

# SECRETS OF TECH GROWTH

Revealing a range of reassuring, surprising and thought-provoking insights into the journeys and experiences of fast-growth tech businesses



# FOREWORD

## Innovation, flexibility and talent set to drive tech growth

By Martin Courtney

The last ten years has seen the tech industry undergo arguably the most radical transformation of its short history. This has been driven by the large-scale digitisation of information and processes, greater use of automation and the proliferation of smartphones and tablets, which in many cases have replaced a PC as the compute device of choice for a new generation of employees.

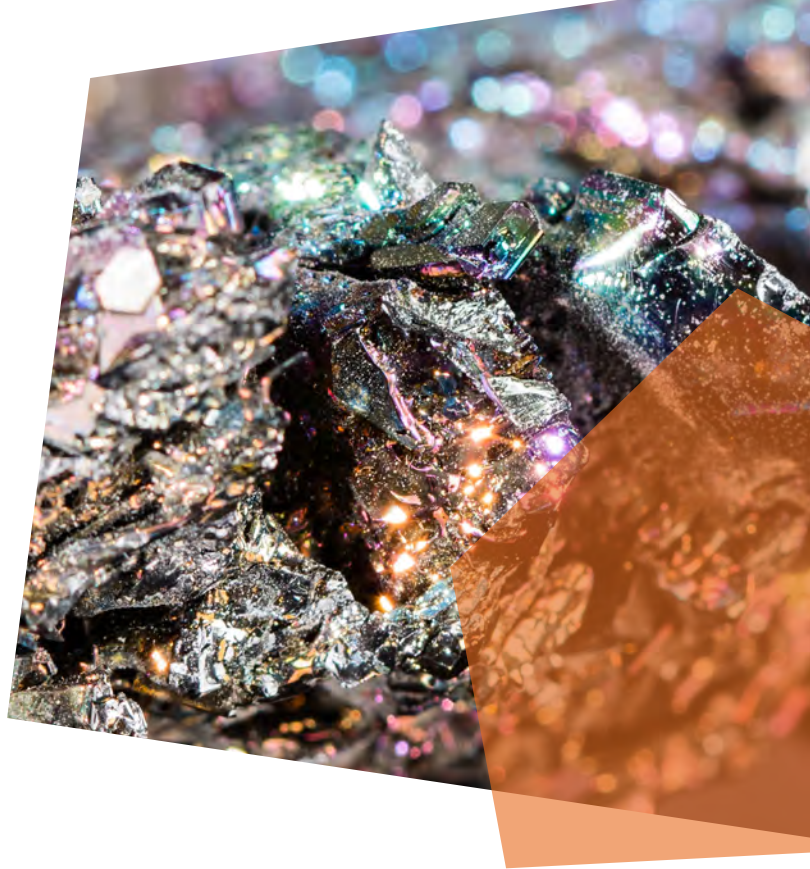
The emergence of the powerful, low-cost public cloud resources available under flexible, pay-as-you-go contracts has made fast processing and analysis of large data sets able to deliver real-time business intelligence and actionable insight feasible for the first time. Enterprise demand for always-on access to the data and digital tools needed to satisfy an increasingly distributed workforce has also changed the way companies now provision, manage and pay for technology resources. It has pushed suppliers to re-architect licensed on-premise applications into SaaS-hosted platforms, apps and services for delivery to mobile devices. The way that businesses communicate and collaborate, advertise, devise customised marketing campaigns, process orders and transactions and manage their workforce and supply chains has fundamentally changed as a result.

Equally, the vast quantities of data now being collected and analysed to gather business intelligence have spawned revenue models and service propositions which were previously unthinkable. While data is today's new gold within the B2B market, it has to be treated as a more precious commodity and protected accordingly. New privacy rules in the form of the European Union's General

Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and equivalent UK Data Protection Act 2018 have pushed almost every organisation to reassess and restructure their compliance frameworks to avoid the risk of heavy fines that could put them out of business.

Increased use of business process automation (BPA) has steadily driven cost out of commercial workflows by reducing the volume of manual activity and paperwork which often had a negative impact on productivity and transaction completion times. But in many cases it has also forced organisations to make sure the tasks they automate demonstrate consistent compliance and generate audit trails proving that compliance every step of the way —both in terms of their own workflows and the impacts that any changes have on partner systems—in order to avoid unforeseen regulatory shocks.

The cloud has also lowered the barriers to market entry for B2B start-ups and scale-ups which can quickly steal revenue and customers from under the noses of the incumbents. Larger organisations tend to move more slowly, sometimes a fatal handicap in an industry whose success is built on speed and agility, in identifying commercial opportunities and bringing suitable products and services quickly to market while building the partnerships needed to drive their success. The delicate balance between investment in research and development and maintaining a profitable business is more precarious than ever for tech-focused companies, yet continuous innovation (and a wary eye on rival activity) is essential to stay ahead of the competition.





---

More challenges remain ahead though, with long-term forecasts beyond the current COVID-19 induced supply chain disruption pointing to increased cyber security vulnerabilities within newly deployed Internet of Things (IoT) and industrial IoT (IIoT) networks, as well as hackers switching their attention to smartphones, electronic point of sale (EPoS), tracking devices and a whole range of industrial sensors, gauges and monitors.

The volume and diversity of structured and unstructured data sets to be generated, collected, transmitted, stored and processed by those billions of IoT/IIoT devices will be used in multiple industry verticals —everything from manufacturing, retail and healthcare to transportation, utilities and automotive. This threatens to overwhelm legacy infrastructure in many cases. Tech companies and their partners alike will need to think harder about how they now approach that data challenge, and look for more intelligent ways to filter and analyse information, both to avoid performance bottlenecks and drive improved optimisation and efficiency within the B2B transaction chain.

Skills shortages too still threaten to impede expansion. Many tech roles remain hard to fill and expensive to hire, while the specialist knowledge needed to drive B2B digital transformation remains a work in progress.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) now predicts that the COVID-19 pandemic will precipitate a major global recession. But it's not all bad news; as long as the tech industry can maintain the talent, innovation and flexibility to roll with the punches and bring fresh thinking to the fore, it will provide a solid platform to keep driving the world's economy forward.



