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BUSINESS NEWS ENGLAND

Welcome to our round up of the latest business news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

What's your growth strategy?

A company might have a great product or service but without a business growth strategy to help it define, articulate and communicate where it is going, it may not grow at all!



A growth strategy starts with identifying and accessing opportunities within your market. The strategy addresses how your company is going to evolve to meet the challenges of today and in the future. A growth strategy gives your company purpose, and it answers questions about your long-term plans.

Having a growth strategy is important because it keeps your company working towards goals that go beyond what is happening in the market today. They keep both owners and employees focused and aligned, and they allow you to think long-term.

The first step is to look at five important areas that will help you develop a growth strategy:

1. Think long term – invest time in understanding where the market is going and what this means for your customers. Short term decisions do not help grow a business.
2. Having a good value proposition is essential – this states the relevance of your product or service, what it does and why customers need it. What is yours?
3. Expanding your reach – who is your target customer and what do you need to do to let them know you exist and that your product or service is relevant to them?

4. Growth means new people, systems and (maybe) different ways of doing things. Grow at a pace you can manage.
5. How will your marketing get your value proposition to relevant customers?

Once you have taken some time to write out your growth strategy and where you want your business to be in (say) 2 years, the next step is to work out your marketing plan.

A marketing plan is a business document outlining your marketing strategy and tactics. It is often focused on a specific period of time (i.e., over the next 12 months) and covers a variety of marketing-related details, such as costs, goals, and action steps. But like your business plan, a marketing plan is not a static document. This should outline:

1. How you are going to keep existing customers happy and returning to buy more often
2. What the goals are for getting new customers
3. The marketing methods you are going to use to achieve 1 and 2

Please talk to us about helping you formulate your expansion plans; we have considerable experience in helping our clients grow their businesses.

Businesses urged to 'scam-proof' their messages to public

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has published new guidance for businesses on creating trustworthy customer text and telephone messages.



The guidance follows a rise in text and call-based scams such as those involving fake parcel deliveries, the most prevalent type of 'smishing' text messages in 2021.

The guidance covers various aspects of secure customer communications including:

- issuing consistent and trustworthy SMS and telephone messages
- measures to make it harder for criminals to exploit telecoms channels
- providing a route for customers to independently verify communications and more

It includes recommended practices for putting services in place and offers nine tips for organisations to follow to create messages their customers can trust.

See: [Business communications - SMS and telephone best practice - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

Employers' PPE responsibilities extended to 'workers' from April 2022

From April, employers will be obliged to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to workers, as well as employees, who may be exposed to health and safety risks at work.

An amendment to the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, will come into force on 6 April 2022.

Organisations will need to undertake a risk assessment to establish whether a worker requires PPE to carry out their work tasks. If they do, the employer will need to carry out a PPE suitability assessment and provide protective equipment or clothing to them free of charge, as they do for employees.

Organisations will also be responsible for the maintenance, storage and replacement of any PPE they provide, while workers will be responsible for reporting any loss or damage to their PPE.

See: [Personal protective equipment \(PPE\) at work \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

NCSC For Startups programme

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is urging tech startups to join the fight against ransomware.

Companies with ideas to protect small businesses from ransomware are offered a chance to develop them further with leading cyber security experts.

The companies can apply to join [NCSC For Startups](#), a programme in which they collaborate with experts to develop, adapt and test their products.

The programme was launched last year by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) - a part of GCHQ - and the innovation company Plexal. The programme's aim is to bring together innovative startups with NCSC technical expertise to solve some of the UK's most important cyber challenges.

The latest call for companies to join the programme is aimed at those who are developing products to protect SMEs from the growing ransomware threat. In the first four months of 2021, the NCSC handled the same number of ransomware incidents as for the whole of 2020 – which was itself a number more than three times greater than in 2019.

The NCSC and Plexal want to hear from startups that can:

- improve choice for SMEs looking for ransomware protection
- encourage firms to implement secure backups to minimise the impact of an attack
- reduce the risks involved in using Remote Desktop Protocol from home

See: [Current challenges - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

Directors may be liable for overclaimed CJRS grants

Where HMRC believe a company (including LLPs) is insolvent or about to become insolvent, and overclaimed CJRS grants owed will not be paid, they may give a notice making an individual (or individuals) jointly and severally liable for the relevant tax liabilities. This means that all individuals given a notice will be jointly and severally liable with the company for paying these liabilities.

HMRC have issued guidance setting out the conditions that need to be present in order to use their powers:

- a. An officer of HMRC may give a joint and several liability notice to an individual if they are satisfied that all 4 of the conditions A to D set out in the legislation have been met
- b. the company is subject to an insolvency procedure, or there is a serious possibility of becoming subject to one
- c. the company is liable to an income tax charge as a result of receiving a COVID-19 support payment it was not entitled to receive
- d. the individual was responsible for the management of the company at the time the tax first became chargeable, and the individual knew (at that time) that the company was not entitled to the relating COVID-19 support payment
- e. there is a serious possibility that some or all of the income tax liability will not be paid

See: [Overview of joint and several liability notices for the taxation of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) support payments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

GBIP in Taiwan: Smart Cities

Innovate UK is inviting applications for their Global Business Innovation Programme (GBIP) to Taiwan from companies developing new technologies to address challenges in:

- smart healthcare
- smart mobility
- intelligent buildings and housing
- new energy solutions
- future education
- direct citizen engagement
- urban infrastructure and planning

Taiwan is an excellent testbed for future cities innovations and this programme will enable you to find potential collaborators and improve your company's value proposition to international partners and investors.

