Rado), the tongue-twisting Ploprof (Omega), the pop Bivouac (Favre-Leuba), the bold Conquest (Longines) or the exotic Monaco (Heuer). Or how about Caravelle's Bullion. Or those watches of tomorrow, and named for such too: Favre's Moon Raider, Wittnauer's Futurama, Seiko's Astro or Amida's Digitrend. They all had a certain poetry...

"Inevitably the things we have to think about now when naming a watch means many of watch names chosen by the industry over more recent years can sound a little dull in comparison," as Zenith's

product development and heritage director Romain Marietta concedes. "The watch market was much smaller in the 1960s and perhaps there was not a sense of just how big some of the brands that survived would get. We could come up with much cooler alternatives to the ones used but often they don't work for some reason."

Indeed, naming a watch is no easy task. Many of the most iconic watches, truth be told, have names that are somewhat prosaic, echoing their functionality, with maybe just a hint of machismo: the Reverso, Navitimer, Speedmaster or Fifty Fathoms, for example. But watch names can capture the spirit, or the technology of the times. Cartier's blocky Tank was inspired by the new Renault tanks that Louis Cartier saw in use on the Western

Front in 1917 - a name now somewhat at odds for such an understated dress watch today. Jaeger-LeCoultre's Polaris was named by a US sales agent who'd concluded that the brand's more standard approach - just naming models by the three digits of its caliber number - just wasn't going to cut it. Polaris that hinted at adventure, at extremes, at the pole star, but since the watch was also released in 1968, six years after the US military brought into service its Polaris submarine-based nuclear missile system, had a hint of weaponry too maybe.

One reason watchmakers tend to return to their historic names - as with Zenith and Defy, for example, first used in the 1960s, then, appropriately enough to mark a break with tradition, for some wild designs in 2009, and then again in 2017 - is that they



own them, legally or through usage. The older companies have built a portfolio of names to pick from. Secondly, now that these makers typically serve a global market, each name has to work across multiple languages and cultures; it has to both be pronounceable and above local meaning. A name is no good if it sounds cool in one language but like a swearword in another.

Of course, many watches are known by names that the watch companies haven't even given them. It's usually collectors that provide such nicknames, many of them of an evocative or pop cultural kind that the brands themselves likely wouldn't be bold enough to use themselves. "The cool names nearly always come from the collectors," as Zenith's Marietta notes, citing its Chronomaster A3818 being called the 'Cover Girl', thanks simply to it appearing on the cover of a book about Zenith; or, better still, the 'Superman Blue', for its dial being close in shade to that of the super-hero's uniform. "Typically brands don't want to use names like these because of the risks of them being misinterpreted, though we do like to try to anticipate what the watch community might end up calling a model one day," Marietta says.

Sometimes fans have little choice but to collectively name a watch. Seiko, which does not name its watches, has seen its Grand Seiko and more mass-market designs dubbed the likes of the Snowflake and the Skyflake, in part due to the texture of the dials, in part a nod to the snowscapes around the company's manufacturing hub in Shinshu. Seiko even takes the speed with which a watch or collection is named by the collector community as a rough benchmark of its longer term popularity.

"Nicknames come from the watch shapes themselves, from famous characters or actors in films who wear them and any other inspiration which takes the fans' fancy," explains David Edwards, managing director of Seiko in the UK. "Nicknames inspired by the watch shape include the Tuna Can, the Monster, the Samurai and the Turtle. Others have been inspired by a character in a film - the Captain Willard, from 'Apocalypse Now' - and other names include the 'Arnie', after the actor who chose to wear a specific hybrid watch during the 1980s. The last two indicate one of the challenges of using nicknames - as we have no official partnership or franchise

with that specific actor or one of his films, we couldn't use those names in any [official] communication."

And yet other many other watch companies believe that the name they give to a watch is crucial to its sales success. "The name has to be evocative, of the environment it was designed for, or the material it's made from. It doesn't have to explain the movement or some feature but it does have to be part of the story-telling around the watch - because it's that emotion that convinces a consumer to buy it," argues Marietta.

