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Business News Northern Ireland

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!

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year!

Christmas is a season of enjoying the simple things that make life beautiful. May you have great memories that will permanently touch your heart.

We wish you so much joy during this season and all through to the New Year.



Looking for some new year business ideas?

If you are looking for some new business ideas, then ask us for a copy of our guide called “57 Ways to Grow Your Business”! Our publication is packed full of bright ideas for the Serious Entrepreneur and starts with the four basics of growth.

All the ideas in this guide ultimately revolve around four basic insights about growing a business:

- Increase the number of customers,
- Increase the number of times each one does business with you,

- Increase the average value of each transaction, and
- Increase your own effectiveness and efficiency.

57 Ways to Grow Your Business

Bright Ideas for the Serious Entrepreneur



Here are some other business principles that we explore in the guide:

- What you can measure, you can manage.
- Build in unique core differentiators and focus on them constantly.
- It's more important to be different than it is to be better.
- Cutting the price is always an option but there is usually a better way: increasing value.
- Break compromises and lower the barriers to people doing business with you.
- Systemise every aspect of your business.
- Empower your team to make it right for every customer.
- Create a clear and detailed action plan.

Ask us for a copy – you never know there may be a gem or two in there for you to help you grow faster!

Post-Brexit reform of financial services announced

Andrew Griffith, the UK City of London minister, has stated the UK government's intent to revamp the regulation of the investment and insurance sectors.

Earlier this month he unveiled over 30 reforms "to unlock investment and turbocharge growth in towns and cities across the UK".

Last week the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, set out plans to repeal and replace EU retained laws governing financial services. This will establish a new regulatory framework for the UK with the aim of making it more agile, less costly, and more responsive to emerging trends.

These plans included a commitment to make substantial legislative progress over the course of 2023 on repealing and replacing EU-era rules governing insurers' balance sheets. This is expected to unlock over £100 billion of private investment for productive assets such as UK infrastructure.

The work to repeal, and where appropriate replace, retained EU law governing the sector has been guided by industry and split into two initial tranches. These will focus on delivering reform to areas which provide the most significant boost to UK growth and competitiveness, and the government will set out further detail on future tranches over time.

These announcements deliver the next chapter in the government's plan for a UK financial services sector that is open, sustainable, and technologically advanced; one that is globally competitive and acts in the interests of communities and citizens.

As announced in the Autumn Statement, the government will look to announce changes to EU regulations in four other high growth industries by the end of next year, including digital technology, life sciences, green industries, and advanced manufacturing.

See: [Edinburgh Reforms hail next chapter for UK Financial Services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/edinburgh-reforms-hail-next-chapter-for-uk-financial-services)

Tax Year Basis for Unincorporated Businesses – Amending Estimates

From tax year 2024/25 unincorporated businesses will be required to compute their profits on the new 'tax year' basis, i.e. those arising between 6 April and 5 April. Many businesses are considering changing their accounting period end to align with the tax year but those that choose not to will need to apportion their profits and may need to estimate some of the figures in order to meet the 31 January filing deadline.

For example, a business with a 31 December accounting year end would need to include nine months of the profits from the year ended 31 December 2024 and three months from the year ended 31 December 2025 in 2024/25. The results for the year ended 31 December 2025 are unlikely to have been finalised by the 2024/25 filing deadline of 31 January 2026. This will require an estimate of those profits/losses and use that as the basis for the 2024/25 tax return submission.

HMRC's guidance on provisional figures currently requires businesses to make amendments to provide final figures 'without delay'. HMRC have now announced that this condition will be relaxed before the start of the basis period transition year in 2023/24.

Earlier this year HMRC consulted on a number of options on how to deal with provisional figures. The government have decided that they will allow businesses to amend provisional figures by the normal time limit for making amendments. For the 2024/25 tax year this would be on or before 31 January 2027, the same filing date as the 2025/26 return.

In order to avoid this additional complexity, unincorporated businesses should consider amending their accounting date to 31 March or 5 April. The timing of the change is critical, and it will generally be better to do this to 31 March or 5 April 2024 due to the ability to spread additional profits arising over 5 tax years.

Please contact us to discuss the full implications of changing your business year end.

