



As we begin to think about our teams returning to our offices, all of our lawyers continue to offer a full service to all of our clients, new and existing.

We would like to advise all of our clients, colleagues, work referrers, visitors and friends of BTMK that for the time being, our physical offices remain closed to visitors except by prior appointment with specific team members for what has been classified as essential business.

As our minds now turn to safely returning our team members to our offices, we wish to advise all members of the public that in every respect, we are OPEN FOR BUSINESS, that all of our team members continue to work remotely, with full access to our office systems and we

continue to offer an uninterrupted service to all of our clients.

Our lawyers are conducting court hearings, trials and advising clients across all of our practice areas using class-leading video-conferencing technology, which remains our communication method of choice.

Our telephone numbers remain the same (24/7), we will always be available and we will continue to stand by our client as we look forward to the next stage of the recovery process.

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Road to Recovery

Essex Life has partnered with IoD East of England to interview 15 of the county's key business leaders to find out why they think our county is well placed to help lead an economic recovery after the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic

This year has seen a quite unprecedented situation. The world has been brought to a standstill by Covid-19 and the global economy has been devastated by an enforced cessation of activity for so many businesses. But there is hope of a speedy recovery, and the businesses of Essex have more reason to be optimistic than most.

Simone Robinson, regional director of IoD East of England, believes the exceptional people and entrepreneurial spirit of Essex will be a catalyst for the bounce back.

Simone explains: 'I am incredibly proud to see a selection of our IoD Essex members and ambassadors profiled as business leaders in this issue of *Essex Life*. These people represent the experience, ambition and resilience that we need as we start this new phase in Covid-19 recovery and move towards our exit from the European Union.'

'The IoD has represented and supported its members for more than 100 years, and rarely more so than in the last

few months. As we face new challenges, it has never been more important to develop the skills and governance we need to evolve and succeed alongside a changing commercial landscape.'

'Among many initiatives, including waiving joining fees and a new monthly membership offer, the IoD has launched a new Centre for Corporate Governance and a Virtual Development Centre, enabling individuals to remotely access accredited leadership development and director qualifications. Our mission is, as it has always been, to drive positive change and help business leaders be the best they can be. We have so much to be proud of in Essex, and the IoD is here to support your success.'

When Nitin Khandhia, managing director at BTMK Solicitors, heard about this project to showcase some of our key business leaders, he was keen to support it through sponsorship.

Nitin explains: 'BTMK is delighted to sponsor this feature within *Essex Life*. There is no doubt that Essex is an extremely vibrant place in

which to carry on business. The entrepreneurial spirit is what has been the lifeblood of the Essex economy for years and has been the cornerstone of the county's success. Like all of those individuals who are featured in the pages that follow, there are many others, like us, who have a desire to succeed, to grow their businesses, and for professional services firms like ourselves at BTMK to support our clients in their plans and strategies.'

'There is no doubt that Covid-19 will bring to all of us a huge challenge; it already has. The fact that we're all still here, looking for new opportunities and to enhance those that we have, demonstrates the combined effort that will bring us through this.'

'We at BTMK are already looking at the opportunities that the next 12 months and beyond will bring and our motto internally has and will continue to be – we don't just intend to survive, but to thrive, as the world forces change upon us.'

The road ahead may not be an easy one, but it's clear the people of Essex are ready for the challenge.



LEFT:
Nitin
Khandhia



RIGHT:
Simone
Robinson

The Recruiter

IAN BANKS

Managing director of One to One Personnel

Ian Banks is the owner of the Southend-based recruitment agency One to One Personnel. Since he set up his business in 2004, Ian and his team have placed over 7,500 people into jobs in and around Essex. He lives in Danbury with his wife Sarah, their three children and Pippa the cockapoo. Ian is a bit of an adrenaline addict and enjoys mountain biking, jet ski racing, scuba diving and golf with his kids.

When I joined the IoD in 2019 I didn't really know what to expect

Since then I can honestly say that it's been a fantastic experience. I regularly attend the mastermind events together with other locally-run themed events and have met some fantastic like-minded people who all share the same experiences and challenges in business as myself. With the onslaught of Covid-19, it's been great to share business challenges with others in similar predicaments. The support and understanding from people who really do understand how the roller coaster of life can be for a business owner has been a godsend.

Essex is a county of SMEs and entrepreneurs and it's a great place to do business

Personally, I love the fact that as a county of smaller businesses, most of us owners and directors are so much more accessible.

