

Sponsored by  BREWIN DOLPHIN

Why firms turn to Ian to help guide

Business consultant Ian Guyler tells Tom Pegden about his decision to rebrand his company

For a one-man band, Ian Guyler has carved out a big presence on the local business scene. And he wants to strengthen that presence further with a change of branding and a new website.

Lots of people within city business circles already know him for his charity work with the Lord's Taverners, his love of Leicester City, the Tigers and the county cricket team and his years of supporting – and in previous years organising – the Leicester team at the MIPIM property conference in France.

When it comes to work, he prides himself on his abilities as a business consultant supporting the likes of local operations such as John Cheadle – now called Schoolwear Solutions – Qualvis Print and Packaging, Total Motion, Bakers Waste, Notts Sports and M&E Accident Repair.

More immediately, he's drop-

ping Pedigree Filbert as the name of his business – “it didn't really describe what I did,” he said – and with help from Juice Creative Design in Enderby has settled on Ian Guyler Business Consulting.

The 54-year-old from Billesdon – affectionately known as “Guyler” – grew up in Milton Keynes before coming to Leicester Polytechnic in the early 80s to do business studies.

After graduating he was offered work here, and still remembers those early days fondly.

Ian said: “In terms of quality of life Leicester was nowhere near as good as it is now – the city centre was a lot rougher then.

“There were two bars the business community would go to – Olive's under the Belmont Hotel and Vin Quatre in New Walk.

“But it was still a great place because we had the football team, the rugby and the cricket. Milton Keynes had nothing like it.

“One of the things that kept me here was the first guy I met on my course.

“His dad was the chairman of Walkers crisps which had seats in the Belvoir Suite at Filbert Street so we used to use them.

“That's where I met Shaun Patrick – who runs Lutterworth synthetic surface business Notts Sport – who became a good friend, along with many other good Leicester friends.

“Lots of the people I met were the sons, and odd daughter, of local company bosses.”

He was drawn to the accountancy side of industry, joining a graduate training scheme at TI Group, spending three years at its £30 million turnover subsidiary TI Desford Tubes.

It was a huge operation with three mills making ball bearing racers for automotive and mining.

Ian said: “What I loved about it there was the life experience I got.

“You were based in the office but spent your time on the shop floor talking to the operations people, then talking to the sales people.

“You would walk over the gantries and feel your feet getting hot.

“That was my first test of working in finance and dealing with directors.”

From there he went to Fisons Pharmaceuticals in Loughborough, ending up as finance manager for the consumer health division – the same people who were responsible for the Sanatogen vitamins range.

“I had the choice of going to work in Hertfordshire or taking redundancy.

Sponsored by  BREWIN DOLPHIN

them through challenging periods



UP FOR A LAUGH: Ian Guyler is a familiar face in the city thanks to his involvement in the Alternative Business Awards, above, part of the Comedy Festival, The Gauntlet, an It's a Knockout-style event, below left, and the L Factor talent contest



“It was brilliant to start with,” he said. “It was the best run company I have ever worked for – a great atmosphere, great culture, great people, and pretty much the biggest employer in the town.

“But it all went wrong for strategic and investment reasons and was eventually sold off piecemeal to companies like AstraZeneca.

“I had the choice of going to work in Hertfordshire or taking redundancy.

“It was about 1992 and I was in my late 20s so I took the money and invested in some buy-to-lets in Leicester.”

His next two roles were with Emap's newspaper division – as finance director at the Peterborough Evening Telegraph Group (which had 100 titles), then as divisional financial controller based in Stanford.

When that was sold to Johnston Press he took redundancy again and bought a

couple more houses.

That was the start of the buy-to-let boom and Ian now has a handful of properties in his portfolio.

After working in newspapers, he joined an engineering firm in Nottingham and helped turn it around over a period of two to three years.

“That's where I really learned my craft, as I started to recognise that I could influence businesses and influence their boards.

“We contracted and sold off parts of the business and strengthened what was left and expanded them.

“My job was to communicate clearly with the management and implement good corporate practice.

“Identifying what needs to be done is relatively straightforward, but what I did with that company, and what I do now, was about implementing that and getting the board to recognise what needed to change.

“Finance is not about adding up numbers. Being an FD is about knowing what levers are needed to influence change operationally and commercially and bringing about cash generation.

“A lot of companies do not even address that.

“A lot of business people are good at the technical bit and will focus on that rather than the people who deliver it or think about the strategy to give it financial focus.

“There should be entrepreneurial spirit but it's also about knowing when to let the business grow and bringing in solid structures without losing that spirit.

“It's like raising a child to go out on its own into the big wide world.”

By the turn of the century he decided to take a career break, following the England cricket team to New Zealand then heading out to the 2002 football World Cup in Japan (which it co-hosted with South Korea) and the rugby World Cup in Australia.

He began his business consultancy practice – which he called Pedigree Filbert – in 2002 after he returned home and started getting requests from business contacts and accountants for help.

Since then he has guided many business clients through challenging and changing times.

Among them were the Nottingham-based Hardys & Hansons pub group and structural and civil engineers in Nottingham called BWB Consulting which he helped.

Ian said: “I was called in by BWB at a time of high growth and went in with a finance remit but ended up chairing the board and guiding them to a management buy out.

“They are a big success story now and I feel quite proud of that.

“Projects since then have been a mix of companies getting general advice, helping them transition from small to medium size, getting the boards to become more effective and some specific turnaround projects.

“Sometimes the role I take on will be as non-executive director which can be as wide or as narrow as the company wants.

“In the SME world you've got to roll your sleeves up and create a relationship with the board and help them improve.

“There are always companies out there that you can change.”

SOMEONE TO LEAN ON: Ian Guyler

PICTURE CHRIS GORDON