*Martin Courtney is a freelance IT & telecoms editor, journalist and analyst with 30 years' experience of reporting and analysing technology and market trends for a long list of B2B/B2C publishers and tech research companies. He currently covers the enterprise cloud, networking, telecoms, IoT and cyber security markets for UK analyst firm TechMarketView and is a regular contributor to The Register, Engineering and Technology Magazine and Data Center Dynamics, having previously worked for Computing, IT Week, IDG Connect, Heavy Reading, Market Mettle, Current Analysis, Computer Reseller News, ComputerActive, PC Advisor, PC Direct and Mobile Today.*

# CONTENTS

---

## **Introduction**

- 05**    **Secrets of Tech Growth Revealed - The Journey so Far**

## **The Interviews**

- 08**    **Alistair Mackenzie / CEO of Predatar**
- 10**    **Andrew Vize / CMO of SysGroup**
- 12**    **Charlie Horrell / CEO of Imagen**
- 13**    **David Buckingham / CEO of Ecrebo**
- 15**    **David Keene / CMO of Funding Options**
- 17**    **Jon Fowler / CEO of Auga Technologies**
- 19**    **Mark Paraskeva / Founder and CEO of paiyroll**
- 21**    **Martin Philpott / CMO of Adatis**
- 23**    **Nina Pepper / CMO of Divido**
- 25**    **James Pepper / CEO of Vista Retail Support**

# INTRODUCTION

## Secrets of Tech Growth Revealed – The Journey so Far

---

The technology marketplace was a vastly different landscape in 1993 when we opened our doors. The movie Jurassic Park was dazzling audiences with animatronic dinosaurs and pioneering CGI, we were getting to grips with personal digital assistants (PDAs) which paved the way for smartphones, and while laptops had been invented, we were still using clunky desktop PCs. Webcams, flip phones, GPS, DVD players and Blackberries soon followed. And, as our business grew, the market and our clients within it evolved dramatically.

Now, more than 25 years later, as a firmly established B2B tech PR consultancy, we're proud to have worked with many of the world's fast-growth technology businesses and to have played a key part in their growth journey.

As we entered this new decade, one already marked by significant macroeconomic challenges, we were keen to understand what sustainable growth looks like for different technology companies. Do they share common characteristics? Similar approaches from their leaders? Or even the same business models? What are their views on PR and marketing, especially around driving that growth? And when is the best time to deploy these tactics?

Enter The Secrets of Tech Growth – our own research designed to answer these questions and shed some light on the experiences of those who are at the helm of successful, fast-growth companies. We interviewed a series of past, present and prospective clients, both CEOs and CMOs, to gather their insights on how their businesses are pushing forward, how they are using PR and marketing, and what advice they would give future market entrants.

Covering multiple industries in which we have deep expertise, such as retail, broadcast and IT, our respondents shared some similar insights. But there are also marked differences. While many centre their growth approach on providing customer value, others focus more on innovation, creating the right company culture and establishing strategic partnerships.

There are also many commonalities in the challenges they face, with securing funding, finding the right staff and remaining relevant being top of mind.

For many, hindsight on their own journeys provided interesting nuggets of advice for tech start-ups looking to enter or disrupt the market. One of the overarching themes was agility – something referenced by Martin Courtney in our foreword. That is, being prepared to adapt to



---

circumstances, being clear on your identity and value as a business, and, perhaps most importantly, not trying to be all things to all people.

While the views between CMOs and CEOs on the use of PR and marketing and the best time to deploy them differ slightly, there is little doubt that both are vital elements of past and future growth. There are also some great insights into the types of marketing and PR activities that our respondents have used for business success, from focusing almost solely on social media, to making full use of technical forums and staff-generated content in the early stages.

What all our interviewees could agree on is that driving a business forward, achieving objectives and reaching growth aspirations does require a sustained effort across the board. But bear in mind that it isn't just these commonalities in approach and experience that lay the groundwork for success, but also the differences. Each growth journey, regardless of business model, is different. Each experience as a business on a fast-growth trajectory is different.

We've created a snapshot of these experiences in our Secrets of Tech Growth eBook, revealing some reassuring and some surprising yet thought-provoking insights into the journeys, challenges and practices of a cross section of fast-growth tech businesses.

We hope you enjoy the interviews which follow.



**James Kelliher**  
**CEO of Whiteoaks International**



## THE INTERVIEWS

---

**Alistair Mackenzie**  
CEO of Predatar



# PREDATAR

*Predatar is a data protection technology company — in the business of helping customers sleep easy at night, helping them secure their data so that they can get the most value from that data.*

### **How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

There are two main ways we achieve sustainable business growth. The first is the quality of our service delivery and, tied to that, organic growth. As we continue to deliver our service to a very high standard and continue to guarantee our work, we get referrals from happy customers. Also, as our current customers expand and acquire more data, they entrust us with that data, which is where the organic growth comes in.

The second is by modernising what we do and increasing the value of what we do. In our business customers often see us as an insurance policy that doesn't contribute to their top line. We're focusing on changing that perception and moving up the hierarchy of needs by helping customers extract value from the data we look after to advance their business, either through data analytics, DevOps or software development.

### **Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

It's not a model as such, but we are focused on staying at the cutting edge of what we do to remain relevant. When we started trading in 2002 it was a very different business. We had a simple trading-type, transactional, reseller model. We realised early on that this wasn't scalable for us as a business model, so we started developing newer models of delivering and deploying technology. This then fostered the development of our own intellectual property and we moved to a subscription-based business model, which kept us relevant and better served the market.

### **What role has this approach played in your company's development and growth?**

It's an all-consuming role. It's never far from the top three items at any board meeting or leadership team meeting agenda. We continually ask ourselves what we need to do to stay relevant and keep adding value to our customers. And it's obviously driven us forward and helped us evolve as a business.

### **What are the key challenges in creating and running a B2B technology business?**

For us, in our evolution to a subscription-based business model, we encountered a number of challenges. The most obvious

was money; normally to build a business like this you get some investment. For us, we reinvested the funds that we secured from the old model, which put pressure on cash flow because we were pushing out cash earned from an upfront payment model to feed into the business over a longer period of time.

But the biggest challenge we faced was a cultural one. Team members were used to working one way under our transactional business model and it was a challenge getting them to think about the business in a different way, adopt new habits, and change their mindsets.

***"In the early stages we didn't use PR and marketing and we probably waited too long before using it. Our thinking was that we couldn't afford it and at the time it was more something that big companies did. It's different now; PR and marketing has become almost democratised."***

### **What do you believe the key challenges will be during the next stage of your company's growth and how will you overcome them?**

One of the main challenges is sustaining enough momentum to keep pushing forward. We're investing significant sums of money in sales and marketing resources to do this, which is more challenging now. When we were a reseller, for example, we could almost stand on the shoulders of the vendors we worked with. Now, with our own platform, we're standing on our own two feet, which means spending more on marketing to create that traction in the marketplace.

And the other challenge is to significantly increase the research and development into the Predatar software platform. But this leads on from investing more in marketing. If we get this right, it will lead to more sales and we can invest more in R&D and accelerate the development of the platform going forward, which is vital if we want to stay relevant.



**What advice would you give to a tech start-up looking to disrupt or enter the market?**

My advice is don't be afraid. You've got to go for it harder than you think and you can't afford to do things half-heartedly, especially today. You need to believe in what you're doing, bet on yourself and go bigger than you thought because you need to make an impact.

