

Lloyds Bank British Business Excellence Awards 2021



The best in the business

In a year that has thrown down unprecedented challenges, the awards champion the success, resilience and ingenuity of our SMEs, says **Sarah Austin**



LLOYDS BANK BRITISH BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS DIRECTOR

I have learnt a lot about my business and leadership during these times, but it hasn't been particularly pleasant." This quote from James Timpson OBE really resonated with me. There is no denying that the last year has been tough for us all, and I myself have faced many personal and work-related challenges.

We can, however, take inspiration and be bolstered by the many amazing sporting triumphs achieved by our tiny island. Team GB simply shone and achieved fourth place on the Tokyo Olympics medal board, and even my home county of Yorkshire achieved eight Golds, putting it one place above the country of Canada!

A relatively unknown tennis player, 18-year-old Emma Raducanu, won the US Open and became the first British woman in 44 years to win a Grand Slam

title. The England men's football team, heralded for being racially diverse, not afraid of speaking out against racism, campaigning against poverty and supporting LGBTQ Pride, achieved our country's first placing at a major football final since the legendary 1966 World Cup win.

While we didn't actually win, we all joined in their inspirational journey, which gave us hope and positivity in an otherwise dreary time. And being such a young team, I believe that the best is yet to come.

It may be a cliché but I also believe that "whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger" - so it's been my absolute pleasure to see so many businesses not only survive but flourish over the past 18 months and earn their place as a finalist in the Lloyds Bank British Business Excellence Awards. Our awards have

been created to champion British businesses. The heroes who pivoted in order to survive, the entrepreneurs who grabbed with both hands the opportunity to launch new companies, and the disruptors who seized their chance to positively change their industries and ultimately our world.

The judges and I were thrilled to witness so many businesses triumph this year; the combined year's turnover of the finalists in our LDC Entrepreneur Of The Year Award category alone was more than £500m.

That's £500m generated by just 11 driven and passionate people (and their teams) who seized their chance to shine.

People buy into people and Lloyds Bank believes this. It has supported a wide range of businesses through the last couple of years, operating with understanding and empathy towards

small businesses and empowering a number of our finalists to achieve their dreams and prosper.

Our well-deserved finalists all know how encouraging winning awards is: it will bolster morale, attract business and cement relations with suppliers.

The last 18 months have been hard for all of us and I'd like to convey my thanks to our amazing panel of judges who took the time to assess all of our entries, and to Lloyds Bank which has generously sponsored this opportunity to celebrate the achievements of these British companies.

I hope you will join me on Tuesday 9 November to celebrate the achievements of the very best of British business at our glittering ceremony at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London.

To book tickets, go to britishbusinessexcellenceawards.co.uk.

Daniel says the current situation is a perfect storm for entrepreneurs



'I've found the last 12 months exhilarating'

Many business owners have found the last year a challenge, but for Daniel Priestley the last 12 months have been "exhilarating". Daniel's approach and attitude was a key factor to him being named a finalist in this year's LDC Entrepreneur Of The Year Award.

He has built and sold businesses in Australia, Singapore, and the UK and is the co-founder of Dent Global, one of the world's top business accelerators for entrepreneurs and leaders to stand out and scale up.

"Since 2016, our leadership team were expecting disruption that we thought would come from Brexit," he says. "As a result, we made significant investments of time, focus and money into digital assets. We had been preparing the business to be less reliant on our geography and more ready to attract customers anywhere."

Pre-pandemic, Dent had published 100 episodes of a podcast, several hundred videos and four books with an aim to reach a wider audience. "We had also moved our operations into the cloud and become an Investors in People company to formalise our culture. All of this became essential in 2020 and 2021. It felt like we had a surfboard underneath us when a wave came along."

Daniel learnt that so much of the value in his business is intangible. "Our culture doesn't rely upon a physical office. Our services don't require being in the same room as our clients, and our products don't need to be touched physically to be understood."

"We learnt how to do things differently, too. We've found that eight-hour days are often not as powerful as three-hour sprints. We learnt that some of our team prefer

We've found that eight-hour days are often not as powerful as three-hour sprints

Jill Hawkins

'Women don't need help to shine, they just need the opportunity'

How has the pandemic impacted women's equality at work and what does the long-term picture look like? By **Jill Hawkins**

While the disruption caused by Covid has been widespread and indiscriminate, the shake-up may not have had an equal effect on both sides of the gender divide. So we asked a range of female commentators if the pandemic has helped or hindered their mission to smash the glass ceiling.

