



# The LDC Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders 2024

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[ldc.co.uk/top50](https://ldc.co.uk/top50)





# Celebrating Ambition

**Ambition is the driving force behind British business. It fuels growth, separates the good from the great, and is why we are here.**

The LDC Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders 2024 – in partnership with The Times – celebrates the entrepreneurs demonstrating remarkable ambition. These unsung heroes of our economy are creating jobs and putting people first, supporting their local communities and representing the UK on a global stage.

We're proud to share their success stories. Now in its seventh year, The Top 50 has profiled hundreds of inspirational founders and CEOs – shining a spotlight on their growth journey.

Luke Consiglio was crowned The LDC Most Ambitious Business Leader last year for building an incredible business– taking a small sandwich shop in Hayes and transforming The Pantry into a £17million turnover contract caterer that employs almost 1,000 people and feeds 35,000 children a day. Perhaps even more impressive is Luke's desire to do good – making food donations to homeless shelters and working with families to promote healthy living.

Katrina Hutchinson-O'Neill, founder of Join Talent, took home The Disruptor Award in 2022. Katrina's business was the first company in the embedded recruitment sector to be built remote-first. Pre-Covid, she'd been told that her plans were "wacky". Today Katrina employs over 250 professionals across 21 countries and has an enviable roster of clients from start-ups to Unicorns and through to household names.

Software developer turned entrepreneur Praveen Karadiguddi featured in The Top 50 and won The Innovation Award in 2021. Scrumconnect created an online platform for the Department for Work and Pensions during the pandemic, ensuring that 14m citizens were still able to access their pension payments.

The LDC Top 50 2024 features even more journeys of ambition and inspiration, showcasing business leaders from across the UK, and representing a wide range of sectors. Together, they employ more than 5,100 people, turnover a combined £1.1billion and have grown 110% over the last three years.

**Introducing The LDC Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders of 2024.**

◀ Award winners from The LDC Top 50 2023



# Fortune Favours the Brave

**The LDC Top 50 demonstrate remarkable ambition. Their determination to make a difference sets them apart and drives the growth of their companies and the UK economy at large.**

◀ **Ancient + Brave** - Founder Kate Prince is celebrating 1000% growth.



## Adam and Drew Jones

**Founders, Permanently Unique**

After qualifying as a solicitor, aged 22, Adam Jones was at a crossroads. “I wanted the freedom to be creative,” he says. He abandoned the law, went travelling and set up a luxury concierge business in Marbella. In 2015, he teamed up with brother Drew to open their first restaurant, TATTU, in Manchester. “We didn’t have a plan to open more than one,” Drew admits. Today, their hospitality brand, Permanently Unique, has five TATTU sites in the UK and two sister brands, FENIX and Louis. “We’re also taking TATTU to Dubai,” added Adam. “Our brands offer truly unique experiences, and we want to share them with the world.”



## Kate Prince

**Founder, Ancient + Brave**

“Being one of the highest scoring B Corp wellness brands in the world is a huge point of pride,” says Kate Prince. “People and the planet are at the heart of our business, and profits are a great side-effect.” The former media lawyer started Ancient + Brave from her kitchen table in 2018 and her range of sustainably sourced collagen, blends and supplements are now sold via its website and in retailers across 22 countries. The company employs a predominantly female team of 55 in Sussex, including a team of nutritionists. “We won’t be sensationalist about our products, ever. That’s the lawyer in me. We want to educate customers.”



## Mark Seaborn

**Group Director, Pennington Choices**

“We just finished our second five-year plan and we are set to double revenue again.” Former consultant Mark Seaborn launched Pennington Choices in 2000, offering consulting and services to organisations with complex properties, like NHS trusts, local authorities and schools. “I’ve always had something to prove,” he explains. “My dad started as a decorator and I was the first person in my family to go to university. For someone like me, it’s the fear of failure that pushes you forward.” His company is unique because it can deal with high volumes at pace: “We now win one in every two opportunities, which is world class.”





## Fatih Haltas

Founder, Matchingham Games

Computer scientist Fatih Haltas started making games in 2013. “Your product can go global overnight,” he explains. “This is an industry that makes unicorns.” He launched Matchingham Games four years ago, focusing on puzzle and quiz games to keep players’ minds active, and has achieved almost 700m downloads – which is unheard of for a small, privately-owned studio. Hits include Braindom, Flashback, Food Match 3D and Triple Match City. “Before I die, I intend to reach every smartphone user in the world” he says. “We will hit £50m in turnover this year, and I won’t stop until we are number one in the industry.”



## Robert Oates

Founder, Arbtech

Robert Oates founded Chester-based Arbtech in 2006 after dropping out of university. The business provides next-day ecology surveys in an industry where rivals take weeks or months. Employing more than 130 people, mostly working remotely, his consultancy is targeting £100m in turnover by 2029. The former infantry soldier credits his competitive nature for his entrepreneurial success: “I’m a driven and ambitious person who constantly aspires to be better and do more,” he says. Alongside his business success, Oates is a heavyweight gold-medallist in Brazilian jiu-jitsu and a Royal Chartered Biologist. He says: “If I want something, there’s no one out there that can outwork me.”



## Philip Miller

CEO, ABCA Systems

After winning a football scholarship to train and study in the US, Philip Miller started his career as a graduate trainee in Ohio before returning to the UK in 2005 to run his father’s electrical systems business, ABCA Systems. “My dad was planning his retirement and wanted me to take the reins. I joined as an engineer and worked my way up to CEO.” Miller has taken ABCA Systems from a local firm with a dozen staff to a national fire and security systems provider with 380 employees across offices in Newcastle, Manchester, Cambridge and London. He recently completed three acquisitions and expects turnover to hit £100m by 2026.



