

# imagine

issue 2015

INSIGHT INTO THE NORTH EAST RECRUITMENT MARKETPLACE



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Featured interview

**Steve Parkin,**  
CEO at Mayborn Group

RECRUITING IN  
**100 COUNTRIES**  
ACROSS THE GLOBE



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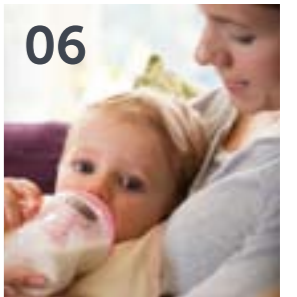
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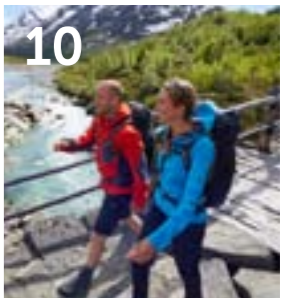
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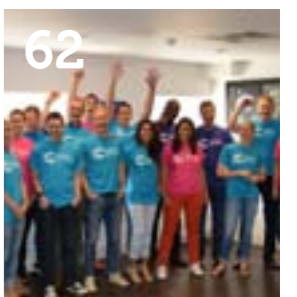
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INSIGHT INTO THE NORTH EAST RECRUITMENT MARKETPLACE

# imagine



## Welcome

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of Imagine, Nigel Wright's annual in-house magazine for the North East market.

It's been a typically turbulent but ultimately positive 2015 for the UK economy. Business growth has remained constant throughout the year and factors such as low mortgage rates and rising salaries have certainly had an impact on consumer confidence, which has reached above average levels. This, I'm glad to report, has all helped set the scene for what will likely be a strong beginning to 2016. However, a recent slowdown in the services sector, relatively weak manufacturing performance and an imminent EU referendum could stifle progress and businesses must therefore remain vigilant as we enter the New Year.

Similarly in the North East, the opening of the Hitachi train plant at Newton Aycliffe along with the region's booming automotive industry, have led to thousands of jobs being created; while the Rugby World Cup gave a significant boost to the local economy and helped promote the area, in all its glory, to the nation and the rest of the world. Nevertheless, unstable global markets, the declining price of oil and, undoubtedly, the closing of SSI has certainly dampened the fairly upbeat mood. Gaining greater autonomy and much needed investment from the Northern Powerhouse programme would help alleviate any lingering concerns, while confirming the region's key role in the UK's future.

As we go to print the recruitment industry is still showing strength with the number of vacancies across the UK currently 10% higher than this time last year, in line with rising employment. And with

hiring intentions remaining on the agenda for firms over the next few months, Nigel Wright is currently expanding its teams in the North East to accommodate growing demand. While the buoyant economic environment has certainly led to an increase in the number of clients approaching Nigel Wright, the reshaping of our regional business over the last 12 months has also had an impact and we are confident that the market continues to value our specialist industry and discipline expertise as well as our unique approach.

In this issue you can read about many of the significant issues affecting the North East and developments that have taken place in the region over the last 12 months, including our special feature on the future of Teesside; in-depth analyses of some of the North East's most important sectors and interviews with a number of influential local business leaders such as Mayborn Group CEO Steve Parkin, veteran engineering entrepreneur Dr. Tony Trapp and Digital Leaders Chair Steve Blanks.

Thank you for your continued support and as ever, we welcome any feedback on any of the content.

**MARK SIMPSON**  
GROUP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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### FEEDBACK

We would be delighted to hear your comments on this edition of **imagine**.

Alternatively if you would like to contribute to the next edition, please contact us on 0191 222 0770.

# BEHIND EVERY WINNER STANDS THE PERSON WHO HIRED THEM


# Featured interview: Steve Parkin

CEO of Mayborn Group



We're spreading the message that coming to work here means working for an established, well respected 'global' brand where you will get the chance to fulfil a nice blend of personal and career aspirations.



 Ben Debnam,  
Managing Consultant

Ben Debnam is a Managing Consultant at Nigel Wright. He is responsible for executive search assignments across all commercial disciplines, from senior management up to board level. He also leads Nigel Wright's regional sales and marketing recruitment team, which operates across the Newcastle and Teesside offices. Ben's team provides retained search and contingent recruitment solutions for clients based in the North East, supporting them with regional as well as national and international talent acquisition projects. The team of seven specialist consultants has a combined 30 years of recruitment experience.

Since its acquisition by private equity firm 3i in 2006, Cramlington-based Mayborn Group, the owner of the iconic tommee tippee® brand, has enjoyed rapid growth in the UK and overseas. We caught up with CEO Steve Parkin who explained how the business is investing heavily in digital marketing, New Product Development (NPD) and organisational 'up-weighting' as it seeks to further develop its reputation as a world leader in baby essentials. >>

*The business has grown rapidly during the last few years, here in the UK as well as overseas. What has driven this growth?*

There have been three main drivers behind that growth. The first was consolidating and then increasing the market share of our UK business from 25% to around 40%. This created a strong foundation from which to invest in other markets outside of the UK. The second driver of our growth has specifically been our success in opening up three key international markets of scale – North America, France and Australia – by establishing direct company ownership of our business units in those countries. Our total overseas business now represents circa 60% of our overall turnover. The third factor behind our rapid growth, and one which sets us apart from our competitors, is our aggressive NPD and innovation pipeline. Over a third of our incremental business each year now comes from these areas.

*What organisational challenges have you overcome so far and what further challenges do you anticipate facing, as Mayborn Group transitions into a global business?*

In the last 24 months, we've invested around three million pounds in organisational 'up-weighting.' This has involved changes to our executive, global leadership and regional teams, making significant improvements to our innovation and

digital capabilities, and defining and embedding a common set of values for our 'global' business. The speed and scale of change has been very challenging for a company of our size, but change needs to become a part of the DNA and culture of this organisation if it truly wants to become a global leader. Certainly an ongoing challenge for our global leadership team is to look for ways in which we can constantly push the boundaries of what we do further and faster.

*What ambitions are there to grow further beyond the UK? How is Mayborn Group typically approaching overseas markets?*

We follow three international development models: direct to market as well as third party and classical distributor management. The first two are the main catalysts for our international growth. So, our first priority is to drive significant growth in international markets where we have already established company-owned business units – notably North America, France and Australia. A second priority is to continue to develop partnerships with global and pan European retailers such as Amazon, Toys R Us, Carrefour and Tesco. Then a third driver is to use classical distributor management to help us engage with smaller, fragmented international markets.



Our sourcing strategy ensures that we manage our risk, monitoring suppliers and, where it is required, moving our operations to minimise that risk.



*Mayborn Group acquired its French distributor in 2013 and more recently acquired the tomme tippee® brand for Australia and New Zealand in 2015. Is growth through acquisition still on the agenda for Mayborn Group in the near future?*

There are certainly lots of opportunities for route to market acquisition where we could acquire a direct relationship in market like we did in France and Australia, and establish company-owned business units. If a market has scale, then this approach is on the agenda and over the next five years we will be assessing the viability of this model in a number of new markets in Europe. Another area we are investigating, however, is brand and product acquisition. For this to be successful though it's important to first identify products that have international appeal and where there is intellectual property which supports the journey we're on.

*Customer recommendations and word-of-mouth marketing are key factors in developing Mayborn Group's brands. How does the business engage with parents? Where do you invest your marketing activities?*

There has been a fundamental shift in the power of recommendation. Fifteen years ago, your

decision to buy a particular product for your baby or infant child would have been wholly influenced by a health professional, or you would have simply followed tacit beliefs passed down through your family. Today, it is very different. Over 80% of purchases in our sector are based on recommendations from friends, which now also includes your online 'social community' of friends. Our research suggests that every mum has a huge influence over other mums, so as you can imagine, customer recommendation is at the heart of our strategy and it is our ambition to be the most mum-to-mum recommended brand within our sector. Over 90% of all of our brand investment is now in social and digital marketing. That includes engaging with mums via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as well as via retailer sites such as retailer.com, amazon.com and mothercare.com and the plethora of parenting sites like Mumsnet, to raise awareness and create an emotional engagement with our brand.

*Have the actual shopping habits of parents changed in the same way that purchasing habits have changed in the grocery sector?*

Yes, massively. Five years ago, in the UK, our online sales accounted for a small percentage

of all sales. This year, just under 30% of our UK business' revenue will be due to sales online. That's a phenomenal change in such a relatively short period of time. It's true that new mums today spend more hours on social networking sites and on mobile devices researching and buying products than any other consumer group, so we have to be 'laser focused' in our targeting and interrupt the purchasing journeys of new parents. What's really apparent though is that our customers are becoming truly multi-channel shoppers. Consequently, we've had to make sure that the front end of our commercial business is completely aligned to the multi-channel mind-set.

*Mayborn Group is renowned for product innovation. What is the innovation process like at Mayborn Group? In your view, what are the barriers you need to overcome to succeed at innovation?*

NPD is the biggest growth driver for our organisation and our process is to blend different sorts of NPD and innovation for different purposes. In terms of classic innovation, we create value and grow market share by developing products that solve unmet needs. The 'Closer to Nature®' bottle, which we launched in 2009, enabled mothers to interchange easily between breastfeeding and bottle feeding; nothing like that had ever existed before and it represented a real step-change for Mayborn Group. A more recent example is the Perfect Prep Machine™, launched in 2013, which essentially automates the 22 manual steps involved in preparing a baby's bottle. We also do a lot of 'renovation' to help incremental category growth and to ensure we are putting news out to the consumer and the retail trade that helps keep our brand moving forward. With regards to barriers, the biggest issue we have is making sure that the funnel of ideas is broad enough and then we must also tackle other typical important areas such as intellectual property and making sure we obtain a strong return on investment.

*What is Mayborn Group currently doing to attract talent? Why should people join the business?*

We're spreading the message that coming to work here means working for an established, well respected 'global' brand where you will get the chance to fulfil a nice blend of personal and career aspirations. So, yes, we are headquartered in the North East but we also have offices in Boston, Melbourne, Paris and Hong Kong and we increasingly offer our employees the opportunity to travel or live and work overseas. I believe that is a very attractive proposition. Finding talent based in the North East isn't a problem either. We have some great people here already and I think the strength of our brand helps us to attract the best.

There are also a lot of highly successfully 'expats' who we have been lucky to entice back home. Mark Hall (CFO), Martin Cooke (Global Brands Director) and James Young (Global Head of NPD) are all originally from the North East and before joining Mayborn Group, enjoyed international blue-chip careers. I do think the attractiveness of working in the region is still massively understated in the UK and that has caused issues for us in the past. More work could be done at a regional level to improve this.

*You've worked at the business pre and post-acquisition by 3i in 2006. How has the culture of the business changed since then?*

Mayborn Group is definitely a much sharper commercial organisation now than it was pre-acquisition. The business was always commercially driven, but there is now a lot more emphasis on the importance of growth. The management team has been tasked with the job of establishing Mayborn Group as one of the largest baby essentials brands in the world, and this has led to more risk taking across the organisation, because if you want disruptive revolutionary growth then you need to start making bold choices. And that is exactly what we've done over the last few years.

*What kind of leader are you? How do you get the most out of your teams?*

Honesty and integrity are the two values that I try to live by as a leader. I also play to win; I hate losing and really drive my teams to always try and be the best at what they do. My style isn't commanding, however, I'm very approachable and will happily listen to people's problems and ideas. It's a real privilege to bring great talent to the North East and develop talent from within the region and as Mayborn Group continues to grow, it's important to recognise that our success is down to our people and my job as CEO is to communicate that message internally and externally.

*What keeps you busy outside of work?*

I'm very competitive in my personal life, as well as my professional life, and satisfy that need by running and playing a lot of football. I also help coach my son's football team and generally spend a lot of time outdoors with my family, walking and playing or watching sport.



Certainly an ongoing challenge for our global leadership team is to look for ways in which we can constantly push the boundaries of what we do further and faster.



# James Harris

## Chief Operating Officer at Berghaus Ltd.

Berghaus started life in the back room of a single shop in Newcastle upon Tyne nearly 50 years ago, but today the maker of iconic outdoor clothing is a £50+ million global business employing over 140+ people in the UK and many more around the world. We caught up with outdoors enthusiast and COO James Harris, to talk about some of the latest operational challenges the business is facing as it continues to expand internationally. >>

*First of all, what is your role at Berghaus and what attracted you to the opportunity?*

My role here at Berghaus has changed over the years, but, fundamentally, I lead the global operations team, driving improvement in key processes and platforms, work with the Berghaus senior executive team to develop and deliver our short and longer term business plans, and develop the commercial areas of the business I have responsibility for.

I'm also part of Pentland Brands plc (our parent group) Global Supply Chain team, which is focused on sharing best practice and achieving the group's longer term ambitions. My attraction to the role was driven by my love of the outdoors and the opportunity to lead change through a geographically diverse team. My last boss described the opportunity as "like being handed the keys to the sweet shop". It was a good analogy!

*You joined Berghaus with an agenda to improve end-to-end supply chain processes. What progress have you made in this area?*

We have made a lot of progress on several fronts, from simplification of who we work with and how we work with them and greater visibility of the value stream, to the reduction of non-value added activity and more effective management of our key measures.

This was recognised when our largest UK customer awarded us with an operational excellence award at the end of a specific collaboration project that aimed to improve on shelf availability via a step change in delivery performance.

*Berghaus has recently become the first British brand to join the bluesign® system. Can you tell us more about what that is?*

The bluesign® system is a globally renowned initiative which works with chemical suppliers,



James Harris >>  
Chief Operating Office at Berghaus Ltd.



We work closely with our supplier base to identify ways of improving our margin without compromising what Berghaus is famous for, namely our innovation, product performance and quality.

textile mills and component manufacturers to eliminate harmful substances from the supply chain, ensuring that products are safe for consumers, workers and the environment.

Berghaus has worked with bluesign® and its supply chain to ensure that our products meet demanding requirements in terms of hazardous substances, worker safety and environmental protection. Ours is the first British clothing brand to join the bluesign® scheme and the move is part of a sustained programme that we've embarked on to reduce the environmental impact of our activities.

*What are the other big supply chain challenges for Berghaus this year?*

As well as our drive in corporate responsibility, there are four other key areas we are focusing on this year. The first is margin. With increasing product costs, despite a major drop in oil pricing, maintaining our margins is an ongoing challenge. We work closely with our supplier base to identify ways of improving our margin without compromising what Berghaus is famous for, namely our innovation, product performance and quality. Inventory management is also important.

By focusing on demand planning we ensure that availability of our core products remains above target and that we minimise obsolescence risks. We have been running a Total Quality Management (TQM) programme for the last three years that has delivered some impressive results and we are now looking at the next phase of this work.