Cost of Living Crisis – Help for Households Campaign

The UK Government has launched its 'Help for Households' campaign. The campaign aims to help people through the cost of living this winter. Some of the topics include:

- Cheaper broadband and phone packages - Social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. For further information please select the following link [Cheaper broadband and phone packages - Ofcom](#)
- Discounts and offers – To find out what discounts and offers are available from businesses to help with the cost of living, please select the following link [Discounts and offers - Help for Households](#)

See: [Help for Households - Get government cost of living support](#)

HSE guidance on keeping workplace temperature reasonable

As winter takes hold, you can find helpful advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on keeping people as comfortable as possible when working in the cold.

The guidance has been refreshed to make it easier to find and understand advice on how to protect workers in both low and high temperatures.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations require employers to provide a reasonable indoor temperature in the workplace.

The guidance explains how you can assess the risks to workers and put controls in place to protect them.

There is a workplace temperature checklist to help you carry out a basic risk assessment. HSE have also updated sources of advice, including practical steps you can take in the summer months to protect workers during a heatwave.

See: [Temperature \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/)

Stay safe in the snow

The Met Office has some practical advice and information on what to do to stay safe in the snow.

When there is a snow warning in place the guidance covers:

1. What to do if you need to drive somewhere;
2. Driving safely in snow;
3. Thinking ahead and acting now so you can cope if cut off;
4. Staying safe if you are cut off; and
5. What you can do in a power cut.

See: [5 tips for staying safe in snow - Met Office.](https://www.metoffice.com/uk/news/5-tips-for-staying-safe-in-snow)

StartUp Show 2023

Whether you are an aspiring or existing entrepreneur, the StartUp Show is a chance to not only discover everything you need to know about starting a business, but also to connect with advisers and business experts who'll help take your enterprise to the next level.

The event takes place on 28 January 2023 at King's College London, with early bird tickets costing £10 (register by 31 December 2022).

By registering for the event, you will receive access to the recordings captured from the Keynote stage, featuring top tips from inspirational entrepreneurs.

See: [StartUp Show: The biggest start-up event in London \(enterprisenation.com\)](https://www.enterprisenation.com/startup-show)

“Small Business Goes Big” – Enterprise Nation scheme

Enterprise Nation has partnered with Adobe to bring “Small Business Goes Big”. It’s a chance to pitch your small business to retail buyers, with the possibility of getting stocked. You could also win a share of £10,000 cash grants.



If you are a small business, micro-business, freelancer or sole trader, are based in the UK, have fewer than 20 employees, and operate in the following sectors then you’re eligible to apply:

- Food and drink
- Homewares
- Fashion and jewellery
- Beauty
- Health, leisure and wellbeing

To enter, you will simply create a two-minute pitch video with the free Adobe Express app. You don't need any design or software experience.

The competition closes on 8 January 2023.

See: [Small Business Goes Big | Enterprise Nation](#)

Cyber Essentials grace period extended

Cyber Essentials has extended the certification grace period to April 2023, to coincide with the next technical requirements refresh. In January 2022, the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) announced an [update of the Cyber Essentials technical controls](#).

At the time, organisations who were looking to be assessed against the new standards were given a grace period of up to 12 months for some of the requirements. This grace period was due to end in January.

The decision has now been made to extend the grace period for a further three months until April 2023. The new deadline will coincide with the next, light touch, update to Cyber Essentials' technical requirements.

See: [About Cyber Essentials - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

SBRI: Net Zero heat and power upgrades for demand reduction

Apply for Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) funding to develop data driven approaches for upgrading portfolios of buildings. Innovate UK is investing up to £5 million (across two phases) to accelerate the shift to a net zero economy, by developing and testing scalable commercial service propositions.

These must reduce bills and carbon emissions from buildings with the intention of commercialising the results beyond phase two of this competition.

Projects must take a data-driven approach to assessing and defining appropriate pathways for:

- the upgrading of building portfolios
- targeting decarbonisation
- energy demand reduction
- market demand certainty
- heat efficiency

This is phase one of a two-phase competition. For phase one, you must deliver a technical feasibility study and produce a feasibility report that:

- outlines your approach to delivering future building upgrade programmes,
- identifies a building portfolio-owning partner, and
- describes supply chain partners and outlines how this service could be commercialised more broadly after the end of the project.

For phase two, successful projects from phase one will be invited to apply for funding to test their approach. Success in the phase two competition will depend on a subsequent assessment process.

