



Annual Review 2021

ape
technology
solutions

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Andrew Bernard's Foreword:



In these past twelve months, there has been precious little to get very excited about, so it gives me enormous pleasure to be able to write something truly celebratory about a new business started by a young person.

I met Alfie through a mutual acquaintance on Twitter, Dr Emma Kell, who rightly thought there would be some resonance between us. As many of you will know, Alfie's story includes the uncovering of skills, a passion for helping others and sadly, an education system that was – at the time – unable to accommodate the changes Alfie needed to make to his life and learning.

The genesis and development of Ape Technology Solutions echo a wider and quickly emerging issue which we need to discuss – namely that of post-covid

recovery and the effects of Brexit on the career aspirations and realities for young people in the coming years. The World Bank is predicting a global contraction of 5.2% growth caused by the 2020 pandemic, the rebuild from that will take years. On top of this, the UK Government's decision to refuse to extend the Brexit transition period, the continuing issues with the customs border in Northern Ireland and with imports to the EU from Britain shrinking by 40% in January 2021 there's going to be a tough time ahead for the economy.

Big employers are changing working patterns and recruitment will stall.

Ok, that's the bad news. What about the good news?

Well, what Alfie is proving with Ape Technology Solutions is that with support, learning and passion, young people will be able to create businesses of their own, use the skills and vision they have alongside the expertise of supportive organisations and their networks to develop self-employment opportunities for themselves and others.

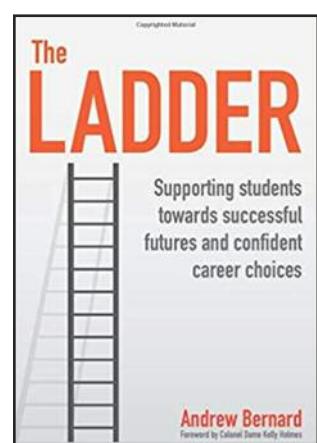
There are 5.9 million small businesses in the UK employing less than 49 people – and 76% of these have no employees...there are therefore 4.5 million sole-traders in the UK. Without a true focus on learning about starting a business, we are leaving potentially thousands of people at a disadvantage as they leave education and start their businesses. It's time we seriously developed entrepreneurial thinking in young people and changed the traditional model pathways (school, college, university, work...) to one which recognises there are HUGE changes we need to accommodate. Enterprise and entrepreneurship are a vital component of the changes required.

Having the skills and passion is one thing, being able to do what Alfie and his team are doing through Ape Technology is quite another. It takes confidence, chutzpah and leadership to convince businesses they need to employ a young team to solve their IT challenges and I'm continually impressed by what they've been able to do, as well as inspiring other young people along the way.

I wish all the team, clients and Alfie himself all the best for a successful future...this is just that start!

Bernie

Andrew 'Bernie' Bernard is an international speaker, entrepreneur and author. His business Innovative Enterprise has worked with over 150,000 young people since 2006 and he is a Director of National Careers Week. His book, The Ladder: supporting students towards successful futures and confident career choices, is available from Crown House. <https://www.crownhouse.co.uk/publications/the-ladder>



Our Purpose



Our purpose at Ape Technology Solutions is to help clients navigate their way through the jungle of technology. Whether our clients need help with web design and development, digital marketing and social media, or IT Network Management - we guide them through the daunting process of building a strategy and we execute it for them.

Performance

Our performance sheet reflects that of a bootstrap, start-up business. We were born in the middle of a shutdown economy – and we're now an established limited company, with an office and international client base.

Please find our performance projections for the year ahead.

Performance Projections:

We have set ourselves a steep financial goal – to achieve 1.5x our Year 1 revenue. So, that's a total of £65,100 of sales revenue we're looking to achieve, up from £43,400.

Our performance:

In the last year, we have poured our earnings into capital investment, which you would expect for a new company.

In an economic climate where businesses are struggling to stay afloat, we have successfully launched and grown our business, even taking on employees.

The impact our work has for our clients will always be more significant than what the balance sheet says. Having said this, in the next year we expect our balance sheet to demonstrate a significant increase in our profits.