## Amy Knight

**Founder, Must Have Ideas**

Amy Knight has a simple motto: “Treat everyone like your nan and make decisions that would make your mum proud.” She started online retailer Must Have Ideas from her spare room in 2018 with husband Rob Knight and business partner Chris Finch. They invested £3,000 and bought 1,000 boxes of Hygiene Hero antibacterial sponges. “The idea was to sell exciting, innovative products that you couldn’t find in a supermarket,” she says. Today, the company sells more than 200 different products and dispatches 7,000 orders a day. “I want to turn Must Have Ideas into a household name and be a role model to our daughters.”



## Russ Mably

**CEO, Medtrade**

It is impossible to know just how many lives have been saved by Medtrade, admits CEO Russ Mably. The Crewe-based medical devices company has developed a ground-breaking product, made from shrimp shells, that is used by paramedics, police and militaries worldwide. “Celox is designed to stop bleeding from gunshots and stabbings in 60 seconds,” explains Mably, an industry veteran who joined the business four years ago and has grown revenues to £45m. Mably has now launched a product to tackle postpartum haemorrhage. “This has the potential to save tens of thousands of mums’ lives a year,” he says. “I’m ambitious, driven and unbelievably proud of our impact in the world.”



## Simon Abley

**CEO, Obsequio**

After selling their last business, Simon Abley and Simon Cashmore sat down to work out their next move. “We had spent 12 years on a buy and build, and learned so much,” says Abley. “We didn’t want to waste that. Within a year we were up and running with Obsequio.” Abley had no experience in the compliance space – “I did a two-day fire training course to learn the basics!” he says. But in just four years, Obsequio has reached a turnover of £35m, acquiring eight companies along the way. “I’m really ambitious and driven,” Abley says. “I’m in this for the long-term. I love creating new things and developing people’s careers.”



## Sean and Charlotte Ali

Founders, Rheal

Husband-and-wife team Sean and Charlotte Ali discovered the benefits of natural superfoods at university. “We were looking for ways to help Charlotte manage her coeliac disease and started adding superfood powders to our diet. Within weeks, we both noticed a huge difference in our energy levels,” says Sean. They launched Rheal in 2017 and appeared on Dragons’ Den four years later, becoming the first company to receive offers from all five Dragons for the asking amount. Since then, turnover has skyrocketed to £28m with products stocked in Holland & Barrett, Tesco and Boots. “We want to be the global leader in the superfoods space,” says Sean.



## Gary Gallen

Founder, rradar

“I’m stubborn as hell,” says Gary Gallen, corporate law veteran and founder of legal specialist firm, rradar. “That’s how I built the first commercial law product in 30 years.” rradar helps more than 125,000 businesses to operate legally and fairly. “It took longer than I hoped to get going,” says Gallen. But he’s now convinced one of the world’s biggest insurers to become partners and is set to double revenues. He’s driven by a desire for justice: “I’ve locked people up, I’ve got them out of prison, but the main thing I’ve realised is that most people don’t set out to break the law: they just don’t know any better.”



## Chris Monroe

CEO, Smiley Monroe Group

Chris Monroe quit his job as a corporate lawyer in 2013 to join his family business. “Mum and Dad started Smiley Monroe from a garden shed in 1979, supplying conveyor belting services to local quarries and mines. Dad was considering stepping back and I felt I could enhance the structure and add value.” Not only has he added value, but he’s continued to grow Smiley Monroe into a giant, serving major blue chip customers from three production hubs in Northern Ireland, India and the US. As part of his mission to revolutionise the industry, Monroe has introduced a four-day working week and an ESG strategy, targeting net zero by 2040.





# Steering Sustainable Success

**Outstanding entrepreneurs are making a real impact, by combining growth with a commitment to driving progress towards their sustainability goals.**

◀ **BELL Lighting** - The team are leading the way with sustainable products.



## **Peter Moody**

**Founder, GAP Group North East**

Peter Moody joined the Royal Navy at 17, becoming the youngest corporal in his branch. After his service, he launched GAP Group North East in 2005. “I noticed the Waste Electrical Electronic Equipment directive was coming in, so I used my military gratuity, took out a £6,000 loan, remortgaged my house and started an electrical waste recycling business.” Today, GAP Group North East recycles 700,000 fridges and 18,000 tonnes of small domestic appliances annually from its plants in Gateshead. It is also opening a new facility in Perthshire, powered by 100% green energy. “We’re building the most environmentally friendly fridge recycling facility in the world,” he says.



## **Ankit Modani**

**Director, Nustone**

Ankit Modani has an entrepreneurial background; he scaled his family business in northern India from a standing start to £15m in just a few years - but he always wanted to go it alone. In 2020, he decided to buy paving stone retailer Nustone. “It wasn’t doing that well, and I knew I could help,” he says. He turned it around, investing in new product lines, honing customer service, and focusing on e-commerce. This year, it will hit £25m in turnover but Modani feels there’s still a long way to go: “By 2030, I want to IPO,” he adds. “When you think of patios, I want you to think: Nustone.”



## **Peter and Steven Easton**

**Founders, Green Home Systems**

Brothers Peter and Steven Easton have been building businesses together since their teens. “Our father was an entrepreneur so that’s all we have ever known,” says Peter. While developing a property portfolio they saw the opportunity to develop a second business, retrofitting buildings with energy-efficient LED bulbs. This is how Green Home Systems began in 2014. Today the Ayrshire company has 100 staff and supplies every single energy-efficient home improvement product on the market. Steven attributes his success to “the fire in our bellies”. “We plan to triple the turnover of the business to £50m within three years,” adds Peter. “We are on a mission to eradicate fuel poverty.”





