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## **Business News Scotland**

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; and
- 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!

### **Power up your business with Innovation!**

Innovation has generally been recognised as essential for value creation, both for individual companies and for the UK economy as a whole. The development of new ideas, processes and technologies and their flow across different sectors is a significant driver of economic growth and productivity. Recently, innovation has also

been identified as crucial to the transition of the economy away from fossil fuels and carbon-intensive business activities.



There are many factors that affect whether and how businesses innovate, for example the availability of skills and capital and government policy measures such as tax incentives.

However, none are more important than the company's own culture, capabilities and internal systems – all of which are aspects of its governance. Unless companies are governed in a way that is conducive to innovation, they are unlikely to be in a position to take advantage of new opportunities.

Our most innovative clients share some key characteristics:

- They invest in activities with uncertain outcomes for which the likely commercial return is difficult to quantify and the risk of failure is higher than normal;
- They have a culture which encourages flexibility, experimentation and a high level of individual decision making; and
- They require a longer-term time investment horizon than many other kinds of business activity.

Research and Development (R & D) is the process of taking an innovative idea and transforming it into a fully-fledged product or procedure.

If you are looking for long term finance to support innovation then you will need to ensure your management accounts are up to date, you make available current detailed lists of debtors and creditors, and you might need up to date projections before an expert will consider your application.

In the recent Autumn Statement, the government announced a new simplified research and development (R&D) tax relief, combining the existing R&D expenditure, credit and assembly schemes.

Please talk to us about R & D tax breaks and long-term finance, our independent experts have many years of experience and success in advising business across a wide range of sectors.

### **Building business resilience**

The British Business Bank's Guide to building business resilience contains impartial, practical, and actionable information and support to help smaller businesses manage their costs, boost their long-term profitability, and increase their resilience.



There is guidance on everything from energy efficiency to investing in technology, included to help make your business more innovative and resilient.

Other topics covered in the guide include:

- Foundations for growth;
- Managing business costs;
- Securing funds and controlling debt;
- Focusing on customers;
- Optimising your supply chain; and
- Controlling staff overheads.

See: [Guide to building business resilience - British Business Bank \(british-business-bank.co.uk\)](https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk)

### **Protecting Employees from Stress at Work**

The Working Minds campaign has been created by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety is committed to improving the health of workers.

Tackling stress isn't just the right thing to do, it's a legal obligation. Working Minds can help you make it a routine priority for your business.

There are three main reasons employers should be looking to prevent stress and support good mental health in business:

1. It's the law;
2. It's good for business; and

### 3. It's the right thing to do.

Whether you're a small business or a large corporation, the law requires all employers to prevent work-related stress to support good mental health in the workplace.

It's important to remember that in the end we're all just people – and every one of us face pressures in and out of the workplace. By treating each other with respect and compassion at work we support our teams and colleagues to stay well.

The earlier a problem is tackled, the less impact it will have for the person and your business. Stress affects people differently – what stresses one person may not affect another. Factors like skills and experience, age, or disability may all affect someone's ability to cope.

You can get started today with these 5 steps:

1. Reach out and have conversations.
2. Recognise the signs and causes of stress.
3. Respond to any risks identified by agreeing action points between employer and worker.
4. Reflect on the actions taken – have things improved?
5. Make it Routine to check back in on how things are going.

If you think that a worker is having problems, encourage them to talk to someone, whether it's their line manager, trade union representative, GP, or their occupational health team.

See: [Working Minds Employers - Work Right to keep Britain safe](#)

## Exploring Closure Options for Solvent businesses

There are many reasons a solvent company needs to be brought to an end; perhaps due to retirement, illness, or simply a desire to extract the proceeds tied up in the company.



Once a decision has been made to cease trading and begin winding up the company's affairs, the next step is to determine the most appropriate way of closing the business down officially. When looking at your options, there are a number of processes which should be fully explored to ensure maximum suitability is achieved.

This decision will be determined, in the main, by the financial position of the company at the time of closure, as well as the future ambitions of its directors and shareholders.

### Strike Off/ Dissolution

Strike off – also known as dissolution – is an informal way of closing down an unwanted limited company quickly and easily. An application for voluntary company strike off is made using the DS01 form submitted directly to Companies House. This will then be published in the Gazette, with any parties affected by the proposed strike off invited to make an objection. So long as no objections are received, the company will be removed from the register held at Companies House and the company will subsequently cease to exist as a legal entity.

Any property or assets remaining in the company at the time of strike off will become *bono vacantia* and ownership will pass to the Crown, therefore any loose ends should be tied up in advance of the application being made.

While there is the possibility for a company which has been struck off to be restored to the register at a later date, this can be a lengthy and complex process, so strike off should only be opted for if there is no likely reason the company will be required again in the future.

### Make The Company Dormant

If there is a possibility that the company may be required at some point, making the company dormant may be the most appropriate solution. When a company is marked as dormant it remains on the Companies House register, meaning it can be immediately resurrected if trade recommences. Minimal filing obligations are required during this period and all outstanding tax liabilities and obligations must be fully up to date before HMRC will consider your request.

