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Allstaff becomes an employee-owned business

Recruitment specialists, **Allstaff**, has become the latest business to move to employee ownership. The company has transferred to an Employee Ownership Trust and will continue to provide a professional, expert service whilst retaining their unique company culture. Allstaff has an excellent reputation for the provision of temporary & permanent staff across the Manufacturing, Engineering, Warehouse, Logistics, Office & Professional services sectors from offices in Paisley and Glasgow. Operating mainly within the West of Scotland, Allstaff has been providing recruitment services for over 40 years.

The transaction was initiated by majority owner, Carolyn Moir Grant, who has 30 years' experience in the recruitment industry.

Carolyn says, "I'm immensely proud of what we have achieved and the long legacy I have been fortunate to be a part of. We have always worked hard for our clients and candidates

whilst maintaining many long-term business relationships; built around our ability to understand the pressures both are under and by providing a very personal service. The sale to an Employee Ownership Trust will allow Allstaff to continue our trajectory of growth with clear succession plans ensuring we maintain our great team spirit. Our clients and candidates alike will continue to receive the efficient service we deliver."

Director Ryan Robertson has been with the company for over 15 years. He sees this as a very positive move for the business. "When Carolyn proposed the idea of an Employee Trust, I was intrigued. I couldn't see any negatives. The Trust will allow us to maintain our unique way of working. Had we sold to a third party, things may have been very different."

(Continued)

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As part of the move, Gillian Graham has been promoted to the company's Board of Directors. She says, *"It's an exciting time in the company's story. We've always been a different kind of business. Our focus is on our service, and we strive to be a great place to work and to work with. We now have a secure ownership structure from which we will continue to grow."*

The legal advisers on the transaction were Douglas Roberts and Nimarta Cheema of TLT. Douglas says, *"Allstaff is exactly the kind of business that fits well with an EOT. It is a successful business with talented people and astute leadership. By making this move the company can continue to provide quality recruitment services for many years to come."*



Third generation family business becomes employee-owned

Alexander (Scotland) & Co Ltd transferred to employee ownership on 5th July 2023.

Alexander (Scotland) & Co Ltd has been 100% family owned since Alexander MacLachlan started the business in 1949. 75 years and 3 generations later it is one of Scotland's largest independent Steel Stockholders, operating from our 2 depots in Central Scotland and a well know business to many.

The current keeper of the watch, Glenn MacLachlan had started to look at his exit strategy from the business, one of the traditional options being a trade sale. A trade sale potentially could have seen many changes to the business, affecting both staff and customers.

The business which has been proud to be family owned could lose its identity and its ethos on focusing on the customer and delivering excellent service.

Therefore, to ensure this did not happen, the company was transferred to an Employee Ownership Trust. This means in essence that the staff now own the company and will potentially



share in the success of the business that they have all worked so hard to achieve. It offers stability and longevity of the business in its current format, whilst remaining independent but always with the customer's best interests at the forefront.

Glenn is stepping back from the business but by passing it on to the employees, the future of the company is secure.

Stuart Sharp will take over the role of Managing Director. Together with the Board of Directors, the excellent management team and ably supported by our long-standing employees in both Stirling and Bathgate our business will continue to thrive and grow in the coming years.

Glenn MacLachlan will still be a presence within the company, offering support and guidance as the company start this next new exciting chapter in the life of Alexander (Scotland) & Co Ltd.

Livingston based Glen Drummond Chartered Accountants now in employee ownership

Accountancy firm, **Glen Drummond**, has joined the growing number of companies in Scotland who are 100% employee owned. Based in Livingston, Glen Drummond provides business advice and accounting services to companies across West Lothian, Central Scotland and beyond.

The Chartered Accountants are no strangers to the concept of employee ownership - and have helped a few clients with their own transitions and continue to work with them seeing their businesses thrive under this new business model. This convinced them that employee ownership would be a good fit for their business.

