

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

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Midland marketing and consultancy firms merge

BUSINESS

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TWO West Midlands consultancies have merged after working together in recent years.

Birmingham-based branding agency Switch and Warwickshire business growth consultancy Pure have joined forces with the aim of offering a more integrated range of business and marketing services.

Established in 1985, Switch provides high-end branding, design and digital communication services

to UK and international clients including global agri-business Olam, intellectual property law firm Withers and Rogers, Legal & General and 'The Soldiers' Charity.

It employs 16 staff at its base in the Jewellery Quarter.

Pure, which is run by Tim Holmes, lists The Gambling Commission, Solicitors Regulation Authority and The Wolseley Group among its SME and corporate clients.

It offers strategic growth planning, product development and marketing communications strategy, along with mentoring services to management teams.

Mr Holmes said: "By joining forces, we will be able to provide an

opportunity for our Midland-based clients and beyond to access a range of in-depth, integrated services to support their organisations and achieve their business objectives."

Steve Eldred, who co-founded Switch with Richard Pope, added: "We've built our business on long-term relationships with progressive clients who want insight-based creative solutions that contribute to achieving tangible results and not just an agency that takes a brief.

"This strategic undertaking with Pure, combining our collective skill sets, will enable Switch to support our clients even more effectively and continue to help them to build better brands."



➤ From left: Pure founder Tim Holmes with co-founders of Switch Stephen Eldred and Richard Pope

New faces as PR firm sees revenue rise

BIRMINGHAM PR agency Liquid has boosted its team with two new appointments and four promotions.

The agency, which has sister offices in Jersey, Guernsey and London, has promoted Ben Carrett to finance director and Jon Perks to account director.

Ben Tucker and Aimee Wood have also been promoted to account manager and senior account executive respectively.

A 33 per cent rise in revenue and increase in project work have also enabled the Birmingham team to recruit account manager Madeline Arnold and account executive Faith Whitehouse.

Former *Post* food writer Richard McComb is also now working for the agency on a consultancy basis.

Chief executive Elisabeth Lewis-Jones said: "We've experienced incredible growth already this year and these promotions and appointments add strength and depth to our growing, talented team.

"We have also seen greater collaboration between the UK and Channel Islands offices, working together on some of our national and international food, education and finance campaigns."

Launch of on-demand beauty service for busy women

AN on-demand beauty services company has secured £3.5 million in new funding to support its launch in Birmingham this month.

Blow offers customers the chance to order blow dries, nail and make-up services directly to their home, office or hotel. The firm, which has a

London base, has secured the new capital from Unilever Ventures, the venture capital arm of the consumer products group.

It said its on-demand business grew by more than 20 per cent month-on-month in the South East and had already delivered over

120,000 beauty services to date. Only ten per cent of the professionals who apply are invited to join the service which is run via a website and phone app.

The company has also recruited Brian Hickey as its new chief executive who previously worked as divi-

sional director of takeaway ordering service Just Eat. He said: "Having refined the operational model in London, it is time to kick off our ambitious expansion plans which will allow us to bring expert beauty services to the homes of time-poor women in Birmingham."

Are data protection officers a bulwark against online crime?



Matt Lewin

MANY people still associate crime with what they can see - theft, anti-social behaviour, vandalism.

Less visible, however, is cyber-crime, and yet recent figures from the Office of National Statistics reveal that 40 per cent of all recorded crime is now online.

Offences can range from phishing attacks against individuals, to large scale digital breaches of businesses and Governments.

The seriousness of the threat of cybercrime, and the urgency of the need to take steps to protect against it, was graphically illustrated by the ransomware attack on businesses

and organisations across the UK and other parts of the world earlier in May.

Sensitive personal and commercial data were put at serious risk of being compromised, not to mention thousands of hours of productivity were lost while IT systems were placed in lockdown.

There is every reason for businesses to take this threat to their operations seriously and to do something about it now.

It is a timely reminder that all organisations will be expected to comply with the new General Data Protection Regulation which, although a piece of EU law, is expected to become part of UK law within the next year or so and will make important reforms to UK data protection law.

In anticipation of it becoming law, businesses should be reviewing their data protection procedures to make sure they are compliant.

One of the most important changes in the law is to make it a



legal requirement for certain organisations to appoint a data protection officer (DPO).

So, which organisations need a DPO?

First, all public authorities. This does not include private sector companies carrying out tasks on behalf of public authorities, though it is recommended that these companies appoint a DPO in

any case, and public authorities may stipulate this in their contracts.

Secondly, any organisation whose activities depend on large scale monitoring of people's behaviour and activities.

This includes online tracking and profiling, on which almost all online advertising depends.

Businesses that operate loyalty programmes (if done on a large scale), provide location tracking, or provide "smart" devices, such as smart meters, home automation or wearable tech would all fall into this category.

Thirdly, any organisation whose activities involve large scale processing of "special categories" of data or data relating to criminal records. "Special categories" of data include: ethnic origin, political opinions, sex life, genetic data, and biometric data.

Even if not obliged to do so, organisations may voluntarily appoint a DPO and, if they do so, the rules relating to DPOs apply in

exactly the same way as if it had been mandatory.

For companies carrying out a significant amount of data processing, voluntarily appointing a DPO may be a good way to ensure compliance with data protection law.

And for those businesses that aren't obliged to appoint a DPO and choose not to?

The reality is that, as awareness of the risk of cybercrime grows, consumers may 'vote with their feet'.

After all, if you were choosing between doing business with a company where you know your data is safe, and one which can't make that guarantee, where would you go?

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