The setback certainly hasn't stifled the clamour for gender equality, now even audible from the classroom. Leah Katz is a 13-year-old student at an independent school in south-west Wimbledon. Earlier this year she gathered and published insights from 11 inspiring women holding media roles. "We must share our stories of gender injustice everywhere and not be silenced or afraid to talk," says Leah. "Many women are now speaking out thanks to the efforts of campaigns like Everyone's Invited and Me Too."

One of Leah's contributors was actress, author and activist Joanna Lumley, OBE, who stated: "Women are massively complex and impressive creatures, as are men, and we don't need help to shine, just opportunity."

Women certainly adapted faster and more easily than their male counterparts to working from the kitchen table during lockdown. Accustomed to juggling work and domestic duties, they were more comfortable squeezing the challenges of home schooling and caring for elderly relatives, friends and neighbours into

their new routine. Those, that is, who were lucky enough to keep their jobs.

The pandemic gave some employers an excuse to trim the payroll – or parts of it. In July 2020, a survey of nearly 20,000 mothers and pregnant women conducted by charity Pregnant Then Screwed revealed that 15 per cent of respondents had either been made redundant or were expecting to be.

As many as 72 per cent of the mothers surveyed had been obliged to work fewer hours because of childcare issues.

Of the employed mothers surveyed, some 81 per cent said they needed childcare to be able to do their job, but 51 per cent did not have the necessary childcare provision in place to enable them to work.

Not all stories were negative. Tessa Clarke is co-founder of local community app OLIO, which connects neighbours with each other to help them share and waste less.

The app has been successful in tackling food waste, linking neighbours and businesses to share surplus food that would otherwise be thrown away.

"As we were remote-first prior to Covid, the impact for us in terms of ways of working was minimal," says Ms Clarke. "We were also fortunate in that OLIO continued to grow during the pandemic, with listings on the platform increasing five-fold and members growing to 4.5m globally, so we didn't have to deal with a downturn in users."

Award-winning financial adviser and founder of The Money Panel, Catherine



Tessa Clarke says her remote-first company continued to grow during the pandemic

Morgan provides financial advice, coaching and training for women. She admits that there were times over the past 18 months when she felt positive and others when the lack of connection felt hard. "It is OK not to be resilient and acknowledge that we are struggling," she says. "Resilience is more about self-acceptance, to recognise when you are not feeling resilient or in balance in order to replenish our wellbeing rather than solely focusing on just coping."

With more than 26 years in PR and campaigning, Sara Price has advised some of the largest companies and charities in the world, from Unicef to Avon, and now coaches entrepreneurs and business owners through her new company, Actually.

After a year of trials and experimentation, Ms Price had been due to launch in late March 2020. "You can imagine my consternation when the pandemic began," she said. "I needn't have worried; my business boomed during lockdown and far exceeded all of my projections. It was exhausting and relentless, but I also learnt a huge amount and became more confident in my decision-making, my leadership and my purpose as a result."

Another of Leah Katz's contributors was Sarah Austin, entrepreneur and director of the Lloyds Bank British Business Excellence Awards. Austin is a fervent supporter of the 30% Club, a club whose goal is to ensure that the businesses in the FTSE 100 have a least 30 per cent women on their boards. She says: "In the 2020 FTSE 100, which

are the top 100 businesses in the UK, there were only five female CEOs – and therefore 95 male CEOs. How is this acceptable?"

Dame Inga Beale is a director of the 25x25 initiative, which wants to see 25 women CEOs in the FTSE100 by 2025.

"There are many initiatives to look at rebalancing the number of women in senior positions," she says. "More and more companies are proactively putting in place specific development programmes to retain women in the workplace, they are setting representation targets at all levels, and some are building gender balance goals into bonus schemes."

"It feels very different to nearly 40 years ago when I started work, and we have seen some progress in terms of more and more women rising up the ranks, but it seems very slow."