I started out as a cartographer in the oil and gas industry back in the days when maps were all drawn by hand

Like so many of us who fall into our long-term career, I fell into recruitment. Since then I can truly say we have seen a lot of



'You never stop learning, especially when people are your business...'

things. You never stop learning, especially when people are your business. During the years we have been through two recessions, opened other offices only to get hit by the double dip in 2012 and now we are in the middle of a global pandemic. It's been a tough ride and it's been a good one too. Our industry is constantly evolving, especially with the massive impact that coronavirus has had on the jobs market. The future now is all about video interviewing, remote working and hot desking.

We have helped thousands of people from all walks of life start, change and shape their careers

In some ways I see what we do as silent collaboration with the community, quietly helping people into work, supporting our regional businesses and the

larger economy as whole. Their success is our success, and as the county starts to get back on its feet I think we will have an even bigger part to play.

Technology has a massive part to play in everyone's lives even more than ever

With the emerging generational behaviours of Millennials and Generation Z, employers should be thinking about how to attract and retain younger talent. Remote working, flexible working, home working and mobile working is here to stay. Covid-19 has forced our hand to adapt the workplace quicker than we could have ever imagined. While everything around us is becoming more remote, I think the social interaction we humans crave will bring balance back to the workplace and life will go back to normal, albeit at a safe distance.

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The Public Affairs Consultant

ANDREW CAMPLING Director at 419 Consulting

Billericay-based Andrew Campling is a director of 419 Consulting Ltd, a public affairs and public policy consultancy focused on the tech and telecoms sectors. Andrew moved up from Kent 25 years and he and his wife brought up their four children in Essex. Outside of work, Andrew enjoys watching rugby, and was particularly pleased when his two younger sons both played for the Billericay senior team for a while before work got in the way.

As a member of the IoD, I value the networking in general as well as the local events

I also make good use of the facilities at Pall Mall and in the City of London, both for hot desking and for meetings.

Essex is a great county for a business to be located in, both for market access and also for the many fantastic places to live

We're lucky to enjoy easy access to the countryside and a wide range of leisure activities, together with many excellent schools. One way that our business community can help our young people is to ensure that we engage with our local schools, for example, by offering to talk to older pupils about career options in our many different industries. Where possible, businesses should also offer work experience and apprenticeships to give our young people a start to their working life.

I started in IT before moving into marketing when I realised that an interesting hobby didn't necessarily make a great career, at least for me

One key learning for me was when I saw the benefit of a diverse team, with different



'Even start-ups can lead the way on exporting...'

people bringing different perspectives and insights. Once you experience this you realise how much better decision-making is when you bring different points of view to bear. I'd urge all business leaders to consider whether they are taking this into account and to see what they can do to ensure diversity of their own teams.

The business community will have to work extra hard to make up for the additional burdens brought on by Brexit

Looking forward, businesses in Essex will continue to benefit from proximity to London as well as excellent connectivity to overseas markets via Stansted and Southend airports as well as DP World, Tilbury and Harwich.

In my marketing career, my team and I were twice recognised by the global IT industry

It's a great feeling to go to the US

to pick up awards in the backyard of some of the world's best-known companies. More recently, I was particularly proud to secure my first overseas business award for my new venture when it was less than six months old, showing that even start-ups can lead the way on exporting.

I'd like to move to an electric car but am concerned about the lack of charging points - this is something that definitely needs attention

Where we do need to see more investment is in our road infrastructure, whether it's improvements to the A120 or doing better on sorting out the growing proliferation of potholes on our local roads. Our digital infrastructure will also continue to need investment if businesses are to thrive, both in terms of full fibre connectivity and enhancing mobile coverage as we prepare for 5G.

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The HR Services Provider

TIM PRICE

Operations director of Park City Consulting

Tim Price is joint owner and operations director of Park City Consulting, an HR and health and safety services and training business based in Colchester, which was founded by his wife Juliet in 1997. Tim is a past chairman of Essex IoD and contributed to the initial start-up of the Essex Employment and Skills Board as deputy chair.

Having been a member since 1997, my relationship with the IoD has been different at different times

As a newly appointed director, initially it was the world-class training that attracted me. When my membership developed, networking opportunities became important as did being associated with a business voice that was consistent and represented my views.