**How has PR and marketing been a useful tool in helping communicate your proposition to the market and generate awareness?**

In the early stages we didn't use it and we probably waited too long before using it. Our thinking was that we couldn't afford it and at the time it was more something that big companies did. It's different now; PR and marketing has become almost democratised. Nobody owns the channels anymore and with the increase in digital channels it does make it easier. But it also makes it more difficult — because the channels are free, there's a lot of noise and getting your messaging out there is more challenging. That's why you have to be smarter about your message and the channels you pick.

***“But the biggest challenge we faced was a cultural one. Team members were used to working one way under our transactional business model and it was a challenge getting them to think about the business in a different way, adopt new habits, and change their mindsets.”***



**Do you believe there are any common characteristics that lie at the heart of successful B2B business models?**

No, not really.

You see the waves of what appears to be “this is the model that's going to work going forward”, something that will kill everything else behind it, but then something else comes along.

By definition, if it's common, it's not going to be adding anything new and unique anyway, which is the whole point. You have to find new ways to bring value to a customer and not get too worried about being a slave to what everyone else is doing and following a tech trend or a tech fashion. You've got to do the opposite.

**What do you expect your industry to look like in five years?**

Hopefully it will look younger and more diverse.

At the moment university graduates aren't seeing tech as the place to be anymore, whereas 15 or 20 years ago it was all about getting into tech. But with attitudes about tech changing, and if we're focusing on cloud and technology delivered as a service so it's more of a rental model as opposed to something that you own, then maybe we can start to attract some youth back into the marketplace.

Andrew Vize  
CMO of SysGroup



*SysGroup provides cloud hosting and IT platforms for UK mid-scale businesses. This includes consultancy on implementing IT change and a host of services all delivered as a managed solution.*

### **How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

Sustainability comes from our delivery model.

We look at total value of customer spend. This is a combination of project activity as well as contracted IT, but we also we look to sustain the engagement with our customers through project work; introducing innovation, new technologies and some public cloud services as part of a digital transformation programme.

Our data centres are central to this. By delivering our managed services out of our data centres, we set the scene for when they are ready to evolve their services.

When an organisation takes their service to the cloud, we can offer value through managed service consultancy, and then a unique hybrid IT solution going forward.

The key is a flexible approach centred around total customer value. Initially we tend to engage customers with contracted services, but this can develop into an ongoing relationship if those customers then migrate to a pay as you go public service later down the line.

***“PR is hugely important for a start-up. It focuses on the story of the journey. It sets that commentary on how they’re disrupting an established market, then effectively becomes the loudspeaker for that organisation’s success.”***

### **Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

It’s largely based on organic growth, which demonstrates the basic feasibility of the business, and we have strict targets around that. However, we also have a large M&A component to our growth targets. At each step, we need to integrate the acquired organisation, and then demonstrate that it’s contributing to sustained organic growth. Overall, we intend to deliver our targets using a combination of organic and inorganic growth.

### **What role did marketing and PR play in the success of this model?**

It has a huge role to play in all of that, because effective PR allows us to articulate our capabilities and the scope of our offering. In particular, we can articulate the value of our people, which underpins our value proposition. PR is a channel for us to reflect that clarity, that confidence in our values, and our focus on projecting the SysGroup brand newly out to the industry and our target market.

The first stage for any campaign is providing clarity on our offer: identifying who we can help, what our capabilities are, what our value proposition is, and then articulating that. The second stage is differentiating ourselves, especially within market verticals. While this might seem rudimentary, it all comes back to the model.

Consider our M&A growth plan; every time we acquire a new organisation, that model, that scope and that value proposition changes. That variation is going to introduce an overall variation in what we do, and we have to accommodate it.

We’re also dealing with multiple audiences. From an organic growth perspective, we’re dealing with both customer and prospect bases. But from an inorganic point of view, we’ve got an industry audience and part of that is making ourselves as attractive as possible for future M&As.

**What role will marketing, communications and PR play in the next stage of your company's growth?**

I think the role they'll play for SysGroup, in particular, is enormous brand awareness. Whilst traditional PR is important, the primary channel is actually digital. It's a combination of web, some social and then paid channels.

We're devising a communication strategy that leads with our aspirations in the industry. Then, it's about consistent articulation to our market target, customers, and prospects through digital channels and then through more traditional PR channels such as investors and analysts.

Our PR strategy will also consider the integration of the businesses and the need to get everybody on board, so there's definitely something to be said for internal audiences as well. In terms of messaging, our internal approach wouldn't deviate much from the way we engage with analysts or the investor community. What we're asking for is for people to buy into our vision — perhaps not in terms of investor funds, but in terms of hearts, minds and loyalty. There's a huge overlap between those audiences. So whether it's for an external audience through traditional PR, or for an internal audience through a communications programme, it's essential to ensure your communication really snaps and sings.

***“Effective PR allows us to articulate our capabilities and the scope of our offering. In particular, we can articulate the value of our people, which underpins our value proposition. PR is a channel for us to reflect that clarity, that confidence in our values, our focus on projecting the SysGroup brand newly out to the industry and our target market.”***

**What advice in terms of marketing and PR would you give to a technology start-up looking to enter the market?**

They have to be really clear on their unique selling point – where they're innovating and the audience that they are innovating to. Specifically, they need to pinpoint the market or the technologies they're disrupting, then get as much attention during that growth period as they can. PR is hugely important for a start-up. It focuses on the story of the journey. It sets that commentary on how they're disrupting an established market, then effectively becomes the loudspeaker for that organisation's success.

You should find a PR organisation that resonates with your message, your story, the audience, and the target market you're disrupting. The PR organisation that understands that target market and is interested will provide you with the commentary and the focus to deliver publicity and commentary as you tear up that market and make changes. It's about getting the right PR agency to really give you full prominence and perspective on your journey within that target market.

Fundamentally, start-up success is about having a good product or service and then growing with that product or service. Then, under tactical use of PR, they can engage in an investor relations programme to take the company through the various stages of growth.

**At what stage of growth does marketing and PR become a tool to support business success?**

Hitting various milestones is about having the PR in place to be as effective as possible at each stage, so it's important to launch PR with the company from the ground up. The first day customers land, they should benefit from good PR. To get maximum leverage, organisations should focus PR around their corporate milestones – whatever these are. And from then on, it's about integrating and planning PR against those key milestones to maximise every market engagement.



Charlie Horrell  
CEO of Imagen



*Imagen is an intuitive video management platform that enables sports organisations, media companies and enterprise sectors to intelligently manage their video content with enhanced functionality, control, and insight.*

### How does your business achieve sustainable growth?

We are a SaaS technology business helping organisations manage large-scale video assets. Many of those are sports organisations, but not all. If you're a sports organisation, you typically create a great deal of video and that can be hard to manage, store, preserve, distribute and monetise. We help organisations manage that at scale.

We achieve sustainable growth by winning new business. As a SaaS company, we charge customers each year, so it's an annuity, and we would expect each customer to stay with us for many years. We have a very fixed cost base and want significant growth within our customer base. Every customer we get will increase the value of our revenue and the value of our profit, so growing our customer base is the prerequisite of what we're trying to do.

### Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?

We're a sales- and marketing-led business and have invested a great deal in both of these areas. For example, we have a team of 10 people in our marketing function, which is a significant number for a business our size. We have a full-service commercial team so we are doing our utmost to win every piece of business we can. We are spending a lot of money on marketing and a lot of money on sales with the expectation of a payback when we win new business. So, I would call it an invest-to-grow model.

### What are the key challenges in creating and running a B2B technology business?

Winning each customer is very important. The average deal size is quite significant, and each customer is, therefore, important to us. Consequently, what I'm trying to do is grow the rate of acquisition of customers to be three or four times what it is right now. That's the challenge.

To help overcome that challenge, we've opened new offices. Imagen used to be a business that was headquartered near Cambridge. Now, we've opened a large office in London and we've also got an office in New York. We are putting people close to where we think our customers would be.

***"If you don't invest to grow, you will win individual customers and you will grow at a slow rate, but life is too short for that. You want to grow quickly but it takes a degree of courage and financing to make it happen."***

### What advice would you give to a tech start-up looking to disrupt or enter the market?

I would say that at the very least, you need to ensure you have a good product in a good market. By a 'good' market, I mean one in which you can have a conversation with the potential customer and each time they will nod their head and say it makes sense. Then it becomes a question of price and when they will buy.

You also have to have what I would call a good product, which meets most needs and has limited need for customisation. The problem with customisation is it takes time and erodes margin, so the less customisation you have to do, the better your margin and your speed of sale will be. In my opinion, every tech business needs to have at least a good product and a good market. If one of the two is excellent then fantastic, you're really in a good position.

You should regularly ask yourself whether your market and product are excellent, good, average or poor. To say a product is good or excellent, it doesn't necessarily mean the quality is good or bad. What it should mean is, "can it be deployed easily, does it meet the customer needs, and does it require much customisation?". If the answer is it's easy to deploy, it's quick, it doesn't need much customisation, and that the market needs it, then you've got an excellent product.

If you don't invest to grow, you will win individual customers and you will grow at a slow rate, but life is too short for that. You want to grow quickly but it takes a degree of courage and financing to make it happen. If you've got both courage and financing, and a good product and a good market, those are the prerequisites, and then you've got a chance.



**David Buckingham**  
CEO of Ecrebo



# ecrebo

*Ecrebo is a point of sale marketing technology specialist. Its flagship OnPoint Total Receipt Marketing platform enables retailers to cost effectively reach every shopper with personalised, high-ROI marketing delivered on paper and digital receipts.*

### **How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

We focus on return on investment and scale opportunities. We're now at the stage of our journey where we have a good history of case studies, we've got a great client base, which is growing significantly, and our customers are very happy to talk about the value that we deliver because it is so high — whether that's through our technology or the support we give them. We have a great understanding of the value we bring, our application of the software and the costs we incur to a granular level.

This means we construct very solid business cases for our customers and can command a fair price for our service, which gives us that sustainable model. It becomes a cyclical model; existing customers are happy, so they stay with us and then also act as reference points for prospective customers. And the more that happens, the more we develop our business and the markets in which we operate.

### **Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

We have two broad approaches. The first one is organic growth, which is the direct-to-market, sales team-based approach following all the usual processes of prospecting, contacting, forming relationships, creating a business case, and putting it against the need. We do that very well, but obviously, it's quite labour-intensive and the sales cycle is long.

The second is a focus on partnerships. Our platform delivers value as a standalone solution, but it also complements what other providers offer. In addition, we have partnerships with technology vendors, like the POS software specialist Toshiba, where we work collaboratively on securing deals.

### **What are the key challenges in creating and running a B2B technology business?**

One challenge is staying true to what it is you're trying to deliver. Start-ups run the risk of getting waylaid because too often in the beginning stages they're eager to prove their worth and do things for customers that aren't really core to their offering. Even though they're well able to do them, it's a distraction. Instead they need to maintain focus on their goals.

Another challenge is valuing your core proposition at the same time as making investments to keep you sustainable for the long term. That's really hard when you're in start-up mode because you don't necessarily have the funds to do it.

There's also balancing your cash/funding versus growth because very few start-ups have an endless pot of cash resources. Then, once you've got a few clients on board the challenge is to maintain value there.

***“One challenge is staying true to what it is you're trying to deliver. Start-ups run the risk of getting waylaid because too often in the beginning stages they're eager to prove their worth and do things for customers that aren't really core to their offering.”***

### **What do you believe the key challenges will be during the next stage of your company's growth and how will you overcome them?**

For us it will be about keeping the right balance of staff across the markets in which we operate. We're a UK-based company, with most of our staff based here. But we are rapidly expanding into the US and need to ensure we're presenting one face to the world. By the same token, we're selling into different markets and the positioning is slightly different, so we need to deliver nuanced adaptation rather than mass re-positioning.

We also must maintain focus on our overall goals and while we're still delighting our customers, we have to balance that flexibility with staying true to our mission.

**What advice in terms of marketing and PR would you give to a technology start-up looking to enter the market?**

Initially you need to do a lot of due diligence on your idea, its application and whether it is going to provide sustainable value. You need this from trusted sources who won't just tell you what you want to hear.

Also, don't overshoot on the funding. There are different ways in which you can structure funding for your company and that needs to be very carefully thought through beyond initial seed funding and how you're going to keep afloat.

Once you're in the marketplace, you're going to face adversity and competition; you have to be thick-skinned and not take it personally. So, you have to be able to get up every morning and work exceptionally hard, because if you've got to that stage, the last thing you want to do is lose faith.

***“To take advantage of a more formalised (PR) approach, two things should be in place. The first is that momentum, and the second is funding. If you're going to do PR, you need to do it properly, so you have to be at a certain stage in your journey to be able to afford it.”***

**At what stage of growth does marketing and PR become a tool to support business success?**

That's a tough one. PR has a value at any stage, but the reality is professional PR comes at a price and you won't necessarily have the money to do that when you're at an early stage. There's a difference between positive PR generated just from momentum in a marketplace or customer success stories, for example, and formal paid-for professional PR advice and support.

To take advantage of a more formalised approach, two things should be in place. The first is that momentum, and the second is funding. If you're going to do PR, you need to do it properly, so you have to be at a certain stage in your journey to be able to afford it.



**Do you believe there are any common characteristics that lie at the heart of successful B2B business models?**

Yes, to a degree. Successful companies provide either a unique approach to an existing problem or have found a solution for a previously unsolved problem. They've got something unique in the marketplace. The reason for that is the people.

I think pretty much every start-up in the early stages is started by a certain type of person. Super smart, super diligent, super hardworking, quite often somewhat maverick. They have that unstructured way of working, thinking and approaching ways to solve problems. Of course, this will change as the business matures and the role either morphs into a more traditional one, or someone else is brought on board to take on driving the company forward.