## Jess Aldersley

**Managing Director, Beyondly**

“My biggest ambition was to raise a family. It didn’t seem possible to have kids and a successful career,” says Jess Aldersley. She’s proved that you can have both. She joined B Corp environmental agency Beyondly in 2006 and rose up the ranks to become managing director while having two daughters along the way. “They’re teenagers now, but I still work part-time for work-life balance. I want to lead by example.” The company nearly doubled profits this year and donates an annual 5% to charities and community projects. “Financial success gives us the opportunity to do more good. This doesn’t feel like work, it’s a passion.”



## Nick Higginson

**Founder, Phoenix Health & Safety**

At 23, Nick Higginson was broke and sleeping in the lounge of a one-bedroom flat. “I had a dead-end job. I had to turn my life around for my kids,” he says. He started studying health and safety and self-funded his way through a diploma, degree and MSc. In 2005, he started Phoenix Health & Safety, delivering a range of health and safety training courses online, in the classroom and via distance learning. Higginson, who has a tattoo of a phoenix rising from the ashes, expects profits to hit £8m in the next five years. “I’m driven by fear. I’ve come from nothing and don’t ever want to go back.”



## Trevor and Ralph Grote

**Managing Directors, BELL Lighting**

When Trevor Grote joined BELL Lighting 23 years ago, the business was struggling. “My great grandfather started the company in 1920 and it remained in the family but was on the brink of collapse, and I wanted to help,” he says. By selling the original factory in Wimbledon and outsourcing production to China, Trevor turned the business around with the support of brother Ralph. Today it employs 95 people in Yorkshire and sells around 7.6 million light bulbs a year to electrical wholesalers across the UK. The duo is driving an industry shift towards sustainable products: “Regulation will force the sector to change and we want to lead the way.”





## Craig Smith

**Group Managing Director, ICT Reverse & Mazuma Mobile**

As a sales manager for Orange in the mid-nineties, Craig Smith kept hearing the same question: what should we do with our old mobile phones? To tackle the problem he founded mobile phone recycling company SHP in 2000, before expanding into monitors, laptops and desktops. He rebranded to ICT Reverse and sold the business in 2017. The new owners went on to acquire Mazuma Mobile in 2018, before Craig eventually rejoined as Group Managing Director. He's now responsible for both companies. "I left school at 16 and always wanted to have my own business. To be employing 174 people in my hometown of Morecambe is something I'm exceptionally proud of."



## Richard Haddon

**CEO and Executive Chairman, Bluewater Bio**

"I planned to stay a year and here I am, a decade later." Chartered engineer Richard Haddon was asked to turn around technology business Bluewater Bio: "It was losing a lot of money". He knew the technologies, which make step change improvements to wastewater treatment, had to be best in class before pushing growth. "We've grown 10-fold in five years, have a compound annual growth rate of 59% and are debt free," he reveals. "A total contrast from where we started". The business generates 40% of revenues overseas and has cleaned 1.5bn tonnes of wastewater, 70% of which has been recycled for use in agriculture, irrigation, industrial and environmental processes.



## Laura Keir

**CEO, Protein Works**

Laura Keir heads up Cheshire-based Protein Works, one of the country's fastest-growing health food brands. "We're the underdogs. We love the challenge of disrupting the sector and grabbing market share from the big players," she says. From product development to production and packaging, the company does everything in-house and has sold nearly 300 million shakes to more than two million customers since 2012. Keir took the helm in 2023 and has overseen a year of record-breaking growth, with turnover jumping from £30.7m to £42.8m. The secret of her success? "I'm customer obsessed. I frequently moonlight on our live chat platform so I can talk to customers directly."



## **Ian Barker**

**Founder, BFY Group**

“My ADHD is my superpower. I have a brain for data,” says Ian Barker, founder of Nottingham-based consulting firm BFY Group. In 2004, Barker landed his first consulting gig. “A leader in the energy industry asked me why his field-based engineers in the south were less effective than those in the north.” That’s when BFY Group was born. Barker works with energy and utility companies on transformational projects and has grown the consultancy from £2m in revenue in 2020 to £10m today. “We will triple in size over the next three years,” he says. “My ambition is to be the firm of choice for board members at large companies.”



## **Malcolm Wallis**

**Founder, C365Cloud**

Technology and turnaround specialist Malcolm Wallis started C365Cloud in 2010 after a stint at another compliance business. “I turned it around and the business was sold, but while I was there, I saw an opportunity to create a cloud-based compliance management system,” he explains. C365Cloud helps large organisations to audit, manage and improve their statutory compliance and health and safety obligations across 120 legislative areas. “We were a pioneer, there was no one managing everything from asbestos to water risk.” People thought he was crazy for leaving a high-flying career, he says, but he now has over 100 clients and is focused on delivering sustainable growth year-on-year.



## **Neil Richardson**

**Group Managing Director, Think Hire**

Neil Richardson started Think Hire in 2018 in response to the mounting carbon crisis in the building and infrastructure sector. “I felt there was a huge opportunity – and responsibility – to make the industry more sustainable and fundamentally change the way businesses operate,” he says. After 18 months of intense R&D, he launched the company’s flagship product, a hybrid solar power generator proven to halve CO2 emissions and reduce fuel costs by up to 80%. His business now employs 52 people and supports customers including Network Rail and Siemens. “Great products mean nothing without great people. I’m proud to employ a diverse workforce and encourage a culture of innovation.”





# Putting People First

**Inspirational leaders demonstrate their ambition to support people. Creating a more equitable and inclusive society is central to the growth of their companies.**

◀ **RE:GEN Group** - the company is helping social housing tenants into work.