"When I look at the minimal female CEO representation in the FTSE100, I realise we still have a long way to go. That's why I'm so passionate about our 25x25 initiative. This is being supported by major FTSE corporations with the aim of having 25 women CEOs in the FTSE100 by 2025. An ambitious goal but we have to aim high in order to make some real progress."

Ms Clarke is hopeful for the future: "I do believe women will benefit in the long term. Many in positions of authority have seen successful implementations of flexible working and so now will be much more amenable to rolling it out in their organisations. This will ultimately benefit women, whose requests for



Mary Portas sees a better society post Covid



Leah Katz got insights from influential women

flexible working had previously fallen on largely deaf ears."

She also believes the looser workplace boundaries will produce greater flexibility for all. "If more men are working from home, then that also empowers their partners to be able to go into an office if required for their jobs."

Ms Morgan is more guarded: "Whilst working from home has its benefits, it also has its drawbacks. The isolation and lack of social interaction and connection can be debilitating and have harsh consequences of resiliency and human disconnection."

"The pandemic has forced companies to re-evaluate their flexible working arrangements which should see a positive effect on retaining more female leaders, but the history of gendered stereotypes still make it harder for women to be on an equal playing field with men."

In her latest book, *Rebuild: How To Thrive In The New Kindness Economy*, retail expert Mary Portas envisages how we might build a better post-pandemic society "creating an economy that's not just based on growth and how much we sell, but one built on kindness and the wellbeing of our planet and people."

The optimists among us share her view that the old structures really are being torn down. But more cynical pundits suspect that the simple dynamics of supply and demand will continue to shape the future landscape: who needs who more, and who has no choice but to pay the price – economic or otherwise.

Lloyds Bank British Business Excellence Awards The finalists

Business Enabler Of The Year

D CSL GuideSmiths
BigChange
Dent Global
Pallet-Track
Blend Commerce
Reflex Vehicle Hire
AM Bid
Datatron
Investor Meet Company
Digital Cake

Employer Of The Year

ServiceMaster AAA
FlyForm
D CSL GuideSmiths
GovGrant
Ground Control
1E
The UPAC Group
Threshold Financial Services
Bovingsdons Catering

Exporter Of The Year

EthOss Regeneration
Direct Healthcare Group
Rebound Electronics (Rebound Group)
Invento Business Solutions
Paradigm Human Performance

The Lloyds Bank New Business Of The Year

The SaaS People
The Greater Good Fresh Brewing Co.
Three Sisters Farm Ltd
Investor Meet Company
Distributed
EVONA
Home-dine Club
Premier Hearing
Exchange Train

The Lloyds Bank Positive Social Impact Award

Designer Fragrances
eco mmc
Jude's Ice Cream
The Tartan Blanket Co.
Blush Cloud
Tribepad
S.M.A.R.T. Foundation UK
SchoolOnline.co.uk
Fairfax & Favor
Yorkshire Psychology Practice

The Lloyds Bank Small to Medium Sized Business Of The Year

AU Vodka
EWI Store
The Tartan Blanket Co.
Frenchic Paint
D CSL GuideSmiths
GovGrant
Route 101
BOXPARK
Mackie's of Scotland
Aker Systems
Cameo

More finalists on page xv



Sara Price has advised some of the biggest companies



Dame Inga Beale wants more female CEOs in top firms

We have to aim high in order to make some real progress

It's safe to say that the past 18 months have been a whirlwind for most, and businesses are no exception. Like so many across the world, we've had to face unforeseen obstacles and regroup, rethink, and reshuffle to stay on track.

Covid-19 came with its unique challenges for my children's food brand – be that to our supply chain, to shopping and cooking habits shifting, or to adapting to an expanding team as we try to keep up with continued digital and sales growth.

Although I started out as a children's cookery author, I've now branched out into award-winning retail children's food ranges and a Number One-rated recipe app, partnerships with global leading brands, and a strong online presence – I engage with 1.5 million parents weekly. Being so diversified is both a blessing and a curse and it certainly keeps my team and myself very busy, but it also meant that we could be agile with our business strategy in the face of Covid-19.