David Keene  
CMO of Funding Options



*Funding Options is the UK's leading marketplace for business finance, helping businesses walk tall by finding them the right funding for their situation.*

**How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

For a start-up it's easy to focus on scrambling for increased growth. For us it's more about consistency of growth. We manage the business based on that consistent growth, so if we can put a clear plan in place, we can be consistent.

With better plans, the business can make stronger decisions. That in itself makes the business more sustainable in terms of people and the way we engage. We aim for maximum stability in this regard. It's about planning, it's about clarity of direction, it's about setting great goals, getting great outcomes, and key results. It's about just putting in place that steady, strong level of continual growth.

**Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

We set very clear organisational objectives and key results (OKRs) for the year, and then we set goals on a quarterly basis to achieve those results. By setting clear goals and objectives, people better understand their roles; and then the business can empower people to deliver against them – while avoiding micromanagement.

**What role did marketing, communications and PR play in your organisation's development and growth this far?**

It's been essential. Without marketing and PR we can't achieve any customer acquisition. Customer acquisition is what leads to growth, and that's both in terms of new customers and customers who do repeat business with you. You can't grow without marketing.

**At what stage does marketing and PR become a tool to support business success?**

It depends on your business. Some businesses depend more on marketing and PR if they're heavily sales focused. If a business is less sales orientated, then they're probably going to work in a slightly different way. In any business that needs to engage and acquire customers, or is planning to scale up, then marketing is absolutely essential. Without marketing, there is very little you can do to achieve this.

*“Often, in start-ups, people are only focused on the “do” stage. That’s where they put a lot of money into paid media and paid search, just to acquire people at the moment of action — and they don’t think more strategically about longer-term engagement.”*

**What were the marketing, communications and PR challenges for your business in the beginning and have these changed as the business has grown?**

I think the biggest challenge is thinking about how to put your marketing mix together. This is one of the things that start-ups in particular have challenges with. Businesses need to think about each stage of their marketing funnel, starting with early awareness; then thinking about how to engage PR and marketing; then the “do” stage, where they actually put a plan in place and start looking after their customers.

Often, in start-ups, people are only focused on the “do” stage. That’s where they put a lot of money into paid media and paid search, just to acquire people at the moment of action — and they don’t think more strategically about longer-term engagement.

**What role will marketing, communications and PR play in the next stage of your company's growth?**

We're moving to a full-funnel marketing model, where we're looking at all stages of the journey.

In our case we're providing lending to customers. I can put a lot of money into Google to find people who are searching for business loans. That's a very simple way of doing marketing, but actually a better way is to build our brand, to use PR tactics, and drive a more holistic approach, where people really understand what we can do. We can then engage with them over time, and once we've built a brand, that brand itself is what people come back to — without us having to pay for it. Individual clicks on a particular keyword isn't a sustainable model.

The sustainability of marketing is all about how much it costs to acquire your customer, and therefore what profitability you have. This, in turn, dictates when you can break even as a start-up, rather than just burning money. So that full-funnel marketing approach is what's really going to make a big difference.

**What advice in terms of marketing and PR would you give to a technology start-up looking to enter the market?**

It's all about investing the right amount of money in your marketing. A lot of start-ups don't spend much on their marketing, and then they wonder why they can't acquire customers. So actually, over-investing in marketing will pay off.

It's important to really focus on hiring the right people as well — and not just to meet your current needs. It's vital to hire people in line with how you see the market evolving over time. You have to look forward and realise that marketing isn't about what's happening now, it's about what you're putting in place for tomorrow. Your sales team might be doing something right now, but your marketing team is doing something that will impact you in the future. The timeline is different but equally important. So, it's worth thinking carefully about that.

**Do you believe there are any common characteristics that lie at the heart of successful B2B business models?**

I think success can be achieved by having clear understanding and alignment across the leadership team about how to acquire customers. Often, businesses — particularly tech companies — think too much about their product and not enough about their customer. The smart ones ask, "what does my customer really need?"

If you spend all your time thinking about your product, then you're building something without really thinking carefully about your customer. That's probably one of the biggest failings I see in tech companies. They don't talk or listen to their consumer base; they focus on the here-and-now of building a particular product, rather than working out exactly how to engage their customers, where their customers go, and what their customers really need.





**Jon Fowler**  
CEO of Auga Technologies



*Auga Technologies is a technology company with a focus on the provision of real-time audience engagement and insight. Brands include Vevox, QMob and software development company Auga Solutions. These brands address three markets which are, respectively: employee communications; higher education (Vevox) and market research (QMob).*

### **How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

Our approach to achieving sustainable growth is to focus on enterprise-wide rollout of our technology, embedding it across the organisation. Once your technology starts to be adopted in that way and becomes part of the everyday suite of tools that are being used, it becomes very “sticky”.

### **Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

Our business model has evolved as we realised there was definite demand for enterprise-grade rollout. We operate a software-as-a-service (SaaS) model, but Vevox and QMob operate distinct strategies.

QMob is built on a traditional sales-driven model through a combination of business development professionals and account managers. With Vevox, we use classic SaaS techniques, providing the smoothest starting-point possible. We offer a Freemium version, with a competitive feature set, so clients can use and experience the solution in a real-life situation. We also recognised from the outset that Vevox was going to require a large degree of automation to support the sales, on-boarding and support processes.

### **What are the key challenges involved in creating and running a B2B technology business?**

One of the biggest challenges is to remain relevant. You need to be constantly searching for ways to improve, developing an internal culture that encourages everyone to participate.

Funding can also be a challenge. If you're building a product from scratch, as we have, you will need funding to support the business until it achieves cash flow-breakeven, which can take a lot longer than even your most conservative forecasts suggest.

In the early days, as CEO you may have to work in the business and juggle a never-ending list of tasks. As soon as practically possible, you need to transition from working *IN* the business to working *ON* the business. It can be hard to give up control and you need the right team of people around you to do it. Trying to do everything yourself is a sure-fire way to limit your growth.

### **What do you believe to be the key challenges during the next stage of your company's growth and how will you overcome them?**

For us, this period ahead is all about how we can accelerate growth.

We also need to ensure we remain true to our values of unwavering quality and provision of amazing customer experience, along with the unrivalled level of support we pride ourselves on. The obvious challenge here is getting the right combination of appropriate resources, coupled with the support function to handle the increased volume of support inquiries.

### **What advice in terms of marketing and PR would you give to a technology start-up looking to enter the market?**

The first piece of advice I would give is to ensure that before even starting up, you properly research your idea or product to ensure that it's solving a real problem that actually needs to be solved. Perhaps one of the mistakes we made in our infancy was trying to be something to everyone.

You will always be faced with competition, whether direct or indirect, but if you're late to a market you'll need to have a reason for clients to adopt your product or solution.