Essex has a long history of being a county of traders

We are a net contributor to the treasury – I believe this is due to the can-do attitude of our workers and business leaders. My experience from my manufacturing days based in Witham and now working with highly-skilled professionals in HR and H&S business services in Colchester has just reinforced this view. Our positive attitude, tenacity, resilience, ingenuity, agility and, above all, our combined work ethic differentiates Essex from other counties across East Anglia and the South East.

I would ascribe my business success to my time spent on the rugby field

I played for 26 years from the age of six, at both school, club and representative level back



'I am excited about the potential we have in Essex to benefit from the Brexit bounce...'

in Wales. As a sport it taught me everything about honesty, integrity and values, and as a team captain I soon learnt that you needed two main attributes: to lead by example and to adopt different styles to get the best from your fellow team mates.

The period of uncertainty between the referendum result and Brexit was a challenging time

Now, with a much higher degree of certainty, the door is open for Essex to continue to drive business growth and success and increase yet further our net contribution to the Treasury. Park City has certainly seen increased client investment in

people and services. Before Brexit was settled, the doomsayers were predicting a withdrawal of all European-based investment but I am positive and excited about the potential we have in Essex to benefit from the Brexit bounce.

Post-coronavirus we need to create an environment of certainty for businesses

Business tax policy and legal frameworks need to be stable. Whether an EU trade deal or WTO, a clear decision either way is needed with no delay? Finally a clear direction on government-funded projects. It's uncertainty that fuels a lack of confidence and an inability for business leaders to plan.

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The Trade Advisor

BOLAJI SOFOLUWE Managing director, ETK Group

Bolaji Sofoluwe is managing director of specialist Africa consultancy, ETK Group. She has worked with more than 400 businesses, covering such diverse sectors as aviation, agriculture, beauty and fashion, and has helped global companies make trade connections in 11 African countries. Bolaji is fluent in French and lives in Colchester with her husband Samuel and two beautiful daughters.

New businesses are launching in Essex and existing businesses are relocating to the county, resulting in a rich and diverse business community

Many of the business leaders are also thought leaders and entrepreneurs – when they bring their expertise and success to the region, it benefits other companies and the economy as a whole.

Africa has some of the youngest populations in the world with 60% of people under the age of 35

It is still virgin territory for trade and investment but while some of the continent is underdeveloped, it also includes some of the world's fastest-growing economies. This means there is a wealth of trade opportunities and I am passionate about helping businesses find partners in this market.

Global thinking entrepreneurs and funding specifically for exporters needs to be the thrust of the government's revival strategy post lockdown

We will need to acknowledge that there is a new way of doing things – one that is centred around technology – and must begin to work on ways to use this to our advantage. The government



'Essex businesses are leading the way in terms of trade negotiations with Africa...'

must continue to invest in innovation, research and product development that makes us stand out. We also need to re-engineer supply chains to become less dependent on specific parts of the world.

My greatest achievement is to have established a niche consultancy business and made a success of it

Building a business from scratch is challenging but I believe my transparent, honest business approach, and the fact I am an expert in my field have meant I have been able to establish excellent, mutually beneficial

relationships with other businesses. Essex business are leading the way in terms of trade negotiations with Africa and have found lucrative links to burgeoning markets. I believe the rest of the country needs to follow their lead.

With the IoD, you never know who you will bump into having a coffee or a meeting

The organisation offers many opportunities to network with senior industry professionals. I also like the support the IoD provides through its events, along with the flexible meeting space it offers.

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The Accountancy Leader

JANIS OSBORNE
Managing director,
Rickard Luckin

Janis Osborne is the managing director of chartered accountants and tax advisers, Rickard Luckin, which has offices in Basildon, Chelmsford and Southend on Sea. She lives in Ingatestone with her husband Craig and is looking forward to her son Jack's forthcoming wedding later in the year. Outside of work Janis enjoys spending time with friends and family, travelling, keeping active at Greenwoods gym and has an interest in all things spiritual.

My biggest lesson was to make sure you understand what motivates your clients and your team

As a maths graduate, some think accountancy is an obvious choice. However, little did I know then what an interesting and challenging career lay ahead. It has meant becoming a business person first, which is more than just the numbers. I have always wanted to influence the company as a great place to work and that led me into leadership. It's a big responsibility yet a huge privilege and I never take that for granted.

There is something special about the business people of Essex

They love it when we show an interest in them and their business. They are adaptable and resilient and have helped Essex survive, and in many cases thrive, through what has been a tough economic climate since 2008. Essex is a great place to do business, not only because of the diversity and range of business, but the skilled and talented people that live here, many of whom want to work locally rather than commute.

