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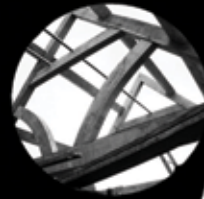
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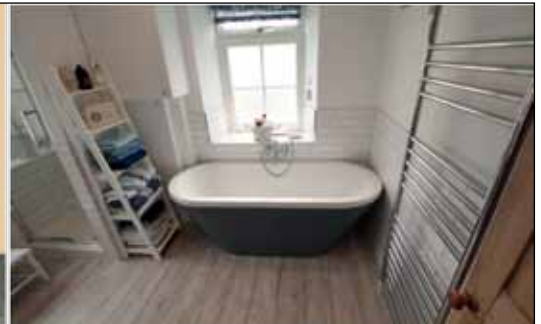


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10 Local News
We look at a tornado that hit Condicote in October



12 Gardening
We plan a successful garden for 2024

Welcome to the January - February issue

In this issue we welcome in 2024 and look forward to the year with a look at how to plan your New Year, New Garden! (p12).

We also have an exciting look at the origins of Leap Years (p10), as well as a look back at the terrifying tornado that hit Condicote in October.

On page 8 we learn about the role of Artificial Intelligence in education and society.

I hope you all enjoy this issue and I'll see you again in March.

Best wishes,

Christine

Christine Campbell | Editor



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WISE INVESTMENT

PLANNING YOUR BUSINESS EXIT FOR RETIREMENT



Retirement and business exit planning are life events too significant to leave to chance, requiring a blend of both personal financial planning and strategic business considerations.

With a wealth of experience in financial planning and asset management, Wise Investment offers a tailored solution focused on optimising tax efficiency and building strong investment portfolios. Complimentary to this, The MGroup Corporate Finance brings decades of specialisation in advising businesses on exit strategies and maximising company value for a successful transition.

Working collaboratively and combining this expertise, this article aims to provide an introductory guide for business owners contemplating retirement.

The Importance of Planning

In a world that is often reactive rather than proactive, planning for retirement frequently sits on the back burner, especially when running a business that demands your full attention. For many business owners, the catalyst for considering an exit comes unexpectedly. This could include health issues, familial obligations or even a sudden loss of interest in the business itself.

It's easy to get caught up in the daily tasks of running a business and forget about long-term plans like retirement. However, it's crucial to remember that the choices you make today can significantly affect your financial security in the future. Think of an exit strategy as a roadmap that helps you navigate from running your business today to enjoying a comfortable retirement tomorrow.

Many consider an exit strategy a contingency plan, something to think about "just in case." However, it's a fundamental aspect of business and personal financial planning. A well-structured exit strategy involves more than leaving the business; it's about strategically divesting or transferring ownership so that you are no longer financially or legally accountable. Operating without a well-defined exit strategy is similar to sailing without a compass—you may eventually reach land. However, you're taking unnecessary risks and missing out on maximising your business value.

Real-Life Scenarios: A Case Study

To understand the importance of detailed preparation, let's look at real clients Mr and Mrs W, co-owners of a Limited company. At first, they were not very concerned about retirement, assuming that their business would provide an adequate sum when the time came and that they would eventually be able to pass this on to their son.

Their situation dramatically transformed after they took the decision to sell their business and found that they could achieve a much higher valuation than anticipated. However, the sale also meant they would lose the Business Relief (BR) for Inheritance Tax (IHT) purposes, which their shareholding qualified for. Their potential liability rose from £108,000 to a staggering £1,788,000.

So, how exactly did Mr. and Mrs. W manage this transformation? They didn't do it alone. Guided by seasoned financial experts, they undertook a series of well-thought-out decisions:

- **Maximising Pension Contributions:** In the two tax years prior to the sale, company profits were used to fully utilise their pension contributions, including unused allowances from the previous year. This not only saved corporation tax for the company but reduced their own income tax and their estate's potential IHT bill.
- **Paying Off the Mortgage:** Post sale, one of the first steps was to eliminate their mortgage debt, liberating their primary residence and reducing their outgoings.