You also need to surround yourself with good people with the right experience to help you succeed, so be sure to get the right team on board. And don't give up! Starting a business is hard, even with all the right ingredients in place, but stick in there and remain positive.

***“One of the biggest challenges is to remain relevant. You need to be constantly searching for ways to improve, developing an internal culture that encourages everyone to participate.”***

**What do you expect your industry to look like in 5 years' time?**

I would expect to see a few of the bigger players in the industry continuing to look to gain market share, which will likely lead to some consolidation in the market.

**At what stage of growth does marketing and PR become a tool to support business success?**

For us PR has been key from the outset. We were going into a couple of competitive markets and as a young business it was important to get our name out there. Being able to lean on professional marketing and PR provided us with great support. But when we started, we may have been trying to cover too many bases. Now, however, we understand PR better and it is part of our approach to growth. Our inbound marketing strategy is key to new customer acquisition and at its heart is the continuous creation and publication of compelling content.

**How has PR and marketing been a useful tool in helping communicate your proposition to the market and generate awareness?**

In the early days, as we were trying to establish our brand, we looked to PR to help with raising awareness and to position ourselves as thought leaders in our target markets. PR for the purpose of 'awareness' is often hard to put a value on, but our belief is that the right mix of marketing and PR techniques is the key to the growth and success of our business.

I think as an organisation, we've probably grown up a little bit in terms of what we're expecting from PR. As such, PR has become more relevant, and maybe that's because we're more comfortable with our growth model now – and with what we're actually using PR for.

***“For us PR has been key from the outset. We were going into a couple of competitive markets and as a young business it was important to get our name out there. Being able to lean on professional marketing and PR provided us with great support.”***

**Do you believe there are any common characteristics that lie at the heart of successful B2B technology business models?**

I would argue that market need is crucial. You have to be solving a problem that people want and need to be solved. Without this it will be hard to get started or reach any kind of scale.

I think success also relies on having the right team in place to develop your offering or proposition.

Mental agility is another characteristic; as you scale up, the challenges change, so you need the ability to stay a step ahead.



**Mark Paraskeva**  
Founder & CEO of paiyroll



# paiyroll®

*paiyroll® is an on-demand service that puts control of payroll in the hands of employees. Built on Robotic “Payroll” Automation (RPA) technology, the solution automates manual payroll activities, updates in real time and gives workers access to on-demand pay via a mobile app.*

### **How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

Importantly, we’ve gone for a mobile-first model. When we developed our product we did so from an employee point of view; not an HR or payroll administrator perspective, but rather who would actually be using the app. Allied with that, we’re completely cloud-based, so this approach is also based around software-as-a-service (SaaS).

As a SaaS business, we’re subscription based. There’s a fee per payslip or payroll, plus a platform fee for hosting all the data. It’s really simple; mobile, cloud, SaaS, and a straightforward monthly pricing model.

The second element we’re looking at is a partner model, where we’re working with partners to provide this service. And that’s an important aspect of scalability as well.

### **Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

Yes, as mentioned, partners play a big role. An important aspect of business growth is to consider partners that you could work with, who can bring something to the table that you don’t have. This is probably also good advice for all new tech companies.

Though we haven’t put it into action yet, another area we think will work well for us is crowdfunding. This will help people to really buy in to what we’re doing, with a reasonable number of small investors that are able to help us on our journey.

Also, as a cloud business we’re completely home based. We take this philosophy to heart in everything we do, from customer sales and marketing, to support and implementation. It’s all done remotely: something that has served us well and that our customers appreciate because of our availability and flexibility.

***“Although it’s easier to start a business now than ever before, particularly with cloud services, the flipside of that coin is that it actually costs a lot more.”***

### **What are the key challenges in creating and running a B2B technology business?**

Ultimately, the first key challenge is funding. You’re going to need more funding than you thought and probably for longer than you thought. Although it’s easier to start a business now than ever before, particularly with cloud services, the flipside of that coin is that it actually costs a lot more. I’d say it costs a lot more to scale and stand out because there are so many big ideas out there, with so many companies doing new things.

As a B2B tech business, you’ve got to be prepared to put in the time and spend a lot of money. If you look at the large companies around now, they’ve taken a long time to achieve profitability, regardless of industry.



### **What advice would you give to a tech start-up looking to disrupt or enter the market?**

The first thing I'd say is be prepared to pivot. I know it's a bit of a cliché, but I really do believe that now that we've been through it. For example, if I describe our journey: we started out by focusing on large clients who outsourced payroll. The idea behind this was that instead of outsourcing to someone else, you outsourced it to our 'robot'. When we developed this product, we realised that because it saves 75% of the payroll processing time, it was even better for those who operated in-house payroll. In a sense, that was pivot number one.

In offering this solution, we brought the power to the employee, and this in itself was disruptive in the market. Workers could run their own payroll, and they could access their pay on demand. This wasn't just an automation of payroll, this was a change. Using our product, workers could do something that they couldn't do before. This was a second pivot.

Being prepared to pivot will help you get new ideas as you engage and develop your product. The second piece of advice is always to follow a guide. For me, it's been *Crossing the Chasm* by Geoffrey Moore. As a company, our model focuses on the early adopters and innovators. Now we need to cross the chasm.

Having that model and guide is important. It may not be relevant for every industry, but whether you use this or another great tech guide, it's worth having that reference point to support you as you go forward.

### **At what stage of growth does marketing and PR become a tool to support business success?**

I think it should start on day one — engaging with early adopter customers. Of course, this needs to change as you move forward as a business. As you take on new funding, the basic marketing efforts of the start-up phase come to an end and the PR operation must scale up.

As things progress, businesses must start doing things at a different level than before. Marketing has to take a step up. PR has to take a step up. When it comes to paiyroll®, we've got to get our message out there.

We know that LinkedIn is going to be a big part of our marketing and PR, and this is likely to be one of the crucial tools on the B2B side; however, it could be another social media platform.



***"I think PR and marketing should start on day one — engaging with early adopter customers. Of course, this needs to change as you move forward as a business."***

### **Do you believe there are any common characteristics that lie at the heart of successful B2B business models?**

There are three key things that I believe lie at the heart of successful B2B business models. The first is developing strategic partnerships, which we've touched on already. The second is scalability. It's essential to always think about the scalability of your product — whether it's global scalability or the scalability of resources. The third is the customer acquisition model. Businesses need to ask themselves what model they're going to use to acquire customers. Those are probably the three main things: scalability, partnerships and customer acquisition model.



**Martin Philpott**  
CMO of Adatis



*Adatis is a data analytics and artificial intelligence company that offers strategy, consultancy and managed services to help organisations understand their market, monetise their data and make the right business decisions using predictive analytics.*

### **How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

We always focus on value, celebrating our clients and empowering our own colleagues to grow their careers as well.

