

Lockdown has made us all change

We have now been in and out of lockdown for almost a year. It would have been difficult to foresee last February what lay ahead for all of us in 2021.

For our February [newspaper](#) I spoke to some smart people in business in Edinburgh who have reinvented themselves and innovated to stay afloat and prosper after the pandemic pandemonium.

They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and it strikes me that some people and businesses are better poised than others to take advantage of the new lifestyle that we have all had to embrace.

I set out to find some people who have made the best of things during lockdown, some of whom have made big changes to their lives. If you have then I would be delighted to hear from you.



Kirsty Mackenzie runs her business Boyes Botanics from Edinburgh Palette at St Margaret's House on London Road. She told us that with a business creating wedding flowers she had to change. Kirsty said: "As a result of the pandemic, which sadly resulted in a number of postponed weddings and events during 2020, I found the time to get through that to-do-list that I never had time for before.

"I opened an online dried flower shop and started offering a local Edinburgh doorstep delivery every Wednesday, which went down pretty well. Creating new products and ideas kept me going through the weeks, plus it was so lovely just to see people's (socially distanced) reactions upon receiving their delivery, which was an absolute bonus – definitely keeping this going." www.boyesbotanics.com

WRITING YOUR WAY TO THE TOP



Joan Dewar explained that she finished off a project she had already started. She said: “I finished my children’s novel last year whilst in isolation. I was delighted when it got accepted for publishing. It was released in mid December with a futttt.. rather than a bang!

“Due to lock down and bookstores being closed I’m trying to raise awareness of my novel using social media (I’m definitely not within my comfort zone here). I’m connecting with people who may be able to spread the word and help me promote my book to the great reading public, especially those who are home-schooling (poor souls) and are looking to find ways to divert their kids and wean them away from their screens by introducing them to reading a good book. I believe children need good stories.”

You can have a look at (and perhaps buy) Joan’s book [here](#).



Rachel Atkinson

Rachel Atkinson of [red feather consulting](#) says she has completely changed her life during the pandemic. Rachel explained: “My uncle was one of the first 400 people to pass away last March and I’ve used it as a kick up the butt.

“I’ve left my job, set up on my own as a [freelancer](#), changed my lifestyle to be much healthier, lost weight and generally embraced a life I’ve always wanted. There is some guilt involved as so many people struggle – but personally I’ve quite enjoyed many elements.”

Rachel set up her HR consulting firm and her mission, with 20

years of HR experience behind her, is to help charities and purpose led organisations “challenge traditional ways of working and create a new normal through their people”.

SWIM TO SUCCESS

Colin Campbell works in PR during the day, but at other times you may also find him down in Wardie Bay. He has been working towards a qualification as an open water swim coach for a few years now.



Colin swimming in Orkney

Due to the pandemic, swimming pools have been closed and swimming in the sea is one option for keen water babies. With his new qualification achieved in autumn 2019, Colin set up a social enterprise called Scottish Swimmer which intends to offer swimming lessons to people who don't have access to pools.

Colin said: “It has since evolved into wanting to tackle the barriers that prevent people from enjoying open water swimming, as well as creating employment. It’s very early days for the social enterprise side of things, and lockdown has made it doubly difficult.

“Having said that, lockdown has enabled my business to grow (and indeed other coaches have had the same experience). I was on furlough and was then made redundant, so it gave me time to run enough coaching sessions to meet demand.”

Colin is not treading water though – and has just recruited assistant coach Louise Fleming so that they can both help people discover the benefits of outdoor swimming. He says it is good for mental health, motivation, confidence, sleeping, skin and circulation. www.scottishswimmer.com

KILTED

John Kinloch Anderson is part of the latest generation to look after the family firm. [Kinloch Anderson](#) is a Royal Warrant holder and experts in tartans and kilts.

John told us: “No doubt the current situation has made it challenging for what are deemed ‘non-essential’ businesses. To all business owners and their employees, in a way their business is essential, as it provides income to support their livelihoods. Therefore, in the short term, one has to adapt.

“A few of the ways this can be done are to diversify products, combining what one can make with what people are wanting/requiring. In our case this is face masks. Never would we have thought a year or so ago we would make thousands of face masks, but if that is what is required, that is what you do.

“Change the method of delivery of service. Instead of physically looking after customers in store you have to look

at online, and business was already heading that way but has now accelerated into the digital world and so becomes an obvious area to focus resources on. This includes trying new digital strategies and take for example measuring for a kilt – if you can't do that in person the next best option would be over a video appointment.

“We hear a lot about costs and it is correct that, although the furlough scheme is crucial for many businesses, there are continuing costs of running a business over and above staffing. For almost all small business, cutting costs is a significant means to withstanding the current financial pressures.