Chris Wilson is director of the firm. It was always Chris's intention that, when the time came, he would hand the business over to the staff who have worked hard to maintain the high quality



service that we pride ourselves on. Chris said *"I had been aware of employee ownership for years, having assisted several clients transition their business. I am confident our employees have the right mix of skills, and the positive group attitude needed to continue the success of the business. Together they can now guarantee their own job security, something that may have been a worry with an external sale."*

Chris reflects that there are clear benefits for clients too adding: *"Clients are at the heart of everything we do. Employee ownership allows our clients to continue getting a quality service from the people they know and trust for years to come."*

Promotion at ALTAR Group

Broughty Ferry based Marketing experts, **ALTAR Group** is delighted to announce the promotion of Judith Maguire to the role of Finance Manager. ALTAR is an award-winning marketing-led suite of Design, Digital, Research and Communications Consultancies. The Group became employee-owned in 2021.

Finance Director, Vicki Anderson says *"Judith joined ALTAR Group as an Accounts Assistant in January 2019, and has consistently demonstrated unwavering dedication and exceptional contributions to our organisation. We are proud to recognise her achievements and are pleased to announce her promotion to the role of Finance Manager."*

Judith's journey within our company reflects her continuous commitment to excellence,



her strong work ethic and attention to detail. Her promotion aligns perfectly with our strategic direction as we embark on a phase of active growth. This promotion signifies not only the acknowledgement of her past accomplishments but also our confidence in her capacity to support us into a prosperous future."

OAUK News

The HMRC consultation closed on 25th September and it's interesting reading some of the responses that firms have been posting on social media. The aim of the consultation was to gather views on how the EOT legislation could be amended to ensure that the EOTs and EBTs remain focused on the targeted objectives of rewarding employees and encouraging employee ownership, whilst preventing any abuse of the rules.

Most of the submissions shared with me agreed that the threshold for the tax free bonus should be raised; it has been at £3600 since the introduction of the EOT legislation in 2014. Many responders suggested an annual increase linked to inflation, and some suggested that this increase should be backdated to reflect inflationary rises since the introduction. Some responders proposed that the strict criteria for distribution of the bonus should be relaxed, perhaps taking account of seniority. This is not a view I agree with. I believe that remuneration recognises seniority; the EOT bonus recognises ownership.

There was also general agreement that the Trusts should be UK based rather than offshore trusts, with some respondents questioning how an offshore trust could fit with the ethos of long term beneficial employee ownership.

Most are agreeing that former owners should have a position on the Trust board, but should not dominate it.

The responses haven't been quite so aligned on other points in the consultation document. HMRC asked if it should be mandatory to have employees as trustee directors. Some felt that it was too weighty a role to have inexperienced individuals appointed, and some had concerns around confidentiality. My own view is an emphatic yes to employees on the Trust – if the firm is unable to identify employees to sit on the Trust board then this suggests that there are other issues to be addressed within the business.

The consultation also suggested that independent trustees should be included in the composition of the Trust Board. I believe firmly that an independent trustee brings neutrality and guidance to the EOT, and also helps prevent



the trust from straying into operational matters. However, I'm not convinced that such making this inclusion compulsory would be sensible. There is not a deep pool of suitable candidates for the role in Scotland and this is something we have to address as a community as the number of employee owned companies continues to accelerate. Some respondents said that the fees of the independent trustee might be beyond smaller employee-owned companies, although another respondent pointed out that the Independent Trustee is likely to be more important in a smaller business with limited resources and reference points. HMRC will publish its findings within the next few months.

As the number of employee-owned companies grows, I'm finding there's an increasing desire for EOBs to look for other EOBs to work with. I'm often asked if I can recommend an employee-owned accountants for example. This led me to think that a database of employee-owned firms would be useful – hopefully if a company was looking for a supplier their first port of call would be to see if any employee-owned firm could meet their requirements. I'm refreshing my website currently and this is something I'm exploring. I'd be delighted to hear what you think about this or indeed, any feedback is welcome. Just email me on carole@ownershipassociates.co.uk

Yours in Partnership

- Carole
01786 611066



i-confidential celebrate final EOT payment

L-R: Ian Harragan, Colin Fraser, Simon Lawrence

The employee owners of **i-confidential** are delighted to announce that the vendor loan used to acquire a 55% ownership stake in the business has been fully repaid on schedule.

i-confidential became employee-owned in 2018 when the three founders decided to mark the company's 10th anniversary by transferring a majority shareholding to an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT).