For us, sustainable growth is about matching demand. It's about choosing our clients and our projects well. It's about always delivering on our promises and making sure that our colleagues – our most important asset – are equally happy and valued, because without that, growth won't happen.

By the same token, the culture has to be right for our customers and our colleagues. We want to build a company that we're all proud to work for, where people have a growth mindset as they develop their careers.

We want to work with clients who enjoy working with us and want to keep coming back to us. We've got a number of clients that have been with us for 10 years. For me that's what sustainability is about.

### **Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

Our model is focused around our people, our growth mindset and ensuring we match the right clients with our company. That's how we deliver value and, ultimately, how we grow.

We also need to stay ahead of the curve in terms of technology, specifically in the areas of data analytics and artificial intelligence. We do lots of R&D to make sure we're at the forefront of the technology, and then we put everything else into play in terms of the right customers and the right colleagues.

***“Sustainable growth is about always delivering on our promises and making sure that our colleagues – our most important asset – are equally happy and valued.”***

### **What role has this approach played in your company's development and growth?**

Within analytics and artificial intelligence, there's a very large technical community who get together for conferences, seminars and exhibitions, with a strong representation from the Microsoft data community. Historically, we've participated in and presented at these events.

This was a key part of our marketing and PR strategy. Of course, that was the unstructured, ad-hoc stuff that we did from the very beginning. Over time, this has evolved.

We've also focused heavily on creating our own user-generated content. Our workforce, again, is our biggest asset here – we always write our own articles. There's a whole load of communities now engaging online and that certainly helps us achieve a wider reach. Because what we do spans technology and business, we've evolved our content; so instead of simply communicating to our original technical demographic, we now focus our marketing on a combination of business and technical topics.

### **What role will marketing, communications and PR play in the next stage of your company's growth?**

We're now trying to market what data analytics and artificial intelligence can do for organisations. We're focusing on business outcomes and appealing to companies who want to drive change and make use of their data rather than how good the technology is and what technology does for the technology space.

We're also now focusing very strongly on social media. A lot of our colleagues write excellent tweets and blogs, and we're also producing business blogs, business tweets and whitepapers. By having staff producing content and being active on social media, it's almost like having an internal content marketing engine. And by capitalising on this, we'll be able to get strong messages across and start being considered as thought leaders and subject experts.

In order to facilitate the next stage of growth, we're trying to figure out what messages high-tech companies want to communicate to a business audience, and target the right people for maximum effect.

**What were the marketing, communications and PR challenges for your business in the beginning and have these changed as the business has grown?**

In the early days, we knew we should be doing marketing, but we didn't really know what marketing was or how to do it. When you've got people working hard to build a business, time is your most precious commodity – and money, of course. And what really transformed that for us was the introduction of our professional marketing team.

We've got a pure marketing team of two, as well as a sales team which is very marketing-aware. Then we have heads of business departments, senior people who are our marketing secret weapons now.

Of course, back when we started in 2006, the landscape was completely different. It was very formalised and there were limited channels. Now, it takes two seconds to find an article online or tweet about something important and we've got the ability to put up a blog on the website or talk about it on LinkedIn, so this has helped us get away from the issue of time constraints.

The challenge to provide insightful communication is growing, but as our company is growing up, we're learning how to do it better.

***“The challenge to provide insightful communication is growing, but as our company is growing up, we're learning how to do it better.”***



**What advice would you give to a tech start-up looking to disrupt or enter the market?**

My advice would be just to demonstrate you are experts in your field. The challenge with that is that it takes a long time to do. Being in this business for 14 years, I know it can be a slow start, but it's important to maximise the channels that you've got.

You need to show how you're helping companies make money, save money, and adhere to compliance and regulation to avoid fines, or even worse, imprisonment.

It's about taking those stories and case studies and getting them out there. My advice would be not to underestimate how important marketing and PR is, but if you do great work, people will find out about it. If you do bad work, people will also find out about it, so make sure you're just doing great work all the time and it will spread by word of mouth. Target user groups, technical meetup groups, get-togethers and volunteer as an expert speaker at some events.

You have to spend money on marketing, there's no doubt about it. It's either costly in terms of time, money or both. However, you have to spend it in the appropriate way by working out where it's going to have the maximum impact. Whatever your budget is, try to measure, manage it, track it, and work out where the value is.



Nina Pepper  
CMO of Divido



# divido

*Divido is a global consumer lending platform for financial institutions and multinational retailers that want to rapidly build new or defend existing revenue streams and enhance their product proposition through point-of-sale finance.*

### How does your business achieve sustainable growth?

Our growth has come from scaling up in terms of the size of businesses we work with. We were very much focused on the SMB market at the beginning. A lot of our early growth came from that market and focused on small- to medium-sized merchants and retailers. Our product has developed significantly since then and we are very much focused on enterprise level retailers and banks where we have been very successful with our white label product. This has allowed us to access significant scale that wasn't viable through SMEs.

***"I think marketing has a huge amount to offer ... Creating a data-driven demand machine and supporting that with a strong brand narrative is a game changer."***

### Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?

As with any early stage business, we've gone through a couple of iterations of our particular growth model driven largely by the types and sizes of businesses we are targeting. The model that we have now is very firmly an account-based model in line with the types and number of businesses we are targeting. We operate to a named account list of lenders and merchants. In line with that, the product is being built for that market, and our sales and marketing culture is aligned with that. It's really important to get everything aligned against the audience you are targeting. I've seen businesses get this part wrong and try to be all things to all people and it just dilutes the product marketing and stretches resources to a point that they are ineffective.

### What role did marketing and PR play in the success of this model?

Historically we've been a very product and sales-driven company. Going forward, that's changing. We're realigning all of our ideal customer profiles, we're realigning that named account list and that total addressable market and really, marketing is going to be at the forefront of driving the next phase of growth. It's early days for us as a new team but I want to get to a much

more sophisticated model for growth that is driven by all of the different intent signals aligned with that account-based approach in creating an end-to-end sales and marketing machine.

### What role have marketing, communications and PR played in the development of the business' growth so far?

Up until this point marketing, communications and PR have played more of a supportive role in our growth. As we enter this next exciting phase of our growth, it's poised to play a much more central role for all of the reasons above. I think marketing has a huge amount to offer beyond slide decks and newsletters (although these do have a role to play). Creating a data-driven demand machine and supporting that with a strong brand narrative is a game changer.

### What were the marketing, communications and PR challenges for your business in the beginning and have these changed as the business has grown?

I think category awareness was probably a big challenge, because the category that we're in is a fairly new one. It's definitely not as much of a challenge now as this is a growing category and hot topic, so the conversation has shifted to the best way to capitalise on the opportunity. As with every early stage business the difficulty is also about building credibility so businesses take you seriously, especially when you are dealing with enterprise-level organisations and banks. In the early days it's really about punching above your weight until you figure it all out and build the momentum. Thankfully we have passed that stage and whilst we

still have a long road map of things we want and need to do, we have proven products, a growing pool of customer advocates and a talented team of people. All the right ingredients for the next stage of business.