## Vanessa Leach

**Managing Director, Tute Education**

Vanessa Leach became a teacher to make a difference. “I want every child to achieve their potential,” she explains. She started her career teaching Welsh, breathing new life into the vulnerable language by achieving a huge increase in kids choosing a Welsh GCSE at her school. She joined Tute Education in 2013 and saw an opportunity to make an even bigger impact. “We provide online lessons for students who can’t access mainstream education,” she explains. “This year, we’ll teach 6,000 students, many with special educational needs and disabilities.” Since 2018, revenues have grown tenfold, and profit is up 5x. “I have huge ambitions for this business.”



## Carl Henriksen

**Founder, OryxAlign**

As Namibia’s top-ranking squash player, Carl Henriksen first arrived in the UK in 1996 to compete in the British Open. Following that, he secured a work visa and spent the next 10 years working for an IT services organisation before boldly launching OryxAlign. “I felt client experience needed to be revolutionised with a more personalised service,” he says. OryxAlign designs, delivers and manages critical IT services for clients ranging from Landsec to Ella’s Kitchen. Henriksen employs 110 staff; a quarter are from ethnic minorities and half of the senior leadership team are female. “I’m a big advocate of diversity and inclusion.”



## Brinsley Sheridan

**Founder, RE:GEN Group**

Brinsley Sheridan played football for Bradford City before pivoting into construction and training as a quantity surveyor. “It was a culture shock to sit at a desk all day, but it felt like the start of a new chapter,” he says. “I’ve never been afraid of stepping back to move forwards.” He started Sunderland-based RE:GEN Group in 2019, working with housing associations and councils to build, improve and modernise social housing. The company also runs an academy scheme, offering six-week construction boot camps and free driving lessons. “We want to make a difference by helping social housing tenants into work and combating the construction skills crisis,” says Sheridan.



## Tiku Chauhan & Kavita Parmar

**Founders, Word360**

In 2013, husband-and-wife team Tiku Chauhan and Kavita Parmar bought a small translation business from Chauhan's uncle. "It was only turning over £600,000," says Chauhan. Optometrist Parmar leveraged her clinical experience to make Word360 a vital partner to customers across health and social care, becoming a technologist along the way. "We saw that automation would be key," she says. "We built our own software from scratch that is 'like Uber' for interpreters." Today, Word360 has a national network of 15,000 linguists and covers 450 languages. From the emergency room to GP practices, it provides language support to patients when they need it most. "We're tackling health inequality," she says.



## James Post

**Founder, Ashbury Global**

"Why do we come to work? To help brands protect consumers." James Post's London-based food compliance business provides labelling, allergen and nutrition regulatory advice to the nation's biggest retailers and brands. He launched the business in 2011 after pivoting his IT training company to focus on food regulations. "We won our first contract with M&S and we're still working with them 13 years later." Today the £13m-turnover business analyses and approves over 30,000 product labels a year for companies like Tesco, Innocent and Amazon. "I always want to do more and find a way to continuously improve compliance processes."



## Hellen Bowey

**Founder, Alcove**

Growing up with a sister with a complex learning disability, Hellen Bowey was frustrated by the lack of technology in the social care sector. "The system was broken," she says, citing inefficiencies and a real underutilisation of technology. To help solve the problem, she started Alcove, a Colchester-based care technology company. Alcove provides smart care technology packages and services to local authorities and the NHS. This includes a 24/7 call centre, a responder service, a virtual care agency, and a data platform with integrated sensors and wearables that all help older and disabled adults to live independently. "Saving lives is in our DNA," she adds.



## Paul Rogers

**Managing Director,  
Ocura Healthcare Furniture**

Shortly after becoming general manager at Ocura Healthcare Furniture, Paul Rogers was diagnosed with throat cancer. Over the following months, he saw first-hand the impact that the right chair, the right equipment, a simple armrest, can have on patients, visitors and the people who work in hospitals. Following his recovery, he used that insight to help grow Ocura, which sells furniture to NHS and private hospitals. “I can see a clear path for this business,” says Rogers, who became Managing Director in 2023. He credits his parents for his work ethic. “They taught me that it takes a lot of hard work to achieve anything worthwhile in life.”



## Ram Gupta

**Founder, Nybble**

Ram Gupta’s purpose is simple: to invest in people. His diverse team at tech firm Nybble has been recruited from all walks of life. “All that matters to us is potential,” he says. The son of immigrant parents, Ram Gupta grew up with “everything and nothing”. He launched Nybble in 1998 as an IT retailer, pivoting in 2010 to an MSP supplying equipment and software to automotive and manufacturing companies. The multi-million-pound company will grow 30% next year, and is trading internationally for the first time. “But most importantly, we have doubled our workforce over the last year, and we’re helping to grow those people’s ambition and skill,” he says.



## Andrew Humphrey

**CEO, Kubus**

Following a career spanning IBM, Phoenix IT Group and Teneo, Andrew Humphrey now heads up IT solutions and services firm Kubus, where he’s made it his mission to create an exceptional place to work. In two years, he’s increased holiday allowance and pension contributions for staff, reduced their working hours, been accredited as a Living Wage Employer and turned the Gloucestershire HQ into a dog-friendly zone. “We’re professional but we have fun. If you treat employees properly, they’ll go the extra mile without being asked,” he says. “We’ve received an ‘Outstanding’ Best Companies rating for the past two years. I want to get us to ‘World Class’.”





## Jo Tutchener Sharp

Founder, Scamp & Dude

Having suffered a brain haemorrhage, Jo Tutchener Sharp was about to undergo surgery when she vowed that if she made it out of hospital, she would build a business that helps others. She set up Scamp & Dude in 2016 and has since donated 8,000 superhero sleep buddy toys to children who have lost a parent or are seriously ill, and 52,750 super scarves to women with cancer. Her Buckinghamshire-based B-Corp also includes a fashion range, which is stocked in Liberty and stores across the UK. “I don’t see boundaries anymore,” she says. “I’ve been given a second chance at life, and I’ve got a fire in my belly.”