I have personally really benefited from IoD events

The events are particularly



'My eureka moment was that it's OK to still be me, even though I'm MD...'

helpful, not just for the content, but for the opportunity to share ideas and challenges in a confidential environment with peers from other companies and industries. I am proud of our IoD Essex Branch Supporter partnership, now in its second year. At Rickard Luckin, our mission is to help clients realise their potential and achieve their aims – which aligns well with the IoD's aims to help directors to hone their skills and reach their full potential as business leaders.

Last year, we won the MGI Worldwide Large Firm of the Year Award

This reflects the hard work of our whole team in creating our Firm of the Future programme – designed to continually improve the client and employee experience now and in the years to come. MGI Worldwide is a

Top 20 ranked international accounting network.

Whatever our politics, the government sets the environment for businesses to operate

True success is down to the businesses that contribute to the economy through employment and innovation. From my experience of working with business owners across Essex, I know that they are adaptable and resilient – qualities that are more important now than ever. My advice is to remain optimistic about the opportunities that arise, focus on your customers, engage and support your team and use the coronavirus crisis as a catalyst to consider how your business needs to transform for the future. Despite what is happening now there is a future where Essex businesses will thrive.

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The IT Skills Guru

JOHN BAUMBACK

Managing director, Seetec

John Baumbach is managing director of Essex-based business and public services provider, Seetec. The firm is the ninth largest employee-owned company in the UK and is a leading provider of skills, training and rehabilitation services to business and government in the UK and Ireland. John started as one of the company's first apprentices in 1984 and at the beginning of 2020 took over leadership of Seetec from its founder Peter Cooper. He lives near to Seetec's headquarters in Hockley with his wife Sarah and their children.

At the age of 11, I spent my savings on buying my first computer because I had an aptitude for maths and wanted to become a computer programmer

By 16, and with five O Levels, I became disillusioned with school and, with my family struggling to make ends meet, I signed up for an apprenticeship earning just £26.25 a week. My friends thought I was mad but the traineeship advertised with Seetec, a young company with just six employees based close to my Canvey Island home, offered training in computer programming for business use.

Life-long learning and continuous reskilling will be more important than ever now

Our economy will benefit from the diversity of ideas, greater competitiveness and hopefully higher productivity this will bring. Already prosperous areas will embrace this trend but if we are to reduce inequality, we need to ensure those with the least have access to skills and training that enable them to get onto the first rung of the ladder in the knowledge economy. The government has rightly focussed



'We need to ensure everyone can access the skills and training they need to build better lives...'

on levelling up opportunity across the UK, particularly in the North. But it shouldn't be a case of having to choose Jarrow in the North over Jaywick, in our county. As business leaders, we need to champion these areas and ensure everyone can access the skills and training they need to build better lives.

It has been a privilege to grow an international business based in Essex
Seetec has expanded throughout the UK and Ireland, employing 2,500 staff and has a turnover of £150 million a year. Perhaps, even more satisfying has been

to teach and train hundreds of young adults in the county to help them kickstart their careers, start new businesses and build more successful lives.

We work with a huge number of partners to help the people we work with to build better lives

Our relationship with the IoD helps us to prosecute that agenda locally in Essex. From a personal perspective, I find it hugely beneficial to talk to peers to discuss challenges and opportunities and, where I can, to offer my experience to others where I can offer value or insight.

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The Sales Expert

PAUL DURRANT Founder of PDT Sales Consultancy

Shenfield-based Paul Durrant is founder of PDT Sales Consultancy and part-owner of the family property management business. A keen amateur artist, Paul enters the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition each year but is yet to be picked. His son, Matthew, holds the bragging rights here because his photo was displayed in 2019, so Paul is hoping to match this lofty achievement soon.

My IOD membership is the easiest subscription to renew each year because it provides such a good return

Benefits include local networking with fellow professionals, personal development events, Mastermind groups and the annual conference, plus use of the Directors Room at 116 Pall Mall, which is my unofficial London office.

I have lived and done business in Essex for over 20 years and it is such an enterprising county

Harlow is getting a new science park and has a growing start-up community; Southend on Sea has rebranded itself 'tech on sea' and Chelmsford recently acquired city status. Essex is also great for its transport links.

As the 8th largest economy in the UK, Essex attracts companies from a range of different sectors

The county can also offer significant cost savings over cities such as London and Cambridge, as well as other international locations – all of which makes it a great place to do business.