Article written in partnership with



- **Building a Robust Emergency Fund:** They created a cash emergency fund held in Premium Bonds to cushion their finances further.
- **Engaging in Potentially Exempt Transfers (PETs):** In a generous but strategically planned move, they gifted £1,000,000 through PETs to their family members, with a view to reducing IHT after seven years.
- **Investing in ISAs:** With an eye for tax efficiency, they invested in ISAs, enjoying tax-free income and growth to meet their capital and income needs at each stage of retirement.
- **Utilising General Investment Accounts (GIAs):** Additional funds held in these accounts provided further resource whilst also serving as a vehicle for feeding their future years ISAs.
- **Curating an AIM Portfolio:** Adding another dimension to their financial planning, they constructed a portfolio of AIM listed company shares, which enabled them to immediately regain a large proportion of the Business Relief that was otherwise lost on the sale of the business.
- **Implementing Wills and Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs):** Realising the indispensability of estate planning, they set up both Wills and LPAs to ensure their wishes would be honoured down the line.
- **Involving Their Son in the Financial Strategy:** As a forward-thinking measure, they encouraged their son to engage as a client in his own right, further solidifying the family's financial future.

This strategy allowed Mr & Mrs W to enter retirement with greater confidence that they could live within their means. Furthermore, they were able to immediately reduce their IHT liability by £440,000 and within seven years this will fall by another £400,000 to a more manageable £948,000.

The story of Mr. and Mrs. W shows us that good planning can change your life, especially as one approaches the golden years of retirement. Like them, you, too, can significantly reduce financial burdens like a looming tax bill by making the right strategic decisions.

How to Prepare for an Exit

- **Initiate Planning Early:** Much like Mr. and Mrs. W, who began their planning before selling their business, starting the process 18-24 months before your intended exit gives you adequate time for preparation. This phase includes the critical step of choosing your exit strategy, be it selling to a trade buyer, management buyout, or some other option.
- **Comprehensive Business Health Check:** Before any sale or transfer, a thorough review of all business aspects is essential. From accounting to operations, having all your documentation in order can ease due diligence and possibly raise your business's selling price.
- **Personal Financial Planning:** Use this time to focus on your financial well-being, just as Mr. and Mrs. W did. Clearing debts, making pension contributions, and understanding the broader tax landscape will set you on the path to a worry-free retirement.
- **Expert Consultation:** Consult with a specialist advisor to guide you through the complex landscape of retirement and business exit planning. Professional advice can provide your compass, helping you make well-informed choices.
- **Managing Unsolicited Offers:** Receiving offers for your business is part and parcel of the process, but caution is advised. Having a valuation in hand empowers you to assess offers critically, ensuring you get the value your business deserves.

- **Future-Proofing Your Plans:** Lastly, don't overlook how your exit strategy dovetails into your broader estate planning. As Mr. and Mrs. W found, having Wills and Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs) not only assures that your wishes are respected but also paves the way for tax-efficient estate management, fortifying both your and your family's financial future.

This approach offers a well-rounded view, illustrating the importance of detailed planning at every step, from business valuation to personal finance.

Final Thoughts

Your retirement and exit strategy should be as bespoke as your business. Like Mr. and Mrs. W, you, too, can take control of your financial future through proper planning and consultation. Remember, it's never too early or too late to start planning for your exit and retirement.

Contact Us for Tailored Support

Whether you're in the early stages of considering an exit or have already embarked on the journey, both Wise Investment and The MGroup Corporate Finance are here to collaborate and offer their joint expertise. Take the first step towards a secure and comfortable retirement by getting in touch with either team for a personalised consultation today.