## Alex Latham

Managing Director, Latham’s Security Doorsets

When he was 17, Alex Latham started importing a standardised range of steel doors and selling them on eBay. “It was a genuine bedroom startup,” he says. “No-one took the business model seriously at first. I had to educate the market that there was an alternative to bespoke doors. I was the ‘college dropout’ with something to prove.” Dudley-based Latham’s Security Doors is now one of the UK’s largest suppliers of steel security doors, selling 30,000 products a year via its website and resellers including Travis Perkins and B&Q. “I get my kicks from empowering my workforce and mentoring other business owners.”



## Sat Sanghera

CEO, IPI

After selling his technology firm Datapoint Europe, Sat Sanghera spent the day working on a market stall. “I was getting too comfortable,” he says. “I used to help on the stalls as a kid and it was the best place to learn communication skills.” He joined contact centre specialist IPI in 2019 and became CEO a year later. The business has since doubled in size, developed its own software products and been awarded a ‘World Class’ rating by Best Companies. “We want to create the best possible environment for our people to succeed and lead purposeful lives,” says Sanghera, who is also a trained meditation teacher.



## Dr Sally Beattie & Emer Bustard

Joint Managing Directors, Lazy Day Foods

Scottish food scientists Dr Sally Beattie and Emer Bustard teamed up in 2006 to launch Lazy Day Foods, producing a range of gluten-free, milk-free and egg-free vegan sweet treats. “We both suffer from food allergies and struggled to find delicious free-from goodies,” says Bustard. “We built the business believing there was a significant gap for high end free-from biscuits and cakes.” The pair started out creating recipes from their own kitchens. Now they have their own purpose-built, dedicated free-from bakery, employing 140 people and supplying branded and private-label products to all major UK supermarkets. “We have exciting plans for future growth,” says Beattie. “From our perspective, the sky’s the limit.”

**Scamp & Dude** - Jo Tutchener Sharp donates superhero toys and scarves alongside running the fashion business.







# Making a World of Difference

**A combination of focus, teamwork and courage is helping business leaders to expand their operations and sales overseas – representing the UK on a global stage.**

◀ **Strathberry** - More than two thirds of Strathberry's sales now come from overseas.





## Yomi Tejumola

Founder, Algomarketing

In 2017, data scientist Yomi Tejumola was working for Google when he saw the opportunity to build a disruptive new agency using AI to automate mundane tasks and transform the workforce into what he calls a new era of ‘evolved workers.’ “I’m on a mission to restore joy to the world of work,” he explains. “80% of most people’s jobs is made up of repetitive or redundant tasks. I have built a platform that frees people from the shackles of the mundane.” Today, Algomarketing generates 65% of its revenue from outside the UK, with clients like Google, Cisco, Stripe, and Zoom, and is on track to reach £150m by 2030.



## Dan Jones

CEO, Neo G

After working for accounting giant Grant Thornton and US medical device powerhouse ArthroCare, Dan Jones joined Neo G, the family business founded by Paul and Mila Starkey, in 2014. “I was employee number eight,” he says. “My first task was to get under the hood of the business and put systems in place to help it flourish even further.” Neo G manufactures consumer-focused medical grade orthopaedic devices and advanced wound care products, selling an item every eight seconds in retailers such as Boots and Walgreens. Since Jones became CEO in 2021, the business has doubled revenues. “People trust us to help them stay active. That’s a huge responsibility and privilege.”



## Steve Salvin

CEO, Aiimi

Serial entrepreneur Steve Salvin sold his first software business when he was 29 and spent the next eight years working for data giants Open Text and MicroStrategy – but his heart wasn’t in it. “I was spending all of my time dealing with spreadsheets and performance reviews. I wanted to be back in the driver’s seat.” He set up Aiimi in 2007, helping companies such as Rolls Royce and Anglian Water to make smarter decisions through data and AI-powered insights. “We’re seeing off competition from some of the biggest tech companies in the world,” he says. “I’m proud to be building world-leading software in Milton Keynes.”



## **Dr Olga Kubassova**

**Founder, Image Analysis Group**

“My only job has been running this company,” says mathematician turned entrepreneur Dr Olga Kubassova. “I created Image Analysis Group (IAG) to commercialise the technology I developed in my PhD, and 15 years later, we’re a global player in clinical development.” IAG helps pharmaceutical companies to test new drugs for effectiveness and safety using cutting edge tools and algorithms. “We allow clients to clearly and objectively see if a drug is working,” explains Dr Kubassova, who has worked on breakthrough drugs for auto-immune diseases and cancer. “The government awarded me £20,000 to start this business, and now we’re conquering the world. There are no limits to what we could achieve.”



## **Fraser Smeaton**

**CEO, MorphCostumes**

The lightbulb moment for MorphCostumes was during a lads’ weekend in Dublin. “One of our mates rocked up in a blue head-to-toe Lycra fancy-dress costume,” says CEO Fraser Smeaton. “It got the most incredible reaction.” Smeaton teamed up with his brother and friend to design their own Morphsuit in 2009 and set up a website. Their test order of 200 products sold out in six days. Today, their Edinburgh-based business sells 1,200 different costumes via Amazon, select retailers and TikTok Shop. “We’re really ambitious for MorphCostumes, but you can’t maintain the same level of obsession for 15 years without exploding,” says Smeaton. “For long-term success, you need balance.”