Our business

Over the last year, we have evolved from being a single freelance web designer to becoming a fully-fledged digital agency. A few of our major milestones include:



Our strategy

Transparency and being open and honest with our clients and stakeholders is critical for us. When we first launched, we hoped to achieve a turnover of £12,000 a year – we had no detailed business strategy, and we weren't sure how we thought it would go. Our primary focus was to help our clients, delivering great results along the way, as well as growing our network and client base. We are certain we have achieved this – otherwise almost all of our clients come from word-of-mouth referrals based off our work.

Although it is fair to say this strategy has worked for us so far, we are constantly reviewing and adapting how we are operating – especially as the business matures. Our focuses this year are to continue to grow and expand our client base, and also to make sure that our business remains sustainable and self-sufficient.

During our first year, we have invested heavily in capital equipment. In essence, this means acquiring the relevant technical equipment for our business, including computers, cameras, lighting and sound production equipment, and investing in our creative hub. We know that these initial expenses have been a good investment, as we have to have the correct tools to provide the best service to our clients. However, as we have now established our agency's necessary infrastructure, we are ready to start generating profit in the next year, to reinforce the notion to key stakeholders and clients, that we are an agency to watch. We know this and we want our profit to demonstrate it.

Another important aspect of our strategy going forward into next year is to increase brand awareness. We have made significant strides in this area in the last year, through our association with Sky's AdSmart brand, and ally & mo media, but we would like to increase this recognition further.



Our Approach



Morris Singer Foundry



Our clients are at the heart of our business and we will always strive to find the best way to assist and grow their business. At Ape we pride ourselves on good customer service, which translates into long term customer retention. We offer a personal service on a agency-wide scale. We advise on and implement tailor made solutions to IT problems. We strive to be open and transparent in our approach, elucidating IT jargon, breaking down costs and offering advice on making our client's businesses as profitable and efficient as can be.

A one stop shop

Our service offering includes:

Web development

Web design and development, making sure clients' websites are optimised for SEO, safe and secure and most importantly, easy for their users to navigate and take action.

Digital Marketing

We offer fully integrated digital marketing services, including but not limited to, email marketing, PPC campaign creation and tracking, social media management, content creation, through social media content and blog content.

With AdSmart from Sky, we are also able to offer our clients targeted, affordable and measurable advertising solutions.

IT Management

We work closely with our clients to identify the right tech stack for their requirements and then work closely with them to implement it.

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“ We contacted Ape Technology after having several issues with the development of our website. They were open and friendly. Superb! ”

...Prymak Referrals

Meet our specialists:

Since we started last year, we have recruited 7 people. All of our employees are at different stages in their careers and have different and complementary skills that they bring to the agency. Our employees work across multiple industries, including, website design and development, digital marketing, graphic design, HR and the legal industry. Meet our specialists below!

Paul Beard:

I'm Ape's non-exec strategy director, assisting with a variety of areas - including making sure that our strategy and governance is heading along the right lines. I assist with consulting for clients and with our contracting arrangements. I have over 30 year's experience working in the law and business, have an MBA and am a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute. When not helping Ape, I work in business and management training and with businesses related to aviation.

Vicky Pollock:

I'm a senior graphic designer at Ape with a BA in Graphic Design. I come from a background in advertising and have experience working for a wide range of Blue chip clients including the leading toy manufacturers Mattel and Tomy, hair and beauty companies Alberto Culver and Wella and a variety of Government departments including the Home Office and DFID (now FCDO). It's been thrilling to work with some new and exciting clients at Ape and to help develop their brands. I'm looking forward to being a continuing part of the 'Ape Evolution'.

Ben James:

Ben has recently joined the Ape team as a senior web designer, bringing with him more than 20 years of experience working within the digital marketing sector. He previously worked for Fidessa plc as their web services manager. His skills encompass web design, graphic design, social media marketing, video creation and photography, copy writing and proofreading.

Becca Slater:

Before the pandemic, I was working as a social media editor for a global events and publishing company. When the pandemic hit, I was put on furlough and have used the time to upskill in the area of digital marketing, by completing several digital marketing qualifications. Completing these courses has enabled me to start my business as a freelance social media manager, and that is how I came to start working for Ape Technology Solutions.

I have been working for Ape for 4 months now and joining this growing digital agency has been an incredible experience. I love working for such a dynamic agency; as the agency's client base continues to grow week-by-week, so does the variety of work within my role. It will certainly be an exciting year ahead for Ape Technology Solutions and I look forward to every moment of it!