Finally, both from a supply chain perspective but also as a business, we need to look at everything that we do – empower the business to experiment with different ways of doing things, evolve our processes, capture the benefit and then share with other areas of the business and group. I work closely with our Continuous Improvement (CI) coaches and departmental champions to ensure that all ideas are captured and acted upon.

*You have P&L responsibility for developing the Berghaus business in the USA and Asia Pacific region. From an operations perspective, how do you see the business evolving to meet its growth targets in these regions?*

When we looked to launch in the US, we designed and developed the end to end process for a business that was selling a reasonable volume, before a single item was ordered. This was a departure for Berghaus, but has enabled us to offer greater service to our rapidly expanding customer base from day one. Our challenge will be to ensure that we keep listening to our customer needs and developing our operational activities accordingly. The challenges for Asia Pacific are more around

simplified logistics direct from Asian suppliers and the seasonal product differences between northern and southern hemisphere. So we are working with our logistics partners to identify opportunities to add value to our operation.

*What further plans does the business have to expand in these regions and how will the supply chain support future growth?*

We work with our partners in the Asia Pacific region to develop the brand awareness with target consumers and ensure our supply chain has capacity to meet future potential for these markets. For the US, despite being a relatively new brand in the market, we are seeing our customer base expand swiftly. As it is the largest outdoor market in the world, we are constantly monitoring business performance against the specific strategy we are working to. We have capability to expand quickly if needed, and our relationship with key suppliers allows us to update them on progress.

*How are you developing the supply base in emerging markets? What is Berghaus doing to plan for potential supply chain disruption in this environment of greater complexity?*

We currently source predominantly from China, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia, but we also monitor what capability is being developed in other markets. Due to the performance requirement of our products, we look for skill set and technical capability in our suppliers, among over 20 other factors.

Sourcing from Asia means that we have to plan for disruption, and our approach to this means that we already have the flexibility to absorb some limited disruption. Our sourcing strategy ensures that we manage our risk, monitoring suppliers and, where it is required, moving our operations to minimise that risk.

*What technology improvements is Berghaus seeking to make to its supply chain?*

We have recently gone live with a new product line management (PLM) system that will help our supply chain in a number of areas, specifically with simplified technical specifications that the supply base can see and comment on much more swiftly. It also supports our CR strategy and offers product developers a better view of our current material and trim selections. We have also implemented a new warehouse management system that will allow for improved export capability as it offers a duty management system that has been particularly helpful for our Nordics business.



*How does Berghaus address skill shortages in its supply chain?*

We try, wherever possible, to develop internal talent, both in Berghaus and across Pentland, through succession planning and talent development. We do need to bring certain skills into the business on occasion, an example of which has been our Corporate Sustainability Officer who was recruited from Melbourne.

*You indicated that there is a big focus at Berghaus on how to engage with millennials. What does that mean for you and your team?*

Our insight work has identified that millennials do shop very differently. They do more online, usually on a mobile device, and want very swift service and expect brands to behave in a responsible manner. They will also share their experience on review platforms. For Berghaus, this has meant significant investment in our websites and, more specifically for my team, movement of our e-comm distribution facility earlier this year to drive better availability of our range online.

*Berghaus has recently invested in new innovation labs and sample rooms. Could you give us an insight into how these will be used?*

Yes, we upgraded both facilities as part of our ongoing building refurbishment. Both the lab and sample room are used as proof of performance for any of our new innovations, such as the idea of 'body mapping' that is used in a number of our products, and they allow us to bring new ideas to market more effectively. The second key purpose is as part of our TQM programme where we use them to test materials and trims to ensure that they meet our standards.

*What role does manufacturing play in the innovation process? How does it link up with the commercial teams?*

Manufacturing plays a big part in our innovation process, as we need to ensure that new ideas that work in the lab or sample room can be mass produced. If the innovation requires investment by a supplier, e.g. laser cutting or ultrasonic welding, then we have to identify these suppliers



Our challenge will be to ensure that we keep listening to our customer needs and developing our operational activities accordingly.



Throughout my career, one thing has been constant – change. Businesses need to embrace change to keep up with consumers' ever changing needs.



and capitalise on the investment. The link with the commercial team starts early in the process, where initial ideas are shared as part of a longer term plan so we can then start to identify suitable suppliers who will work with the development team to finalise the technical specification.

Marketing and sales then become involved later as we identify the most effective way of communicating the innovations to the customer and consumer. Our award winning ECO Wovens range is a good example as it uses innovative yarn production techniques that reduce water usage by 89% and chemical usage by 63%. Our marketing team has created some great labelling and point of sale assets to support consumer education.

*The Berghaus business has evolved significantly over the last few years to counteract new challenges. What are they?*

Berghaus started life in the back room of a single shop in Newcastle upon Tyne nearly 50 years ago and now employs 140+ staff in the UK and many more around the world. The growth of the company itself has brought with it many challenges, and we have certainly had to adapt to thrive. In recent years, globalisation has meant that the competitiveness of the whole outdoor market has increased massively, particularly now that the sector is more attractive to brands that haven't traditionally operated in it.

Within that mix, Berghaus has had to work hard to maintain its brand and business position. Looking ahead, the biggest challenge is one that everyone in our industry faces. Although we all know the huge benefits that outdoor activities brings to those who participate, there's a real inactivity crisis developing as more young people fill their leisure time without leaving their home (or even the sofa). We all need to inspire more youngsters to make some of the same choices as the people who created such a success out of Berghaus and the other brands in our sector.

*How has the business met these challenges?*

It's our people who make that possible, at every level of the business. We have a fantastic blend of experience and youth at Berghaus and everyone is completely committed to making sure that this company continues to be a leader in the outdoor sector and a successful, profitable business.

*You have specialised in lean manufacturing for many years, how has lean manufacturing evolved during that time? What are the latest trends internationally?*

I have seen lean manufacturing develop during my career from JIT, basic Kanban systems, through six sigma and on to the current lean system thinking. Our suppliers deploy lean manufacturing/lean



Although we all know the huge benefits that outdoor activities brings to those who participate, there's a real inactivity crisis developing as more young people fill their leisure time without leaving their home (or even the sofa).

systems to varying degrees of success. Those that fully embrace it across the total business have been very successful. The future is all about continuously reviewing the value stream, not just in the manufacturing arena, but throughout the end to end supply chain, solving the next set of problems and removing as much waste as possible.

The key for me at Berghaus has been to be able to give the team the tools to identify the value streams and then empower them to identify solutions that lead to step change in all areas of the business. To use a climbing term, this is the crux of our CI programme.

*You've dedicated your whole career to the consumer industry. What attracted you to it in the first place and why should others consider a career in the sector?*

The attraction of the consumer sector for me is the pace of change. Throughout my career, one thing has been constant – change. Businesses need to embrace change to keep up with consumers' ever changing needs. Look at consumer behaviour in the last 20 years and then consider what the next 20 years could bring – what could be more interesting?

*What kind of leader are you? How do you get the most out of your teams?*

I think my team would describe me as being an empowering upbeat leader; one who is open to their views, listens and is approachable.

I also like to have fun with them while giving clear direction, so our team meetings always involve some laughter. To get the most out of them I try to provide as much clarity as to why we need to do something, give team members the reason to buy into a decision, then empower them to find solutions.

They will make mistakes from time to time, but always learn from them, and I support them through that process. The challenge for me is making sure that teams from the UK, around Asia and in the US are all aligned in the same direction. It is amazing how much can get lost in translation, so simple and clear objectives are key.

*Outside of work, how do you challenge yourself?*

Challenges outside of work are, unsurprisingly, outdoor ones. I have been rowing for over 30 years, and now run the Masters squad (for those over 27!) at my local club. My challenge is to get a gold medal at the Masters National Championships. I have to balance training needs with the needs of family and work, so this is a tough one. Our squad is strong, but we all travel too much and have families who want to see us occasionally too! We are getting better each year, but the gold is still elusive.

I'm also raising some money for charity later in the summer by completing two cycle challenges, the Manchester 100 mile ride and a coast to coast ride. Non sporting challenges revolve around the work I do as a trustee for the Great North Air Ambulance, helping them with strategic and operational planning, as well as parenting two children.



# Third Party Logistics

on the rise as customer demands lead companies to seek out complex and specialist storage and delivery solutions



Peter Stephenson,  
Managing Consultant

Peter Stephenson is Nigel Wright's expert in supply chain and procurement recruitment. Having been with Nigel Wright since 2006, and having previously worked within the supply chain profession, Peter is extremely well connected at entry level up to Board level within this vital discipline. Nigel Wright has the highest number of supply chain and procurement focused recruitment consultants in the North East, and Peter and his team work across a range of sectors to deliver solutions within procurement, materials management, planning and logistics.

In view of an increasingly global and interdependent economy, as well as a need for organisations to maximise efficiency, minimise costs and meet the exacting delivery expectations of customers, there has been a sharp rise in demand for the specialist solutions offered by third party logistics (3PL) providers. These solutions are varied and include warehousing, distribution and transportation as well as other added value services such as assembly and packing, among others. >>

Peter Stephenson, who heads up Nigel Wright's Supply Chain, Procurement and Logistics practice in the North East, explained that outsourcing all or parts of its logistics function can give a company a competitive advantage in the market by enabling it to '...focus on other critical strategic areas, while ensuring that it offers all-round improved customer support'. He added that complex services such as deconsolidation, a system of transporting cargo as separate pieces rather than in containers, have 'come to the fore' in recent years and 3PL companies are also diversifying their services to encompass B2B, B2C and ecommerce solutions, as well as investing in the necessary infrastructure to guarantee customers next day delivery anywhere in the UK.

Some of the most innovative 3PL companies, according to Stephenson, have built large deconsolidation centres at key strategic locations around the UK and have adopted what is known as a 'flexible walls' system, allowing customers to pay for the warehousing space they need but then easily up-scale investment if and when requirements change. Stephenson explained that this allows customers to forecast the space they need now and in five years time, as opposed to having to invest in extending warehouse space every time they grow. In his words, 'By developing close relationships with clients and reacting to changes in the market, 3PL firms are giving customers the vision and capability to grow now and in the future.'

Historically, retail has always been a challenging environment for 3PL providers and over the years solutions have become increasingly innovative in this sector as retailers' expectations have risen. High standards in the retail sector are essentially driven by consumers who want a faster turnaround on deliveries and, as Stephenson notes, tools like Facebook and Twitter have meant that 3PL failures are now constantly in the spotlight making it much tougher; 'If one consumer from one dispatch doesn't get their delivery when they expected it, that's a one hundred percent fail.' It is the emergence of ecommerce, however, that has really compelled 3PL firms to develop niche propositions in what is an increasingly competitive environment.

Ecommerce, in Stephenson's view, has magnified the complexity of the whole 3PL process and the skillset and systems required

to manage it successfully force firms to offer customers unique and specialist solutions. 'Companies recognise that as ecommerce gradually becomes the norm for most retailers, lead times will keep getting faster. City centre deliveries will eventually be down to just two hours following a customer making an order. Because most retailers don't have the internal skills or the infrastructure needed to make this work efficiently, they will increasingly require 3PL providers to ensure orders arrive within customers' expected timeframes.'

Having worked with multiple 3PL providers over the last ten years, Stephenson believes there are three factors that make firms stand out from the crowd and deliver complex solutions: systems, infrastructure and people. Firstly, leveraging the latest technology is essential to meet the high expectations of customers. Stephenson explained that the best firms now have fully integrated IT systems and dedicated in-house teams entirely focused on developing and improving Warehouse Management Systems (WMS). 'To satisfy the very different needs of customers it's absolutely critical to offer a high level of IT flexibility.' Furthermore, another key aspect of the modern 3PL proposition is to offer customers visibility around stock, inventories and cost. Generic stock files are utilised enabling customers to hold all of their stock on site and monitor and track levels in real time. 'This guarantees that customer integrity is not impacted when goods belonging to companies in competition with each other are stored in close proximity. Costing models are also usually flexible, allowing both parties to leverage mutual benefits and savings.

While systems and infrastructure are vitally important, the most critical factor in the delivery of exceptional 3PL solutions, Stephenson emphasises, is making sure you have the best people at all levels of the organisation. 'A strong management structure is key and that must be complemented by a multi-skilled workforce that can work across multiple contracts, allowing companies to easily manage increased capacity without causing service issues. Additionally, Stephenson contends, 'This helps develop skills and provides people with job enrichment as well as opening up opportunities for progression, keeping retention high and costs low.'

Stephenson added that because the whole 3PL operation is far more sophisticated and strategic now than in the past, firms require a much higher calibre of person. Consequently, the need to attract and retain talent is high on the agenda for companies. Specifically, 'there is a concentrated effort in the sector to educate young people about the exciting careers that exist in logistics.' He concluded by saying that 3PL logistics solutions can be effective in different markets and that more and more companies are developing specialist knowledge within different sectors, rather than necessarily targeting and competing in one. '3PL is broad and varied and it's important that firms continue to take best practices from different industries to ensure they are providing customers with the most modern and effective solutions.'



'By developing close relationships with clients and reacting to changes in the market, 3PL firms are giving customers the vision and capability to grow now and in the future.'

# Nigel Wright report highlights 3% increase in North East salaries in the last 12 months

In February we published our annual North East salary survey. The report was compiled from over 1,000 respondents, across different industry sectors, who completed our online survey between the beginning of December 2014 and the end of January 2015. The survey is timely, as the start of the year is when pay reviews are announced. >>

Our large data-set allows us to understand the average salary and benefits packages people receive within the North East. Other factors covered include the benefits regarded as important in a remuneration package, the reasons why people move jobs internally or externally, as well as the methods utilised to search for a new job. Some of the highlights of the survey are detailed below.

### Salaries

- Executive salaries saw the biggest increase at 4.2% on average, followed by HR at 3.9%. Other disciplines' salaries generally increased by between 2.8% and 3.2% - supply chain and procurement, in particular, is increasing in prominence in organisations, while IT salaries remained static;
- Contractor day rates are up by almost 10%. Contractors tend to work in Finance, IT and Operations across all levels;
- The gap between male and female salaries increased again by 1% to 12%, which is above the national average of 9.4%; it is important to note, however, that women often work a three or four working day week, or reduced hours, to account for childcare arrangements;
- Satisfaction with remuneration has stayed fairly static, increasing on average by 1% compared to last year.

### Benefits

- Pension contributions have remained static with average employer contributions fixed at 7% and employee contributions fixed at 5%;
- There were slightly fewer people indicating they received a guaranteed bonus in this year's survey, but the average increased by 2% from 5% to 7%;
- Company bonuses remained static at 8%, while personal bonuses increased, on average, by 1% to 10%; although, again, fewer people received them during the last 12 months;
- Candidates open to a new job clearly indicated that flexible working conditions would be a major factor in persuading them to move on. Flexible working, as a benefit, has increased in popularity by 11% in the last 12 months.