The company began in 2008 when two executives, Ian Harragan and Colin Fraser, left what was then called Royal Bank of Scotland, now known as NatWest. The duo had worked together in information security for a number of years, and identified an opportunity to use their expertise to create a new cyber security and risk consultancy that would provide trusted advice and support to industry. They were joined a year later by a third ex-RBS employee, Simon Lawrence, and the company quickly built a sound reputation as a key player in the cyber sector. The company has grown to a turnover of approximately £25m.

i-confidential now employs 22 staff and has around 150 consultants and an impressive list of clients. Although focused mostly on the UK market, i-confidential staff work throughout Europe, India, the US, and Hong Kong, to help international businesses.

The move to employee ownership was spurred on by the three founders considering their succession plans. Immensely proud of the talented team the company had attracted, and the unique

working culture, all three were keen to identify an exit strategy that would allow the company to continue flourishing.

Colin Fraser says, *"The sale to the EOT was the only option we considered seriously. Yes, we had offers to acquire us and that would potentially have been more lucrative for the founders. It would likely have led to disruption for the team, however, and destruction of this great culture we have built. We wanted something different."*

Ian Harragan continues, *"First and foremost, our priority was to provide i-confidential with a firm foundation that would see the company continue for the next 15, 20, 30 years. We have such a great team and it is so rewarding to see people grow and develop."*

Simon Lawrence emphasises the benefits employee ownership has brought for the company's clients. *"Our move to an EOT was welcomed by the companies we work with. Continuity is important when it comes to cyber security. i-confidential is no longer reliant only on us – there is a whole team of talent that will ensure our clients continue to receive expert advice and service."*

Kathryn Walker, elected employee Trustee on the Trust Board, gives the employee point of view. *"This is the best place I have worked. We are so proud that we have worked hard to ensure the EOT debt was repaid on schedule, despite covid, political turmoil, and economic downturns. We all*

(Continued)

have a stake in i-confidential and have a clear vision of where we want to be.”

Nicola Huskie is also an elected Trustee on the Trust Board. She outlines the future plans. *“We have always been an ambitious business. Our challenge is to continue the founders’ legacy by building on growth whilst continuing to have a people-centred culture. Longer term, the employees want to increase our shareholding in the company, and over the next year we will be working on a plan to achieve this.”*

The company marked the occasion of the last EOT payment with a special dinner held in the prestigious Tower restaurant at the National Museum of Scotland. It was an evening of reminiscences, fun and talking about the future.

Samantha Whalen, Business & Relationship Development Manager, sums up what employee ownership means for i-confidential: *“Becoming employee owned has given us so much. We have attracted high-quality talent to the team and the staff turnover is lower. Employees are more engaged and committed as they have become comfortable and willing to exchange ideas to solve issues that perhaps do not immediately affect them. We have also seen an increase in cross-team collaboration as we drive the company forward together. Becoming an EOT reinforced our long-held belief that i-confidential’s prosperity stems from the strength of its people and encouraging inclusiveness in everything we do. I am proud to be part of it.”*

CIOB Honour for Pacific Building’s Brian Gallacher

Pacific Building figurehead Brian Gallacher has been honoured by the Chartered Institute of Building who have presented him with their Open Award.

The company Chairman received the citation at an glittering ceremony at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Glasgow on Friday, September 15, 2023.

The CIOB decided to honour Pacific’s former Managing Director as “an eminent person, associated with and highly respected in the Building and Construction Industry who is deemed to have made a major contribution to the industry and goes above their contribution directly to CIOB”.

