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GROWING your PROFITS

GROactive

Accelerated Excellence in Business Growth

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This issue's feature

Shaz speaks to Scott Bell, Record-breaking FireWalker



3 FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT TREASON

1 Until 1998 you could still be executed for treason in the UK, despite the abolition of the death penalty (for murder) in 1969. This apparently included allowing your pet to mate with a pet belonging to a member of the Royal Family without permission!

2 On 30 January 1649 King Charles I was beheaded in Whitehall - his crime was stated to be 'treason'. For his execution he wore a silk knitted vest beneath his shirt, because he felt that if he shivered from cold, the watching crowd would think he trembled from cowardice.

3 William Joyce ('Lord Haw-Haw'), the last person executed for treason in the UK, broadcast pro-Nazi propaganda to British radio audiences in World War II. The Treason Act 1945 was rushed through, to align the previously lengthy medieval trial procedure with that for murder. Born in the USA to an Irish father and English mother, Joyce held a British passport, and appealed on the grounds that he had lied about his country of birth on the passport application in 1933, so owed no allegiance to the UK. But he was still hanged at Wandsworth Prison on 3 January 1946. Nice try!

Exceptional growth for Peterborough Recliner Ltd



Mike Brisbourne of Peterborough Recliner Centre has grown his turnover by 50% in under 4 years! He tells us where he's heading next...

When Mike Brisbourne and his father Don purchased Peterborough Recliner Centre in 2011, they took on an established business in a competitive market sector – and have increased turnover year on year so it's now reached a level more than 50% better than in the year of purchase!

With a showroom in Mancetter Square Peterborough, one of the largest in the area for this sector, the business supplies manual and powered recliners, recliner and fixed suites, swivel recliner chairs and stool sets and electric lift and rise care recliners, as well as fireside chairs. If you're thinking that this all sounds a bit middle-aged then, in the nicest possible way, you'd be right! As Mike says, 'The majority of our customers are aged 50 and above – and they appreciate good, old-fashioned service'. However the business is also the designated local stockist of the prestigious Scandinavian Stressless range – which, as the ultimate recliner, appeals to everyone with its streamlined design which meets the body's need for comfort and support.

Whilst Don, as co-director, brings to the business his business expertise gained from his many years' experience as a

senior manager of a national organisation, and looks after the financial side, Mike is the driving force behind the company's success and takes on day-to-day management in a typically 'hands-on' way. At the moment the business has a single location in Peterborough, staffed by Mike, another full-time employee and a part-timer, but plans for the future include opening two more centres in other areas, using the successful Peterborough operation as a blueprint. Mike is currently also reviewing the future marketing strategies for the business, as this is a very competitive sector to be in. Asked what he felt was the hallmark of the success so far, Mike immediately zoomed in on customer service. 'We always go the extra mile', he declared, adding with a wry smile, 'although I'm afraid many of our customers take undue advantage of this!'

It obviously works, though, and Mike was quick to praise the service provided by aa Chartered Accountants, saying, 'The team has covered all our needs from day one and really contributed to our success'. Mike's not 'reclining' on his laurels however, and with the planned expansion, he expects to be taking further advantage of our expertise and pro-active approach to business growth!

In the meantime, if you're aching to rest comfortably after your day's work – take a look at the website www.peterboroughreclinercentre.co.uk or ring Mike on **01733 325566**



Someone who walks on fire to get to where he wants to be!

Scott is a twice Guinness World Record holder for the longest firewalk and has appeared on numerous radio and TV programmes. He's passionate about peak performance and how to get the best out of people.

With over 20 years experience in sales, management and consulting, Scott can Talk the Talk and more importantly Walk the (Fire) Walk. He can make the most uninspired become alive and want to change their ways. Don't go to him unless you're prepared to step out of your comfort zone, because Scott's experience has led him to work in many different sectors, including motor, legal, charity, financial and insurance to name a few. He has one thing on his mind and that is to improve the current situation his client is in.

Communication skills mean that even the most difficult concept can be easily understood. As one of a new breed of professional speakers and a member of the Professional Speaking Association & Global Speakers Federation, Scott has this gift and ensures the audience take a valuable lesson home with them.

Tell me a bit about your background

After leaving school at 16, I worked my family retail business. First of all I learnt to sell and then I progressed into branch management and finally into training. Along the way I got into firewalking when I attended a Tony Robbins seminar.

How did you end up as a record-breaker?

I wanted to be known for what I do, so I needed exposure and coverage. Thinking about how to achieve this, breaking a record seemed a good idea - although I burned my feet in the process! But it gave me the chance to demonstrate my expertise and I got lots of coverage.

What did you learn from this?