As with other increasingly specialist, anachronistic products - sports cars, for example - the name is often central to the package. With cars and watches alike, a name can even supersede the brand: "You don't want a Rolex, you want a Daytona," as Sadry Keiser, Roger Dubuis' international marketing director, notes. "Smart companies find ways of building on the brand equity that can develop in a name - and, from a marketing perspective, that's genius if you can pull it off."

"We think about the actual name of a watch very early in the process because we find it tends to prove inspirational for our designers," adds Keiser. "We want to assist in potential sales in some way, but also, if you like, to be impertinent. Sometimes you can certainly debate the quality of creativity in a name. We recently launched an Excalibur single flying tourbillon 36mm and called it...Excalibur 36. Sometimes all the info that comes through to enable the

choosing of a good name doesn't make it."

But such literalism can work. There's method in the madness of Bell & Ross - whose watches include the snappily-named BR 03-92 and the BR 05A. It argues that it is precisely the technical-sounding nature of these 'names' that underscores the brand's design ethos. "Using a code rather than a name is an industrial approach - you see the same logic with Airbus or Audi - which we think fits the utilitarian nature of the product," explains co-founder Bruno Belamich. "Coming up with a name for our early model, the Hydromax, was like a kind of game. But we think being consistent in taking a utilitarian approach with everything is what gives our brand an identity, even if we know sometimes it would be easier if we just gave each model a more traditional name."

And this, at least, avoids the inevitable pitfall of ending up with a name that misfires. The watch industry doesn't always get it right. There are brand names - Seagull and Nauticfish, for example - which, depending on your sensibility, can just sound wrong. The appeal of some model names too - The Growler, the Jazzmaster, maybe even the kitschy El Primero - are debatable.

"But you have to remember that the watch industry has historically been about working with a product that's very tangible. Watches are solid things," reminds Keiser. "And the industry isn't always so good at all the soft, marketing-oriented things like names." ●





Indian Cuisine

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Taste sensation

South Shields award winning **Zeera** serves up sumptuous authentic Indian dishes with a modern twist

Ocean Road is well known for its wide variety of restaurants – particularly of the Indian type, hence the name the Curry Mile. Nestled centrally, we have Zeera, a family-run business owned and operated by the 3 Choudhury brothers – Shahanoor, the Director; Kohnoor, the Head Chef and finally, Abadur, the Second Chef.

Shahanoor, or Shah as he is known locally, was going to be looking after us. Sitting down with Shah, I first had to understand why he chose to open an Indian restaurant on the road famous for them?

“I knew what people were used to when dining in an Indian restaurant. They would have the standard onion bhaji, served with rice, naans and a typical curry dish like a Jalfrezi or Korma. I wanted to offer something more.”

Hence, when eating at Zeera, you have a much more upmarket dining experience. Although you will find, at the core, traditional dishes, Shah has made sure that his menu stands out. Providing a fusion of enhanced flavours, presentation and experience, people leave thinking they aren’t in South Shields but possibly in India.

Since leaving school, Shah tells me he had always dreamed of having his own restaurant.

Food has always been his passion, and after spending many years working in other establishments and developing his skills, in December of 2007 Zeera was opened with a capacity of 42. By 2012 having established a dedicated set of customers that was constantly growing, Zeera expanded into the business next door and increased its capacity to 90. Even so, it is highly advised to book as the restaurant filled up quickly on our night, a Thursday.

“I am aiming to deliver good food to give people a good mood”, Shah jokingly tells me. “This way, I know they will always remember Zeera. I don’t want to offer a dining service where you eat, drink and go, but rather soak in the ambience and fully enjoy the experience at a nice pace.”

“We are not a curry house. We are so much more.”