The programme, delivered by Innovate UK EDGE, consists of:

- a preparation phase
- a 5-day innovation visit focused on Smart Cities
- a post-visit exploitation workshop
- follow-up support from an Innovate UK EDGE Innovation and Growth Specialist

The programme aims to help your business maximise the opportunities identified, including developing innovation projects with partners in the territory.

This initiative will be delivered physically and include virtual activities.

See: [Global Business Innovation Programme Taiwan Smart Cities Flyer 2022 \(ukri.org\)](#)

Climate and environmental risk analytics for resilient finance

Innovate UK's Small Business Research Initiative competition will assist in integrating climate and environmental factors into financial services.

Organisations can apply for a share of up to £1.5 million inclusive of VAT.

This competition will fund projects that bring climate and environmental risk analytics into the everyday practices of financial services.

These risks include:

- physical risks to supply chains and property as posed by increasingly common natural disasters
- litigation risk where businesses are liable for their contribution to damages to nature
- transition risk whereby socioeconomic or political shifts toward net zero undermine non-aligned investments

The competition will fund companies to develop cutting-edge solutions for greening finance and to trial these solutions with partners in the finance industry.

The closing date is 16 February 2022.

See: [Climate and environmental risk analytics for resilient finance: phase one – UKRI](#)

£50 million of Government investment announced for creative businesses across the UK

£18 million funding will support creative businesses outside of London as they create new economic opportunities in their areas, £21 million to go into three-year UK Global Screen Fund to promote UK films internationally and £8 million will help entrepreneurial, start-up video game developers from across the UK create new games the government announced last week.

See: [£50 million of Government investment announced for creative businesses across the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Geovation Accelerator Programme is now open for applications

The Geovation Accelerator Programme is backed by Ordnance Survey and HM Land Registry. The Programme offers 6 months intensive support, structured to each start-ups needs, aimed at helping founders grow their business. Start-ups receive up to £20,000 grant funding and the equivalent to over £100,000 in benefits on the Programme.

Applications for the Spring 2022 intake are now open and are seeking start-ups working in PropTech, as well as start-ups using location data in the energy and mobility industries, especially with a sustainability angle.

The deadline to apply is 28 February 2022.

See: [Startup Accelerator Programme | Geovation | London](#)

Great Taste 2022 Awards

Great Taste is the world's largest and most trusted food and drink accreditation scheme.

Putting your food or drink to the test with our panel of over 500 experts is a quick way to get honest, straightforward and impartial feedback from chefs, buyers, food writers and retailers. Whether your product receives a 1, 2 or 3 star accolade, Great Taste stars are highly respected seals of approval.

General entry closes 14 February 2022 (competition will close earlier if entry cap is reached)

See: [Great Taste - Guild of Fine Food \(gff.co.uk\)](https://www.gff.co.uk)

UK Government sets out blueprint to transform UK

The UK government's [Levelling Up white paper](#) has set out the blueprint to expand opportunities across the United Kingdom.

The UK government has set 12 new missions to drive change to people's lives by spreading opportunity and reversing geographical inequalities.

Leaders across the UK will be asked to find new ways to collaborate and learn from each other's successes as the UK faces common challenges.

One example is a Silicon Valley-style 'Innovation Accelerator' for Glasgow to create quality new jobs and boost regional economies.

See: [UK Government sets out blueprint to transform UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Funding support for new residential-led development

The government's housing delivery agency helps to build homes across England and encourage innovation, both in the kind of homes that are built and the way they are delivered.

They do this in two ways:

- by providing development finance to small and medium house builders
- by providing infrastructure funding to support developers, master developers and landowners

The housing delivery agency will continue to provide investment directly to developers, in the form of loans, and to specialist lenders.

Loans can start from £250,000, with house builders typically borrowing between £2 million and £5 million. Development finance is designed to support small and medium homebuilders that are struggling to access development finance from the

private market and to help new entrants into the housing sector, to bolster house building and diversify the market.

If you are a small or medium sized house builder and are interested in applying for a development loan, you will need to have majority control of the site you plan to build on and be planning to build five or more homes.

In addition to providing development loans, Homes England is keen to explore how funding from the Levelling Up Home Building Fund can be used to develop more sophisticated financial arrangements, such as lending alliances with the private sector, increasing the amount of funding we are able to provide to the housebuilding sector.

The fund also has the capacity to form joint ventures, which can support projects to regenerate town centres and revive public places, working with local councils, housing developers and others.

See: [Funding support for new residential-led development - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-support-for-new-residential-led-development)