Brexit will have a short-term impact but Essex is well placed to power ahead

Planned increased capacity at our airports and major infrastructure



'Grow your circle of influence as well as develop an open entrepreneurial mindset...'

projects, such as the completion of Crossrail (which starts from Shenfield) and the construction of the Lower Thames Crossing due in 2027, will help grow the Essex economy. Our new trading relationship with the EU and other international trade deals, will further boost our ports and their local economies as well as attract foreign investment and talent.

Innovation will be vital for rebuilding the economy but collaboration will be a factor too

It was good to see the leading UK business organisations (including the IOD) come together nationally to form the

Business Action Council but this collaboration needs to happen at a local level also.

Sales will be the biggest challenge for many firms in the coming months

With 54% of buyers seeing reduced budgets due to Covid-19, according to the McKinsey Report, the months ahead will be tough for selling. Start with your existing customers and remind them that you are there to help. Target the fastest recovering sectors and make it as easy as possible for customers to buy. Finally, offer 'budget' variants, incentives and special offers to make it worth their while.

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The Legal Leader

LUCY FOLLEY Partner, Tees Law

Lucy Folley is a partner in the corporate and commercial department at Tees Law in Chelmsford. When not working, Lucy loves to go to the gym, ski and spend time with friends and family. Her son, Joseph, aged 19, is reading philosophy at Cambridge University and is a budding actor while her daughter, Jess, who is 16, is a singer, studying music at ELAM in London. She won ITV's first ever series of *The Voice Kids* in 2017 and at the end of last year won *The X Factor: The Band* and is now signed to a record label with her band Real Like You.

Being part of the IoD offers an opportunity to meet and openly discuss things with peers and share ideas and learn from other business leaders

Professional development training events are all invaluable and tailored to the needs of business leaders. The Legal Ambassador role also allows me to give something back to the business community, legal advice to those wishing to develop robust legal structures to support their business development.

It is great to be involved in business in Essex

There is a fantastic professional community which is extremely supportive and focused on developing business in the Essex area and stimulating the local economy. Essex attracts entrepreneurs which makes it an extremely interesting place to work.

I qualified as a solicitor in 1994 after having completed my articles in London

I joined Wortley Byers in 1997 and was appointed as managing partner in January 2014. In that role I led the firm to its merger



'I thoroughly enjoy my job – I practice law and am a leader of the business...'

with Tees Law in January 2019. I thoroughly enjoy my job and have had the opportunity not only to practice law but also develop my skills as a leader of the business, culminating in the merger with Tees.

I am most proud of is having had the opportunity to work within a small business for many years and helping grow that business

The team expanded from 20 to 55 people and then merged with Tees Law to be part of a legal practice with over 300 staff serving with offices in Cambridge, Royston, Saffron Walden, Bishops Stortford, Chelmsford and Brentwood.

Apart from legal services I am also proud also that as a firm we support local charities and sponsor local events such as the Brentwood Business showcase and the IoD Christmas breakfast.

I feel confident that our entrepreneurial spirit will enable us to embrace changes and see them as an opportunity rather than as a challenge

The infrastructure in Essex continues to grow particularly with the greater transport links and I think that Essex will continue to attract developing and successful business leaders given the can do approach that is prevalent in the county.

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The HR Expert

SARAH MCKEE-HARRIS
Managing director of
Kingswood Group.

Sarah McKee-Harris is the founder and managing director of Kingswood Group, an HR solutions business based in Essex that supports organisations across the county. She lives in Colchester with her partner, David, son Harry and their crazy cockapoos, Ruby and Maggie, and keeps fit by running and cycling. She has taken part in both the London and Paris Marathons.

From my experience,
Essex both creates and
nurtures entrepreneurial
leaders in its community

Essex is such a diverse county and with its close proximity to London and excellent international transport links, it's an exciting place to do business. The Essex business community wants to see Essex businesses thrive and keep us well and truly on the map. I believe Essex will bounce back from the coronavirus crisis quickly as the business leaders here such an innovative, positive and dynamic approach. Most importantly, the business community work together to help each other succeed.

I started my career selling
printers and photocopiers

Times have changed a lot over the years though even more so in the last few months, and now my passion is identifying HR solutions and working closely with our customers to find the best fit for them. When I launched Kingswood Group it wasn't with the intention of growing a business that provided a full HR solution, but from my networking locally, I identified a need to provide a personal, qualified HR service to smaller companies to help them grow and manage their employees more effectively.