### Job satisfaction

- Overall job satisfaction has declined by 12% during the last 12 months;
- At the executive level, however, those claiming to be 'very satisfied' in their job increased by 16%.

### Searching for jobs

- For job seekers, using job boards and social networking sites to find employment have both increased again (7% and 6% respectively);
- Utilising social networking sites when searching for a job has increased by 30% in our survey between 2010 and 2015 and is now an integral part of the recruitment process.

Paul Wilson, CEO at Nigel Wright, commented on the findings; *"The 3% increase in North East salaries is a clear indication of the improving market conditions we've been experiencing in the past year. The economy is growing and companies have started rewarding people again."*

*"The 12% decline in job satisfaction is an interesting figure; essentially, it means that after years of prioritising job security over career development, candidates are becoming more open to reevaluating their careers and looking for better conditions elsewhere."*

*"It is very much a candidate-driven market, and as confidence levels improve, candidate shortages become more widespread. The skills shortage issue is particularly prominent in the region; competition for the best people has been heightened and companies are willing to pay for the best talent."*

*"Finally, as more and more individuals are now using online media in their job search, it is increasingly important for businesses to invest in their employer brand and in resources that can maximise their potential for attracting the best candidates."*

[DOWNLOAD](#)

Download the full report from our website: <http://www.nigelwright.com/media/1027/north-east-salary-survey-2015.pdf>



# North East division demonstrating impressive customer service results



Nigel Wright measures its customer service performance using the NetPromoter Score (NPS), a global management tool that can be used to gauge the loyalty of a firm's customer relationships. >>

In the company's last financial year, Nigel Wright's North East division has an impressive NPS of 55%, following submissions from over 700 clients and candidates.

Analysis of other B2B providers indicated that a Net Promoter Score of 30%+ indicates you are largely seen as 'unique' by your customers.

The table opposite shows the NetPromoter Scores for Nigel Wright's main markets, as well as the overall score for the Group. Nigel Wright's Andrew Openshaw commented,

'Collecting valuable customer data gives us a strategic advantage in the marketplace by allowing

us to identify any issues and then make immediate improvements across all areas of our business. NetPromoter gives us a really clear and more in-depth idea of how our customers value our service.'

Research suggests that NPS is actually correlated with overall revenue growth and the score achieved by the consumer division this financial year is certainly in line with the heightened demand for Nigel Wright's services in the sector.

Openshaw continued, 'We are always looking for ways to improve scores and in May 2016, when next year's final results are in, we anticipate that the North East division's NetPromoter Score will have grown during that time.'

DIVISION	FY14-15 (%)
Norway	64%
Sweden	60%
North East	55%
Denmark	51%
UK	40%
Germany	37%
Spain	34%
France	30%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>50%</b>

**30%+**  
= Unique

# How talent mapping can help secure your business' future



## overview

With the economy returning to growth, businesses are aware that the most talented employees are coming out of hiding and seeking new opportunities to help boost their careers amidst positive market conditions. >>

Talent mapping is increasingly seen as the definitive way to ensure that these objectives are achieved.

The best people, however, are also usually the most discerning and will only engage with roles and companies they perceive to be absolutely right from a personal and professional point of view.

Put simply, although it's possible to attract the best talent in a buoyant market, it's even harder for companies to intimately understand what they need to get right, to get the best on board.

Research by CIPD suggests that talent management and succession planning are the number one priorities for HR&D functions today. Talent gaps

are a major strategic concern and developing or investing in innovative ways to engage, hire and retain the best talent is what will ultimately set businesses apart from their competitors, and play a critical role in their immediate and future success.

Talent mapping is increasingly seen as the definitive way to ensure that these objectives are achieved. It's important, however, that businesses are absolutely clear what the talent mapping process is, why and when they need to carry out a talent mapping exercise and how they will make sure the process is successful.

## What is talent mapping?

Talent mapping is often confused with the preliminary stage of the executive search process. This is when a search firm and its client jointly identify businesses where it is believed the right kind of people will exist. The search firm will then target those companies, with the aim of finding and hopefully teasing out the right kind of talent before approaching them with an opportunity. This is a valuable service but it is also part of a fixed project, with a very specific objective to find one particular person.

Talent mapping, on the other hand, is a strategic service that is used by businesses to plan for short, medium and long term talent acquisition. It is used by the most perceptive companies to ensure that a recruitment process doesn't just result in a quick hire, but rather, that it focuses on the short, medium and long term needs and leads to a number of strategic talent acquisitions over a prolonged period of time.

Entering into a talent mapping partnership involves the search firm helping its client to measure and define its internal current capability, as well as its future potential capability. This process should reveal various immediate or future talent requirements and whether or not those needs can be met internally or externally. The search firm will then gather intelligence about organisations, industries and talent on an on-going basis, building a talent pipeline, which the client can access whenever there is demand.

Talent mapping recognises that if you're trying to identify candidates for multiple potential vacancies, you need a large pool of candidates from which to make your selection. Often, those engaged during the talent mapping project are regularly contacted and updated over a long period of time, meaning when there is an immediate need, they can be reached quickly and the search firm doesn't have to repeatedly start from scratch and sell opportunities to the market.



Talent mapping... is used by the most perceptive companies to ensure that a recruitment process doesn't just result in a quick hire...



### When and why do companies talent map?

Companies can benefit from talent mapping during times of growth or austerity, and because there is such a broad range of analysis that can be done during the process, they can be selective about aspects on which they would like to focus, to best suit their needs.

The benefits of using talent mapping go way beyond simply giving a business the capability to make multiple hires over a long period of time. It also increases the chances of them hiring the absolute best candidate. Organisations that talent map also find that it can improve their employer brand and raise their reputation in the market.

Furthermore, because the process involves gathering industry and competitor data, as well as finding the best talent, it acts as a great benchmarking tool for strategy, remuneration and employee benefits, competitor structures and reporting lines, level of responsibility, skills, academic background and so on.

Stockpiling this kind of intelligence over a sustained period of time can give businesses a detailed and holistic view of the market for talent and it enables them to be decisive in their hiring, while building a clear foundation for succession planning.

### How can Nigel Wright support you?

In support of our clients' future business plans, Nigel Wright offers a robust talent mapping and succession planning (TMSP) service. Our sector expertise across the world means that we can provide our clients with an in-depth analysis of how their organisational capabilities compare to others in the sector. We can then use our extensive networks to help our clients plan for the future, by identifying the right talent internally and externally for their business.

Our TMPS service has become increasingly popular with clients over the last few years. Some notable recent examples of companies we have assisted in this capacity include L'Oreal and Henkel in the Middle East, DBApparel in Europe, Grupo Siro in Iberia and the Americas and Greencore in the UK. If you are interested in finding out more about our TMSP service, as well as our other services, please visit [nigelwright.com](http://nigelwright.com).



Organisations that talent map... find that it can improve their employer brand and raise their reputation in the market.

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Nigel Wright brings together high-calibre candidates for your specialist recruitment needs.

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**NIGEL WRIGHT**  
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# Adaptability, Resilience and Inventiveness

are characteristics that have defined, and continue to define, Teesside industry.



**Dr. Rowena Sellens**  
shares her views  
on the future of  
Teesside

Most people can easily conjure up a mental picture of Teesside's iconic landscape with its plumes of smoke rising out of giant blast furnaces set amongst vast industrial complexes. It can seem like a dark and imposing place to the imagination, but actually seeing it up close is far more dramatic and unexpected. When Dr. Rowena Sellens first moved to Teesside in the mid 1990s, the Sussex born former ICI researcher who became General Manager Materials of Lucite International's EAME businesses (formerly ICI Acrylics), was immediately struck by the contrasting surroundings. 'If you drive along the motorway towards Wilton, yes, there's the huge Wilton International site on one side, showcasing everything you ever imagined about Teesside, but if you look the other way you have views of Roseberry Topping, along with miles and miles of other rolling hills.'

It was the fact that Teesside actually has 'all needs catered for' in a relatively small geographical area where, according to Rowena, you can enjoy the benefits of busy and vibrant town centres, yet '...drive for an hour and be amongst beautiful countryside'; combined with the 'genuine sense of togetherness' of the area's 'open and friendly people' that persuaded Rowena to make it her home in 1996. And in 2014, when she finally left

her 28 year ICI/Lucite career to become CEO at London-based start-up Eonic Technologies, Rowena couldn't bring herself to move permanently south again. Instead, she retained her house in Northallerton and now enjoys working from home most Fridays, while commuting and living in London during the rest of the week.

As a proud resident of Teesside, Rowena explained that '...all of the people who live here love the area and desperately want it to prosper, but there is still a long way to go before we can call it a prosperous place to live.' As Teesside awaits the outcome of the government's Northern Powerhouse programme, which will likely see the south of the region receive greater autonomy along with guaranteed funds for much needed investment in housing, transport and skills, Rowena is adamant that Teesside, more so than anywhere, is a region deserving of investment. 'It clearly has the potential to remain as a globally significant manufacturing area and efforts must be made to really drive and invest in the necessary infrastructure needed to help the sectors that genuinely have a long term future to survive and thrive.'

Rowena's frustrations are symptomatic of a region which has achieved so much yet seemingly

and comparatively reaped so little. Teesside's industrial heritage began with shipbuilding in the 15th century before the discovery of iron ore in Cleveland in the 19th century led to the rise of steel manufacturing. Following that, the area played a key role in the development of coal mining in the North East, moving coal through its ports, as well as via the world's first ever railway between Darlington and Stockton. All of this activity paved the way for the emergence of a world class chemicals industry in the 20th century, with the establishment of ICI in Billingham, the firm behind inventions like Perspex and Polyethylene. Yet, despite all of this, Rowena notes that 'There's been limited growth in prosperity, significantly less than what people living here would have liked to have seen.'

Teesside does, however, continue to be at the forefront of industrial trends and innovation, carving out a reputation in biotechnology, electric cars, battery components, flexible toll manufacturing and renewable energy, among other sectors, as well as still boasting a healthy and diverse chemicals industry, made up of a cluster of companies operating out of the largest integrated chemical complex in the UK. And it is Rowena's experience of the Teesside chemicals sector during her 19 years in the region with ICI/Lucite that makes her confident that the area already has the strengths it needs to fulfil its potential and re-emerge as a global leader for industrial manufacturing. In her words, 'A key factor in the ongoing success of chemicals companies on Teesside is the world class skills and networks in the region that come from its ICI heritage. It is also these skills as well as the inherent adaptability, resilience and inventiveness that exist here that has enabled new sectors to emerge and flourish.'

Rowena explained that while the demise of ICI was undoubtedly hard for many people on Teesside, the actual break-up of the business ultimately helped make the local sector stronger and more globally competitive. ICI Acrylics, where Rowena worked, was the first major ICI division to be sold in 1999 and this sale signalled the beginning of a new era for the chemicals industry on Teesside, as further acquisitions followed and the demise of ICI began to gather momentum. But according to Rowena, under new ownership, many of the former ICI divisions received further investment and became more focused on continuous improvement and thus stronger operators overall. In her view, 'If this change hadn't occurred they probably wouldn't all exist today.' Furthermore, due to the sheer number of chemical firms that entered the region through merger and acquisition between 1999 and 2007, by the time AkzoNobel bought what was left of ICI in 2007, there was already an established multi-company chemical industry hub in Teesside, and the sector's future was not threatened by that final step.



Organisations such as NEPIC and CPI have also played a key role in the evolution of the chemicals industry on Teesside post ICI. Rowena argued they have done well to encourage inter-business networks, which have subsequently led to shared learning and increased cooperation among firms with common interests. NEPIC in particular, according to Rowena, has been very effective at gaining access to strategic information and groups of stakeholders. 'These two things can be very powerful, giving firms a far more coherent strategy as well as the ability to have more influence on what happens in the region as well as the sector.' Similarly, CPI has also '...brought in a lot of investment and has been very successful as a centre of excellence.' She was keen to point out, however, that the success of NEPIC and CPI relies heavily on the contribution of the chemical companies. 'A huge amount of time and effort is put into these networks by individuals working in the sector, on top of their day jobs.'

In terms of what the region needs from the Northern Powerhouse programme to ensure that the hard work that has gone into consolidating and diversifying industrial manufacturing on Teesside is adequately rewarded and supported, Rowena was quick to point out that the international scope of firms in the area means transport investment must be a priority. 'We need to make it easier for people working for and with global businesses to travel

in and out of the region from overseas.' Secondly, Rowena believes that cost efficient energy to support the huge chemical compounds in Teesside is an obvious funding area, while at the same time the already strong skill-base in Teesside needs further investment to make sure the high levels of skills are maintained. Specifically, she added, developing the practical and academic foundations of science and engineering are fundamentally important. A key part of this in Rowena's opinion, is to 'build experiential knowledge through 'on the job' learning.' Being able to adapt to new technologies is also '...an ability that needs to be honed.'

Yet, the hope that there could be some real and impactful positive change on Teesside in the onset of greater investment and devolved powers, has been somewhat tarnished by a major industrial setback, as steel making, which has been a defining characteristic on Teesside for over a hundred years, has finally come to an end with the recent closure of SSI. Rowena commented that although the ending of SSI is undoubtedly a single huge blow for the south of the region, it's important that Teesside isn't simply condemned. Instead, according to Rowena, the region needs to find a constructive way to respond to this by creating some positive stories about the area, particularly about the successes



...there are far more attractive opportunities in Teesside than many people inside or outside of the region perceive there to be.

that help fuel the local economy. 'A way to tip the balance is to find some real 'human' stories that reflect the positive side of what it's really like here and what is being achieved by the region's businesses. Basically, a positive national media campaign, and not just a defensive one.' She added that during her two decades on Teesside there have already been some big global economic downturns but the region has seemingly tackled those challenges and '...not taken too much of a step back.'

In terms of her own career, Rowena admitted it was a difficult decision to look for a new personal challenge after 28 years with ICI/Lucite, but the opportunity to lead Econic Technologies was impossible for her to refuse. 'Econic has a very exciting and rare proposition in the sense that its catalyst for utilising CO<sub>2</sub> in plastics manufacturing has both strong economic and environmental benefits.' After 18 months in the role, she is enjoying making an impact and taking on the many challenges associated with establishing a team and commercialising the technology; experiences that will further develop her ability to build different teams and businesses as she goes forward. Rowena explained that at some point in the future she would be happy to find an opportunity closer to her Northallerton 'home' yet admits the first class rail networks in and out of the region enable her to be very mobile, making it easy to essentially go wherever the opportunity takes her. 'I can catch a train from Northallerton on Monday morning at 7:15am and arrive at Econic's London office at 10:30am after working comfortably for three hours on the journey down.'