Wise Investment: If you're looking for strategic financial planning solutions tailored to you, contact Joe Cooper or David Burrell:

wise@wiseinvestment.co.uk
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The MGroup Corporate Finance: For comprehensive advice on exit strategies and business valuation, reach out to Ian Walker for a confidential initial conversation:

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Important Information

This article is intended for information only, and does not constitute advice. All information is based on our understanding of current law and practice, which may be subject to change in the future.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND EDUCATION

News on the progress of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increased at an exponential rate in the past few years and no Managing Director or Chief Executive can predict with 100% confidence how AI will affect, in detail, their organisation.

Carrying out a search on the internet on AI and Education will show papers from UNESCO, the USA Office of Educational Technology and the EU commission outlining their recommendations.

The Department of Education is in the process of evaluating information obtained from educational establishments on how AI is being used across education in England and the opportunities and risks it presents. Unsurprisingly AI is with us and one could say it has crept in quite stealthily through the backdoor.

Within the European Commission's 112 page publication on AI was the statement:

"While many writers and government ministries have expressed their hope that AI will save teacher time (Bryant et al. 2020; Miao and

Holmes 2021b), others have suggested that AI will at some point make teachers de facto redundant – or at least their role will be reconfigured as classroom orchestrators/technology facilitators....."

The above comment shows how serious the potential problem of AI and Education must be taken. I comment on this passage towards the end of this article.

Factors to be considered

- AI needs to be controlled.
- AI is already improving traditional teaching methods by enhancing the students' best aspects and correcting their flaws.
- AI can be available for students 24/7, encouraging remote learning.
- AI can even take care of many tedious administrative tasks allowing teachers more time to focus on their students.

The Way Ahead

I do not believe for one minute that AI will make teachers obsolete. It is and will continue to be a great asset to teachers, but the role of a teacher goes beyond teaching to a specification from some examining body. They are also instrumental in preparing students for the life they must face beyond schools, colleges and universities. The lockdown taught us how many children have suffered and have since needed to be taught social skills upon returning to a formal educational environment.

References:

- www.gov.uk/education
- www.ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6338

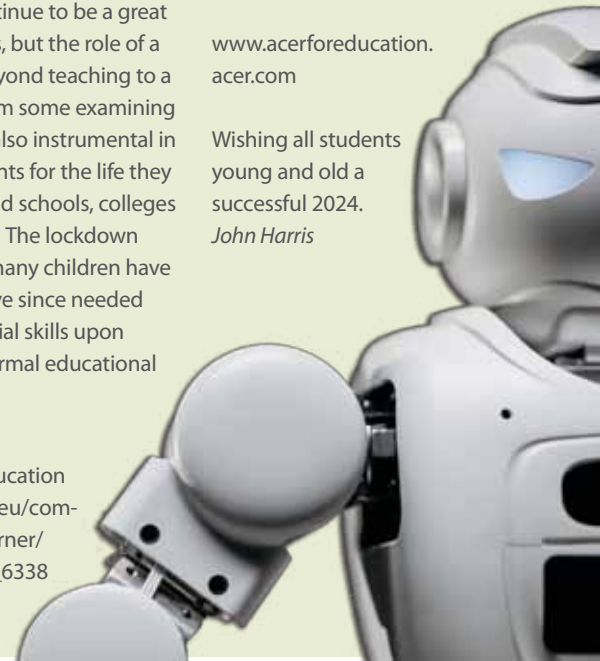
www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/artificial-intelligence

www.tech.ed.gov/ai

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Wishing all students young and old a successful 2024.

John Harris



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The Leap Year

As everyone knows Leap Years come around every 4th year when the last 2 digits of the year are divisible by the number 4. There are exceptions to this rule and at the turn of each century the first 2 digits have to be divisible by 4. So the year 2000 was a leap year but the intervening change of the centuries 1800 and 1900 were not, and neither will the year 2100 be a leap year. Thus 2024 is a leap year.

How did this come about?

We are taught at school that the Earth rotates the Sun in 365.25 days in reality it takes 365.242199 days, a difference of 11 minutes and 24 seconds. Obviously, the Emperor Augustus did not have the advantage of modern technology to assist him when he amended Julius Caesar's calendar (although Hipparchus (c190 – 120 BC) the Greek Philosopher was aware of the inconsistency.