Making a company dormant prevents another entity incorporating a company using the same name; this can be hugely beneficial in retaining the valuable reputation that has been built up over the years of trading. As a company can remain dormant for any length of time it chooses, this could be a great option for those who know they don't currently require the company but are unsure as to what the future may hold.

### Members' Voluntary Liquidation (MVL)

If there are significant assets (typically in excess of £20,000 in total) then opting to place the company into liquidation could be the most cost-effective and tax-efficient way of extracting these funds. Solvent liquidation is achieved using a formal process known as a Members' Voluntary Liquidation (MVL) and must be overseen by a licensed insolvency practitioner. With an MVL, money is distributed to shareholders as capital gains rather than income; as capital gains are taxed at 20%, this can

represent a huge tax advantage. Directors can also benefit from Business Asset Disposal Relief (up to a lifetime limit of £1m worth of gains) which halves the effective capital gains tax rate down to just 10%.

As an MVL involves the input of a licensed insolvency practitioner, there are professional fees which need to be accounted for when considering the suitability of this process; however, many find that this cost is eclipsed by the potential savings able to be made elsewhere.

Directors will be required to sign a declaration of solvency, attesting to the fact that the company is able to fulfil its obligations to creditors within 12 months of the date of liquidation. Falsely swearing a declaration of solvency is considered an act of perjury, therefore, it is vital an accurate Statement of Affairs is drawn up and any contingent liabilities accounted for before the company enters liquidation.

Please contact us if you would like further information on your options, we are here to help!

### **Consultation on new Climate Change Agreements scheme**

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has launched a consultation seeking views on proposals for a new six-year Climate Change Agreements scheme to begin in 2025.

The new scheme would add three new target periods running from 2025 to 2030, resulting in three certification periods running to 31 March 2033. It will provide further reductions in the Climate Change Levy for eligible participants.

The scheme would be open to new entrants who qualify under the current eligibility criteria.

The consultation outlines:

- aspects of the current scheme that will be retained for the new scheme, as well as some policy decisions following on from proposals in a previous DESNZ consultation.
- further proposals for a future scheme, including the possibility for new sectors to apply to be eligible for the scheme, target setting, reporting and how performance will be measured.

See: [Climate Change Agreements: consultation on a new scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/climate-change-agreements-consultation-on-a-new-scheme)

### **Funding for digital supply chain innovation**

The [Made Smarter Innovation | Digital Supply Chain Hub](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/digital-supply-chain-hub) (DSCH) is inviting applications from businesses interested in developing and deploying digital technology solutions in the DSCH testbeds.

A supply chain testbed can be defined as an end-to-end supply chain environment, where technologies can be deployed and tested using real data but without risking business disruption.

Together with the testbed companies, the DSCH has identified seven potential challenge areas:

- standardised naming system for automotive spare parts;
- project finance and market modelling in the emerging hydrogen supply chain;
- digital product passport for the textile supply chain;
- connected life cycle assessment in the textile supply chain;
- logistics pricing engine in the textile supply chain;
- data driven best before date in the food supply chain; and
- a marketplace for investment in sustainable farming.

Each challenge comes with £100,000 available for a tech solution provider to work with an Industry Challenge Sponsor to address critical supply-chain challenges and develop a solution which will be deployed into one of the testbeds. Find out how to [unlock funding for digital supply chain innovation](#).

Experience within the manufacturing sector is not essential, however, knowledge of how to apply this to industry and relevance to the challenge is required. The deadline for applications is 22 December 2023.

See: [Unlock Funding for Digital Supply Chain Innovation - Apply now - Made Smarter Digital Supply Chain Hub - Virtual Hub](#)

### **The Highland Council Growing Business Growth Fund**

This fund is for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Highland Council area that are looking to grow or introduce a new product, process, or innovation.

Businesses can apply for a grant to cover up to 50% of their eligible project costs, to a maximum of £10,000. If your project costs are higher and you need additional support to cover them, Business Gateway Highland can help you find other potential funding sources.

The Business Growth Fund can be used to help your business grow or diversify in various ways, such as:

- the introduction of new, innovative technology products or services that improve performance - these do not need to be unique, just new to your business;
- premises improvement or expansion related to business development or new products or services;



- acquiring capital equipment to enable a more technical or efficiency/productivity enhanced approach;
- the introduction of flexible working or new practices for staff, or enhancing customer services; and
- investment in new systems or processes for operations.

You will need to submit a business growth plan with your application. For help with this, contact the local Business Gateway Highland office.

See: [The Highland Council Growing Business Growth Fund \(findbusinesssupport.gov.scot\)](https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)

### **Business Loan Fund – South of Scotland Enterprise**

South of Scotland Enterprise loans can be used by businesses in Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders to finance business growth, capital expenditure, and innovative projects.

The fund offers loans of between £50,000 and £500,000, typically over a term of 3 to 5 years.

