

GODPARENT



RED SOFA INTERVIEW

ANDREW FRANKLIN, AREA DIRECTOR, HSBC

Andrew Franklin takes a seat on the Red Sofa and talks about his 'Business Help Series'

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DIGITAL

CYBER-ATTACK... IT FOLLOWS A PROCESS

What can you do to protect yourself against a cyber-attack? Read our top tips.

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THE BUSINESS GODPARENT

Life regularly throws curved balls, and by Jove the UK is tackling a few this year. What with Brexit, floods, and Covid-19, it's certainly been turbulent, to say the least. But it's worth remembering we're all in this together and we will overcome these challenges; it's what we're good at. The landscape may change, and we may feel battered and bruised, but I encourage you to take a look through the window. Out there, with daylight lasting longer than night, and with winter moving on, trees are in leaf, birds are singing, and frogs are getting up to all manner of unmentionables in ponds. There is always hope in the ancient cyclical rhythms of the world. And we must hold onto that thought; now more than ever before.

ROGER EDDOWES
BUSINESS GODPARENT



DODGING THE SCAMMERS

The government is wisely advising us to stay at home. The medical experts are wisely advising us to wash our hands frequently. And now, the cybersecurity gurus are wisely advising us to be even more vigilant regarding coronavirus scams. Insidious as it is... there are people out there still trying to do digital harm. But we won't let them beat us!

What you need to watch out for...

Online websites: Authorities have seen a rise in complaints regarding products that have been ordered and paid for but not delivered. The obvious ones are for face masks, sanitiser, possibly even toilet paper! But,

tickets, loans, even dating apps have seen a rise in dodgy behaviour. So be wary.

Phishing: Phishing emails aren't a new problem, but coronavirus related messages are seeping through our mental defence shields and causing havoc. Malicious attachments, fraudulent data gathering, duplicate login pages... all these are presenting cyber security challenges. If you receive an email purportedly from an organisation like the World Health Organisation (WHO) be very cautious. Don't click on any links, don't subscribe to any newsletters, don't make any donations through the email, and don't suddenly start investing in Bitcoin if you're not fully acquainted with the provider!

Another prevalent one is a fake email from HMRC advising people of a refund. It may look very convincing, but if it looks too good to be true... that adage still works. However, if you must check, go to HMRC's website directly yourself and not via the email.

Our Top Tips

- Don't click on links in emails or open attachments unless you know for sure who they're from
- Only purchase from reputable suppliers online, and always use your credit card (you are then protected)
- Keep your anti-virus software up to date

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT – JAKE STUBBS, ACCOUNTS



What does a day in the life of Jake look like?

I'll arrive and check my diary first thing. If I have any meetings to discuss monthly management figures, I'll plan for those, otherwise I'll crack on with preparing accounts, doing CIS returns, and updating Xledger (bookkeeping and finance software) for various clients. Then, with a full day under my belt, I'll often head to the gym, knock up a bite to eat, and finally catch a bit of TV before bed.

What's my favourite sandwich filling?

Chicken and stuffing... you can't beat it (especially when it's part of a meal deal!).

Do I prefer dogs or cats?

I'm definitely a dog person, though we have a cat at the moment. Hmm....

What is my claim to fame?

I've met the Manchester City team! Well, I bumped into them as they were going for a jog in Wales, does that count? I remember spotting David James; I have an eye for a goal keeper.

If I could take just 5 things to a desert island, what would they be?

A football (of course), music (played on a device with solar power), a lighter (for a fire), a toothbrush (you have to look after your teeth!), and a knife (no explanation needed).



ANDREW FRANKLIN ON THE RED SOFA

Interviewer: What do you feel the main challenges are for local businesses today, and how do you see HSBC supporting these?

Andrew: I think there are two main challenges. The first is that SMEs, even limited companies with a couple of directors, have to find all the answers themselves. This is one area where we're trying to help local businesses by bringing experts in to help. The second is that business owners can spend too much time within a business without seeing the wood for the trees. It would really help if they allocated time to take a helicopter view to work out how to make their business one percent better. If they did that every week, then in theory they could improve their business by half.

Interviewer: Essendon see an accountant's role as changing to a more advisory role in the coming years due to technology. Do you see HSBC taking a similar stance? And how is technology influencing your role?

Andrew: I agree. I think that when you spend time with your relationship manager, whichever bank it is, they should be adding value with each interaction. The day to day stuff can be covered by internet/telephone banking. But every interaction should lead your relationship manager to look at your business and either try to make it better or enable them to understand how they can provide the best service.

Interviewer: 2020 has already seen a huge milestone with the UK leaving the EU. What opportunities do you feel will arise from this? And what should we look out for?