So it took 1582 years for Pope Gregory XIII to enact the present calendar. By this time the calendar had slipped 10 days with the seasons.

Great Britain would not change and for a period of 170 years carried on with the old calendar and did not convert to the Gregorian calendar until 1752. This is the calendar which the world tends to follow, there are others but that is another story for another day.

Diary

The Quadrantid meteor showers peak early hours 3/4th January. Perihelion Wednesday 3rd January – It takes some believing but the Earth is the closest to the Sun on this day.

Mercury: Can be observed during the first 3 weeks of January to the left of a very bright Venus but by February reaches superior conjunction (i.e. on the opposite side of the Sun), and is therefore not observable.

Venus: Look South East early in the morning and observe Venus hugging close to the Moon. Good to observe during January and first half of February.

Mars: Not observable during January but to the keen observer you may catch it under Venus on the 22nd February.

Jupiter: Wonderful to observe during the whole of January as it traverses the southern sky. Continues on its journey throughout February.

Saturn: Look towards the south west in the early evening during January but Saturn will have set by 8.00 pm in the early part of the month. By February Saturn is effectively out of view as it approaches a conjunction with the Sun.

John Harris

Condicote Tornado

28th October 2023 19.10



Caroline Clare is a resident of Condicote and was at home when the tornado struck. The following week she was teaching at Longborough School. The children were fascinated by the tornado and wrote an article about it. The TORRO research group came and assessed the damage and have written a full report.

Please see attached link below: www.torro.org.uk/research/event

The report on the Condicote Tornado can then be accessed from the link above.

It was assessed as a T3. There are approximately 30 reported tornadoes every year in the UK and, of those 30, about 8 are rated T3 and higher (that is stronger). The T3 tornado did so much damage as many houses suffered damage with 5 houses suffering considerable damage.

Caroline said that she would not like to experience a stronger one! Interestingly, Caroline pointed out that when they compared insurance companies' reactions to the tornado the NFU came out top. The representative rang all clients a few hours after the tornado struck - such good service.

The following article was written by children from Longborough C of E Primary School and the photographs of the damage were taken by Lucy Clare.

Condicote villagers were not expecting a tornado. However, on Saturday 28th October, a village in the Cotswolds, got hit by a tornado. Before the tornado hit people said at about 6.30 pm there was hard rain. The torrential rain started about half an hour before the tornado. At 19.10 the tornado began and was over by 19.11. Someone said it was horrifying and someone else said it lasted about 20 to 40 seconds. The villagers said it was like a train going through the house and some felt shaking. Trees were ripped apart and small out houses were blown out of their gardens and other small buildings were blown away by the tornado. Slates came off roofs on people's houses with tiles hitting cars leaving five houses damaged.

There was debris everywhere, destruction of roofs and sadly two houses made uninhabitable. The owners of the houses were upset. The tornado picked up debris as well as a rabbit which flew 100 metres approximately and survived. The electricity men found the rabbit in the middle of the field and it looked like it was stunned. They took the rabbit to a villager.



There was a piece of metal that got wrapped, twisted around an electric pole at the bottom of the field.

Someone said: it is shocking to see a tornado do that much damage in 20-40 second. None of the locals were hurt.

TORRO inspectors came round to Condicote (on Friday 3rd November) and ranked the Tornado as T3 which means there was airborne debris in people's back gardens as well as broken sheds and trees! The wind speed of the tornado was approximately 114 mph. Lots of sources are from a site called TORRO.

Written by Tilly, Sienna, Eadie, Lev and Willow.
Photos: Lucy Clare

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This month: New Year, new garden?



When the outlook is cold and bleak pour a mug of hot chocolate and start planning for Spring.

We'd all like a dream garden right? But is your dream garden the same as your neighbour's? Probably not. Whether you're designing a garden from scratch or remodelling the one you have there is no 'one size fits all' garden design. Unless you can afford to have the professionals in - and they can be worth every penny - you'll need to apply a lot of thought to the process. We've created this brief guide to give you a kick-start.