This vision is echoed in the massive amount of awards the establishment has won, including the Indian Restaurant of the Year 21/22 by The Luxury Travel Awards against rivals across the globe. The popular Indian restaurant was crowned Best Team at the English Curry Awards and Indian Restaurant of the Year in the Prestige Awards 21/22 in 2021. ▶

Shah puts all this recognition down to having a business run by a close family with everyone putting in their all. “My brothers have helped make Zeera what it is today. I can rely on them to help me deliver my vision, providing consistently high service and high-quality food.”

On the night, I, Rob, Lisa and Nicholle were treated to a truly unique dining experience with Shah and his team as we got to sample the new menu. To allow us to experience every possible flavour, Shah selected the starters, mains and desserts that he felt would make the night spectacular. This prevented us from playing it safe and only going with dishes that would make us feel comfortable. We placed all of our trust in him and were not disappointed.

The night started with a dish called ‘The Street of Mumbai’ – an interesting take on traditional street food called Pani Puri. A small crispy puri filled with chickpeas, chutney and onion sits above a shot glass of spicy mint flavour water.

The dish clearly represented what Shah meant when he wanted to create

something fresh with Indian cuisine, as the table were truly confused about what they were looking at and what to do with it. Was it a shot? Was it a small snack and drink? After a quick demonstration of mixing the two, everyone dived into it like a pro. The crispy and tangy taste with not too much spice was a fantastic start to awakening the senses, with Rob pointing out how the flavours were just right and not overpowering.

Next up, we had the Kathi Roll consisting of lamb tikka tossed with onion, peppers and tomato all wrapped in a layered egg paratha and a Paneer Tikka Mushroom, a vegetarian dish with mushrooms and paneer as the core, plus onions, peppers, garlic and coriander.

The Kathi Roll showed what could be achieved with a bit of imagination, substituting what typically would be a flatbread wrap with a layered egg instead. Almost like an omelette, the tender lamb was complemented with a sauce that added some ‘oomph’, as Lisa put it. Considering she isn’t a massive fan of lamb, she was

pleasantly surprised and after more! Nicholle enjoyed the textures of the Paneer Tikka Mushroom as the soft cheese and mushrooms combined well with the crunch of the peppers and onion.

While we waited for the mains to arrive, Shah brought over Delhi Ki Chaat – mini samosas served with chickpeas bursting with street flavours, chutney and various sauces. Rob jokingly compared it to the Indian version of nachos since the crispy base and toppings were similar to the staple Mexican dish.

The dish had citrus undertones with a spicy kick, with the chickpeas absorbing so much flavour it was unimaginable. This delivered on a higher level than nachos, believe me! The perfect balance of crunch and sauciness was ideal, and it would leave everyone satisfied as a sharing plate.

Supporting the sharer, we also had a Vegan Thali – a traditional Indian dish regularly seen in classic movies featuring rice, flatbreads, chutneys, and various other condiments. The portion sizes here were more than enough for any vegan, with



many flavours that could be combined or kept separate.

Following up from this was the Dum Biryani, a lamb dish steamed with rice and served in a sealed handi (pot) using naan bread. As Rob cut into it, the steam was visibly escaping carrying the aromatic flavours. Each of us dived in, scooping out a nice helping of lamb and rice while breaking off a bit of the naan. It was like we were helping ourselves to an eastern version of a pie, with a huge surprise of a boiled egg in the middle of it – we were not expecting it!

We all noticed how each dish looked more extravagant as it came out, but thankfully not sacrificing any of the flavours for a more visual presentation. Instead, they seemed to get more flavoursome as they went on – especially when it came to the next dish, the ‘Bunny Chow’.

Served in a small loaf, the bread had been scooped out and filled with chicken curry (also available in lamb) accompanied by poppadoms and raitha. Rob and I had found our favourite out of all the dishes so far. The South African inspired curry was magical. The bread was crunchy while absorbing the curry sauce, while the chicken was tender and succulent.

Combined, the two different textures worked perfectly as a mouth-watering dish, and we were honestly disappointed about having to share it with the table!