I realised that human beings can burn! But I also learned that it was something that I can do. It got me lots of radio and



Scott Bell

TV interviews and I became a celebrity in my line, so that taught me how to leverage my expertise.

What are some of the key ideas of success that you've learned and how could our readers use these?

You need a positive mindset. You need to believe that things are possible. For example, I was asked to appear on TV where Neil 'Razor' Ruddock wanted me to help fifteen lads to change their mindset. These fifteen people succeeded in changing the way they did things so, as I see it, they became 'real-time'.

What would you say are the critical factors in winning more business?

I did it by first gathering evidence - it made a big difference, because it added credibility to what I was doing. With proof, life is a lot easier! You also need to be consistent in what you do. And do gather video testimonials, because I find they make a huge contribution.

Have you experienced any failures along the way and, if so, what did you learn from them?

The first world record I made in fact felt like a failure because I burned my feet doing it! This made me lose a bit of confidence and it took me six weeks to get back on the fire. What did it teach me? Never give up!

What is the one thing in business, if you had to get rid of everything else, you would keep and why would it be this one thing?

The ability to be a specialist in your sector and be the 'go to' expert in your field. But you must be sure your heart's in it!

Of all the books you have ever read, which ones stand out as the ones you would recommend to anyone else and why?

'7 Habits of Highly Effective People' by Stephen Covey - it helps you understand yourself and others too.

'Goals' by Brian Tracy - it gives you a blueprint.

What do you see as the main attributes which make people more successful, regardless of their definition of success?

Persistence - never give up on what you believe. People will try to bring you down but if you remain strong, you'll see it through.

You must deal with lots of different organisations and companies. What in your opinion are the biggest mistakes they make and how would you suggest to them that they do something different?

Companies don't know what they really want and so they lack clarity. This comes about through lack of responsibility and because their ideas lack substance. Being able to state clearly what you are aiming for, and taking responsibility for your decisions - and communicating this to your workforce and your customers - is the way to succeed.

A Big Thank you!

This time we want to thank all of our clients, team members and professional friends and associates for your support! Whether it's giving us your instructions, coming to our seminars and workshops, or referring us to potential new clients - it's all important to our continued success and very much appreciated. Keep it coming!

Accountancy Archie's Technical Round-up

Are you into cloud accounting yet? And if not - why not? Maybe you're confused about exactly what 'the cloud' is. Or perhaps you're worried about data security. So let's get down to basics.

Cloud accounting is just like using accounting software on your own computer, except it's over the Internet and you access it using your web browser. You'll most likely be using software as a service (SaaS). The cloud providers install and manage the infrastructure and platforms that run the applications and the cloud users (you) access the software through the cloud clients (your service provider). SaaS is sometimes referred to as "on-demand software" and is usually priced on a pay-per-use basis or on a subscription fee. You access your data by desktop, laptop, tablet or phone.

What are the advantages to cloud accounting?

- effective outsourcing of hardware and software maintenance and support
- easy maintenance, because applications are not installed on each user's computer
- 24/7 access from anywhere in the world
- no need for upgrading your system as business expands
- updates can be released without re-installation
- multiple users can work on the same data simultaneously
- data stored off-site, which helps with business continuity and disaster recovery
- lower costs because resources and costs are shared between a large pool of users
- coping with peak-loads, or only partial use of system

Which cloud is right for you? Well, you'll need to talk to your provider or your current ICT support. As always, the important thing is to know exactly what you're getting!

Contact us on 01733 555667 if you would like further advice.

Please note that the advice is intended to be generalised and may not apply to your specific circumstances. aa Chartered Accountants therefore accept no liability for any loss incurred as a result of any action taken or omission made in reliance on the above unless specific prior advice has been sought and given by aa Chartered Accountants.

Drawbacks?

- Data security - your data is stored on the cloud provider's server, so there's no denying that there could be unauthorised access to the data, but this is also a risk on non-cloud-based systems, and, just as you install firewalls and other protection systems, you can adopt intelligent third-party key management systems to protect your data. In fact security on cloud-based systems can often be better than on traditional systems, because providers are able to devote resources to solving security issues that you might not be able to afford! This is another economy of scale.
- Access by service provider is a related concern in case information is accidentally altered or deleted. Make sure there is a back-up and also read the cloud provider's privacy policy! Ideally you'll be able to encrypt data to prevent unauthorised access.
- Legal ownership of the information stored on the cloud - you'll need to make enquiries, to be sure your cloud computing complies with data protection and any regulatory requirements and also to ensure that the cloud provider can't profit from your hard-won business information.

Cloud-computing's a great way to maximise efficiency and minimise cost, for all sizes of business. Follow the rule of making sure you know what you're getting and you will be OK! Why not come to our Gro-Active Forum on cloud-based accounting on 30 June 2015 - contact us on 01733 555667 or on shahzad@aa-accountants.co.uk for details.