## **Nick Keller**

**Founder, Benchmark**

Nick Keller created Benchmark with a mission to use the power of sport to improve society. Benchmark, which is now a B Corp, is a group of companies that includes a social impact consultancy, and it helps brands to drive value in areas such as wellbeing and sustainability. “We were a live events business, so the pandemic cut us in half, but now we’re back, turning over £14m,” says Keller. “We’re opening a new European office and growing in the US.” According to Keller, who was described as “unteachable” at school, “there’s nothing better than driving value in society and for our clients at the same time.”



## **Guy & Leeanne Hundleby**

**Founders, Strathberry**

When Guy and Leeanne Hundleby took a career break to move to Spain with their young family, little did they know it would spark the idea for a business. “We learned about the local craftsmanship and fell in love with the leather,” says Guy. In 2013 they launched Strathberry, which has since gone on to become one of the world’s fastest growing luxury brands. Today, their sustainably-made bags are worn by the Princess of Wales and Katie Holmes, and exported across the globe. “I get a buzz every time I see someone wearing our bags,” says Leeanne. “We have created something unique: a Scottish luxury accessories brand with global ambition.”



## **Guy Horner**

**Group CEO, TBA Group**

Guy Horner showed incredible drive when, aged 24, he set out to buy live event agency TBA from Tony Ball, father of celebrity singer Michael. “I was three years out of university, and had worked my way up the agency,” he recalls. “Tony wanted to retire and I wanted a part of the business.” Ball took a chance on Horner: “I didn’t have any money but I was audacious.” Horner became managing director in 2000 and has grown revenues to £50m, working on events like The Olympics and MTV Awards. He hopes to reach £100m within three years. He says: “We create experiences that people remember for a lifetime.”



## **Jake Lavelle**

**Founder, JPL Flavours**

At the age of 16, Jake Lavelle became a junior flavourist at Wirral-based Hagelin, a firm that was eventually bought out by a rival. When the former Hagelin site went up for rent, Lavelle took it as “an omen” to start his own flavourings company there in 2014. JPL Flavours now employs 40 people and has formulated 19,000 different flavours for clients including Krispy Kreme and Applied Nutrition. The company is moving to a new 55,000 sq. ft flavourings factory next year and Lavelle plans to scale internationally. “I find it hard to talk about my achievements. In my head, we’re not even 10% of the way there yet.”





**Ben Booth**  
CEO, MaxContact

Frustrated with selling contact-centre software from other vendors, Ben Booth decided to build his own. He started Manchester-based MaxContact in 2015 and the firm's cloud-based call-centre platform now handles over 100 million interactions each month for clients including Utilita, Papyrus UK and Whistl. "Contact centre agents are the hidden backbone of society and represent around 4% of the UK workforce. Our mission is to make their lives easier," says Booth. The company launched its first AI tool this year and plans to open an overseas office in 2025. "Most of our competitors are giant US tech companies. We're proud to be a fast-growing UK challenger brand."



**Younis Chaudhry**  
CEO, Regal Food Products Group

From a standing start in 2009, Younis Chaudhry overcame enormous challenges to build a £40m-turnover food empire. "I ticked every box in the problem book," he says. "Banks weren't lending, suppliers didn't want to work with us. I worked non-stop for three years to get the business going." Regal Food Products Group now supplies everything from cakes to confectionery to retailers like Tesco, Morrisons, Asda, Sainsbury's and generates 10% of revenues from export. The key to his success? Strong relationships with suppliers and retailers. "Even when times are tough, we have been positive partners," he says. "While other people panic, I am calm."



**Rob Sinclair**  
CEO, Altia

Technologist Rob Sinclair joined Altia seven years ago when it employed just 25 people and turned over £5m. The company creates intelligence and investigation software for law enforcement agencies, government departments and private sector businesses. "A well-managed investigation protects communities, businesses and individuals, and ultimately ensures justice," he explains. He has increased headcount at the Nottingham and Glasgow-based company four-fold, focusing on a culture of learning that has won the firm awards for being one of the best places to work for development and for women. "Next year, we're focused on international expansion," he says. "I'm super ambitious and excited about the opportunities out there for us."



## Sam Fenton-Elstone

**CEO, Anything is Possible**

When Sam Fenton-Elstone started his Brighton-based creative, tech and media agency Anything is Possible in 2018, he chose a pink mountain goat as the logo: “It represents our work ethos: daring, decisive and prepared to leap into the unknown.” The company employs a team of 70 “Possibilists”, delivering campaigns for the likes of Tate Galleries, the Natural History Museum and Best Western Hotels, and opened its first international office last year in Cape Town. The US and Asia are next on Fenton-Elstone’s radar. “I don’t just want to build another big agency, I want to build a brilliant one that lives on without me.”

# Ones to Watch

**The Ones to Watch of 2024 are leading innovative businesses and shaking up their respective industries.**

An app that supports children. Fashionable eyewear. An edtech specialist who's simplifying compliance for schools. Amid fierce competition, these leaders are the driving force behind businesses destined for great things.

**Meet the Ones to Watch of 2024.**





## Assad Ahmed

Phase 3

**Ambition:** “To set the benchmark in HR, Payroll & Finance Digital Transformation and exemplify excellence in professional and managed services.”



## Elliot Avison

Dancerace

**Proudest achievement:** “Building the happy, creative team that has transformed Dancerace’s technology, products and reputation after 30 years in business.”



## Daniel Barnes & Lina Tejoprayitno

Pop Specs

**Proudest achievement:** “Being able to scale the business from just the two of us to having more than 100 employees.”



## Polly Barnfield OBE

Maybe\*

**Ambition:** “At Maybe\*, we embrace AI to unite people and transform work. Blending innovation with human creativity, we’re redefining productivity and shaping a new future.”



## Oliver Bruce

PinPoint Media

**Ambition:** “I’ve always wanted to show, to myself and others, that neurodiversity, while challenging, can lead to great opportunities. Often, we see outcomes that many may miss. Go get it!”