Thankfully the next dish, a Lamb Handi, was arriving just as we were thinking about how to keep the chicken curry to ourselves. Again served in a selection of traditional Indian dinner sets, this Bangladeshi curry feature fresh lamb on the bone cooked with nothing but herbs and spices. Shah was keen to point out that so much flavour can be achieved with few ingredients, as the meat and bone provided it all.

There was rice, a small dal, chapati and raitha supporting the dish. At this point, the girls were already full to the brim but powered through a few small helpings as we all tucked into the food. This dish is an excellent choice if you want to try a different assortment of aromas as it comes with so much, and for one person, it would be highly satisfying.

Wrapping up the night, we were served a Mango and Passionfruit Torte, a Summer Fruits Cheesecake, and an Affagato (scoops

of ice cream topped with hot espresso and Baileys).

We highly recommend the Mango Passionfruit Torte. The passionfruit glaze was sublime, while the sponge cake mango base perfectly complimented it. The cheesecake was rich and fruity, while the Affagato was ideal for those who like to have a coffee and ice cream but can't decide!

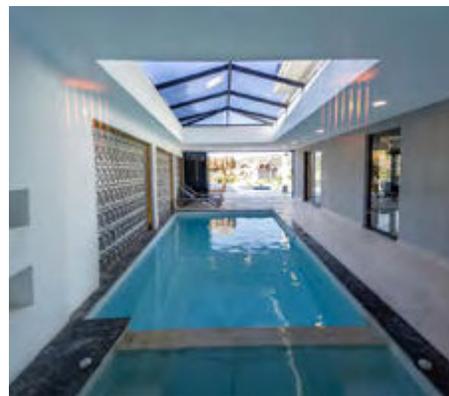
The experience overall at Zeera was magnificent. We felt like we were

transported around the entire of India, from North to South, East to West. Everybody felt like they had enjoyed a culinary delight while trying something new that couldn't be found anywhere else. Shah and his brothers have gone above and beyond making sure whoever comes to Zeera is treated to a form of dining that is unique and experimental but executed to such a high standard they would struggle to find anything that matches it. We all highly recommend it! ●



Luxury villa in Ovacik

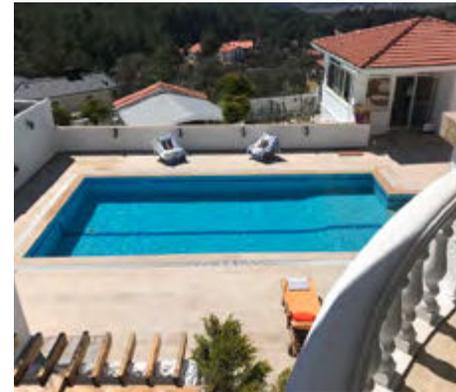
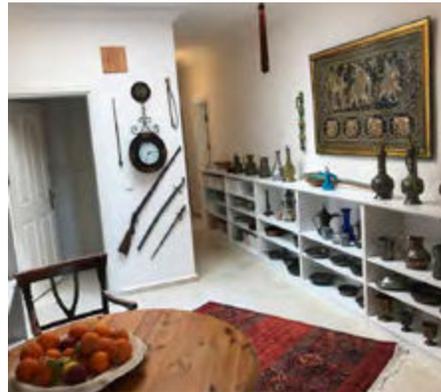
Location: Ovacik **£680,000**



- 60 m² floor session 4 floors 240 m² usage
- Italian origin wallpapers
- Vitra ceramic
- Linea Rossa Aluminium joinery
- All cabinets are lacquered
- Underfloor heating
- Turkish bath
- Sauna
- Outdoor pool 7.5m x 4.5m
- Indoor swimming pool 6.3m x 3.5m and 8 multi-jet jacuzzi next to the pool
- Indoor parking 40m²
- Automatic garden irrigation
- Camellia 30m²

Ultra Luxury Villa In Yesilüzümlü

£810,000



This ultra-luxury villa located in Yesil Üzümlü, Fethiye district of Mugla, is one of our villas with a view, single story and private pool in the most amazing area of Yesilüzümlü.