The loans can be used to fill funding gaps in projects that aim to grow the business and commercialise new ideas. These projects should help support the sustainability of the business and inclusive growth.

Businesses from any sector can apply.

To be eligible, businesses must:

- be located in Dumfries and Galloway or the Scottish Borders;
- be registered at Companies House;
- have been trading for at least 2 years;
- be profitable;
- turn over a minimum of £100,000;
- show that they support fair work practices; and
- show that they are transitioning to net zero.

See: [Business Loan Fund \(findbusinesssupport.gov.scot\)](https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)

### **Disclosure and Protecting Vulnerable Groups training**

Disclosure Scotland offers free online training to businesses and organisations that use the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme and/or are looking to employ someone with past convictions.

The PVG scheme is a membership scheme for people who work with children or protected adults.

Organisations can use disclosures to help decide if a candidate is suitable for the role that they're applying for.

There are 3 training sessions available:

- PVG Eligibility - discover the purpose of the PVG scheme, available disclosure types and when to use them;
- PVG Duty to Refer - learn about PVG referrals, your organisation's obligations around referrals and the 'consideration' process; and
- Helping Employers Recruit Fairly - find out how to make defensible, risk-based recruitment decisions while ensuring candidates with past convictions still get fair opportunity.

Each session lasts for 2 to 2.5 hours. Attendees will have the chance to work on real life case studies and share their own experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

Places are allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Disclosure Scotland is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government and shares information about people's criminal records.

See: [Disclosure and Protecting Vulnerable Groups training \(findbusinesssupport.gov.scot\)](https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)

### **Free energy saving workshops for employees**

Help your staff save energy at home with Home Energy Scotland's free and interactive employee engagement services, funded by the Scottish Government. The workshops are tailored to suit your specific needs and cover a range of topics:

- energy efficiency – how to save energy and reduce fuel bills while keeping warm at home;
- sustainable travel – explore greener ways to get around, from active travel to electric vehicles; and
- saving water – ways to use water wisely, delivered in partnership with Scottish Water.

Home Energy Scotland can also support your organisation with:

- employee engagement strategy: learn how to create a valuable, sustainable programme for your team, from developing an action plan to implementing and evaluating activity; and
- one-to-one support to help your employees, including:

- guidance on funding, including grants and loans for energy efficient boilers, insulation, home renewables and electric vehicles;
- information on how to go green and save, with specialist advice about home renewables and solid wall insulation; and
- visits to green homes and the opportunity to talk to householders on the Green Homes Network.

See: [Employee engagement · Home Energy Scotland](#)

### **Home Energy Scotland private sector landlord advice**

Home Energy Scotland offers free, expert, impartial support and advice for registered private landlords in Scotland who would like to improve the energy efficiency of their rental properties. These improvements make properties more attractive to tenants and reduce maintenance issues such as damp, ultimately adding value.

Improving energy efficiency should also increase the rating on the property's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), helping landlords meet future minimum energy efficiency standards.

Whether landlords are looking to discuss their EPC, talk through the various funding options or have their property assessed in depth, Home Energy Scotland can help. This free, impartial advice service is funded by the Scottish Government and supported by a network of specialist advisors operating across Scotland.

If a property visit is appropriate, one of the specialist advisors will carry out an assessment and provide you with a tailored report that outlines:

- the current energy demands of your property;
- recommended improvements that offer more detail than your EPC;
- different scenarios to improve the energy efficiency of your property;
- the approximate cost of making these improvements;
- potential fuel bill and carbon savings; and
- the estimated improvement to the EPC rating.

The specialist will talk you through the report, helping you decide what's right for you and your property. You can also get advice over the phone at a time that suits you, along with a tailored report.

See: [Landlords · Home Energy Scotland](#)

## **Funding to develop your workplace practices**

The Workforce Innovation Voucher scheme can be used to develop a company's workforce in partnership with a college or university.

Its purpose is to support innovation that will develop the company's workforce in partnership with a college or university – for example, a new or enhanced business process, workplace practice or expertise.

The value of this voucher is between £1,000 and £7,500, which covers the project costs and is paid directly to your partner university or college.

Interface provides support with finding a suitable academic partner who has the right specialist expertise to progress your research and development project.

See: [Funding to develop your workplace practices \(findbusinesssupport.gov.scot\)](https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)

## **National Lottery Open Fund for Organisations - Creative Scotland**

The National Lottery Open Fund for Organisations is a funding programme for artistic, creative, and cultural organisations based in Scotland.

Organisations can apply for between £1,000 and £100,000 to support creative activity that lasts up to 18 months.

The types of activity eligible for funding are:

- a specific one-off project or production;
- a period of creative research and development; and
- a longer-term programme of work.

The funding programme can also help organisations to undertake business and organisational development that will:

- enhance business sustainability through the development of new or more diverse income streams; and
- consider broader organisational development costs.

The funding programme is open all year round, with no deadlines - organisations can apply at any time.

See: [National Lottery Open Fund for Organisations | Creative Scotland](https://www.creativescotland.gov.scot/national-lottery-open-fund-for-organisations)