## Nate Burke

Diginus

**Mission:** “Diginus’ mission is to put control back into the hands of the business or agency, drive transparent business growth and allocate online marketing investment.”



**Adam Casey**  
tmc3

**Mission:** “To enable organisations to operate securely in an insecure world. We provide value and expertise to critical UK public sector projects and services.”



**Sophie Copley**  
Little Journey

**Ambition:** “To revolutionise the way the world delivers paediatric care. We empower every child and their family with personalised, compassionate, and effective support to allow them to have the best care experiences, reduce their anxiety and improve health outcomes.”



**Laura & Craig Davidson**  
Tag Digital

**Ambition:** “Our purpose is ‘data, for a better tomorrow’. We believe in the power of data to create a better, more open, more inclusive future.”



**Ian Flanagan**  
Voly Group

**Ambition:** “We continue to drive innovation through technology solutions into multi verticals from yachting, family office to entertainment, with the final aim to deliver full ERP solutions for industries not yet fully using technology to streamline processes.”



**Ben Foster**  
The SEO Works

**Mission:** “Our mission is to help our clients get more customers online. As a market leader in digital growth services, we partner with ambitious brands to achieve long term commercial return.”



**Aaron Fox**  
TelXL

**Ambition:** “To build a global technology company that enables communication between all businesses and their customers to feel exceptional.”



## Laura Haldane

SciLeads

**Proudest moment:** “That we’ve maintained incredible growth in a fully-remote environment – providing a strong work-life balance and fostering our unique 50-50 gender split for a STEM company.”



## Joe Harford

Airship Interactive

**Ambition:** “I want to push boundaries in visual development, delivering excellence through collaboration and innovation, while always staying true to our clients and our craft.”



## Ben Harwood

Naismiths

**Ambition:** “My ambition is to revolutionise the construction industry by leveraging technology, enhancing data accuracy, and minimising risks to build a safer, smarter and sustainable future.”



## Benedict Heaver

Streets Heaver Healthcare Computing

**Mission:** : “Our mission is to help everyone become better every day.”



## Shorful Islam

Be Data Solutions

**Mission:** “To build a sustainable data company which helps businesses fully realise the true potential of their data to deliver growth and innovation.”



## Alexandra Isenegger

Linkilaw Solicitors

**Mission:** “The more difficult my clients’ problems are, the more excited I am to solve them!”





**Alice Jones**  
Pepper Agency

**Proudest moment:** “Watching clients prioritise influencer marketing within their strategy, thanks to the results we deliver. Whether that’s driving impact for a charity, or driving sales for a household name brand.”



**Vinod Kakkar**  
Citycom

**Proudest moment:** “I am proud of the thriving business ecosystem we’ve built, where our commitment to delivering the best for our customers every day is at the heart of everything we do.”



**Dr Peter McQuillan & Akil Memishi**  
Novomins Nutrition

**Proudest moment:** “Reaching over one million individual customers.”



**Tom Moore**  
iAM Compliant and iAM Learning

**Mission:** “We’re shaking up EdTech and LearningTech, simplifying compliance (for schools) and making learning fun again (for businesses)!”



**Matt Mellor & William Newsom**  
Createc

**Ambition:** “To be a global leader in innovative technologies, impacting high-regulation industries. We will drive global digitalisation for a safer, smarter, and more efficient world.”



**Esther Nzenza**  
Decisive Consulting

**Proudest moment:** “Seeing the business bloom from the first spark of an idea to a vibrant community of more than 45 brilliant minds, all working together in support of the companies we serve.”



## Glenn Powell

FormusPro

**Mission:** “To build the best Business Application Development team in the world. As a leading software development and consultancy provider, we are committed to delivering comprehensive solutions and exceptional expertise that drive innovation, efficiency, and growth.”



## Lee Rorison

Seriös Group

**Mission:** “To be a global leader in empowering organisations with innovative data solutions, enabling organisations to take control of their data, delivering rapid value without compromise.”



## Adam Sharpe

Cardstream Group

**Mission:** “To provide partners with financial technology that allows their strategies to rapidly get to market and truly scale.”



## Daniel Sheard

Velstar

**Ambition:** “To become the largest independent UK agency by providing a place for amazing people to do their best work for great brands.”



## Jonathan Summerfield

Xiatech

**Mission:** “We create infinite possibilities for our customers by unlocking data, integrating systems and empowering people.”



## Amad Tababa

Autify Digital

**Ambition:** “Build a business where people feel safe speaking out and happy and proud about their work. Keep growing the business and individuals.”



**Richard Todd**  
Allium Energy

**Mission:** “Reversing environmental damage through decarbonisation, green power generation and biodiversity creation.”



**Katy Upton**  
Fortitude Nicsa Global

**Mission:** “Fortitude Nicsa Global delivers 24/7 IT services worldwide, empowering businesses to leverage sustainable technology solutions to drive business growth across various sectors.”



**Robert Wallace**  
EECO2

**Mission:** “To enable and support the global life science sector to produce more sustainable products and create a healthier world and continuously improve the life science sector through innovation, technology, excellence, inclusivity and professionalism.”



**Phil Wedgwood**  
Engage Solutions Group

**Ambition:** “To create thriving colleague and customer communities, enabling businesses to unlock the power of engagement for the audiences that matter most.”