Personal motivation

We all have a driving purpose and I believe that it is the 'why' you do something that equips you to deal with the difficult times. My career was born out of the grief of suddenly losing my first child Natasha at just three months. If it weren't for this unimaginable loss and then my subsequent child, Nicholas, being such a fussy eater, I never would have had the motivation, nor perhaps purpose, to put pen to paper and write my first book, *The Complete Baby & Toddler Meal Planner*.

I wanted to create a legacy for Natasha to give some meaning to her short life. I think losing someone so precious had a profound effect on me and drove me to dedicate my life's mission to supporting parents as they try to help their child establish good eating habits for a lifetime.

Changing consumer behaviour

One of the many ways in which the pandemic impacted our lives was in how much time people were spending at home, cooking from scratch, and seeking recipe inspiration. We saw a rise in traffic to our website and an uptick in sales from our revamped *Healthy Baby & Toddler Recipe* app.

With 25 per cent of total grocery shopping now being done online, we recognised this change and prioritised our focus to digital (including recruiting a new head of digital and sales director to drive this agenda).

As a company we live and breathe social – we now reach 1.5 million parents weekly via our channels and have 355,000 followers on Instagram alone.

I believe that success is because we provide valuable and honest



Knowing the 'why' is what energises you

Annabel Karmel MBE tells us how her children's food business flourished during a turbulent 18 months

information, as opposed to pushing our products. It's so important to me that I'm striking a real and meaningful relationship of trust with parents – after all it's the very reason I started my business, as my legacy to Natasha!

Failure

You can't grow a business if you stay in your comfort zone. It's the people who can survive failure that ultimately succeed. Every great entrepreneur has failed multiple times. I should know, with my first recipe book I was turned down by 15 publishers before it was eventually published by Random House.

I realise now that the opposite of success is not failure, rather the opposite of success is not trying. If I had been too scared to try, I'm not sure I



If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that diversifying is important within our business

ever would have been able to go from my kitchen table to the global stage, publish 48 cookbooks (and counting), develop award-winning retail food ranges in supermarkets, create bespoke menus in some of the world's leading hotels and leisure resorts, and have such an incredible digital following, as well as a best-selling recipe app in the UK!

Social media

Since my mission has always been to support parents feeding their children, I think it's so important to share information freely online and not just in my books – sharing is caring after all! Not only do I want parents from all backgrounds to be able to access recipes, I also share expert advice, tips and more informative content.

Innovation

As a smaller brand, we can be agile and innovate in ways that larger brands with layers of bureaucracy cannot. Whereas own-label supermarket brands perform well for adult meals, when it comes to children's food, established and trustworthy brands rule. This has allowed us to build up the trust and loyalty of parents around the world and to stay on the right track.

Business during the pandemic

It's amazing to think of the waves of change that we have moved through as a business in the past 18 months. At the start of the pandemic, people were stockpiling, leading our chilled and frozen meal sales to shoot up. While in many ways this was beneficial for the business, it was also difficult to plan production. Our normal pattern of sales was disrupted, but we still had to set our forecasts weeks in advance.

Back in March 2020, we were excited to have just launched an extension to our business – a nursery catering business. Then, with nurseries being closed across the nation, we had to pivot. Instead of catering for nurseries, we used our kitchens to make meals for hospitals and vulnerable people. The camaraderie during this time was wonderful, with Uber drivers and professional chefs volunteering to help.

In addition to the changes in consumer behaviour and ways of working during the pandemic, we also happened to switch one of our suppliers during this time. This saw us move to one of the top frozen manufacturers in the country. We also chose to move to sustainable packaging. As a result of the work that we did on the development of the range and the introduction of our new sustainable packaging, our frozen sales grew by 25 per cent.

During the pandemic we also gained new retailer listings, grew our performance in existing retailers and become the solus children's food brand for Waitrose, replacing our main competitor. I also managed to write a new children's cookbook, *Fun, Fast & Easy*, to encourage and teach children how to eat cook!

Looking forward

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's the importance of diversification within our business. We've been able to come through this turbulent period positively due to the variety of products and benefits that we offer parents.

With this in mind, we have partnered with the UK's leading children fashion designer, Rachel Riley, to create a beautiful and unique clothing range. We're also about to launch a brilliant new website to accommodate and better serve the enormous number of unique visitors that we now have to the site. Our innovation doesn't stop there, we're constantly cooking up new recipes and products to ensure that we're giving parents and children the best food choices out there. For example this year we launched a chicken katsu chilled children's meal and an organic yogurt (banana and strawberry flavour) in our baby food pouches. We have also just collaborated with Young's to develop two new products in a bid to get children to eat more fish!