'Continuously review and assess where you are and the changing market around you...'

We are extremely supportive
of other businesses in Essex

Last year we sponsored and judged the Business Excellence Awards Essex (BEAE) Award for Professional Services which saw Barkers Associates win overall. This year we are sponsoring the BEAE Entrepreneur of the Year 2020 award which we are very excited about.

We have already felt
the impact of Brexit

A lot of our business depends on customer confidence. However, the positive thing is that HR is always needed.

Be human and look after
your employees. If you do,
they will look after you

To continue to evolve and lead a successful business, my advice is to continuously review and assess where you are and the changing market around you. Keep on top of new technology entering the market, look out for disruptors and where possible take risks.

Three words describe
what will be important in
rebuilding the economy
post coronavirus

Agility, technology and determination.

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The Financial Planner

PAUL SPIRES

Director of The Sound Financial Planning Group

Paul Spires is a director of The Sound Financial Planning Group, which he founded in 1998. Paul works exclusively with owner managers, directors and senior executives who are planning their retirement or exit from work and helps them make smart decisions about their money based upon their lifestyle. He lives near to Chelmsford with his partner Deborah and has two grown up children aged 23 and 21. When he isn't working, Paul enjoys his rural surroundings, is a keen sports fan and follows his football team QPR.

My desire to sail my own ship led me to start the business

It was a scary time with a one-year old child, another on the way and a large mortgage, but I had faith in my ability and the gap that existed in the fee-based financial planning advice market. I have made many mistakes along the way and running a business doesn't come with an 'idiot's guide', but we battled through the hard times of the early days and now run a small and successful boutique planning firm.

My advice to anyone who wants to start up their own business is to ask themselves if what they intend doing is worth trading their life for?

If so, then if you feel there is a serious gap in the market for your product or service, believe in yourself and go for it. Having the guidance of a mentor can also be invaluable as well as the ability to ignore the doubters and doomsayers who are two-a-penny.

Essex is a hub of business activity and entrepreneurship

While I concur with the saying that, 'every person is self-made but only the successful ones admit it,' it is true that Essex has



'Ignore the doubters and doomsayers who are two-a-penny...'

a can-do attitude, with people having a strong desire and attitude to roll up their sleeves and succeed.

The IOD gives me a forum to meet with other senior businesspeople, where we can assist each other

The events such as the Mastermind groups I find especially beneficial, along with other networking events and support in terms of member services such as legal and tax assistance and meeting facilities.

I see no reason to doubt the robustness of the Essex economy in the future

I am positive that businesses will

continue to adapt to whatever challenges are thrown at them. I'm cautiously optimistic regarding our exit from the EU and the global opportunities, but also feel that firms need a leg-up in terms of cost reductions to business rates and other 'red tape' that can stifle growth.

As the lockdown eases, assistance for businesses from government will be vital

In terms of the things we as business-people can control, it's really about adapting to the changed environment. Those that adapt to new market conditions and that are resilient that will thrive.

HERE AND
LOCAL KNOW-HOW

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The PR to Entrepreneurs

ALISON SHADRACK CEO of Adia PR

Alison Shadrack is the CEO of Adia PR, which she founded in 2013 and has become known as the go to PR agency for entrepreneurs. Alison has been recognised as one of the UK's top five PR experts and has recently been appointed vice chair of the IoD Essex. She lives in Great Horkesley with her husband David and sons Henry and Oscar.

Essex has more start-up businesses than any other region in the UK

Essex enjoys a dynamic and rich business success with both traditional and innovative companies. People have a hard-working ethic but are also very social.

I am an introvert at heart and I've had to learn to overcome my fear of public speaking

I have worked in PR and marketing since my early career, including the European Commission in Brussels and a property firm in New York. I started my own first business (an Italian food e-commerce and import company) in my late 20s and I launched Adia PR in 2013. There are always many lessons to learn when running a business.

With the right mindset, good planning and an agile business model, I believe most business directors and their organisations will be capable of reacting fast to unpredictable changes

I do think it's important though for directors and business leaders to have access to the right support and information to help them prepare and plan.