**Lewis Reeves, Founder, Walr** was awarded the Highly Commended: Ones to Watch in 2023. ▶





THE TOP 50  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
THE TIMES

LDC   
THE TOP 50  
2023  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
THE TIMES

LDC   
THE TOP 50  
2023  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
THE TIMES

THE TOP 50  
2023  
Highly Commended:  
One to Watch

# Where Are They Now?

**Since 2018, The Top 50 has profiled more than 300 exceptional business leaders, right across the UK. Here, we reconnect with three of our alumni to find out – where are they now?**

**We discover what happened next in their growth journeys and the impact of being part of the programme.**



## **Katrina Hutchinson-O'Neill**

**Co-Founder and CEO, Join Talent**

Katrina Hutchinson-O'Neill started her recruiter insourcing business, Join Talent, from her sofa in 2019. Today, her agency works with some of the world's biggest brands and employs over 250 people around the globe. Join Talent is the only female-led business in the sector and is committed to long-term partnerships that really deliver.

Katrina was featured in The LDC Top 50 in 2022, and since then, became the first ever female Founder/CEO to take a company to the number 1 spot in The Times 100 UK fast growth list 2023 and won a Kings Award for Enterprise in International Trade. Join Talent is now the largest vendor by scale in their sector despite being one of the youngest. When the global economy stalled in 2023, many rivals chose to make redundancies. Instead, Katrina spent £2m protecting her people's jobs until the market recovered. This has created a culture of absolute trust and respect, where people give their all.

“Since featuring in The LDC Top 50, I've been really impressed at the way LDC has stayed in touch, connecting me with other founders and inviting me to interesting events. I didn't have an entrepreneurial network before - but I do now.”



## **Russell Attwood**

**Founder, Route 101**

Russell Attwood, founder of cloud-based contact centre company Route 101 has grown revenues at his business by 50% and doubled headcount since featuring in The LDC Top 50 in 2021. His business is on course to reach £100m turnover by 2031.

The business is winning bigger and more ambitious projects than ever before and has a focus on global firms that are headquartered in the UK. Russell has also invested in its professional services arm of the business, which takes instruction from a client about the implementation of new technology. This side of the business is growing fast.

“Featuring in The LDC Top 50 was great recognition for me and a vote of confidence for the business. When we stand up in front of prospective clients, they know that we might not be one of the global technology giants, but we are still a safe pair of hands. The award has definitely helped to boost our ability to retain clients and grow the business.”



## **Diptesh Patel**

**Founder and CEO, UBDS Group**

Diptesh Patel has been on a professional and personal growth journey since featuring in The Top 50 in 2022. UBDS Group, the digital transformation agency he founded in 2019, has almost tripled its headcount in two years to 150 people, increased its client base by 60% and completed its first acquisition.

Diptesh has also taken the first steps towards turning UBDS Group into an incubator for talented entrepreneurs and visionaries. The business is also big on creating social value, both through its work on public sector projects and its initiatives to bring new skills into the industry, through its apprenticeship scheme and initiative for ex-military personnel.

“Being part of The LDC Top 50 brought huge recognition to me and the team here at UBDS Group. The award gave us the edge when speaking to prospective customers. I also met so many amazing leaders throughout the process and have built fantastic relationships from it. It has supported my own growth journey.”



**LDC**



Prince's Trust

# Supporting Youth Ambition

**LDC is committed to supporting the next generation of business leaders across the UK. We are the leading supporter of young entrepreneurs at The Prince's Trust with the ambition to help 10,000 young people to start and grow their own business.**

Since 2019, we've already supported nearly 4,000 young entrepreneurs by equipping them with confidence, skills and funding through training courses, mentoring and involvement in programmes like The Top 50.

We host marketplaces for Prince's Trust-supported young entrepreneurs at LDC events, including The Top 50, enabling them to tell their stories and sell their products.

This year we are proud to announce a new Top 50 award category for Youth Ambition.

Young entrepreneurs supported by The Prince's Trust, with Toby Rougier, Chief Executive, LDC ▶



“ There are many founders I truly admire in the UK and many of them were in The Top 50 the same year as me. It’s a privilege to be in their company and The Top 50 was an opportunity to lean in, meet inspirational people and grow my network.”

### **Robin Skidmore**

**Founder & CEO, Journey Further**

“ Being part of The LDC Top 50 gave Orean a lot of free publicity, especially on platforms such as LinkedIn. We also won new business as a result, with brands approaching us saying they had seen the coverage.”

### **Dan Williams**

**CEO, Orean**

“ Being in The LDC Top 50 was an opportunity to look back at how far we have come as a company. This business started in my living room, with my little boy by my side, and suddenly there I was being featured amongst all these other inspirational leaders. It was absolutely wonderful.”

### **Sara Lou-Ann Jones**

**Founder, Centre of Excellence**

“ The award has changed my life. It’s given me this incredible platform and opened up so many amazing opportunities. The LDC Top 50 gave me the confidence to think big and I now have a network to help me scale. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate The Top 50 and the impact it’s made on my business and in my life.”

### **Emma O’Brien**

**Founder, Embridge Consulting**

“ Having the recognition of being in The Top 50 put the business on the map. It really brought us into the public domain outside of our core sector, where we were quite well known. Having that feature coverage in the national press and from a household investor name like LDC, really raised the profile of both me and the team. The feelgood factor that the team got from my award, was immense.”

### **Martin Flick**

**CEO, Onecom**

“ Being talked about in the same breath as LDC and The Times was huge for us. We have since won 20 different business awards, but The LDC Top 50 is the only one that sits on my desk.”

### **Jake Karia**

**Founder, Jake & Nayns’**



# Who will be in The Top 50 in 2025?



Scan to nominate

**Do you know someone who should be featured in The Times as one of The UK's Most Ambitious Business Leaders?**

“For more than four decades, we've been trusted to support the ambitions of British businesses and we want to continue to champion those who are creating jobs and driving our economy forwards. The leaders of medium-sized business are often the unsung heroes of UK business, and we continue to celebrate their success.”

**Sam Grey**  
Chief Marketing Officer, LDC

# **The LDC Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders 2025**

**Open for early entries**