Rowena firmly believes that there are far more attractive opportunities in Teesside than many people inside or outside of the region perceive there to be. Her view is that people's perceptions of what constitutes an opportunity are sometimes misguided. 'The best opportunities aren't always bigger jobs in bigger companies with bigger salaries, but rather the ones that offer interesting challenges and opportunities to learn and develop.' With the growing diversity of chemical companies in the region those challenges do exist. For Rowena, the chance to develop her skills and knowledge are factors that take priority over the actual 'size' of the job. Rowena shared that she hopes to one day 'give something back' to the region that has given so much to her and would relish the opportunity to use the skills and experience gained through a rewarding career in the chemicals industry by working in a non-executive capacity, for example in an education and training provider as those things '...have been the foundation of my career.' She added, 'to make best use of the skills and talents available, the not for profit sector needs people who are prepared to 'give back'.

## Nigel Wright chooses Teesside for latest UK office expansion

As part of a wider expansion strategy, Nigel Wright Group recently opened its first ever office in Teesside, at Wynyard Park House. >>



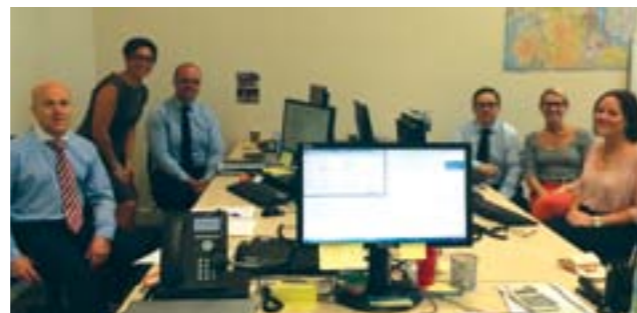
According to CEO Paul Wilson, 'Launching a second office in the North East is a strategic change in direction for the company but it is clear that by creating greater focus geographically and combining this with a closer physical presence, we will be able to serve our clients and candidates in the southern part of the region more effectively.'

Nigel Wright offers recruitment expertise in a range of discipline areas including Finance, IT, HR, Engineering, Manufacturing, Supply Chain, Sales & Marketing and covers all of the main sectors in the North East. Since the office opened in May, the team, which now consists of five specialist consultants, has conducted over 200 client meetings with businesses across Teesside, County Durham and North Yorkshire. Sarah Dargue, Managing Consultant for Finance and one of the five specialist consultants now based permanently at the Wynyard office commented:

'It's an incredibly exciting time for the office and the wider company. Meeting clients has been a huge focus for the team here in order to establish our footprint in the south of the region and we're already starting to see the success of our hard work, winning business with a number of new local clients, as well as those we have an historical relationship with. Significantly, we have also successfully referred work to our international divisions to assist Teesside-based companies expand their operations overseas. Our clients have responded positively to our new location and to our commitment to the region as a whole.'

There is a great deal of optimism in the Tees Valley business community following news that an extra £13.9m will be invested in the area between 2016 and 2021 as part of the government's growth deal. The Tees Valley Local Economic Partnership has already helped Teesside companies secure in excess of £1.3bn of private sector investment since its creation and the North East Chamber of Commerce hopes to see 25,000 private sector jobs created in Teesside over the next 10 years.

Paul Wilson added, 'Nigel Wright is very much part of the Tees Valley story moving forward. We have a management team already in place here with almost 50 years combined recruitment expertise; now we are seeking to grow our teams and are currently hiring for a range of opportunities in Teesside. Anyone interested in finding out more about employment opportunities at Nigel Wright should contact us directly for a confidential discussion.'



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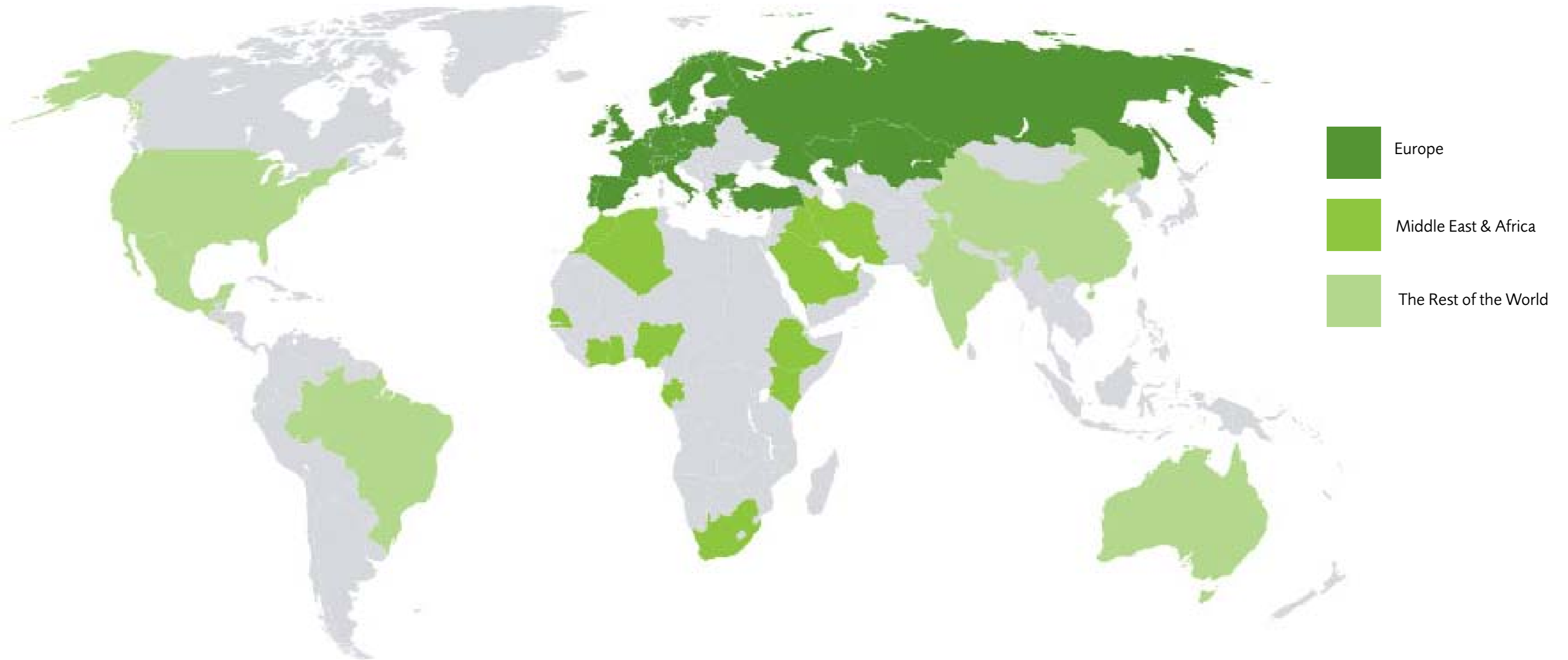
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# Extending our reach

| Nigel Wright regularly fulfils recruitment assignments for clients around the world. >>

In the last 24 months it has won retained work in all six continents, across 30+ international territories. Many of Nigel Wright's international clients have planned for the future by seeking to achieve long term growth in emerging markets. As a result Nigel Wright has been instrumental in assisting clients build new business units in key strategic markets such as Asia, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East. Nigel Wright now has dedicated teams responsible for the EMEA, Asia-Pacific, US and Latin American regions.





# Search

## without boundaries



Nigel Wright delivers search assignments on a global scale. These assignments are typically for large multinational, as well as SMEs and Private Equity backed companies and involve the identification and selection of senior domestic and international talent for key strategic roles. >>

**Nigel Wright Executive's main focus is C-Level, General Management, Commercial and Operations (Supply Chain & Manufacturing) as well as strategic management, specialist adviser and Non Executive Director (NED) roles at the local, regional and group level.**

Companies with multinational operations, particularly in emerging markets, are realigning their hiring strategies to take advantage of the evolving global employment market. The era of the short term expatriate solution for establishing and stabilising an international office is disappearing. Expatriates are staying in overseas markets longer than they used to; incentivised by a positive economic outlook, career development opportunities, greater autonomy and higher salaries.

Businesses also want a different breed of talent today. Experienced, but also highly mobile, multi-lingual and with an intrinsic understanding of the new 'global' economic landscape. And it is not just expatriates they seek to hire; recruiting and nurturing local talent is considered vitally important, as is attracting highly educated, skilled and 'multinational' native talent back home. Regional, non-native managers are also coveted, as companies seek to build regional knowledge but also diversity into their executive teams.

According to Nigel Wright Group Executive Director Mark Simpson, 'The best talent could exist anywhere in today's global economy and as a search and selection firm, having the flexibility and capability to find it is what ultimately makes you stand out in the market.' The reputation and capability of Nigel Wright Executive, the search and selection arm of Nigel Wright Group, has grown consistently over the last ten years due to its proven track record of working alongside firms from significant sectors, helping them to build their capability in domestic and overseas markets.

With an established and integrated network of executive professionals and research teams, fluent in multiple languages, Nigel Wright believes it has a unique offering in today's market. With over 15 specialist consultants recruiting at executive level (between £100-250k+ salary) at any one time, the business also has no country restrictions and it offers clients a truly global approach to search, by utilising its teams across its network of offices who work together to get the best results.

The executive search teams offer a wide variety of services including individual search mandates, ongoing service agreements, talent pool creation

and talent mapping. These services stretch across emerging markets as well as mature western markets. Often an assignment will involve deploying one senior consultant to liaise at the executive level of the client, and coordinate the project on a multiple regional basis, with Nigel Wright's teams.

Nigel Wright Executive's main focus is C-Level, General Management, Commercial and Operations (Supply Chain & Manufacturing) as well as strategic management, specialist adviser and Non-Executive Director (NED) roles at the local, regional and group level. Specific discipline specialists exist in all of Nigel Wright's offices and again, these experts share market knowledge with each other as and when it is pertinent for a particular search assignment.

As Simpson noted, 'We have built up a vast amount of internal knowledge of our specialist sector and disciplines, which continues to grow as we embark on new projects in new territories. Furthermore, we have found developing our global executive search capability has enabled us to be even better at it in the North East of England, where we have been established for the longest.'

Nigel Wright is truly international; however the business takes pride in being effective at the local level, within the countries and regions in which it operates. For Nigel Wright's candidates this means they have the benefit of what Simpson calls the 'no silos' approach; once a candidate is identified and registered on the database 'they can be immediately represented in any of our markets across Europe and beyond.'

This kind of seamless operating model according to Simpson, isn't prevalent among multinational executive search firms and together with Nigel Wright's deep knowledge of its chosen markets, desire to deliver a 'one team' approach to sharing knowledge and information, means that the business is often selected as a recruitment partner ahead of the established firms such as Spencer Stuart, Heidrick & Struggles, Russell Reynolds, Egon Zehnder and Korn Ferry.

The results are excellent too. Over the last two years Nigel Wright has successfully identified talent in, or relocated talent to 34 countries including Malaysia, USA, Canada, Algeria, Nigeria, Cameroon, United Arab Emirates, India, China and Australia as well as multiple states in Western and Eastern Europe. This comprised in excess of 250 executive level assignments; some of the roles and clients were a Regional Manager for a global telecommunications business, a Global Brand Innovation Manager for a multinational consumer goods company and an HR Director and Commercial Director for two world famous beverage brands as well as various roles at CEO, COO and CFO level.

Headhunting in or outside of Europe always requires exceptional market intelligence and Nigel Wright has consistently shown an ability to quickly understand territories and establish relevant networks to get results for its clients. Its team of international consultants and researchers has also been able to seamlessly conduct business in remote places and has faced cultural, linguistic, political and logistical challenges, yet still retained excellent standards of customer service.

According to Simpson 'Having the capacity to effectively source talent either 'on the ground' or bring in the best talent from the around the world is essential to support our clients' growth.'

### Nigel Wright assists Newcastle Business School with development of new non-executive director (NED) training course

A non-executive director is a completely independent director who sits on the board of a company, but has no direct managerial responsibility, or involvement, in the day to day running of the organisation. In fact, NEDs are usually a company's best kept secret. A good NED can bring enormous value to the operational board; using his/her experience and expertise to provide high quality independent advice, which can help SMEs fulfil their potential. The best NEDs have 'seen it all before' and consequently will know the best options for helping a company to improve.

NEDs bring a 'fresh pair of eyes' to the table as well as offering constructive criticism. Their ability to quickly assimilate, listen to and absorb information and ask challenging and unique questions, usually leads to improvements in boardroom performance. This also helps facilitate the establishment of better



organised, more structured and ultimately, more effective board meetings. As well as acting as advisors, NEDs can also help to coach executive directors, enhancing the chances of success.

Fundamentally, NEDs should introduce specialised knowledge and relevant business experience, which will strengthen the management team and give the organisation greater external credibility with potential investors, suppliers or even the bank. Their in-depth experience will also mean they can help the company build robust business plans and policies, provide valuable information on the competitive environment and liaise with sector contacts and other third parties, even helping to win business.

NEDs are an increasingly vital part of any organisation, however, becoming a NED isn't easy; sometimes it can take up to a year for prospective NEDs to secure their first post. NEDs also need to continually develop their own skills and knowledge in order to perform effectively and to meet certain legal obligations they assume when taking on a Director level position. Newcastle Business School recognised there was a need within the executive education market for better NED training and earlier this year approached Nigel Wright to help inform the development of a new training course for current and aspiring NEDs.

Academics from Newcastle Business School worked collaboratively with the Marketing Department at Nigel Wright to create a survey aimed at identifying what potential or existing NEDs need in the way of training and development to either secure their first role, or to become more effective on the boards on which they currently sit. The survey was sent out to Nigel Wright's database of executive and Board level contacts across the UK during the first quarter of 2015 and the results were presented at a special invitation only event at Newcastle Business School in June.

Over 300 people took part in the survey and the results served as a frame of reference to develop the NED Development Programme, designed specifically for non-executive directors covering the whole range of skills and knowledge needed for any non-executive role. Nigel Wright Associate Director Richard Morgan commented: 'We were delighted to work alongside Newcastle Business School on this hugely important project. The results of the needs analysis confirmed that current and aspiring NEDs need more in the way of training and development to assist them in current or future roles.'



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Some of the key findings of the research included:

#### Behavioural skills perceived to be the most important for current and prospective NEDs

Respondents identified the top five behavioural skills for current and prospective NEDs as: objectivity (59%), communication (52%), independent mindedness (52%), accurate listening (47%) and analytical training (44%).

#### Business and commercial skills perceived to be the most important for current and prospective NEDs

Respondents identified the top five business and commercial skills for current and prospective NEDs as being: strategy development (84%), corporate governance (63%), leadership (58%), change management (48%), managing risk (48%).

#### Training and development areas perceived to be most useful to prospective NEDs

Respondents identified the top five development areas as: interview preparation (69%), practical responsibilities of NEDs (62%), adding value in the boardroom (59%), raising your profile (49%), legal duties and liabilities (39%).