See: [Competition overview - SBRI: Net Zero heat and power upgrades for demand reduction phase 1 - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](#)

ICO revises its guidance on international data transfers

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has updated its international transfers guidance, adding:

- a new section on [transfer risk assessments \(TRAs\)](#)
- a downloadable [TRA tool \(DOC, 368K\)](#)

These updates aim to help organisations know how to protect people's personal information when making international transfers.

Earlier this year, the ICO published the International Data Transfer Agreement (IDTA) and the Addendum to the European Union Standard Contractual Clauses (SCCs).

The latest updates clarify an alternative transfer risk assessment approach to the one put forward by the European Data Protection Board.

With the guidance, and the six-question TRA tool, the ICO offers a framework to help people identify an initial risk level for categories of data and focus on whether the transfer significantly increases the risk of either privacy or other human rights breach. The ICO believes this approach captures the key risk to the people the data is about, and is also achievable.

See: [International transfers | ICO](#)

Mind Body Business for Ards and North Down

Mind Body Business is a joint initiative by the Public Health Agency and Ards and North Down Borough Council that aims to benefit eligible local businesses and their employees, by encouraging employers to put health at the centre of their business agenda.

This year's scheme is offering a small grant of up to £250 to businesses who are interested in providing a workplace health and wellbeing initiative for their employees.

Scheme details:

Any suitable initiative should provide an opportunity for employees to make healthy choices and introduce lifestyle improvements following the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing approach which helps maintain and improve wellbeing.

Examples include:

- Provide free fruit and snacks for your workforce, such as one portion of fruit a day, or a free healthy breakfast on a Friday.
- Take 45 minutes off as a business to try a Pilates or yoga class.
- Offer free health checks to employees.
- Engage a trainer to provide a session or series of sessions for employees regarding mindfulness, stress management, mental health awareness or relaxation techniques.

Grants will be offered on a first come first served basis to eligible companies.

Businesses interested in the scheme should submit an expression of interest form by midday on Monday 19 December 2022.

See: [Mind Body Business | AND Business](#)

Employer webinars and events from the Equality Commission: January to March 2023

The Equality Commission's latest training sessions are now available to register for. The events are a mixture of webinars and physical events and will focus on a number of important equality issues for employers. The events are free and most last around 60 - 90 minutes.

Paul Oakes, Manager of the Equality Commission's Advisory Services Team said, "We are looking forward to delivering these new webinars which are aimed at both the private and public sectors. Equality considerations apply to employers of all sizes and it's important that they know their responsibilities and rights, to safeguard their business, staff and customers by complying with the law."

See: [ECNI - Employer Training Programme - Equality Commission NI \(equalityni.org\)](#)

BelTech 2023

BelTech conference is set to return to Titanic Belfast on 8 and 9 March 2023, to lead the way in gathering, informing and inspiring technology practitioners in Northern Ireland.

As well as showcasing the very best of the technology sector in Northern Ireland, a key aspect of the conference is celebration of diversity, inclusiveness, and difference.

Whether you have just started a new project, or have been working on the latest technological development, BelTech gives everyone the opportunity to highlight their ideas to a domestic and influential global audience. The conference aims to break

down barriers and empower people and organisations to succeed anywhere, anytime.

The themes and tracks in focus this year include:

- distributed enterprises - exploring the paradigm shift to becoming cloud native.
- mesh architecture - looking at interoperability and coordination between network agnostic services.
- artificial intelligence - exploring the trends and patterns that may someday change the world.
- sustainable computing practices - discussing how technologies and ways of working can interfere with or benefit the environment.

Giving technology and business leaders a forum to connect and exchange views with peers locally and globally, BelTech celebrates achievement in Northern Ireland tech, whilst engaging and inspiring the next generation of professionals.

See: [Beltech](#)

NI Management Practices Survey 2022

Researchers at Queen's University Belfast are inviting local businesses to participate in a new survey, which aims to understand how management practices vary across Northern Ireland.

In return for completing the survey, you will receive a management practices score for your business and see how it performs relative to its peers and best practice.

The survey is open to anyone who has management responsibilities in a business that operates in Northern Ireland and has five or more employees. The survey closes on Saturday 31 December 2022.

See: [NI Management Practices Survey 2022 \(qualtrics.com\)](#)