We haven't yet seen the full consequences of lockdown

Sadly, many businesses have and will in the coming months close for good, unable to recover from



'Essex has more start-up businesses than any other region in the UK...'

the loss of being unable to trade. However, it has been uplifting to see many businesses not only surviving but thriving through this period. The government's furlough system has provided tremendous support so far and will continue to help until October. Beyond that, the hospitality, travel and Rrtail sectors are likely to require continued intervention to recover as they have been the hardest hit. We need forward-looking initiatives to support unemployed workers with skills and training for new jobs and entrepreneurial support for those looking to start their own businesses. Economic recessions have proved in the

past to be a great time to start a new business, providing the right support for those daring to launch new ventures is available.

I particularly value the relationships I have been able to build with other IoD members in Essex

I lead the monthly IoD Mastermind sessions held at The Blue Strawberry in Hatfield Peveral and it's great to get to understand each member and their business on a deeper level. It's a positive and supportive space – peer-to-peer support rather than coaching – and held over a delicious three-course meal.

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The Business Psychologist

**PROFESSOR
MIKE FERGUSON**
**Director, Developing
Professionals
International Limited**

Professor Mike Ferguson is the director of development for Developing Professionals International Limited. He lives in Halstead with his wife and two teenage sons. Mike is a keen motorcyclist and loves music.

We need to spend time with people we really admire

I find these throughout the IoD – I meet great role models who are always willing to share their insights and friendly advice. I also make frequent use of the IoD premises around the country.

Our business has an international footprint

Essex offers a great operational base – having Stansted Airport on our doorstep is a huge plus, as is our proximity to London.

Engineering was my passion when I was a lad – I was a true teenage geek!

But once I finished my studies, I was very quickly put in charge of large numbers of production staff – a role for which I was hopelessly unprepared. I went back to learning as much as I could and, eventually, became an academic – specialising in the psychology of the achievement of success and high-performing teams and their leaders.

Not having access to high-speed internet is the Victorian equivalent of not having access to books and learning

The internet is still so shaky at our office that broadcasting training sessions by webinar is a stressful nightmare. And what will retire me, eventually, is frustration caused by the decreasing reliability of our local transport infrastructure. If I've



'What we do with people influences the success of an organisation much more than what we do with the technology..'

got an audience of 400 highly-paid executives waiting to hear me address them at a national conference centre, they're not very impressed that I'm delayed an hour because somebody cancelled the 0800 branch line service from Braintree.

To rebuild the economy after lockdown, we need to recognise useful learning

It's about being willing to embrace some permanent changes for the longer-term, wider benefit of humankind. We have been compelled to live more thoughtfully. Wouldn't it be great if we could put that learning to good use?

Way too many people accept far too little

I see my role – indeed my personal life-long mission – as to bring

out the very best in other people. I've worked with many tens of thousands of people around the world in this vein, and what warms my heart the most are the personal, often tear-jerking emails I get, sometimes years later, from folk who tell me that our work together was in some way transformative for them.

It's a pity we have fallen into the trap of regarding economic success as the only useful scorecard

While we're not short of brains in Essex, or indeed the world – the challenge lies in getting people to live and work effectively together, locally, nationally, and internationally. We really have to start thinking in terms of a different dialogue – economic success does not correlate with personal happiness.

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The HR Consultant

CAROLE BURMAN

Managing director, MAD-HR

With over 25 years of experience working in the world of HR, Carole Burman is founder and managing director of MAD-HR, an HR consultancy with a number of offices across the region. Married to Ben, who shares her passion for Ipswich Town Football Club, she also owns 140 chickens and supplies many of the families in their neighbourhood with a daily selection of the freshest eggs.

It's not until you become a member of the IoD that you recognise how invaluable it is to have the kind of support and collaboration the organisation brings with it

I really value the opportunity to access genuinely current business information and support. This has become essential with the recent pandemic. It has also been great to find training opportunities that are not as freely available elsewhere. There's also a wealth of professional expertise across the IoD, and even access to flexible working spaces.

Essex has such a supportive environment for both new and established businesses

I always feel it's a county that is blessed with interesting and inspirational people across all sectors of business, and it really channels entrepreneurialism and encourages collaboration – this has been proven to be very helpful to everyone in the business community when facing the challenges of trading in 2020. I think there's a sense of pride from working in Essex which is deeply infectious.

It is an understatement to say that these are tough and uncertain times for us all

I think that it will be crucial to tackle slow productivity growth,



'There's a sense of pride from working in Essex which is deeply infectious...'

adopting new technology and plugging skills gaps both for the workforce that businesses have now, but also in developing the talent that will be needed for the future.

