

RENFREWSHIRE GOES TO WORK

Business

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It's about putting Paisley on the map

Express Reporter

This week, we meet graphic designer David Atkinson – who is the creative director of CO2 Design. His Paisley firm specialises in advertising, branding and logos, design for print, exhibition and banners, marketing and web design.

What does your business do?

CO2 Design is a graphic design company offering the full range of visual communications for your company, situated in Paisley, adjacent to Paisley Grammar School. We started trading in May 2003 but the experience of award-winning graphic designers, Colette and myself, goes beyond this.

We specialise in branding, printed material, websites and social media for SMEs.

Additionally, both Colette and myself contribute to the local community as part-time lecturers at Reid Kerr College (West College Scotland) and Glasgow Clyde College, teaching graphic design skills to NQ and HND level.

What are you most proud of when it comes to your company?

Giving back to the community in various ways.

Renfrewshire has a lot of potential and after the 2021 bid for the city of culture we're keen to keep the feel-good factor going.

Ideas and creativity is flourishing in our community and we need to work together to let everyone know Renfrewshire is a great place to visit, live and work.

As mentioned previously, Colette and myself both provide local students with an education in graphic design. Within the studio, I have been passionate in ensuring that I give local people a chance to "get their foot in the door".

Our designers live in the Renfrewshire area; a few have been taught by myself or gained a two-day internship that has turned into a full-time position. More recently, we have created a new customer service role by giving a recent graduate an internship via Invest Renfrewshire. Our client base is predominately

local SMEs even though we work with those all around the UK for example: Accord Hospice, Boyd Insurance, Clydesdale Bank, Flowtech-Enviro, Howieson of Newmains, McGhee's Bakery, Renfrewshire Council and W. Munro Rehab.

What do you find most enjoyable in day-to-day business life?

I like dealing with customers on a regular basis, giving advice, helping them grow and develop their companies.

We are at the forefront of technology but it's great to pick up the phone and talk. You get a better feeling for a project and you can sense the customers' mood, better communication results in better design and satisfied customers.

What are your ambitions for the future?

PaisleyIs is a great idea to continue with the 'feel good factor' from the Paisley 2021 bid.

I want to establish Renfrewshire as the go to place for a great day out, to live and work.

Also, to develop and grow the creative talent and make the people of Renfrewshire realise their full potential. National and international companies should want to use Renfrewshire companies as a mark of quality and reliability.

How has the business changed over the years?

New digital trends are putting pressure on businesses to stay current. Ten years ago the demand was for websites, five years ago it was social media and now businesses are looking to create apps.

We work closely with clients to keep them active on social media with current content and continue to redesign websites to bring them up-to-date.

It's important for every company to embrace the full 'Marketing Mix'. Set an annual budget and monitor the results, see what works and what doesn't work for your company.

What are your top three priorities?

Make work enjoyable by delivering quality every time and having fun



Looking forward David Atkinson

doing it.

Understand the importance and changes of design.

Helping customers get the most from their budgets.

Can you offer three tips to new-start businesses?

Always use the right people, professionals.

Don't be afraid to talk costs. It's the first step in our five-step process.

Join Renfrewshire Chamber and make local business contacts

Why is Renfrewshire a great place to run a business?

There is a sense of community within Renfrewshire and more predominately Paisley; it has been fantastic to be involved with many other Renfrewshire based businesses.

The travel links are great with a bus stop right outside the studio, the train station only minutes away and free parking in the streets surrounding us. Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce is one of the best chambers in the country. Bob Grant and his team are

always on hand with help and advice.

Has anything weird or wonderful happened in your working life?

Prior to CO2 Design, I was given the opportunity at designing the annual report to be approved by Robert Maxwell, the flamboyant head of one of the world's biggest media empires.

He was presented with seven colour options, the first five were pushed to the side, the sixth was black and he responded: "the worst colour in world is black", the seventh was blue and he responded "if there is a colour worse than black, it's blue. Make it Oxford United yellow," and left the room.

What is the main thing you have learned since being involved in the business?

Communication. Discuss, prepare and set the foundations for all your projects, this will negate future problems. Treat your suppliers and customers the same. Sort out any differences at the time and maintain friendships.



Family business Richard Harris

Going up in the world

A tannery that was founded over 60 years ago has invested a seven-figure sum in machinery that has allowed them to increase capacity to meet customer demand.

Clyde Leather, based in Neilston, was established by Walter Bevan Harris in 1955 and has developed a wide customer base that includes top brand names such as New Balance UK and Zatchel as well as supplying clients from a wide range of leather manufacturing sectors.

Now in its third generation and run by Walter's grandson Richard Harris, Clyde Leather produces around 40,000 sq ft of bespoke, high-quality leather and suede per week that is despatched to customers across the UK and abroad.

With support from Business Gateway East Renfrewshire, the company – which employs 30 people and is the only known UK manufacturer of pigmented leathers – is now looking to continue its expansion and increase its portfolio.

Richard, a leather chemist and managing director, said: "The British leather industry declined significantly in the 1990s but through hard work, innovation, diversification and creating a consistent quality produce, we have not only survived but have grown since then. We have invested extensively in machinery and our people infrastructure which has allowed us to remain at the forefront of the industry.

"At the moment 90 per cent of our output is for the domestic market with leather being used for high-quality suede shoes, handbags, leather belting and industrial leather.

"We supply leather to Charlotte Elizabeth who manufactures unique, high end handbags for clients including Meghan Markel, so our leather is available and has exposure everywhere in the UK."

• To find out how Business Gateway could help your business visit www.bgateway.com/east-renfrewshire or call 0141 530 2407.



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