Andrew: That's a difficult one. Whenever there is change there will be opportunity. And it's those businesses that react in a positive way who will be the winners. How can they do that? Again, by taking time out of their business and looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and understanding what they could do to improve. But they also have to realise it's not just about product. It's about what experience comes with that product, because people aren't just buying based on price now.

Interviewer: HSBC locally are seen as being proactive in supporting their customers with the 'Business Help Series'. What prompted HSBC to set this up?

Andrew: What made me start the 'Business Help Series'? Well, my wife went into business and I've got thirty years' experience in banking, so I thought I could just use that to help her. What I discovered, though, is that I didn't know half the things she had to tackle. I have no idea about branding, or about managing staff in a small business. Or how to promote it. Or how to use social media. And I suddenly thought, if my wife is going through that, my customers must be going through it too. How could I help them?

Through my network. I can see what's working well for some customers, and what isn't, and I needed to put them in touch with experts who could help make their business better. Now we've got nine experts covering everything from branding, to public relations, to human relations, to grants. We've had twenty customers go through this, and we are up to £300,000 of grant applications.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for our readership on how to maximise their relationship with their bank manager? And the benefits this can bring?

Andrew: The relationship you have is actually with your relationship manager. It's the same as any relationship a business has with a customer or a supplier. You've got to ask yourself:

- 1) Do I like my manager?
- 2) Is he/she capable? And
- 3) Does he/she deliver what I need?

If your manager does 2) & 3) but you just don't like him, you can live with that. But if he/she doesn't do two out of the three, you need to find yourself a new manager; one who ticks 'yes' to each question. Then you'll be able to share everything about your business, and you'll feel happy that you're doing that. Because if a bank is going to help you, they really need to understand your business.

CYBER-ATTACK... IT FOLLOWS A PROCESS

As we are currently very aware, "attack" on our world can come from many angles. But there is still one that businesses, perhaps more than ever, need to protect against constantly; cyber-attack. Some businesses don't think they'll be a target, but the problem is that if it does strike it can have a considerable impact on operations, cash flow and reputation; and in reality all businesses are potential targets. So with that said, what happens? And what can you do to help prevent it?

Watch out for the four key stages

Reconnaissance: This is when the attacker is checking you out. They'll be looking at your email addresses, passwords etc. checking stuff out on the dark web. They'll be listing your IP addresses. Testing your email system. And seeing if you're actually worth their time.

Attack phase: When they decide to pounce, they'll attempt to gain access – having sussed your passwords etc. – and then amend system privileges to give themselves free rein. At this point, you won't even know they're there.

They'll often simply watch your behaviour and install new backdoors whilst they observe.

Expansion: This next phase is where the trouble really begins. They may steal your accounting info, address books, databases etc. And they may well install malware and start phishing others via your system because you're a trusted system elsewhere. Nasty stuff!

Obfuscation: And once they've done their dirty work, they'll take steps to conceal their tracks. They'll delete logs and do whatever they can to frustrate forensic experts from tracing who they are. And it's very likely they'll also set things up for another attack in the future. Yeuch!

So what can you do to protect yourself? Well, we'd recommend many things, including:

- Ensuring patches and updates are always installed regularly
- Having a procedure to change usernames and passwords on a regular basis... and doing it!



- Installing a strong firewall and antivirus etc. software
- Frequent training and updating of staff on cyber security
- Regular system audits
- Getting a Cyber Essentials security certificate

And one final point, if you're in any doubt about any aspect... get professional advice.



10 THINGS TO DO AFTER COVID-19

There's no two ways about it, we are all itching to get back to some sense of 'normal' and we're already looking forward to what we're going to do! What are you most looking forward to?

1. Celebrate belated family birthdays
2. Take the pet to the vet for a check up
3. Catch up on health appointments, such as the dentist
4. Have a hair cut
5. Visit a relative
6. Get back to doing 10,000 steps per day
7. Book a UK holiday
8. Treat yourself to a meal out to support your local restaurant
9. Do something different, like a cookery course
10. Continue to foster community spirit



ESSENDON FORESIGHT

Track cashflow... to be in the know!

Many businesses are struggling with cashflow at the moment, and yes, we know that's stating the obvious. But it's times like these that highlight just how important cashflow is to a business; it's not all about profit, unfortunately. Cashflow forecasting in good times helps a business owner plan ahead for growth. In tough times, though, it really helps them grit their teeth and not lose hope.

At Essendon, many of our clients use a handy little app called Fluidly to help them track their cashflow. It can connect to your accounting software, analyse your data, and present you with a detailed baseline cashflow forecast... at the press of a button. It does the number crunching, so you can then do the strategising and planning.

Do you...

- Loathe nasty surprises?
- Hate compiling cashflow spreadsheets?
- Want to be able to make swift financial decisions?
- Love information at your fingertips?