Budget

Be clear about this. There's no point coming up with a grand design if you can't afford to carry it through.

Time

If you work full time and have an active social life you'll need to think 'low-maintenance.'

Consult your family

What do they want from the garden. Small children will want a space to play; the adults might want a space to eat and entertain; you might want to grow your own veg, or herbs.

Is it possible?

How big is the garden? How much sun does it get? It's no good planning lots of flowerbeds if the garden is in deep shade for most of the day. How can you compromise so that everyone is happy?

What shape is your garden?

Each shape presents its own challenge. Square can be boring and needs to be broken up using lots of curves. Long and thin can be disguised by dividing it into imaginary rooms linked by a winding path. Slopes can be challenging, especially if they're steep but could be made into a feature by terracing or incorporating a waterfall.

Firm up your ideas

Do you want grass or paving? How much should be devoted to borders or flowerbeds? Will you need a new fence or would you rather have a natural hedge. Will you need professional help with any hard landscaping?

Make a scale plan

Measure all the major distances in your gar-

den. It's a good idea to take them from a fixed point, such as the corner of your house. Try 1/4 or 1/2 inch = 1 foot if you're not metric and 1cm or 2cm = 1m if you are. When complete make several copies and draw all your ideas on to the plans until you come up with one you really like. Because it's to scale you can now carry out your plans with confidence. Happy Gardening!

When Planning a Garden...

Look at the plants which thrive in your neighbours' gardens. Chances are they'll do well in yours too.

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INDEX

Architecture

Insight Planning Services: p3

Bathrooms

Cotswold Bathroom Company: p3

Country Bathrooms: p11

Blinds

Associated Blinds: p16

Builders & Contractors

Country Roofing & Building: p2

DJT Roofing & Building: p13

Harris-Keyte Construction: p3

J P Quinn Ltd: p13

Mitre Oak: p5

MRP Construction: p14

Children's Services

Cotswold Tutor: p9

Cleaning

Salles & Santos Company: p5

Clearances

Oxfordshire Clearances: p2

Education

Cotswold Tutor: p9

Electrical Services

Aerial Solutions: p9

Finance

Wise Investments: p6-7

Flooring

Country Tiles and Flooring: p11

Furniture

Amanda Hanley By Design: p1

Andrew Bennet Upholstery: p2

Bob Dadge: p2

Gardening & Outdoors

J P Quinn Ltd: p13

MRP Construction: p14

Stockwell Davies Tree

Contractors: p12

Tom Negus Tree Care: p12

Gifts

Alain Rouveure Galleries: p9

Amanda Hanley By Design: p1

Guen Palmer Designer

Jeweller: p9

Healthcare & Wellbeing

Footworx Clinic: p9

Home & Interiors

Alain Rouveure Galleries: p9

Amanda Hanley By Design: p1

Andrew Bennet Upholstery: p2

Associated Blinds: p16

Country Bathrooms: p11

Country Tiles and Flooring: p11

Paul Dadge: p11

Town & Country Shutters: p1

Jewellery

Guen Palmer Designer

Jeweller: p9

Kitchens

Woodentop Restoration

Company: p14

Motoring

Chips Away: p15

Painters & Decorators

Paul Dadge: p11

Plumbing

Chris Smith Plumbing Services: p5

Gas & Oil Heating: p4

MPN PLumbing: p15

Property Maintenance

Country Roofing & Building: p2

DJT Roofing & Building: p13

J P Quinn Ltd: p13

Mossinator: p1

Removals

Oxfordshire Clearances: p2

Sports & Leisure

Cotswold Archery: p9

GLL / Better: p8

Tree Surgery

Stockwell Davies Tree

Contractors: p12

Tom Negus Tree Care: p12

Tuition

Cotswold Tutor: p9

Windows

ECO Windows & Doors: p15

Town & Country Shutters: p1

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