This villa's pool is not visible from the outside, it has a separate rest room and is in a position to meet the needs of all our customers looking for comfort in a comfortable and peaceful environment.

The living room with a custom-made single fireplace has enough capacity to heat the whole villa and provides the comfort where you can enjoy the winter nature view of Yesilüzümlü. With a total of 3 bedrooms and a separate dressing room, each of which is air-conditioned, the property has a jacuzzi in one of the two en-suite bathrooms and a bathroom.

The guest house also provides guests with a private living space and has a separate kitchen and bathroom.

In the area built on 2 acres, parking area for 3 cars, wood storage, generator room, pool room, 5-ton water tank where you can store rainwater; heat pump and water heater that can be used on winter days are within the property.

The security system is provided with 9 cameras and 2 alarm systems, and the alarm system is directly connected to the public security and law enforcement organisation.

Kalkan villas

Location: Fethiye Kargi

£630,000 depending on the exchange rate



Area: 500m²

These beautiful villas will be completed by November. 8 villas are available in 2 different styles.

Spacious lounge area, heating system running throughout the villa, pool area and sauna.

The Kalkan villas each have a parking space outside as well as an elevator inside to create super easy accessibility.

These Kalkan villas are just a short walk away from the beach.

The Kalkan villa has 4 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms.

Apartment in Calis Center

£254,000 depending on the exchange rate



This apartment, which is only 30 metres away from Calis Beach, is located in a small complex with a pool and a beautifully maintained garden area around it.

This apartment is not far from the marina, close to the supermarkets and easy to access transportation points. It has 2 bedrooms, bathroom, lounge and kitchen area.

It is offered for sale without furnishings, this property could be sold with furnishings please ask for a revised price.

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Forward plan with our helpful

EVENTS DIARY



SEPTEMBER

- 07 #DarloBizClub Meeting, Blackwell Grange Hotel, Grange Road, Darlington
- 08 EMCON 2022, Xcel centre, Newton Aycliffe
- 12 RE: CHARGE Your Business with Supply Chain North East, Northern Design Centre, Abbotts Hill, Baltic Business Quarter, Gateshead
- 13 Northern Make UK & Make UK Defence Dinner & Conference, Hardwick Hall Hotel, Sedgfield, County Durham
- 15 SIEF Forum 2022: Creating New Futures, Ushaw: Historic House, Chapels & Gardens, Woodland Road, Durham
- 20 THE DBN SMALL BUSINESS SHOEBOX EXPO, Beamish Museum, Beamish
- 28 BIPC North East Business Brunch - Blaydon Library, Gateshead
- 29 Teesside Expo - Grand Marquee, Wynyard Hall, Stockton-on-Tees
- 30 Newcastle Upon Tyne Jobs Fair, St. James' Park, Barrack Road, Newcastle upon Tyne

OCTOBER

- 13 & 20 Start Up Smart: Start Your Own Business in Gateshead (2 days Intensive) 10am to 4pm Blaydon Library Community Room, Wesley Court, The Precinct
- 17 The Real Client Journey, Northern Design Centre, Baltic Business Quarter, Gateshead
- 19 Sunderland Careers Fair, Grand Hotel Sunderland, Queens Parade, Sunderland
- 31 KILLER MASTERMIND: Half-Day Business Conference and Mastermind, Great North Hotel, Great North Road, Gosforth

NOVEMBER

- 03 North East Expo - Autumn 2022, Newcastle Falcons, Brunton Road, Kingston Park, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- 23 Middlesbrough Jobs Fair, Riverside Stadium, Middlesbrough Football Club, Middlesbrough

To have your event listed here, please email dom@bw-magazine.co.uk.

Please note, while we make every effort to ensure these listings are correct, we cannot be held responsible for changes or cancellations – always contact the venue beforehand to check.

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