#### The best methods to use when seeking your first NED role

Current NEDs indicated that professional networking (46%) was the most common method they used when searching for their first appointment. This was complemented by approaching prospective employers directly (26%). Responding to advertisements, approaching recruiters and in some cases, approaching private equity firms, were also deemed important strategies.

## Nordic expansion continues...

Since the last issue of Imagine Magazine, Nigel Wright has opened a further three new offices in the Nordics to service its growing portfolio of clients in the region. >>

Since launching in Stockholm in 2006, Sweden has consistently been one of the Group's best performing divisions. On the launch of its new Malmö office in February, Country Manager Simon Taylor commented:

'We already have excellent exposure to the Swedish market, yet this additional office has given our business the added ability to get closer to clients and offer a greater diversity of specialist sector and discipline knowledge, as well as expertise which is not locally or regionally limited.'

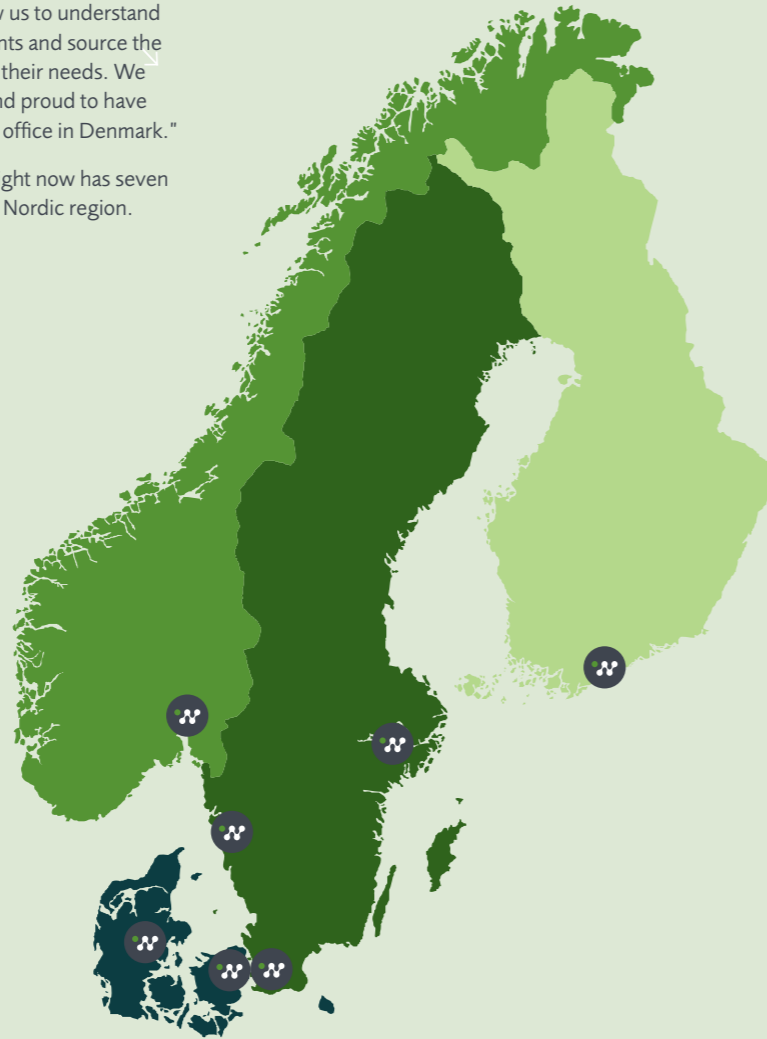
Tobias Sjöberg, who rejoined Nigel Wright as Regional Manager after working for a global FMCG business, relocated to Malmö in February to manage the new location. He has been focusing on developing relationships with key clients in the local area and is now looking to hire additional consultants over the next few months to facilitate its growth.

In January, Nigel Wright's Country Manager Thomas Thorsen and Senior Consultant Søren Hjorth Lee moved from Copenhagen to Århus to launch Nigel Wright's new Danish office.

Since opening its first Danish office in Copenhagen in 2008, Nigel Wright has enjoyed a great deal of success in the Danish market, becoming recognised as a 'top 10 Danish search and selection company' (Økonomisk Ugebrev, 2011) as well as one of Denmark's 'best performing companies' (Børsen's Gazelle, 2013).

Thomas commented: "We are an international organisation, so having an international focus is key to us, both in terms of the market knowledge that we can offer, and also in ensuring that our clients have access to the best candidates in the market, nationally and internationally. At the same time, our roots in the local market allow us to understand our domestic clients and source the best talent to suit their needs. We are very happy and proud to have opened a second office in Denmark."

In total, Nigel Wright now has seven offices across the Nordic region.



# Corporate Finance overview

It was widely reported that global M&A activity in 2014 reached the highest level since the financial crisis and 2015 is on track to surpass these levels. In the current year to date, 45 transactions have been announced with a deal value of more than US\$10 billion. Mega deals are fuelling activity both globally and nationally. >>

Although deal values are breaking records, the number of transactions is only marginally up on last year. Thomson Reuters reported an increase globally of 2% and Experian reported increases of 8% and 5% in Europe and the UK respectively.

Historically the North East has lagged behind in terms of activity with large transactions often skewing underlying deal values. Although 2014 saw a decrease in levels of activity of 14% on 2013, and the first nine months of 2015 are also down on the same period last year, the third quarter has shown an uptick in activity. In the three months to September, 40 deals completed compared to 31 in the previous quarter.

Despite these figures underlying deal activity in the North East is robust. Of the 11 deals which have completed since January 2014 with a disclosed deal value of greater than £50 million, seven were larger than £100 million.

With a deal value of £230 million the sale, in September 2014, of Aesica Pharmaceuticals to Consort Medical Plc, an international healthcare company listed on the London Stock Exchange, was one of the largest transactions in the region in recent years. It also highlights the current trend for rising M&A activity fuelled by corporate interest in strong businesses.

Aesica was founded via an MBO in 2004 from BASF's Cramlington site for £23 million. A secondary MBO by Silverfleet Capital followed in 2011. In the last ten years the business has increased revenue and staff numbers tenfold to £180 million and 1,300 respectively.

This was also one of a number of significant deals in the region in the healthcare sector driven by pharmaceuticals M&A, which was the most targeted industry globally in 2014 and for the first three months of 2015.

Paul Mankin >>>  
Partner, Corporate Finance at PwC





Of the 11 deals which have completed since January 2014 with a disclosed deal value of greater than £50 million, seven were larger than £100 million.

The flotation on the AIM of the London Stock Exchange of Burnopfield-based Quantum Pharma in December raised £106 million. Since then Quantum has made two acquisitions. In April this year it paid almost £7 million for the pharmaceutical development and licensing business of Lamda which has customers in the UK, Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia. This was followed in July when it bought NuPharm Group for more than £9 million.

In addition to the Quantum float, the drought of IPOs in the region was broken when Virgin Money raised £150 million following a listing on the London Stock Exchange last November. This was followed by the only float so far this year when the IPO of ScS Group provided an exit for private equity firm Sun European Partners LLP which bought ScS out of administration in 2008.

According to PwC's IPO Watch, Europe's IPO pipeline looks promising for the rest of the year and may still match proceeds raised in 2014, despite the slow start back after the summer as we saw increased volatility and falling equity indices hit the equity markets.

Both the Quantum and ScS deals provided an exit or partial exit for private equity firms. This was a significant theme in 2014 with Preqin recording 276 PE exits via IPO globally. Although the number of exits was similar to the previous year, deal values for European PE exits in 2014 increased by 94% on 2013 according to Mergermarket.

There have been more significant private equity exits in the region in the last couple of years than investments. This may be partly explained by national factors such as uncertainty surrounding the UK general election, compounded by a slight slowing in growth of the UK economy.

In April this year the £120 million sale of SMD to Chinese company CSR Times Electric provided an exit for Inflexion Private Equity who initially invested in Wallsend-based SMD in 2008.

Recently private equity investor Livingbridge announced the sale of its investment in inov-8 to Descente, a leading Japanese sportswear maker. Livingbridge made its £13.5 million investment in inov-8 in 2012.

There has been some direct private equity activity in the region during the year which included the acquisition of CAV Aerospace by Better Capital who committed £40 million to fund the acquisition and the sale of 50% of Durham-based Learning Curve to MML Capital Partners.

North East private equity backed businesses have been acquisitive in 2015. Agilitas backed Impetus Waste Management acquired a further waste transfer station and processing facility with the acquisition of T Shea in February. NVM backed



Kitwave acquired its second frozen food operation in July following the acquisition of frozen food and ice-cream wholesaler Eden Farm last year. Angelbell (trading as Hulleys Frozen Food) is headquartered in Sheffield.

The Business Growth Fund made three significant investments in the North East this year. In February Chemoxy received £10 million in growth capital. In July Broadband Satellite Services received £6.3 million which will be used to accelerate its long-term growth strategy and Altec Engineering received £6 million. Immediately following the investment Altec announced the acquisition of Ronco Engineering which followed its acquisition of Sigma Technologies earlier the same month.

Back in 2007 deals activity was driven by private equity whereas today activity is dominated by corporates. This deal flow is supported by the strength of corporate balance sheets and buoyant equity markets. Corporates are now taking the opportunity to use their war chests gained in the years following the financial crisis.

In April, Utilitywise announced its fifth acquisition since listing three years ago. The acquisition of t-mac Technologies for an initial consideration of £10 million allows Utilitywise to expand into energy management systems. In August Stadium Group added Reading-based Stontronics to its Technology Products division for £6.5 million

The largest transaction of the quarter was the sale of Addison Motors, which trades as Benfield Motor Group, to Lookers Plc for £87.5 million.

Benfield, the largest private business in the North East in terms of sales, has been run by the Squires family for almost 60 years. Last year the company reported turnover of almost £700 million.

Despite the relative drop in deal activity in the region for the first nine months of the year, we traditionally see an increase in activity during the final quarter and my outlook for the rest of the year is relatively upbeat. This view is based on the level of activity the corporate finance team at PwC is currently experiencing, which includes a number of equity raising assignments in addition to M&A activity. We are also seeing heightened private equity interest in the region again and I believe there will be at least one significant private equity transaction completed before Christmas.



The largest transaction of the quarter was the sale of... Benfield Motor Group.

# Interim positions on the rise

as businesses compete to fill short term skills gaps



**Richard Morgan,**  
Associate Director UK

Richard Morgan is an Associate Director at Nigel Wright. He focuses on executive and senior level appointments, as well as leading the Accountancy and Finance division in the North East. Richard has been instrumental in growing this division since taking over in 2013. During this time the team has expanded out of Newcastle to now also operate from Nigel Wright's new Teesside office. A trained accountant, Richard also manages Nigel Wright's annual sponsorship of the North East Accountancy Awards.

According to the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), between 2008 and 2014 the number of temporary workers (notably temps, contractors and interim managers) in the UK increased by 20%. In comparison, permanent positions went up by only 0.3% during this time.

The buoyancy of the temp, contractor and interim market, widely reported over the last few years, has not abated. Recent figures (published in August) from the REC confirmed that 98% of UK employers intend to maintain or increase the number of temporary workers hired during the remainder of this year.

An increase in temporary assignments is usually indicative of a lingering uncertainty during a market recovery, but with the rate of UK growth accelerating during the summer, business confidence appears high as we move towards the latter part of 2015. So why is there an un-stalling demand for temporary resource in the UK? Richard Morgan, Nigel Wright Associate Director for Finance, explained that two connected factors are at play. 'There is an impending need for UK businesses to capitalise on positive market conditions and increase their capability by hiring more people, however, a sustained lack of workers with the necessary skills to

enable firms to achieve long term growth means they have to turn to interim staff to achieve short term wins.'

Nigel Wright's North East Division successfully places temps, contractors and interim managers specialising in a variety of different disciplines and sectors. Interim appointments usually include CEOs, General Managers and Directors of SMEs; temporary placements largely consist of HR, Sales and Marketing professionals whereas Nigel Wright contractors tend to work in IT, Finance and Operations roles, across all levels. Morgan confirmed that the business' interim recruitment practice has experienced a 23% increase in profit over the last 12 months in line with the market and he was adamant that interim employees can prove to be a hugely beneficial resource for businesses during periods of growth.

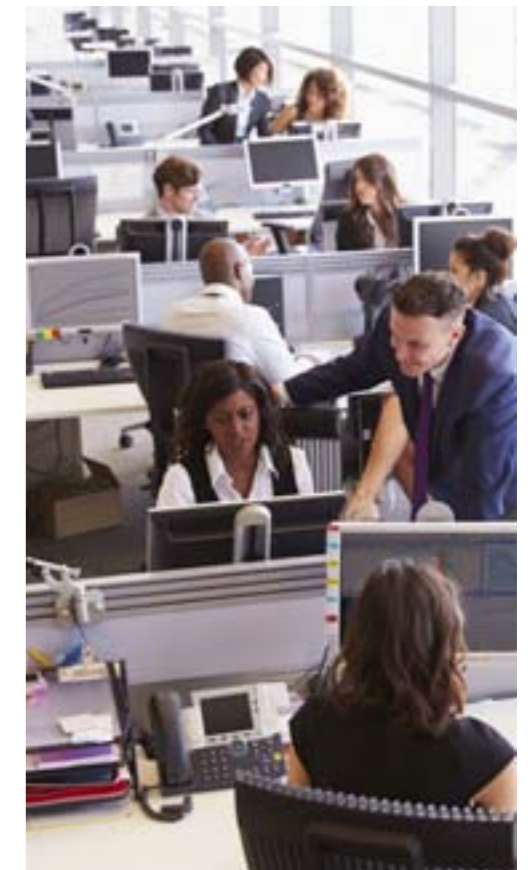
In his words, 'Following the recession of the 1980s there was a movement



Most businesses need a stable core team and then they can seek out the right talent for short term requirements, where capability within the organisation is lacking.

to make UK companies more lean and more focused on productivity. It was envisioned that future organisations would be a mixture of permanent, temporary and outsourced resources and this is essentially the organisation of today. Most businesses need a stable core team and then they can seek out the right talent for short term requirements, where capability within the organisation is lacking.'

Sue Ormerod, Associate Director for IT and HR at Nigel Wright highlighted how interim employees can make an immediate impact with little or no intervention. 'Companies can generally expect higher standards in terms of experience as well as the right qualifications and motivation, being that a temp or contractor will 'work for every hour'. Operating at a senior level, interim managers are also known to be adept at assimilating into new environments and driving change, turning projects around and communicating with key stakeholders without fear of raising sensitive issues. Professional IT contractors also generally have an immediate impact as they are often specifically recruited to add skills and experience that may be lacking in the current technology team.' On the whole, there is less risk involved in hiring a temporary worker, with many businesses using it as an opportunity to assess the suitability of a candidate before deciding to make a permanent hire.