Our achievements are best viewed in the success we see for our clients

Over the years, we've not only seen them create impactful new strategies within their businesses, but have enabled them to achieve numerous accolades on a sector and national scale. Such recognitions have come in the likes of the following: Great Place to Work, Sunday Times Best

Companies or regionally in the Best Employers programme

We live in one of the fastest growing regions in the UK and innovation is in our DNA

We are blessed with great universities and colleges who lead their way in their chosen fields, but it is critical that we find ways in which we can retain this skilled workforce in this county. In the coming decade, I would expect to see growth in agri-food, clean energy, digital tech, transport, freight and logistics. It is likely that growth will involve collaboration between companies from all different sectors.

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The General Manager

MARK OST General manager, Snap-on Diagnostics

Mark Ost is the general manager of Snap-on Diagnostics and Equipment divisions – a \$4 billion, global company and industry leader, supporting critical industries such as the automotive sector. Mark lives with Sam and his two children in Wivenhoe and spends any free time carp fishing, a lifeline passion that helps provide his work-life balance.

Being accepted into the IoD in the first place was a personal achievement for me

From growing up in the 1980s on a tough council estate in Colchester to being recognised by such an institution was special. Since then they have offered support to me both personally and in business. I have particularly used them for obtaining business sector information saving the company thousands of pounds in research costs. Using the IoD's Pall Mall headquarters when in London and the meeting rooms around the country has also helped numerous times.

Essex has always played a major part in the automotive industry

This is the core of our business and has enabled me to stay close to market changes and technology developments, and to build relationships with industry leaders. I will often spend time in and around garages making sure I remain connected first hand, and I've always found Essex people to be welcoming.

I left school and went into Lancaster garages in Colchester as a technician

One day I was approached to buy a Snap-on franchise, the turning point in my family's life. The truth is, I only bought it because Sam convinced me I would



'I grew up on a tough council estate in Colchester, so being recognised by the IoD was special...'

succeed and she would support me. I found a flair for creating sales and spent the next 17 years working for Snap-on in various sales management roles. In 2012 I was promoted to a newly formed role of general manager for two of our divisions, reporting directly into the company's president.

Over the last few years the country has faced some tough challenges

Brexit divided the country and has still to be finalised and now Covid-19 has shut the country and global economy down and cost far too many lives.

With Brexit we are currently in unknown territory and there will be bumps and bruises along this journey. A trade deal avoiding tariff hikes will be vital to us all while infrastructure such as the A12 will play a vital part and needs more investment.

The pandemic is un-paralleled in its global disruption

It is vital for any business that it looks after the well-being of its associates and their families, we will all be judged on this for years to come. We are also going to need structured, clear and conscious guidance from government.

The International MD

JON CAMP

**Managing director,
Tube Tech International**

Winner of the IOD East of England Director of the Year and the IoD Chairman's Award in 2019, Jon Camp is managing director of Rayleigh-based Tube Tech International (TTIL), specialists in the maintenance of petrochemical plants with offices in the UK, US, Europe and Asia. Under Jon's tenure the business has seen significant growth, including a new research and development subsidiary created to deliver innovation in robotic applications to the refining industry. TTIL is one of only a handful of successful applicants to receive highly competitive multi-million-pound EU innovation funding to develop new technologies to combat carbon emissions in industries across the world.

I have been a director for 22 years, but I believe there is always more we can learn.

As a member of the IoD I value the opportunity for professional development. In a high-pressure environment, it's critical to take the time to review, refresh and develop your skills as a director, and the IoD delivers insight and value.

Trust, communications and the right people are the keys to our success

As a director, my career has been built on the ability to listen, hear what's being said and act effectively. Communications, trust and empathy at every level from the workshop to the boardroom are so important.

Essex leads the way in entrepreneurship

Essex is a great place to do business and I'm proud that from our county, Tube Tech is making a positive impact all over the world. We need to think and act



'Always believe that anything is possible, work with the best people you can find and keep it simple...'

like business leaders to give the UK economy what it deserves and keep Essex on the map as an economic powerhouse. Investment in innovation and belief that we can be the best in the world are key to our success in the next ten years.

Listening and acting early on usually prevents problems later on

Get your people onside, engage them in a vision you have for the business, demonstrate how it will

positively affect them and the way they work, and follow it up with actions. Always believe that anything is possible, work with the best people you can find and keep it simple.

Coming away with two IoD awards in 2019 was incredible

In the four years I have been with Tube Tech we have gone on an incredible journey, which gets better and more exciting every year. It's testament to the people I have around me. ♦

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