“This can be difficult for many reasons and there requires a critical mass of resource to be left, otherwise when business conditions improve, they will not be able to operate effectively again. However, in a more positive way this can be looked at as an opportunity to evaluate what aspects of the business are important and what direction you want to take going forward. On that note you may not want to completely change the direction of your business as chances are, the world will probably return back to something like the shape it was in before Covid, albeit some aspects of life and business may change for the longer term.”

<https://www.kinlochanderson.com>





THE WRITE STUFF



Steven Bartlett

Steven Bartlett is a journalism graduate who is on the lookout for new opportunities. But he has not been sitting about. He volunteered with [Heart of Newhaven Community](#) as their

Communications Assistant to keep his writing skills alive.

On top of that, he has been conscious of his own wellbeing. He said: "Like many I am a passionate sports fan but never really entered the world of sport again although I consistently remained active. I will take running and a new-found passion for health out of this pandemic.

"Looking after myself, going vegetarian, and walking more. Normal life meant perhaps I took my slim physique as an excuse. Perhaps on a personal note, I will live longer because of the pandemic.

"My new-found passion for healthy eating and sport will hopefully do that. I find the contrast between this and the reality of the world awful, and I often feel guilty for it. I can't say this has been a perfect scenario, but I have been thinking about it."

WELL, WELL, WELLNESS

Edinburgh-based Issy Warrack and her co-founder, Dr Estrelita Janse van Rensburg, had formed a company, www.wellnesseq.net before the pandemic.

At the outset they put their wellness plan online and wrote a book, *Eat Well or Die Slowly: Your Guide to Metabolic Health*, which explains how the government's guide to healthy eating is in their view so dangerously inaccurate that it could be responsible for a large percentage of all Covid deaths in Britain.

Dr Estrelita van Rensburg and Issy Warrack



Issy claims that “The Eatwell Guide”, created by Public Health England, carries a swathe of nutritional advice that has been shown to increase the likelihood of obesity and type-2 diabetes. She says that the two conditions have both been found to increase the risk of complications from Covid-19.

Issy said: “Our wellness Optimiser Plan takes a different approach to food, adopting a low carb healthy fat approach which is beneficial for reducing weight long-term, diabetes remission, heart disease, dementia and cancer. We then wrote another book, Eat Your Way to Health: Recipes for Success. We would never had the time to focus on these projects otherwise.”

HOSPITALITY CODE

[Amy Browne](#), who previously worked in the hospitality industry, made the decision to change careers from hospitality to tech

after seeing the effect tech was having on her industry.

She noticed it becoming more apparent how tech was going to grow through the pandemic. Throughout lockdown she enrolled in the CodeClan 16 week intensive professional software development course and graduated in January.

Amy is proud to be considered a female in tech and wants to continue pushing herself to keep learning. The best thing about this pandemic for her was learning a completely new skill that will create a fulfilling career filled with opportunities.

SCOTTISH BUSINESS PODCAST



Sebastian Mackay moved to Edinburgh from New Zealand about three weeks before the March lockdown. He said: "Having been involved in the NZ business community through business mentoring and my own small business, I could see that CEOs weren't really sure how to navigate the work from home orders

and what that meant for their companies.

“It took a little while, but I started up the Scottish Business Podcast, where I interviewed CEOs about leadership styles, healthy routines, how their businesses were adapting to the pandemic and started releasing those weekly on my LinkedIn, Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

“The idea was to help provide a space where people could feel and be supported and also get informed opinions on leadership, decision making processes and crisis management and navigation.

“Guests included the Scottish Business Resilience Centre, CodeClan, the School for CEOs, Float and many others.

“The first series ran for about 20 episodes and these conversations were incredibly personal and candid, dealing with burn, stress management and the like. There’s no sponsorship, and I don’t make any money from it, I just thought it would be useful for at least one person to have access to the information.”

BACK TO THE OFFICE

There is a lovely office building on George Street where WeWork have spaces and offices for their members. The Community Manager, Chris Lavery, explained: “The pandemic has shown that while people can work from home, it is clearly not a sustainable long-term solution. We know first-hand that our members miss the collaborative, creative and social nature of the workplace, citing burnout and a lack of work-life separation as downsides to remote working.

“We’re already seeing businesses start to adopt a hybrid approach that combines remote and in-person work and injects a new level of flexibility into their workplace strategies, giving employees more choice, and supporting their mental

wellbeing. Most importantly, employees must feel safe when they return to work.

“At WeWork we have modified our spaces and enhanced sanitisation measures across our 800+ locations to protect our members and employees. The roof terrace at our Edinburgh location on George Street also provides members with a great outdoor space to work from – once the weather gets warmer, that is!”



We Work on George Street with inspirational views