We were only able to do all of this because we rode the pandemic wave and didn't try to build a dam of denial. I firmly believe that we need to constantly adapt and evolve as life unfolds around us, as we simply have no idea what's in store – and the past 18 months are testament to that!

Annabel's top tips to make your business thrive

1. Always be authentic. I believe that 'why' you make your product is just as important as the actual product itself. It's this motivation that makes your customer proposition stronger and provides another reason for customers to believe in you.
2. Follow your passion. Figure out what you love, who you really are and have the courage to do that. I believe the only courage anybody ever needs is the courage to follow their dreams. You need

- that passion to give you strength to fight the battles that you will inevitably face in business.
3. Go out of your comfort zone. You can't be a true entrepreneur without taking risks. Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently. I believe that if you learn from defeat, then you haven't really lost.
4. Believe in yourself. As a mother, you can lack confidence, especially if you have been out of the

- workplace for a few years due to having children. It's so important to believe in yourself. In many ways confidence is as important as competence. There are many skills you learn from having a family, for example multi-tasking or people skills. You can manage any adult if you have mastered the art of managing an irrational toddler. Leave your mum guilt at the door and make your own rules!
5. Put yourself out there. Research the business awards suitable

- for you to enter and compile a strong entry submission. These awards are invaluable for not only brand awareness, but also brand credibility. If someone is choosing between your product versus a competitor, and yours has the award logo, it might just tip the balance. It's also essential to promote your nomination once it's accepted. It might feel a little presidential asking people to vote for you but more often than not your customers are more than happy to show their support!

Meet Our Finalists!

If one piece of good news came from the pandemic, it is that it has driven sustainability to the top of many businesses' agendas. Despite a year of unprecedented disruption, businesses have not only maintained their existing sustainability commitments, but have invested heavily to achieve their carbon goals.

A prime example is Jude's Ice Cream, which became Britain's first Carbon Negative ice cream and desserts company in 2020. The Hampshire-based second-generation family business is a finalist for the Lloyds Bank Positive Social & Sustainable Impact Award. "Through a combination of carbon reduction, carbon removal and rewilding, we now remove 10 per cent more carbon from the atmosphere than we emit," says Jude's joint managing director, Chow Mezger.

Another SME, Mackie's of Scotland, has been making chocolate and ice cream on the family farm in Aberdeenshire since 1986, using fresh dairy ingredients from its own herd.

This year, Mackie's will complete installation of an innovative low-carbon refrigeration facility. The £4.5m project is expected to reduce energy cost and CO2 emissions by up to 80 per cent – a major step towards the company's goal of being self-sufficient in renewable energy.

Managing director Mac Mackie recalls: "Some construction work was delayed at the outset of the pandemic but installation is now nearing completion – and our ammonia plant and other new freezing equipment



Sustained efforts

Jill Hawkins on how SMEs have continued to protect the planet in the face of global disruption

are already in operation." For some entrepreneurs, Covid proved a catalyst for seeking sustainable business opportunities. Philippa Main launched her boutique dried flower business, Three Sisters Farm, in April 2020, after being made redundant. Inspiration came when she wanted to buy some dried flowers for a friend and couldn't see any she liked.

A finalist in the Lloyds Bank New Business Of The Year, Three Sisters

Farm achieved 9,000 orders in 12 months; hitting £55,000 in sales in one month alone. Through a determined communications drive, it has attracted 29,100 Instagram followers and 8,000 email subscribers.

What links these companies is a close-knit corporate culture that embeds sustainability principles throughout the business.

Chow explains: "The past 12 months has shown us that there is no hiding

from the truth of our impact, as individuals and as a business, on our planet. So, transparency is something that we are trying to foster in ourselves as leaders and throughout Jude's."

"It's in our make up as a farming family business to want to look after the land for future generations," agrees Mac. A finalist in the Lloyds Bank Small to Medium Sized Business Of The Year award, Mackie's has been climate-positive since 2007 – harnessing a mix of wind, solar and biomass energy to provide 70 per cent of the farm's energy and generating four times more renewable energy than it uses.