TIP TOP HOT TIP for business growth

Do you see yourself as a 'details person' - or do you have more of a 'broad brush' approach. Well, both characteristics have their place in running a business. Although 'blue sky' thinking (to use another cliché!) is great, there's a real danger in ignoring the 'nitty-gritty' especially on the finances.

It's very tempting to look at your debits and credits as details and assume that, as long as you're still doing business, they will somehow even themselves out - but the following example might illustrate how these small details can have a mighty effect!

Imagine your financial position as a see-saw. On one side are your debts and other liabilities, on the other side are your income and profits. The support in the middle is the fulcrum and those physicists among you will understand the principle of levers - where a force exerted on one side of the see-saw will have an effect on the other. The thing is that the effect of the force may be much greater than the actual force applied on the other side.

Maybe you think it doesn't matter too much if your liabilities are greater than your assets, as long as you can keep going), but now add another well-known image - the snowball.

If you have a small, even an infinitesimal, imbalance in your see-saw, then it will very quickly gather force and disproportionately affect the balance on the other side. Let's look at it in cashflow terms. If you are each month you are making, shall we say, a 1% 'profit' in terms of income over expenditure (leaving aside for these purposes, the need for you to draw an income for yourself), then slowly but surely your business will build on that to create a more and more profitable situation. Sadly the converse is also true. If you are showing a tiny loss each month, then you will run into a huge burden of debt with startling rapidity.

Don't ignore the signs - they have more cumulative effect than you may think. If your financial see-saw isn't evenly balanced, which way is the balance tipping! If it's even slightly the wrong way - do something about it NOW! It only needs a tiny adjustment for the swing to be the other way!

Client spotlight on... Abdul Rahim



This time we're taking a look at a client from outside the immediate locality.

Abdul Rahim is the owner of A-Star Tutoring, based in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The business, which started 11 years ago, provides educational services, in Mathematics, English, ICT skills and Science (Physics, Chemistry and Biology). The age range runs from 6 to 18. Tuition is through private study programmes for primary, secondary, GCSE and A-level, delivered at a dedicated centre which is also a licensed examination centre.

Abdul believes passionately in the power of education and is dedicated to ensuring that students have the ability to make the correct choices in life. A new product, available from September will

cover distance learning in Mathematics aimed at Key Stage 3 students (11 to 14). Students will be supplied with a box packed with information folders and DVDs and will be able to study from wherever they are, but with access to professional tutors at A-Star Tutoring. If all goes well, it is planned to expand the programme to cover A-level. Abdul says, 'Maths lends itself very well to delivery through this type of programme but we will be looking at offering other courses on a distance learning basis'.

As an education professional, Abdul was quick to see the advantage of using aa Chartered Accountants for business coaching as well as for compliance services. He says, 'Shaz is absolutely first class as a coach and a mentor. I've really benefitted from my regular sessions with him in terms of being able to develop my business. One thing I really value is his willingness to pick up the phone and discuss an issue with you. If you can get that kind of support, then it's priceless!'

Take a look at the A-Star Tutoring website to learn more about what's on offer. www.astartutoring.com

EVENTS & News

More changes in our team are afoot as we say goodbye in June to our trainee accountant Matthew Simpson. Matt came to us in 2013 as an apprentice and has progressed well with his training and proved himself a useful member of the team. However, he now wants to relocate to be near his girlfriend who has a new job in Cambridge, so we wish him well in the next stage of his life. We will be recruiting a new team member in due course.

Whilst he was with us, Matt latterly took over the project of Investors in the Environment from our former team member Nikki Cassidy. We're pleased to report that we have been awarded 'Green' status – so thanks are due to both Nikki and Matt for all their input. Our next target in the accreditation stakes is our re-assessment for Investors in People, due at the beginning of July. We currently hold Bronze status in this, so we hope to report success in our next issue.

Our Accelerated Profits Forum (which you may have attended) has now been re-named the Gro-active Forum – to align with our ethos of helping you grow to be the best you want to be. The next meeting will be in July and will centre on the use of cloud-based bookkeeping and management information, especially the Xero system. If you haven't yet been contacted with details, please do get in touch with us if you'd like to attend!

Shaz continues to raise his profile as an inspirational public speaker! If you'd like to look at hosting an AA event, please contact Shaz on 01733 555667 or shaz@aa-accountants.co.uk

Inspirational quote:
"The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis'. One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger – but recognise the opportunity."

John F Kennedy 1917–1963. President of USA
January 1961 – November 1963



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If you have tips on business growth which you'd like to share, or any comments for us, or points you would like to share with our readership please send them to the Editor on hilary@aa-accountants.co.uk for inclusion in our next edition.

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