**What role will marketing, communications and PR play in the next stage of your company's growth?**

It will begin to play a very different role to what it has done in the past. The role for marketing going forward here is very much to really influence the strategy of the company in terms of the market that we're targeting and how we go about targeting that market.

It's natural in the very early stages to chase a broad range of customers to be able to prove our product / market fit. As we mature it makes sense to take a much more granular view of this and ask questions about where we are most likely to win and where our product is most successful, and feed that into an ICP (ideal customer profile). This is where marketing can play a leading role in combining all the insights that drive the targeting and TAM. Once you've done that you can prioritise customers and put in place quite a sophisticated machine behind it that's going to surface intent-level data and drive that through the sales approach so we're not just taking a scattergun approach to our total addressable market.

In addition to building a data-driven demand machine it's important that we build a strong brand that creates a clear position and narrative that separates us from our competitors in a meaningful way.

***"In the early days it's really about punching above your weight until you figure it all out and build the momentum."***

PR obviously has a strong role to play in both the brand and demand elements of the marketing strategy and can really help in those early stages when you are building credibility, as well as later when it's more about scale and momentum.

**What advice would you give to a tech start-up looking to disrupt or enter the market?**

Firstly, I would say make sure you have a narrow focus from the outset. A lot of early-stage companies try too hard to be all things to all people. They're almost frightened of saying, "We're not that, we don't want to do that" and they end up having that magpie syndrome of chasing shiny objects and trying to be all things to all people. Getting the focus piece wrong can derail good companies and it's important to make clear, aligned decisions at the top and make sure this is filtering down through the business in an aligned way. There is no point having a sales strategy focused on enterprise if the product team is building a product for SMBs —this sounds ridiculous, but I've seen it happen!

My second piece of advice would be to look at more versus better, because I think people associate scale with more. I've heard it before — CMOs going into a funding round saying, "We need more money, more team members, more campaigns, more channels, more this, more that" without having a proven model. Of course scale does include more but better should come first, because having that myopic view of scale often misses that whole point of 'better'. Getting to the better part first, and then scaling, is really the best way to do it.

**What do you expect your industry to look like in five years?**

I think things will look quite different in five years' time. The whole consumer buying journey is changing as millennials and Gen Zs mature and account for a greater percentage of buying power. We can already see that this audience buys and uses credit very differently to the generations before. Consumers are driving the change as opposed to the providers in this industry and the winners are those businesses — traditional and emerging — that can respond fastest with a consumer-focused product.





**James Pepper**  
CEO of Vista Retail Support



**vista**

technology  
services

*Vista Retail Support is the UK's leading technology support provider in retail, hospitality, healthcare and entertainment. The business delivers managed and comprehensive technology services tailored to each customer's needs, including helpdesk, project services and IMACD, hardware support, technology sourcing and consultancy.*

### **How does your business achieve sustainable growth?**

Sustainable growth for Vista has been about seeing what customers want tomorrow as well as today. It's about remaining relevant and working as a true partner to our customers.

It's why we diversified in advance of the changes sweeping through retail and now support 60% of the UK cinema market, for example. We understood the trend towards self-service and designed services that would complement this technology. As a result, we now provide remote and onsite support to businesses using kiosks in car parks, hotels and libraries throughout the UK. We also have a strong presence in convenience retail and in retail parks. And we developed world-class helpdesk support because customers were asking us for it. We also provide the full installation, moves and changes (IMAC) such as infrastructure, cabling and Wi-Fi installations.

### **Has your business adopted a particular model for growth?**

Five years ago we moved from a purely retail support business to total technology support.

We have also focused strictly on core services that our customers tell us they want or will want. While we're highly competitive on price, our approach is now more about the value we bring, and how we can benefit businesses wanting to transform the way they operate. Our analytics team have become the market-leaders in retail technology data analytics, analysing large chunks of structured or unstructured data and providing insights and innovation that help our customers perform better.

### **What are the key challenges involved in creating and running a B2B technology business?**

Funding is fundamental, so you must have a good, strong business that demonstrates future income and annuity characteristics. But if you have customers who are willing to be interviewed and be part of due diligence processes, that is a big advantage. You also need a strategy and a team behind you who can convince funders you are capable of implementing it.

Investors often see themselves buying management teams, rather than businesses. We are private equity-backed and our partners, Lloyds Development Capital, are extremely supportive.

### **What advice would you give to a technology start-up looking to enter or shake up the market today?**

Don't see problems, see opportunities. Take on growth challenges. You'll find a way to deliver if you are passionate and have good people around you, but ensure you build the right team as quickly as possible.

Whatever your growth trajectory, you also need to control finances, so don't spend more than you invoice.

Start-up founders also need to focus on what they should be doing, rather than what they could be doing. They need to achieve that without losing momentum or control. And those at the helm must allow themselves time to make big decisions. Everyone makes mistakes; the trick is to learn from them.

**At what stage of growth does marketing and PR become a tool to support business success?**

PR is a requirement from the outset. When you start a business you probably do it yourself, but as you grow, you might involve external consultants. PR will get more sophisticated in relation to the size of the business.

The marketing should be the gateway to selling. There are ways to make your business look larger and a lot more scalable through marketing than you could ever achieve with face-to-face meetings and word-of-mouth.

PR is definitely an area where business owners need to ensure appropriate levels of focus and the right messaging. I've seen businesses who are suffering a lot of brand damage due to what they're putting out on social channels. Equally, there are businesses that are doing very, very well by being a little bit more shock-and-awe about it.

***“Start-up founders also need to focus on what they should be doing, rather than what they could be doing.”***

**How has PR and marketing been a useful tool in helping communicate your proposition to the market and generate awareness?**

PR has been very useful. Any number of people approach us and say they have read a case study about what we did for a customer. The case studies and the PR have been incredible and really paid off. On social media we have never shared anything that wasn't of interest to our audiences and always insist on being unique, rather than posting or tweeting for the sake of it. It's important to us that we can stand by what our marketing says.



**Do you believe there are any common characteristics that lie at the heart of successful B2B technology business models?**

Yes, all these models rely on great customer relationships and the ability to listen and learn. This is how we retain business and keep growing. But you must have an innovative service and add value. A lot of procurement people look beyond price to see what value your business is going to bring to the relationship, which in our case, is virtually limitless. In B2B technology, you must seek to solve customers' challenges before the rest of the market does. You have to be scalable and dynamic and ultimately be passionate about the business.

# LOOKING FOR A BETTER WAY?

For further information  
Call +44 (0)1252 727313  
Email [hello@whiteoaks.co.uk](mailto:hello@whiteoaks.co.uk)  
[www.whiteoaks.co.uk](http://www.whiteoaks.co.uk)

Whiteoaks International,  
Form 1, Bartley Wood Business Park,  
Bartley Way, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 9XA