## Hiring temps, contractors & interim managers: what to look for in a supplier.

With competition becoming increasingly tight in the interim staffing market, it's important for organisations to select a recruitment provider that can help them to react to the temporary skills gap quickly. In order to do this, recruiters must demonstrate the following qualities: >>

- Have a database of candidates who are immediately available, with a wide range of skills and experience
- Are open about the process, managing expectations and identifying any risk involved
- A broad selection of public and private sector clients
- Proactive and able to identify areas within a business where a temp, contractor or interim could add value
- Has been in the market for a long time and can demonstrate intimate market knowledge and understanding of business needs
- Be flexible about methods of engagement, including addressing areas such as contract notice periods
- Consultants who keep in regular contact with their candidates and are aware of trends in contract types and day rates, so they can provide up to date information
- Demonstrate financial strength and the ability to pay interim workers.

An interim recruitment database is essentially a 'live' database. Everyone is a moving target and candidate CVs and rates are constantly changing and therefore need to be monitored closely. It is essential for temp, contract and interim recruitment consultants to know their candidates 'even better' than a permanent recruiter as they must be sure that they have the necessary skills, industry knowledge and attitudes to be able to be an effective short term solution for a specific client need.

# North East Accountancy Awards 2015

Nigel Wright was associate sponsor of the North East Accountancy Awards 2015, which recognised some of the finest finance professionals in the region. >>

The ninth annual North East Accountancy Awards saw hundreds of accountants, other finance professionals and their colleagues gather at the NewcastleGateshead Hilton hotel to celebrate the achievements of the region's top financial businesses and individuals.

Among the winners were Mark Rutter from the National Audit Office, who was named New Accountant of the Year, Andy Trinder from Quorn Foods who picked up the title of Accountant of the Year and Newcastle University's Richard Dale, who was named Finance Director of the Year.



## The winners...

**Innovation in Social Media or Technology Award:**  
Winner – LSL Property Services

**Accounting Technician of the Year:**  
Abiola Dina – National Audit Office

**New Accountant of the Year:**  
Mark Rutter - National Audit Office

**Accountant of the Year:**  
Mark Trinder – Quorn Foods

**Finance Director of the Year:**  
Richard Dale – Newcastle University

**Tax Team of the Year:**  
PwC International Mobility Team

**Business Finance:**  
Team of the Year: Performance Horizon Group

**Public Services Finance Team of the Year:**  
Sunderland CCG & Sunderland City Council

**Corporate Finance Deal of the Year:**  
Cavu Corporate Finance, £7.5 million equity investment into J&B Recycling by the BGF

**Small Accountancy Firm of the Year:**  
Anderson Barrowcliff LLP

**Accountancy Firm of the Year:**  
Deloitte

**Accounting and Finance Employer of the Year:**  
KPMG LLP


**John Wall Award for Outstanding Achievement:**  
Bill Teasdale

**Unsung Hero Award:**  
Keith Proudfoot

# Thriving in an uncertain world:

An interview with Dr. Tony Trapp



 Lisa Taylor,  
Managing Consultant

Lisa Taylor is a Managing Consultant at Nigel Wright. She has extensive experience in providing innovative customised recruitment solutions across the North East, Yorkshire, the North West and Scotland. She personally delivers senior appointments by providing bespoke and innovative candidate attraction tools and is committed to enabling her clients to attract the highest calibre of talent. Lisa's team recruits from Technician/Supervisor to Director level including Production, Manufacturing Engineering, HSE, Quality, Maintenance, Design, Projects and a wide range of discipline engineers across the North East.

« Dr. Tony Trapp

imagine

Dr. Tony Trapp's phone is packed full of music. It has everything from ballroom and opera, to the trip-hop fused electronica of Faithless. As Tony explains, 'When I'm driving I just leave it on shuffle, I love the thrill of not knowing what's coming next.' >>

It is the thrill of uncertainty which has driven Tony's highly distinguished career over the last 40 years, during which time he has helped launch three of the region's most successful engineering companies – SMD (Soil Machine Dynamics), IHC Engineering Business (formerly EB) and Osbit Power – as well as being at the forefront of some of the world's most significant inventions.

After leaving college in Oxfordshire in 1966, Tony came to Newcastle University to complete a degree in Agricultural Engineering and under the guidance of tutor Dr. Alan Reece went on to gain a PhD for his research into the vibratory cutting of soil and rock, an undeveloped area of engineering at that time. However, despite some early interest from JCB, the technology was not considered commercially attractive and Tony had to reassess his future.

With a desire to continue working at the cutting-edge of engineering theory, Tony took up a position as lecturer in Thermodynamics at Edinburgh University. It was here, however, where he first developed a desire to get out of his comfort zone and embrace an uncertain future. 'After five years I could see my whole life ahead of me. I was on a 17 point salary scale, scrabbling with everyone else to get to the next point.'

Increasingly disillusioned with academic life, Tony gave up a permanent tenured lecturing post at 'one of Britain's top universities' to come back to Newcastle University on a six month temporary research associate contract. In returning to Newcastle University, however, he was able to return to his research, and with some great investment and industry support, could at last apply his theories to real life emerging engineering problems. This was at a time when two major new markets were emerging – North Sea oil and fibre optic communications. Both industries needed to carry out activities on the seabed and there were interesting challenges to address and much funding available for the development of new technology.

Teaming up again with Dr. Alan Reece and along with another researcher, Dr. Tim Grinstead, the newly formed Soil Machine Dynamics (SMD) successfully won a lucrative Science Research Council grant to develop underwater earthmoving technology. As Tony explained, 'Nobody in the world was doing underwater earth moving research and developments like this at the time; it was a fertile field and we leapt on it.' SMD's first contract was with BP, and the business went on to develop its first ground-breaking pipeline, cable and back-fill ploughs for the global oil giant.

SMD started to flourish and win significant contracts, including one for Charles Tompkins (ITM in those days) to design and build a seabed power cable plough and control system. It was, however, the invention of submarine fibre optic telephone cables for use in global communications that gave SMD its major break in an emerging market. AT&T were the leaders at this time and had already developed underwater ploughs using BEL Labs' technology. Tony explained that BT were keen to utilise SMD's expertise to lay the world's first fibre optic cable across the Atlantic seabed and were referred to SMD by an ex-student of Tony's who was working at BT's Martlesham laboratory at the time. Returning to underwater plough technology, SMD successfully delivered this project, which led to subsequent approaches from AT&T as well as KDD, NTT, Spanish Telecom, France Telecom, Telecom Italia, and 'everyone else in the world.' Pretty soon, SMD was the global leader.

Tony noted, however, that as the company got bigger it became increasingly difficult to keep the entrepreneurial spirit alive and after 19 very successful years he left SMD to embark on a new venture and once again embrace an uncertain future rather than retire. Driven by 'big ambition' but without a business plan or a name for their newly established company, Tony along with three business partners began searching the world for interesting tenders. Legal restrictions meant they had to avoid contracts within the underwater earthmoving industry, so the team entered a proposal to develop the false proscenium (a theatrical device for shrinking a stage) and its controls for The Royal Opera House. This project was exciting as it meant Tony had to step out of his comfort zone again and although the team came second in the bid, it significantly bolstered the confidence of the new enterprise. Tony finally settled on the name The Engineering Business (EB) for the company, because it defined its agility and desire to tackle a wide range of engineering projects.

By 2001 EB was turning over eight million pounds, yet 92% of its business at this point was in submarine telecom, a market that was effectively wiped out by the dot com crash. In Tony's view 'It was a more extreme version of what's going on now in the oil industry; the submarine telecom industry was decimated.' The future of EB had suddenly become very insecure but Tony was happy to again embrace that uncertainty and the business quickly turned its attentions to offshore renewables to counteract the market decline. EB applied for and won a one million pound government grant to build the first tidal stream generator in Shetland, and before long became world leaders in tidal energy.

However, after four years of intense research and a declining revenue stream, Tony and EB came to the conclusion that tidal energy generation was



too difficult and too expensive to extract what is essentially a 'trivial amount of energy.' It was at this point, as Tony explained, '...we started fiddling with pipes.' And after EB secured and then quickly delivered a solution for laying a pipeline from deep water into shallow water for Technip's flagship pipelay vessel in Egypt, the enquiries began flooding in; 'Within three years, we had a £70 million order book.'

Learning from his time at SMD, however, Tony had planned his eventual departure from EB. He explained, 'It was a ten year plan right from the start' and nine months after originally turning down an offer for the business, EB was finally sold to IHC in 2008. What Tony demonstrated during his time at the helm of EB was that by creating a flexible and agile company, with no rigid business plan or agenda other than wanting to do great and profitable engineering work, his team was able to tackle uncertain market conditions head-on and make quick decisions that led to big successes.

Tony's latest company Osbit Power, which simply stands for On Spec (on) Budget (and) In Time, was launched in 2010 and like EB and SMD has sought to capitalise on emerging market opportunities by

providing flexible engineering solutions to various sectors. In Tony's words 'I don't really know what Osbit does yet; we started in offshore wind and then moved into oil and gas.' After four years the business achieved an eight million pound turnover and despite market conditions, Tony noted that '...we're very busy and expecting to make a healthy profit again this year despite the very difficult market.' He was quick to emphasise that Osbit is in a better position than most because 'they can't change direction easily, like we can.'

Tony also contends that the egalitarian set-up at Osbit Power helps the business work more efficiently and effectively. Twenty percent of the company value is given to employees through an EMI scheme and all of the 35 engineers in the company have the same job title – simply OP Engineer. 'Everyone takes appropriate ownership and we don't need five signatures to spend £50,000, which larger businesses eventually deteriorate into. We're all working together for a common goal and it works fantastically well.' Recent projects such as successfully installing a telescopic gangway system for offshore services in Angola, certainly gives weight to these claims.

For a man who has dedicated his career to the North East, Tony has two very clear ideas for how the region can become truly great. Firstly, he believes it needs to attract and retain the best students - 'The Universities are excellent, and becoming more impressive each day, but they need to keep working hard to attract the best'



**"The reality is that most people never realise their full potential because they are too cautious... If people had a different attitude they could achieve a lot more."**

– and Osbit Power is doing its bit to help in this regard.

As well as building a team of experienced engineers who are often previous colleagues '...because I'm assured that they know exactly what to do' – Osbit also cherry picks the best students directly from universities. As Tony explains, 'We're a very effective training organisation, we turn novice students into highly competent engineers with a strong commercial background. I've always believed in enabling people to achieve their full potential, and it works beautifully here. These young, naïve students come in and gain broad experience across different areas, as well as responsibility, and within a year or two they're fantastic.'

Tony also believes the region needs more entrepreneurial businesses if it wants to seriously become a recognised centre of global brilliance in many industries. Harking back to his own epiphany as a young academic, he notes a sense of frustration that '...too few people actually want to take the risk and set out on their own.' The advice he most enjoys passing on to others is 'Whatever you do, don't get stuck.' He went on, 'The reality is that most people never realise their full potential because they are too cautious. They're afraid of taking a risk and find it easier to just stay where they are. If people had a different attitude they could achieve a lot more.'

Unsurprisingly, with a falling oil price and the onset of what could potentially be another prolonged period of uncertainty in the oil and gas industry, Tony and Osbit Power are relishing the challenge. Rather maddeningly for some of his peers, Tony noted that he '...looks at the falling oil price with excitement.' He also has a surprisingly nonchalant view of the industry's prospects moving forward, arguing that the cyclical nature of the global economy inevitably means that the 'boom times' will come again when demand returns to the market and until it does, people '...will have to get used to the way it is for now.'

Remaining positive is the key, and Tony sees efficient oil production and the fact that people are making new discoveries all of the time (a nod to fracking here) is something to take comfort from and get enthusiastic about. One thing's for certain, you can expect Tony Trapp to be at the forefront of whatever big opportunity emerges out of the latest market shuffle.



# 2015 UK Oil & Gas Salary Survey

In August we published our 2015 UK Oil and Gas Salary Survey. The report was compiled from over 1,000 respondents, across the oil and gas sector, who completed our online survey during the first quarter of 2015. The survey is timely, as the beginning of the year is when pay reviews are announced. >>



**"The falling oil price (currently at \$25 per barrel as we go to print) has undoubtedly had a huge impact on the industry."**

Respondents worked across different levels and disciplines within their companies. Analysis is based on C-Level, Director/Senior Management, Management and Non-Management and includes those working in Technical, Operations, Commercial and Support functions.

Our large data-set allows us to understand the average salary and benefits packages people receive within the oil and gas industry. Other factors covered include the benefits regarded as important in a remuneration package, the reasons why people move jobs, as well as the methods utilised to search for a new job. Some of the highlights of the survey are detailed below.

#### Salary, benefits and bonuses

The average salary, excluding benefits and bonuses, received by respondents was £76,000, with salaries ranging from £35,000 at non-management level up to £250,000 at C-Level. Bonuses, on average, could be as high as 28% at C-Level, yet this has declined from the previous year as have salary increases, which have plummeted to an average of 2.3%, with many roles and levels experiencing declines.

#### Changing jobs

The intention to move jobs was also fairly consistent across the different respondent levels and disciplines. Forty six percent of respondents were in fact planning to change jobs within the next 18 months.

#### Job search methods

Traditional methods of finding a job such as approaching recruiters (74%) or approaching employers directly (56%) still remain important to candidates working within the oil and gas industry. Social networking (36%) is also an increasingly important method for job seekers.

Managing Consultant, Lisa Taylor, commented on the findings:

*"The falling oil price (currently at \$25 per barrel as we go to print) has undoubtedly had a huge impact on the industry, with energy companies slashing capital expenditure and, unsurprisingly, making other cost savings through large scale redundancies. It's a rude awakening, but some argue it's a much needed readjustment in the industry."*

*"Market conditions certainly seem to have affected those at non-management level the most, with over half of respondents working at that level indicating they are dissatisfied with their current role; that's an increase of over 30% compared to 2014, with overall job dissatisfaction rising by 17% overall."*

*"With salaries and bonuses taking a hit, respondents to our survey indicated that factors such as new challenges as well as employee benefits such as flexible working and holiday entitlement, were considered more important than bonuses and increased remuneration. With market conditions not likely to change in the short to medium term, businesses will likely find it easier to incentivise prospective candidates with unconventional benefits packages."*


 **DOWNLOAD**

Download our 2015 Oil & Gas Salary Survey online: <http://uk.nigelwright.com/media/1686/5730-uk-oil-and-gas-salary-survey-august-2015.pdf>



## Key trends in HR: Overview of 2015



 Sue O'Donovan, Managing Consultant

Sue O'Donovan is Managing Consultant for Nigel Wright's HR practice in the North East. Sue initially joined Nigel Wright in 2004 and has specialised in HR recruitment since 2005. As well as being responsible for senior HR appointments nationally, Sue also manages all of Nigel Wright's HR networking events including HR Directors' Dinners, HR forums and employment law seminars. A member of the North East leadership team, Sue is also a trusted partner for several key accounts and managing relationships with HR Directors.