For Philippa Main, dried flowers, grown outdoors rather than intensively in greenhouses, offer a sustainable alternative to their fresh counterparts. She says: "Preserved plants, flowers and trees are 100 per cent natural and sourced in an ecological way. There's no plastic in our products or packaging. Some products are zero waste and carbon neutral."

Jude's projects that 50 per cent of its range will be plant-based by 2025 and has committed to plant 10,000 trees on the South Downs. Meanwhile Mackie's is nearing its target to be 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy and Three Sisters Farm is working towards gaining B Corp recognition.

Awareness of our collective vulnerability has never been greater and, as these businesses have shown, an impressive number of companies have adapted to disruptive events and redoubled their efforts to safeguard the planet.

There is no hiding from the truth of our impact on our planet



LDC got what we were about. They didn't think they knew more than I did. It was all about the value they could add to us and to me."

Tracy Lewis, Eveden



The most eye-opening thing about working with LDC is their incredible curiosity about how to make things better."

Gehan Talwate, Ascend



From the beginning LDC made it clear to us that they wanted to back a management team and allow that team to run the business."

Tim Warrillow, Fever-Tree

Helping Britain's entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, their way.

Economic growth in the UK is powered by great business leaders, and we have invested in 650 of them over the last 40 years.

As the private equity arm of Lloyds Banking Group, we support entrepreneurs to fulfil their growth ambitions and build great businesses.

Hear from some of the entrepreneurs we've backed - www.ldc.co.uk/inews



The disruptors changing the business landscape for good

Jill Hawkins meets some of the Lloyds Bank British Business Excellence Awards nominees who have transformed their sectors in the most challenging of years

“The world as we have created it, is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” These words were expressed by Albert Einstein, arguably one of the most famous disruptors of all time.

Today’s disruptors are certainly challenging the status quo and cajoling, encouraging or even forcing their industries to think or act differently. They do not accept traditional business constraints; they find new and novel ways to conquer age-old problems, and they embrace and encourage up-to-the-minute trends, often creating brand-new industries in the process.

Richard Joyce is co-founder of Evona, a finalist in the Lloyds Bank New Business of the Year Award and creator of a new sector; space recruitment. Mr Joyce puts his inspiration down to his passion for the space sector “coupled with a desire to create a global recruitment business that truly disrupted the entire industry through our innovative business model, people and, most importantly, our culture”.

Another disruptor, Sojo founder Josephine Philips is challenging the traditional ‘throwaway’ culture of fashion. Her app connects buyers of pre-loved clothes with seamstresses who can alter clothes to fit. Ms Philips’ focus on sustainability and her drive has rewarded her with a finalist place in the coveted LDC Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

“The fashion industry is one of the most unethical, polluting and environmentally destructing industries in the world,” she comments when asked about her inspiration behind Sojo. “By making clothing alterations and repairs an easy and hassle-free process I’m making it mainstream and commonplace for the younger generations.”

When Alex Beagrie created Exchange Train, he set out to change a sector that every house buyer has endured; conveyancing. “I think the inspiration behind Exchange Train originated from the fact that within the conveyancing sector the consumer could be so easily taken advantage of,” he says.

“When I began the venture, it seemed many industry professionals were against a 24-year-old trying to change something that worked so heavily in their favour. This reluctance to champion the consumer or provide an even playing field was what drove me to take the plunge and Exchange Train was born.” Exchange Train is flourishing and is a finalist in the Lloyds Bank New Business of the Year Award.

As these disruptors build their businesses, how do they ensure that they are fit for the future? “Through our core values: ‘CAN’ – which stands for Collaboration, Accountability & No Ego,” says Mr Joyce. “If something has gone wrong outside of your control or you have made a mistake,



Josephine Philips set up the app Sojo to make the fashion industry more sustainable

be accountable, collaborate with your colleagues and leadership team to come up with a solution and don’t have an ego by suffering in silence and assuming you can do it alone.”

Ms Philips is creating a culture of adaptability and building a collaborative team who are used to working cross-functionally. “Adaptability is important because being able to pivot at any time depending on outside circumstance and feedback really helps with building resilience,” she says.