The organisation’s Chief Executive Officer Caroline Gumble handed over the award and said: *“We are also recognising your personal support and commitment to partnering with the CIOB as a Chartered Building Company and Training Partner and for your unwavering support of professional qualifications – plus being involved in the community.”*

Brian has been a construction professional and Chartered Builder for over 25 years, becoming a Fellow of the institute in 2002.



He has held senior management positions in the Scottish construction sector since the early 1990s and – to satisfy his burning professional and personal ambitions – he formed Pacific Building in 2005.

Not surprisingly, the company quickly grew into a £22million business with specialities in the hospitality, leisure, travel and food sectors – and it has subsequently become Employee Owned, enjoying an excellent reputation across the industry. Pacific Building has been a Chartered construction business and training partner of the CIOB since its inception – and the CIOB have regularly expressed their appreciation for Brian’s support and insight.

Throughout all of this, Brian has been a passionate advocate of employee ownership, speaking frequently at events and is always on hand to share his knowledge and experience with anyone keen to find out more about how employee ownership might work for their business.



Workpro invests in the future

L-R: Marco Scully, Manow Drysdale and Simi Adedokun

SCOTTISH software development company **Workpro** is proactively investing in the future of computer science and emerging technologies while at the same time creating opportunities for the next generation of scientific talent.

It recently brought in three school pupils to see at first-hand how the business operates and has also established a temporary role for a university student who previously benefited from work experience at the company.

The work-related opportunities are in addition to three recent hires at Workpro, which is the market-facing brand of Edinburgh-based Computer Application Services Ltd (CAS), taking the employee numbers to a record 33 as it enters a new growth phase.

CAS was Scotland's first software development company, and has grown from being the technology transfer unit of Heriot-Watt University into a case management solutions expert servicing clients throughout the United Kingdom and overseas.

The S4 and S5 pupils involved in the experience programme were Simi Adedokun, who attends St George's School, and Marco Scully, and Manow Drysdale, who both go to George Heriot's School in Edinburgh.

Simi said: *"I was very impressed that the company is employee-owned. It seems as if everyone is a lot more invested, and that they feel they have a big part to play. I'm very interested in computer science, particularly the software engineering side."*

Marco said: *"The thing I've liked about work experience with CAS is that we've not been doing just one specific thing for the entire week. We've been moving around, from seeing how the servers are run to how the software engineers do their thing. I think that it gives you a holistic view of the entire business."*

The students spent time in every department, from software development to marketing, learning about how a software company operates.

(Continued)

CAS has an open management style and the students were included in business meetings, including one with CAS investors, C4C (Capital for Colleagues). Discussions about new technologies inevitably came up, AI (Artificial Intelligence) for example:

Manow said: *“I think AI is quite cool technology and I have a basic understanding of how it works. It doesn’t scare me too much because I feel there are good restrictions on how it’s being used. I’m not too worried about it.”*

James McLean, from Edinburgh, benefited from work experience with Workpro in 2018 and is currently engaged on a computer science course at Heriot-Watt University. He worked for the company for ten weeks over the summer before resuming his studies.

He said: *“I worked on accessibility support in Workpro. That involved getting the forms to have adequate screen reader support, and doing things like making landmarks on the page so you can skip to certain sections of menus.”*

“Everyone at CAS is very friendly. If I ever got stuck with things there was always someone to help me. It felt like everything runs very smoothly.”

Chris Ellis, Chief Technical Officer at Workpro, said: “I think it is very important that young people are given the opportunities and encouragement to develop their careers,

especially in STEM subjects which will be so crucial as the pace of technological change continues to quicken.

“It was great to have James back with us and he made a very valuable contribution while acquiring new skills which will benefit him in his ongoing studies.

“Our work experience cohort has shown great interest in how the company works, what it contributes and what it is likely to be dealing with in the future. We will need people with their curiosity and lively intelligence as technology advances.”