It has been another challenging year for HR professionals as they continue to navigate the fluctuating landscape of the global economy. Demographic, technological and societal shifts mean that HR leaders need to constantly analyse and understand the changing nature of work and the needs and the expectations of the workforce and employers, to fully prepare organisations for the future. In this article, we discuss some of the key themes in HR that have dominated, and will continue to dominate, the HR agenda as we move into 2016.



Change is the new norm in today's business world, and HR&D is now widely recognised as the function responsible for developing organisational capability to enable companies to deal effectively with perpetual change.

### Technology can bring together the collective talent of organisations

In every industry, technology continues to have a huge impact on work. HR teams today must consider the influence of different technologies across a multitude of areas including recruitment, wellbeing, employee feedback and behaviour, employment brand, as well as training and development.

As a recruitment business, we are all too aware of the impact new technology has had on talent acquisition. Social networking, for example, is the fastest growing online behaviour and job seekers now rely on social networking more so than ever. The HR teams at the forefront of 'best practice' in social media and technology regularly ask themselves questions such as 'how do I use LinkedIn and Facebook to expand the pool of available candidates?'

Certainly, within the context of recruitment, social media now plays an integral part in many companies' hiring strategies. Yet, the HR&D technology category recognises much more than simply social media recruitment practices.



HR teams can demonstrate excellence in best practice through a variety of other strategic HR areas. It could be utilising blogs, wikis, and other collaborative technology to deliver engagement initiatives, company communications, training and development and HR policies; creating interactive online support channels, reducing enquiries or empowering managers to manage teams more effectively. Investing in efficient systems can also be an excellent way for organisations to identify key data and metrics and add real value to the bottom line.

Advances in new technologies are also having an impact on how learning and development strategies are conceived and many organisations are adopting eLearning and virtual classrooms as efficient ways to train and develop employees. These are just some examples of how HR is improving the efficiency of HR service delivery, while providing consistency across the business.

There is no doubt that technology has the power to bring together the collective talent of employees, fuel innovation and deliver organisational transformation. For it to succeed however, HR must essentially lead a cultural revolution in the organisation by winning the hearts and minds of people at all levels of the business. The HR teams that

are most successful at this are the ones that can provide a return on investment, as well as facilitating collaboration, innovation and learning.

### Managing change is a personal thing

Change is the new norm in today's business world, and HR&D is now widely recognised as the function responsible for developing organisational capability to enable companies to deal effectively with perpetual change.

HR&D must respond to the changing external environment, as well as shifting strategic direction driven from the top of the organisation. Fundamentally, its role is to make sure that the business is primed to deal effectively with change and that everybody is aware of, and supportive of, changes that are taking place.

This can involve expertly delivered internal communications, as well as the creation of competencies, initiatives and attitudes aimed at getting the buy-in of the business as a whole. Failure to achieve success in this critical area can result in a business losing its competitive edge.

As a provider of talent solutions, we are often very close to organisations while they are going through change. They could be expanding rapidly, establishing new business units, becoming more commercial, managing costs, acquiring a new business or launching a new product or service.

Usually, these activities go hand-in-hand with a period of organisational 'soul-searching', where the leadership team, together with HR&D, attempts to redefine the business values and working environment. This is often where change is met with the most resistance from employees, and it is why engagement on a very personal level is crucial.

During periods of change, employees will naturally worry about job security, remuneration and benefits, career development and working conditions and so on. The best HR&D departments, therefore, are able to demonstrate unique and innovative ways to engage with workforces in such a way as to make it clear why change is necessary, but also get their people to recognise what the benefits will be for them and empowering them to feel that they're part of something new and exciting.

### Creative and cost effective HR&D solutions are the key for SMEs

We quite often hear how SMEs are the 'lifeblood of the UK economy' and this statement couldn't be truer anywhere in the UK more so than it is in the North East. With 85% of registered businesses in the region classified as SMEs, it's fair to say our local economy is powered by these 'engines for growth'.

A question often raised in the debates concerning SMEs, however, is do they actually need an HR function? When people think about progressive HR&D, it's usually within the context of large and complex organisations going through transformational change and expansion. Conversely, within the context of a smaller business, HR&D is usually associated with being a bureaucratic barrier to long term growth.

As a talent advisor to businesses of all sizes, however, we recognise that the basic objectives of a HR&D function are ultimately linked to the same resource objectives shared by any business regardless of its size. For example, SMEs must make sure that good levels of employee motivation and engagement exist, that talent is successfully recruited and retained, effective training and development programmes are available and employees are being rewarded correctly.

Our 'trends in HR' report from last year showed how SMEs typically have HR teams ranging from between one and four people, depending on the actual size of the business. These relatively small HR teams must try to achieve all of these things with few resources and often a lack of support from the top - in fact, one of the biggest challenges for HR&D practitioners in the SME environment is building credibility with the senior management team.

HR&D practitioners in the SME environment, therefore, must be highly creative and persuasive in order to achieve the best solutions for their business. Leveraging company values and culture to drive business growth, developing cost effective in-house recruitment processes, innovating in-house training on a cost and time budget and coming up with cost-effective rewards, for example, are just some of the areas that will be on the agenda again next year.

### How to get diversity and inclusion on the agenda

We live in culturally diverse times and recognising and accepting diversity today is an integral part of everyday life. Perhaps because of this, in the business world, recognising and accepting diversity is sometimes taken for granted.

This was highlighted in a recent Deloitte report which revealed that diversity and inclusion were most commonly rated as the least important issues for HR decision makers. The underlying attitude here is conceivably: 'We're a modern business and it's highly unlikely that any of our employees would feel discriminated against in the workplace, so we don't need to prioritise diversity and inclusion initiatives.' But sadly, when organisations dig under the surface, they often find that certain non-inclusive attitudes still prevail.

What has become apparent over the last 12 months is that businesses that excel at promoting diversity in the workplace all have a common attribute - the diversity dialogue is driven from the very top of the organisation. There have been great examples recently of top down driven diversity initiatives at organisations that have appointed senior leaders as diversity champions to drive cultural change across the wider business. Organisations have also made diversity and inclusion part of a wider organisational priority, by developing external projects that support diversity in the community.


Both of these approaches to dealing with diversity and inclusion at work have a real impact on changing attitudes and help to create healthier, more harmonious working environments.



# Steve Blanks

Chair, Digital Leaders North East



 Sue Ormerod,  
Associate Director UK


Sue Ormerod is an Associate Director at Nigel Wright and has been with the business since 2002. She was instrumental in helping establish Nigel Wright's IT recruitment offering and now manages a dedicated team of specialist IT recruiters, who work regionally and nationally. Sue is personally responsible for executive IT appointments throughout the UK and is the account manager for several key clients. She has almost 20 years experience in IT recruitment and can draw on a large network of IT professionals when working on senior appointments.

Digital Leaders (DL) is a collaborative cross sector digital network established in 2008 in London. Since 2013, other regional and national DL networks and hubs have been established in the UK, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as Digital Leaders Europe, based in Brussels. Collectively they comprise 27,000 individuals. >>

We chatted to North East Chair and Escher Group's Head of UK Operations, Steve Blanks, about what Digital Leaders North East (DLNE) has achieved so far and what's on the agenda for the group over the next 12 months. He also shares his views on digital innovation, artificial intelligence (AI) and the future role of the digital leader.

*Could you briefly describe what Digital Leaders is, why it was set up and what its primary objectives are?*

The basic idea behind Digital Leaders is to bring together experts from a cross-section of public and private sector

**Steve Blanks,**   
Chair, Digital Leaders North East



organisations, as well as academic institutions, to debate and ultimately try and solve some of the big challenges facing organisations today in the onset of large scale digital transformation. Individuals are invited to take part in regular (usually monthly) salons, each dedicated to one overarching theme or topic. Ideas and opinions are shared and debated and the outcome is either a white paper or blog, which is submitted to relevant bodies such as government departments, to try and influence policy development. By following the Chatham House Rule – whereby no comments are ever attributed to any particular individual – open discussion is encouraged.

*How is Digital Leaders North East different?*

DLNE was the first DL outside of London. Its aim initially was to focus on regional challenges by engaging with and influencing relevant local authorities. When I became Chair in May 2014, I decided to broaden the focus of DLNE. Although the primary objective is still to influence change in the region, by moving the focus of the salons away from trying to deliver specific digital solutions to instead tackling specific sector challenges, the subsequent blogs and white papers produced after each salon have encouraged meaningful transformational change within particular sectors as well as at a local and central government level. DLNE's aim is to inspire 'high level local interventions' within board rooms and at strategy or policy decision making level. If, as a result of this we have an impact nationally, that's great.

*How do you decide on the theme of each salon?*

Our leadership group is tasked with setting the agenda for each salon. The group usually consists of around six or seven people at any one time

during the year. Members can simply volunteer to join, but in doing so they must be prepared to take active ownership for organising and contributing to the salons. Sometimes the group might decide to re-visit a topic debated at a previous salon if it is felt more discussion around that subject is needed. A recent example was assistive technology, a subject originally raised at a salon last July. This year, we narrowed the focus to look more closely at smart apps in the healthcare sector and the difficulties around procuring services from SMEs. The subsequent salon feedback was relayed to the head of the Clinical Care Commission Group for Gateshead, to influence how digital and technology services could be procured in the future, to open up opportunities for SMEs. We always try to steer away from negative commentary (there's enough of that in the North East already), and instead focus on helpful and positive recommendations to decision makers, such as how to leverage existing opportunities or how to achieve some 'quick wins.'

*How big is the DL network in the North East and how do you attract members?*

We currently have a database of around 600 people based in the region. Those are people who have either previously attended a salon or are contacts that we have approached as part of the preparations for a new salon. Gaining new attendees of salons is really driven by the salon topic. So, for example, the debate on how digital technology was affecting rural tourism generated a lot of interest from individual organisations such as Northumberland Tourism and owners of local businesses, such as B&Bs. These groups were important to the topic as their opinions were seen as really valuable. Identifying people who are designing digital technology or products, or using



**"Healthy debate is good and it's extremely important for us to get a cross-section of people together who will sometimes have opposing views on the issues raised."**



“Nationally, DLNE salons are generally regarded as being the best in terms of content and the fact that DL is often asked to take part in government consultations suggests that it is an increasingly respected and influential body.”

social media to engage with people in innovative ways, are other key stakeholder groups that are always vital to the mix of salon participants. Healthy debate is good and it's extremely important for us to get a cross-section of people together who will sometimes have opposing views on the issues raised.

*Which themes at the salons have divided opinion the most? Conversely, which areas have led to the most collaboration and agreement?*

One of the most well attended salons last year focused on the role of digital platforms to improve the provision of business support. Since the demise of Business Link, much of the support infrastructure in our region has drifted into fragmented silos. This has made it difficult for SMEs in the region to find the support they need at the right time and place. The salon generated a lot of interest and debate resulting in wide agreement of the challenges and potential solutions from each of the attendees. Due to the volume of comments, we decided to follow up the salon with a more detailed focus group session at Newcastle University Living Lab. This session produced an outline white paper that was submitted to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) outlining how businesses could be supported through a digital framework. The same framework has since been referenced in the development of a digital platform for the North East Growth Hub, seen as an exemplar model by BIS for delivering business support. The salon that has generated the most diversity of opinion has been on NHS procurement of assistive technology. Historically, the NHS has relied on large technology companies to develop digital solutions. Our salon revealed that this process is actually stifling the introduction of real innovation into the NHS, which often comes from SMEs developing life and resource saving solutions. In addition, our salon highlighted that SMEs often view NHS procurement processes as cumbersome and expensive. There was a great deal of debate which proved to be largely inconclusive.

*Are you satisfied with the level of influence DLNE is having?*

Nationally, DLNE salons are generally regarded as being the best in terms of content and the fact that DL is often asked to take part in government consultations suggests that it is an increasingly respected and influential body. There are frustrations though, especially around routes to market and the limited resources we have, locally, to get our content read by a wider audience. Over the next 12 months we are aiming to improve how we circulate salon content and a key aspect of this will be to delve deeper into the granular challenges raised at some of our salons, to deliver a more targeted output.



Regional dialogue tends to be very sector based and we want to shape the regional thinking around how technology can have multiple 'quick win' applications.

*In which sectors do you continue to see the most digital innovation? Which sectors are playing catch up?*

The NHS has the most to learn. For example, doctors are still using time consuming methods of recording patient data such as filling in paperwork and then having secretaries' type information into computers. In addition, a lot of hospitals still rely on written faxes to verify patient details. Given the advances in proven technology today, this is very concerning in my opinion. Historically, the construction and manufacturing sectors have also been poor, but there has been real improvement in those industries recently with the use of technologies that help improve production of operational processes. Larger service sector companies are usually the most innovative. However, as one of our salons reported, the cyber security threat is still not taken seriously enough by many organisations; only a third of FTSE 100 companies have a cyber-security specialist on their Board.

We are also seeing the role of the IT Director being re-defined, whereby individuals are expected to have a much broader knowledge of not just technology but the strategic impact of IT aligned to the vision and strategy of the business. This requires a different skillset than that of the traditional IT Director.

*Can you give us an insight into the conclusions and actions that were announced at the annual review on 17th September?*

Cyber security, assistive technology and transport were a big focus this year and are topics we will revisit again over the next twelve months. With regards to cyber security, one of the key findings of our discussions was that small businesses need greater support and advice on how to develop the right strategy to protect themselves from cyber-attacks. It's not just about developing technology solutions, but rather about helping smaller firms create basic processes and protocols to safeguard against data leaks and attacks. Following the assistive technology salon, we presented our salon feedback on the opportunities to develop smart apps within the healthcare sector, as well as our efforts to encourage greater sharing and leveraging of existing digital platforms for healthcare providers. On the subject of transport,

the focus was on presenting the outcome of our debate around 'How digital is shaping the future of transport overseas'. A key area of the presentation was 'the true integration of smart systems' currently being used in places like France and Malaysia – innovations such as intelligent road side lighting and black box technology for cars – and how this technology can be implemented in the UK. An overview of our collaboration with BIS and the ongoing work supporting the North East Growth Hub also formed part of the event.

*Could you tell us a bit more about that collaboration?*

DLNE salons provide the ideal environment to network with a cross section of high quality individuals from all sectors. It was here that Escher Group and Cobweb first came together to discuss how we might collaborate. In November last year, the tender for the North East LEPs Digital Growth Hub was published. Escher already had some good ideas on a technology solution, but our tender response was brought to life by collaborating with Cobweb, who provided the essential content curation service. Because the North East LEP were the first in the UK to develop a digital Growth Hub, (nationally, other Regional Growth Hubs have a physical location with employees based on site providing support to SMEs) the hub is viewed by Government as an exemplar model that other LEPs might one day follow.