Mr Beagrie built resilience into Exchange Train by avoiding the traditional funding model. “Resilience comes from not wanting to become a unicorn company that builds shares and shareholders to acquire a big valuation and sell,” he says. “We acquired enough funding to make us profitable as quickly as possible, therefore ensuring the value in the business and security for the team.”

The partner of ‘resilience’ must surely be ‘adaptation’. Mr Joyce’s recruitment company puts people first: “Providing unlimited holiday and remote working has not only provided a significant increase in productivity, but more importantly this has helped manage employees’ mental health through multiple lockdowns and restrictions.”

Mr Beagrie has taken a slow and sure approach. “I am still unsure of what makes a good leader, however, ‘take risks’, ‘fail fast’ and ‘if something seems



Richard Joyce of Evona



Exchange Train’s Alex Beagrie

too good to be true, it probably is’ are three things I would always want my team to know.”

As we move towards 2022, our disruptors are looking to the future. “We are now in scale-up mode and we aim to be at 50 employees by the end of this year. We have incorporated in the US and we aim to physically land on the East Coast as soon as we can, once the Biden administration chooses to open the borders to the UK,” says Mr Joyce.

“We’re actually amidst another pivot at Sojo as we speak,” explains Ms Philips. “We’re moving into B2B and are totally uprooting our original plan and business model so we can work with brands and scale faster. It’s exciting!”

Mr Beagrie likes to take his race one hurdle at a time. “Against my better judgement, I am not one who looks too far into the future as every time I do, it never turns out how I anticipated, so my next task is getting through tomorrow,” he says.

“It’s so inspiring to read stories of young and ambitious entrepreneurs identifying new opportunities and having the confidence to start up a business during the lockdown,” concludes Jonathan Caswell, origination director, LDC. “It’s a clear marker that the future of British business is in safe hands. The Lloyds Bank British Business Excellence Awards is a great showcase for these leaders and I’ll be watching their journeys with interest.”

Lloyds Bank British Business Excellence Awards The finalists

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The Lloyds Mid-Market Business of the Year

Northern Gas and Power
Direct Healthcare Group
QBS Technology Group
White Stores
Rosemont Pharmaceuticals
Hippo Motor Group
Prestige Flowers
Huntapac Produce
Fairstone Group

The New Entrepreneur of the Year

Katya Valeva, CEO, Blush Cloud
Michael Campbell, CEO, AET Global
INTU Your Home
Eddy Chan, CEO, SchoolOnline.co.uk
Sam Amrani, CEO & Founder, Olvin
Philippa Main, Founder & CEO, Three Sisters Farm

The Scale-Up Business of the Year

Sapio Research
FlyForm
DCSL GuideSmiths
Digital Voices
QBS Technology Group
White Stores
Electric House
The Moot Group
SkinHQ
Thursday (Honeypot Dating)
AU Vodka

The iNews Technology Innovation Award

Northern Gas and Power
Fleetondemand
Smart Lock & Dock Ltd
BrightHR
Tempcover
Pupil
Geeks
Luminance
Octopus Energy
Reflex Vehicle Hire
Investor Meet Company
BigChange

The LDC Entrepreneur of the Year

Dave Stevinson, QBS
Technology Group
Fokhrul Islam, CEO, Northern Gas and Power
Christian Nellesmann, Founder & Executive Chairman, XLN
Sean Ramsden MBE, Founder, Ramsden International
James Whiteley, Managing Director, White Stores
Keith Griffiths, CEO, Built Environment Networking
Simon Morrish, CEO, Ground Control
Lorna Davidson, Founder, regwigwam
Daniel Priestley, CEO, Dent global
Josephine Philips, Founder, Sojo

The future of British business is in safe hands with these leaders

LOCKDOWN LEARNINGS

"Whatever you think
your business does,
it can actually do
100 other things"

EMMA, OWNER, ELP BARBERSHOP, LONDON

Throughout lockdown, we've seen many of our customers demonstrate amazing resilience. Take ELP, who started selling products online and then developed their own brand of beard oil. Whenever our customers find themselves in new situations, we're there to provide the support they need.

Go to [Lloydsbank.com/business](https://www.lloydsbank.com/business) to find all the ways we can support your business.



LLOYDS BANK

By the side of business