Workpro specialises in case management software focusing on activities such as complaint handling and HR case tracking, which allows clients to monitor progress and ensure that they remain fully compliant, even with the most complex issues. The employee-owned company has increased its client portfolio by 400% to 60 over the past four years including clients in national and local government, financial and legal institutions, major retailers and Ombudsman services.

Growth has been catalysed by the firm’s decision to make Workpro available as a SaaS (Software as a Service) solution, a method of delivery and licensing in which software is accessed online via subscription, rather than bought and installed on individual computers.

Caley Timber golf outing in aid of Macmillan

Caley Timber & Building Supplies, based in Dalcross, organised a very successful golf day recently in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. The amount raised was an amazing £18,000. Caley Timber became employee-owned last year and one of the reasons for the transition was to ensure that the company would continue its long record of generously supporting charitable causes.



Dot Surveying Trustee Appointments



Kalin Bennett

"I have been with Dot Surveying for almost 3 years, starting as a Graduate Surveyor and currently as a Senior Surveyor within the Acquisition side of the business. It has been impressive to see how the company has developed and has established an even firmer standing in our industry in that time, which makes us punch well above our weight. We have a very good mix of people working at Dot and we have a good team morale and look out for each other which is important for us to grow together. I was humbled to be elected by my peers to be a Trustee, and I am excited to see what the next stages are, and what the future also holds for us all at Dot."



Rhona Carr

"I've been working with Dot Surveying as their Quality Manager for almost 6 years now and it's been fantastic to see how much the company has grown and flourished over that time. We've got a really committed and highly-skilled team so the Employee Ownership Trust model launched in May is the perfect fit for our company. I was delighted to be elected to the Board of Trustees and look forward to playing a part in Dot Surveying's future as a successful employee-owned company."



Finesse Controls Reach Business Fives Finals

Congratulations to the **Finesse CS** fives team on winning the Europa League at the **Business Fives Ltd** event in Dundee! They have won a £150 donation for Reach Across in Arbroath and qualified for the National Finals in Edinburgh. Good Luck, team Finesse!



Chemco International fundraises for PASP

Chemco International have been doing their bit for the community with some fund-raising for one of their local charities.

Parent Action for Safe Play (PASP) is an award-winning, registered Charity run by the local community in Coatbridge and dedicated to developing and improving play, youth and sport services for local children and young people.

PASP have been successful in establishing a state-of-the-art play area and street play services in several local neighbourhoods, bringing play workers and play equipment to the children.

PASP also has an indoor Children and Youth Development Centre, but this requires an urgent upgrade for which funding is urgently required.

Chemco International's employee-owners are supporting the upgrade of the Centre with a month of fundraising activities. The main event



PASP
PARENT ACTION FOR SAFE PLAY

being a charity cycle from Glasgow to Loch Lomond with over a third of the Company's employee owners taking part. Other fund raising activities include a raffle and a bake sale at work.

Another award for Kilmac!

The team at **Kilmac Ltd** are delighted to have been honoured in the seventh annual Scottish Enterprise Awards.

The employee-owned construction company have been awarded the accolade as Civil Engineering and Construction Firm of the Year 2023 - East Scotland.

As a long established company with roots deep in Tayside - and now working for high profile clients throughout the Central Belt – the team are thrilled that Kilmac has been recognised in awards which feature a wide variety of outstanding nominees drawn from across Scotland. Kilmac is immensely grateful to our clients, partners, and supporters who have entrusted us with their projects and have contributed to our success.

SME
news





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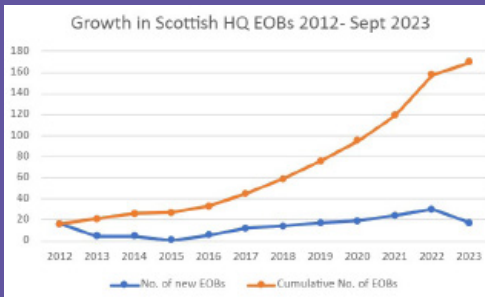


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Employee Ownership in Scotland



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