The Growth Hub houses a number of unique features that include a dynamic search tool where users can seek answers to commonly asked business related questions and obtain relevant, tailored answers. Secondly, the hub has a built-in social network, providing users with a peer to peer community to share ideas and challenges. The third aspect is a marketplace that makes it easier to connect and join up supply chains. The Growth Hub is designed to bring together the fragmented and siloed support landscape within the North East, and make it easier for SMEs to find the right help, at the right time and place.

*What is a Digital Leader? Is this a concept that will gradually become obsolete in the same way that, once upon a time, businesses used to have a Head of Electricity?*

A digital leader is someone who is championing and implementing digital change within their organisation. That person could be the CEO or any individual working in any discipline. I think it's misleading and maybe even narrow minded to assume a digital leader

will be a technologist, or a marketer or even an IT Director. The latter of which, in my experience, are often the biggest barriers to change. Anyone with enough interest in and passion for digital can understand how it can either complement or provide 'game changing value' to the overall strategy and direction of an organisation. Usually, individuals with a varied background are the most effective digital leaders and I think moving forward, avoiding pigeonholing digital within one department or function will be a key lesson for any business seeking to develop an integrated digital strategy. I think it's really difficult to predict whether or not the role itself will become obsolete. My feeling is that there will always be someone responsible for driving cross-functional digital and technological change and transformation in any organisation, but I'm unsure what that role will ultimately be called.

*What aspects of the broad digital agenda are you most excited about?*

I think artificial intelligence (AI) is a really exciting area and it's something that would provide the ultimate 'killer app' functionality if we could incorporate into the Growth Hub. One of the key challenges for our digital platform is trying to 'match-make' individual requirements with potential solutions that are highly relevant. At the moment this process requires vast amounts of human curation. Developments in AI could eventually result in some really valuable applications in this context, and it's an area of technology that I am keen to monitor more closely. What's interesting about the AI debate in general is the amount of scaremongering associated with it, which does not always help the general public's perception. There will certainly be many positive applications of AI, however whatever your perspective on AI, it is sure to get people talking. It will come as no surprise that DLNE is thinking of hosting a salon next year around the 'opportunities and threats of artificial intelligence'. I suspect, due to the wide ranging implications of AI, this salon is likely to be particularly well attended.

# North East of England CIPD HR&D Awards 2015



Nigel Wright, associate sponsor at the 2015 North East of England CIPD HR&D Awards, helped to celebrate the region's best HR and Development practitioners and companies. >>

Over 400 delegates from across the North East gathered at the NewcastleGateshead Hilton hotel to celebrate the individuals and organisations leading the way in HR and development. Nigel Wright was an associate sponsor of the 2015 North East of England CIPD Awards, which rewarded the achievements of some of the region's brightest and best employers including a car manufacturer, a fire brigade and a call centre.

Among the employers recognised were Northern Powergrid, DB Regio, Esh Group, Northumbrian Water Group, Home Group, The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Walkers Snack Foods. Nigel Wright's Sue O'Donovan said, "This year's awards were bigger than ever with a record number of applications, even more support from existing and new sponsors and the quality

of applications was superb, giving our judges a fantastic challenge deciding this year's winners."

Within the 400 plus crowd at the CIPD HR&D Awards in Gateshead were professionals who have proven they are exemplary in terms of HR and Development in recent months, alongside colleagues and friends who were there to celebrate, network and enjoy the special atmosphere of the event.



## The winners...

**Health and Wellness**  
Winner – Northern Powergrid

**Learning and Development Programme**  
Winner – DB Regio Tyne and Wear Ltd.

**HR&D Technology**  
Winner – Esh Group

**Change Management Project of the Year**  
Winner – Northumbrian Water Group

**Rewards and Benefits**  
Winner – Home Group

**People Development**  
Winner – The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

**Employee Engagement**  
Winner – Walkers Snack Foods Ltd.

**Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace**  
Winner – Muckle LLP

**SME HR&D**  
Winner – TH\_NK

**HR&D Team of the Year**  
Winner – NCFE



# Living & working in the North East

not as bad as it seems?



One candidate's journey to the region via France, Spain, Belgium, Nigeria, London, Wales and Scotland. >>

...recent unhelpful media depictions of the region that have caused a stir have focused on misleading indications of 'widespread decline' such as empty train stations at rush hour, boarded up shops and vandalised street signs.

The reputation of the North East as a place to live and work has certainly improved in recent years but there is still a lot to be done, regionally and nationally, to help raise the profile of an area forever associated with high unemployment, low skill jobs and a harsh way of life. Although there is usually a fairly regular stream of statistics and reports that allude to the fact that things are changing for the better, these are typically accompanied by an equal number of disparaging accounts that seek to reinforce historically negative perceptions.

Some recent unhelpful media depictions of the region that have caused a stir have focused on misleading indications of 'widespread decline' such as empty train stations at rush hour, boarded up shops and vandalised street signs. All of these things, while undoubtedly concerning, are not entirely exclusive to the whole 780 square miles that make up the nine counties of the North East, or indeed to this region compared to others in the UK. Unfortunately, there is a tendency within some circles to take this kind of anecdotal evidence as proof that, regardless of the amount of investment it receives, the region is effectively a lost cause.

Even some individuals who want to find a solution to the North East's supposed woes often miss the mark completely: for example, by pointing to the North East's 'usefulness' only as a centre for back office support, for businesses that require a hardworking yet low paid workforce to carry out basic administrative tasks. Or, concerningly, another particularly high profile instance from last year was the suggestion that the North East become a testing ground for fracking, the controversial method for shale gas extraction, being that there was simply 'plenty of room' in the area (and very little else going on).

Nigel Wright, the North East's largest recruitment company, is one local stakeholder that believes this kind of rhetoric paints a misleading picture of the region. Since the 1980s, Nigel Wright has aligned itself with the North East's best companies, as well as other UK and international firms that have chosen to establish operations here. The business has successfully built an internationally acclaimed brand of recruitment using the North East as a foundation to facilitate its growth overseas. A key factor that has remained consistent in its

delivery of recruitment services to the region is the identification and hiring of the best local or externally available talent.

According to CEO Paul Wilson, 'The number of professionals working at all levels and in a variety of sectors that we have relocated here from elsewhere in the UK or indeed the world, over the last three decades, clearly highlights that the region is an attractive place to live and work. To suggest otherwise can be very damaging to the local economy.' Wilson, who himself lives in the region, continued, 'The North East is well known for its incredibly talented and diverse workforce and this pool wouldn't exist if it wasn't for the outstanding work that is done by companies based here in developing their staff and helping them to move forward in their careers.'

One candidate who relocated to the North East for the second time in his career last year, after being approached by Nigel Wright, is Nicolas Pitrat. Nicolas is a French national with extensive experience living and working in the UK as well as a variety of international markets including France, Spain, Belgium and Nigeria. He noted that 'Perceptions of the North East held by people living in the south of the UK, or indeed overseas, are usually completely different to the actual experience of living in the region. It's a great place to further develop your career as well as raise a family.'

Nicolas first arrived in the UK from France in 2005 to take up the post of Financial Controller for GE Aviation, based in London. After 15 months Nicolas was moved internally to GE's site near Cardiff but following his appointment as Global Financial Controller for GE Oil & Gas in 2008, he was relocated again, this time to Newcastle upon Tyne, to work out of the GE head office. He admitted, 'Being French and having only ever lived in the south of the UK, I didn't know the North East region at all – I had to look at a map to find out where Newcastle was.' When GE Oil & Gas acquired Wellstream in 2011 another relocation was on the cards for Nicolas but his desire to stay in the North East, following three happy years here, saw him accept a new role thus keeping him and his family in the region for a further three years. His decision was driven by multiple factors.

<< Durham Cathedral

In his words, 'I believe that the North East is an unknown gem in the UK. There are fantastic companies here, as well as opportunities, and it has the added bonus of offering a great work-life balance – better than anywhere else I've lived. It's very close to the countryside with plenty of outdoor activities, especially for young families, to do at weekends. At heart though I'm a city person, and I believe Newcastle to be a fantastic city; it has great restaurants and a diversity of world-class leisure and cultural attractions on offer. The travel connections with the rest of the region, the country, Europe and indeed the world are also superb.'

Business needs meant Nicolas had to leave the North East in 2014 to join GE Oil & Gas Subsea Systems in Aberdeen. He explained that he and his family never really settled there and after a year, he began proactively seeking a new job that would bring him back to the region. When Nigel Wright approached Nicolas for a role as Finance Director at Tracerco – a global oil and gas services business headquartered in Teesside with divisions in Europe, North America, Malaysia, the Middle East, Brazil, China and Australia – he jumped at the chance to take on what he described as a '...great opportunity for me and my family'.

At Tracerco, which is a subsidiary of FTSE 100 firm Johnson Matthey, Nicolas leads a small team and has day to day responsibility for managing the company accounts as well as a much broader commercial and operational role across the wider global business. Nicolas was keen to emphasise that it's not only the jobs that are great in the North East, but the professional networks are also better here than those he has experienced elsewhere. 'There is a close knit finance community in the region and through a series of regular networking opportunities I regularly get to meet new people as well as catch up with old associates and colleagues.'

Furthermore, what was particularly apparent to Nicolas when he returned to the region for the second time was how easy it was to get his children into good schools. He noted that this is clearly one of the factors that really sets the North East apart from London, for example, where he is aware a number of his friends have struggled to find adequate schools for their kids. Nicolas added that school activities, clubs and support networks for children are generally also better here. Through school, his children now have memberships at local horse riding, tennis and rugby clubs, all of which, according to Nicolas were '...easy to arrange'.

As a senior manager in a global firm, Nicolas has a recruitment remit and contends that he has found it comparatively easier to recruit excellent people in the North East than he has in other parts of the country. In his words, 'Talented



individuals specialising in any discipline who, for example, you would often find working in large blue-chip firms in the south or overseas, don't want to give up the quality of life they have here and are subsequently more open to giving their expertise and knowledge to the world class smaller businesses in the region.' He added, 'The universities here are also fantastic and graduates do tend to stay here for work once they've finished their studies. The work ethic here is likewise extremely high; people are really willing to pull their weight.'

Interestingly, according to Nicolas, another talent asset for the North East is the plethora of expats '...who feel like they've 'done their time' in London or overseas and want to return to the region and enjoy all of the lifestyle benefits here'. On the occasions when he has had to look outside of the North East for talent, Nicolas explained that he has gained the interest of a lot of top tier 'natives' wanting to come home. Usually though, the talent already exists in the local area and Nicolas, like many professionals in the region, believes that more needs to be done to promote the quality of the workforce, 'Most businesses

simply don't realise the availability of talent.' If they did, more companies would establish offices here and there would be even more great opportunities available.'

Amidst the plethora of doom and gloom stories about the plight of the region, it is becoming harder to ignore the fact that despite its historical problems, the North East has a lot of things to be thankful for. For a long time now the tourism industry has often described the region with its beautiful coastline, sandy beaches, breath-taking views and abundance of ancient buildings and historical sites, as one of Britain's 'best kept secrets'. Yes, a prime holiday spot, but even better for those actually living here. And earlier this year, two reports also revealed some surprising facts. The Resolution Foundation, an economic think tank, confirmed in a report published in August that people in the North East have actually enjoyed the biggest rise in living standards since the start of the recession.

Furthermore, an annual prosperity index compiled by Barclays Bank, also released in August, and which considers various socio-economic factors including pay, business growth rates and exam results, has revealed that overall prosperity in the region has grown faster than the national average in the past five years. The report also states that the number of millionaires living in the North East has doubled since 2010, as well as the fact that the region boasts the second best overall exam results

in the country and the best 'entrepreneurial scene' outside of London. These are both classic examples of factors that are not widely reported in the UK, but which should provide excellent encouragement to any individual considering moving here.

For well-travelled Nicolas, Newcastle is now the city he has lived the longest in his life and he and his family generally now think of the North East as their home. For others who are weighing up a possible move to the region, Nicolas said he would recommend that they visit first and perhaps '...spend a few days here and get a feel for what it's like.' He also suggested talking to as many people as possible, ask a lot of questions and read widely; 'Focus on the profile of the people, the quality of the schools and which areas are family friendly and so on.' He added, 'Certainly, if you're used to living in major cities like London and Paris, then culturally, it is a big change and you need to be absolutely sure it's the right move for you and your family.'

### What Nicolas said about Nigel Wright

"Nigel Wright offer a very friendly and honest service. During the recruitment process I built a good rapport with the consultants and was grateful that they made an effort to keep in touch and keep me up to date with any developments. I was also impressed that they would even agree to chat at weekends if we couldn't find the time to catch up during the week.

The interview preparation provided was very thorough and included details on the specific individuals I would be meeting and their expectations, which was valuable. Significantly, they also provided me with a very detailed candidate pack outlining the history, culture, vision and values of Tracerco as well as useful information and further sources of investigation for relocating to the North East. Not all recruiters do this, so it made Nigel Wright stand out in terms of service."

Scarborough,  
North Yorkshire



"Perceptions of the North East held by people living in the South of the UK, or indeed overseas, are usually completely different to the actual experience of living in the region."



# Nigel Wright raises over £10,000



for Cancer Research UK

In July 2015, the company raised a grand total of £10,700 on behalf of the charity by taking part in the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge. >>

Twenty seven employees from across seven international offices took part in the walk, with many completing the route in under nine hours.

Sarah Dargue, managing consultant of Nigel Wright's finance team, made an outstanding individual contribution by raising over £1,000.

The Company regularly raises funds through a variety of activities and a significant contribution was also made as part of the Nigel Wright Summer Party event which brought together its employees to celebrate a great year so far for the company. Here, we raised £1,300 towards our fundraising.

Our aim in the last 12 months was to raise an overall total of £20,000.

CEO Paul Wilson, commented: *"We are delighted to have Cancer Research UK as our designated company charity and to continue our support for this wholly worthwhile cause. Additionally, we are extremely proud of our team for taking part in the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge and indeed many of the other events that we organise."*

*"So far, a fantastic sum of money has been raised and our gratitude extends to the friends and families of our employees who take the time to donate and spread the word of our efforts."*



# WE WILL BEAT CANCER SOONER.

One in two people now survive cancer. Together we've achieved so much, but we won't stop until we've beaten it altogether.

Join the fight at [cruk.org](http://cruk.org)



One in two people diagnosed with cancer in 2010 will survive the disease for at least 10 years. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (11889464), Scotland (SC341696) and the Isle of Man (11103) and registered as a company limited by guarantee in England & Wales (No. 4325234). Registered address: Angel Building, 407 St John Street, London EC3Y 4AD. © Cancer Research UK 2014. All rights reserved.



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