



SHEPS RAISES A GLASS TO BEER REVAMP

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Eduardo da Silva has invested in an online estate agency

Striker's house is in order

EXCLUSIVE: Former Premier League star pumps six-figure sum in online business

A former international football star has become the main investor in an online estate agency launched in Medway.

Brazilian-born striker Eduardo da Silva, who played for Arsenal and Croatia, hopes to score with his support for Glow Move, an agency which is hoping to

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establish a foothold in a crowded and competitive market.

What's more, he has pledged to play in a pre-season friendly for a non-league club in the county which the firm is sponsoring.

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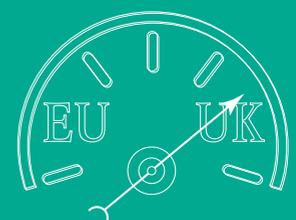
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Business bulletin

from KentBusiness.co.uk

Partner post

Canterbury architectural and planning practice the Lee Evans Partnership has promoted Nathan Anthony to the position of partner. Previously a senior planning consultant at the firm, he will be focusing on strengthening ties with local authorities, national housing developers and contractors across London and the south east. Mr Anthony said: "I have been a part of an exceptional team over the past decade, both contributing to - and being shaped by - their focus, commitment and determination. I am delighted to take up my new position and look forward to strengthening the practice's reputation, portfolio and growth."

Tai on GBCC

The Global Blockchain Business Council (GBCC), the leading industry association for the blockchain ecosystem, has appointed Alex Tai, founder and chair of Medway-based marketing and digital firm Zest The Agency, to its board. The GBCC brings together innovative organisations and thought-leaders from over 40 countries to advance the understanding of blockchain technology amongst global regulators and business leaders.

Awards open

The search for the 2019 Great British Entrepreneur of the Year has begun. The NatWest Great British Entrepreneur Awards celebrates the stories that have taken entrepreneurs to where they are today, regardless of size or turnover. Founder Francesca James said: "Last year was incredible for us as we received 3,000 entries, shortlisted 300 entrepreneurs and crowned 58 regional winners and 13 national winners." Entries close on June 28.

Still time to capitalise on the power of the app revolution

While the age of early adopters to the now established forms of the digital world is over, there is, says one expert, still a narrow time window for firms to get ahead of their rivals by launching their own dedicated apps.

And Richard Pilton, whose firm grew its turnover by 65% last year - primarily through acquisition - but has its sights on doubling in size within three years, is well placed to pass on such advice.

What's more, his company's mission statement is to dominate the Kent digital marketplace.

With a personal background planted firmly in the software development sphere, which remains a key focus, his Kayo Digital agency sees the majority of work coming in through website design.

But the world of apps is proving a fast growing one.

"If you want people going to Google and typing in your name, to find your website," he explains, "every time they do that they see all of your competitors in the result list first."

"If you get them to download your app you've completely cut them off from everyone else - you've won. You have that customer now. When people realise that, then they'll need an app."

"It's still relatively early but the general masses still don't understand why they would need an app. It will start maturing then people will realise apps aren't just for games and social media and with GDPR, if someone downloads your app, you can send them notifications straight to their phone which is actually better than emails."

"We do have to explain it and when you do explain it, it's relatively simple, and business owners get it and can see it."

"There is an opportunity at the moment for people to get ahead of their competitors. It's a relatively short window of a few years, but there is an opportunity right now."

"In terms of jobs we get, the vast majority are designing websites but in terms of the value of projects that would be software. Probably 75% are for websites, but financially it's 60% software."

"A lot of enquiries are about mobile apps and I think over the next couple of years that will grow to 25-30% of our business."

The digital world is one which continues to see huge growth - and one company has set its sights on dominating Kent with its range of apps, software and website design.



Richard Pilton, second left, and the team at Kayo Digital

Skills shortage creates hiccup in growth plans

With 11 full-time staff and a host of freelancers, the only cloud on the horizon for Kayo as it pursues its rapid expansion plans, is tackling the digital skills shortage in the marketplace.

Explains MD Richard Pilton: "I spoke to our local MP [Swale's Gordon Henderson] about this recently. In technical roles, development, coding, programming, there is a definitely a skills shortage."

"We're engaging with Mid-Kent College and the Univer-

sity of Kent to try and help in the long run as a lot of young people are focusing on games rather than web and app development."

"In addition, the vast majority of applicants for these roles are not in the UK. There's no problem with that, but we do need them in the office when necessary so it does create an issue."

It's an issue echoed across the sector and one the likes of the South East LEP has recently launched a strategy in order to bridge the gap in

the years ahead.

As for Kayo Digital, with that growth plan already well on track, it plans to remain in Sittingbourne - but has not ruled out opening another office in the county.

What's more, it has not ruled out further acquisition if the right proposition came along.

"I'd say it's a possible - maybe 50% chance of it happening," adds Mr Pilton.

"We'll just have to see what comes along and if it's the right fit for us we'll consider it."

"We pitch ourselves as a technical agency and we don't have any salesmen so to speak. Everyone who goes to meetings either has or does run their own business and they are experts in the field rather than experts at selling."

If Kayo is a name unfamiliar to you, it took on the moniker from previous incarnation MoCo Software Solutions last year.

"The two directors and myself did some research," the man-

aging director of the company based on the Kent Science Park in Sittingbourne, explains.

"We discovered our main competitors were web design agencies even though they didn't provide our services - mainly because companies would go to their web design company and say 'I think we need a system to do this - can you do it?'"

"And a web design company would say yes."

"Whereas you should really have gone to a software company and asked that. But no-one really knows software companies."

"So that's why we decided to buy two web design companies. It proved the point as our software enquiries have significantly increased now."

Those two acquisitions were Kent-based Interactive Red and Squidders - all of whom now trade under the Kayo brand.

FACTFILE

Richard Pilton's rise up the ranks has been swift. After leaving university, he got into software development in the petro-chemical industry. He explains: "After leaving that I went to work for small software company which I later became a director of. That then got sold to one of our largest customers - MoCo. I became a director there, and then we did a management buy-out a few years ago where I became the MD."

Mr Pilton adds: "MoCo Software Solutions was no longer a suitable name for a company that does mobile app software and websites. So we came up with a shortlist, the employees voted on it and Kayo."

"At the moment of all our efforts for new business is in Kent."

"But 15% turnover is international because we sell and support software all over the world."

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