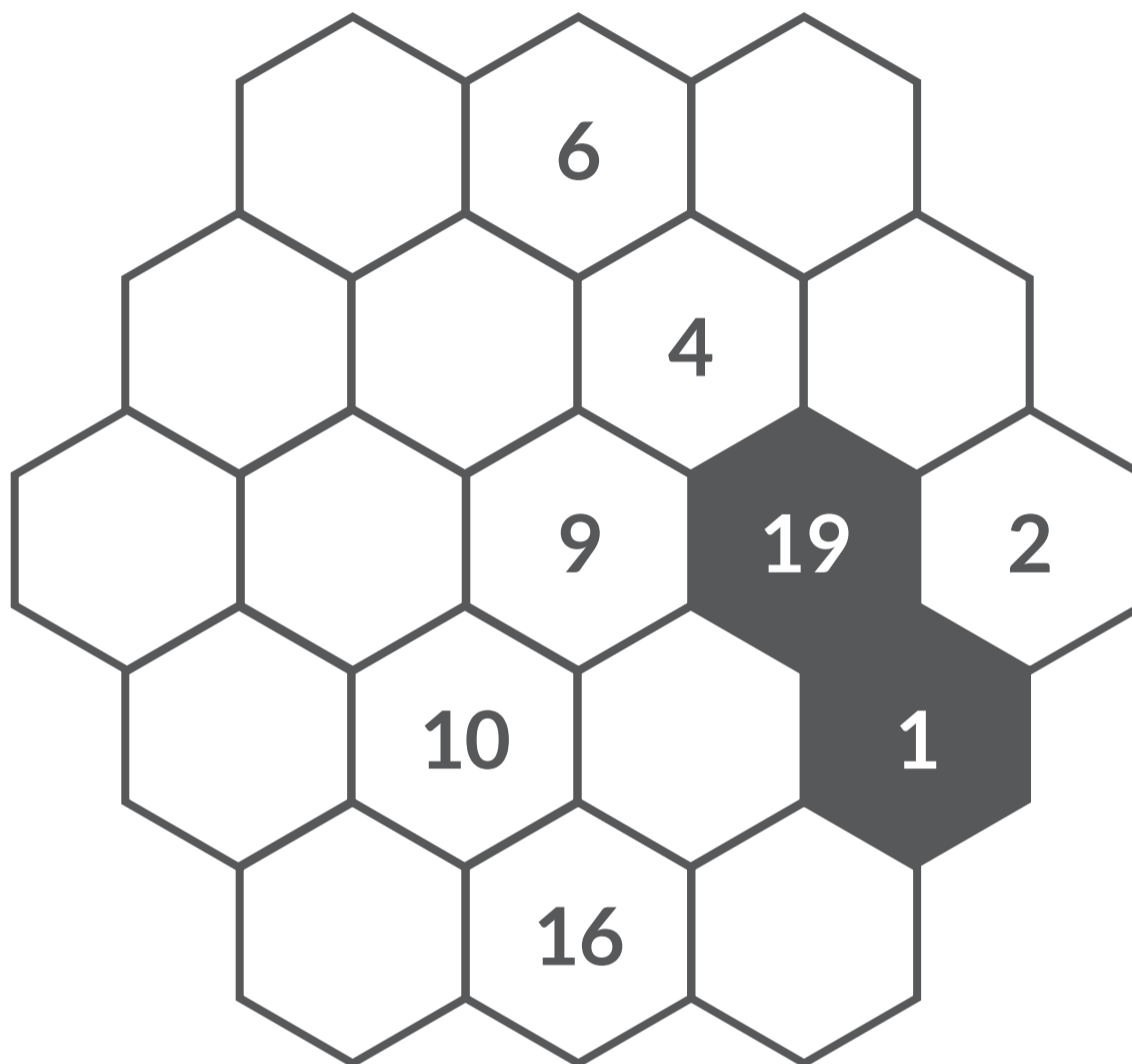
**Cashflow
 advisor**

Have a look at Fluidly... we reckon it's a game changer for businesses wanting to take control of their finances. And if you discover a nasty hole, we have a superb team of financial collaborators who can help you work out how to plug it!

MINDBENDERS HIDATO

The goal of Hidato is to fill the grid with consecutive numbers that connect horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

The smallest and the highest numbers are given on the grid and it has been partially filled to get you started.



Answer (top to bottom, left to right) -
 7, 6, 5, 12, 8, 4, 3, 13, 11, 9, 19, 2, 14, 10, 18, 1, 15, 16, 17

Want to maximise the potential of your business? Contact the Business Godparent now to steer you in the right direction.

Call today on 01908 774320



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