Alex Balmer:

I am a senior PPC specialist. I have worked for many digital marketing agencies as an executive & team manager. I have also worked for in-house companies such as Feefo, handling their day-to-day PPC campaigns. Although my experience heavily leans towards PPC I have experience in other areas of marketing too, which helps with planning strategic marketing campaigns. Ape has launched its PPC service which I am excited to support and propel forward. It is exciting times ahead for Ape Technology Solutions and I am looking forward to joining the team on this journey.

Our commitments

Ape Technology Solutions is pretty unique. For starters, our MD was just 17 when he launched the business - which is one of the reasons we feel passionately about empowering and supporting young people, not just locally - but across the country as a whole.

For example - earlier this year, we worked alongside two of our clients - Acas and Red Training - to deliver content onto the National Careers Week Virtual Careers Fair, giving young people valuable insights on how they can succeed in the workplace.

Our MD has also participated in a number of live online events, one of which was a Q&A hosted by Pearson, to discuss education and career opportunities, and has had thirty op-eds published in The Tes focusing on young people.

Dear clients, customers, and vendors:

I'd like to start by saying thank you. Without you, the last year of exponential growth would not have been possible. In a year where so many have lost so much, it's a true privilege to be reflecting on a year of gain for Ape. In turbulent times of uncertainty, you've entrusted your brand and business to my team: and you've trusted us to deliver. Something we've done, every time. To this day, we've always met our KPIs and SMART Objectives.

"One of the most humbling aspects has been that we've been built on a bootstrap basis. We've got no cash investor. Everything has come as a result of our sales"

In the space of a year, we've developed from being a one-man part-time freelancer to an established agency employing seven people. We've built our own 'creative hub', and worked with over fifty brands in three countries. It's been immense!

One of the most humbling aspects has been that we've been built on a bootstrap basis. We've got no cash investor. Everything has come as a result of our sales - and almost every lead has come as a result of word of mouth of our work. I cannot express how proud that makes me feel, and how grateful I am that you trust us enough to share with your network.

As this report goes on to share, the future is bright. We look forward to building on commercial partnerships, enhancing our service offering across different brands and - most crucially - serving our great clients with great results.

So, please let the key takeaway be, I'm immensely grateful for all your support over the last year and so excited to be taking you on the journey with us to the next level.

All the very, very best to you and your loved ones.

Yours sincerely

Alfie Payne

Our Business Model

Our business model is built on creating value for our clients. During the course of the year, we have sought to deliver the best possible value to our clients across all projects. We quickly discovered that making sure the correct communication was established at the beginning of each project was the key to delivering this value. In addition to this, we found that we were able to achieve the best results by building personal relationships with our clients.

Our value-creation Ape strategy

During one of our weekly team meetings, earlier in the year, we came up with this metaphor which sums up our business model rather nicely. Let us talk you through it.

The Ape Way

This is the process of what we do, to provide maximum value to our clients. Join the journey.

We plant the seed

During the first meeting, we learn about our clients, their business, where the business has been and what they hope to achieve.



The trunk grows

The strategy then grows. We establish a budget for the project, the scope of the project, and define key deliverables.

The branches form

It is at this stage that the branches start to form. The strategy is coming to life. Whether it's email marketing, web redesign, or PPC campaigns, the digital architecture of your business is being pulled together.

The bananas grow

It is during this stage that you see results. Be it a new lead, a conversion or a registration. It is here that you see the holistic value of our services, from the start of the project, through to completion.



A reflection of the last year – by The Ape team

It is fair to say everyone will remember 2020 for different reasons. Many will remember it as the year of the global pandemic. Some will remember it as the year we had to order a scotch egg in pubs before consuming alcohol. But for us, we will always remember 2020 as the year we launched our agency.

Every step of our journey the last year has been amazing. Filled with wonderful clients and steep learning curves. We can honestly say that nothing will ever compete with how we feel when we deliver value to our remarkable clients.

We would like to thank you all for being part of our journey during the last year, we could not have done it without you.

We look forward to continuing to develop and design your websites, launch your PPC and TV ad campaigns and develop your branding. Get ready, it's going to be an awesome action-packed year!

Yours sincerely

TheApeTeam





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