

2022/23 ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

What happened.
How we handled it.

emperor

introduction

This is the
story of a
unique year

It's been a year that's not only given us challenges but also the opportunity to show we're as determined as ever to think, create and do great things for our clients.

Since our last report, we've seen three prime ministers, a cost-of-living crisis, the rise of AI, social upheaval, shifting geopolitics, continuing war in Ukraine and new conflicts in the Middle East.

All of this has undoubtedly had an impact. But we have stayed true to our clients, our creativity and our culture.

We've been able to do this because of the network we've built, the relationships we've nurtured and the extraordinary partners we work with.

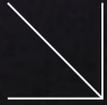
our reports

How we got here

Each of our reports has been written against backdrops of significant change. Our first report explored the legacy of Emperor and why we became employee owned. Our second report showed how we 'supercharged' change during the pandemic and emerged stronger. Last year's reflected a 30% growth in revenues and celebrated our clients, creativity and culture. This year, it's about how our resilience and resourcefulness is helping us succeed through 'interesting' times.







“Our creative approach ensures we’re always striving to do better, continuously evolving and adapting. Our ideas go beyond mere functionality; they captivate our clients with outstanding solutions and experiences.”

Adam Holloway,
Chief Creative Officer

→ Read more about how our creative principles shape our thinking on **page 22**

contents

About emperor ⁴

Strategy and performance ¹⁸

Governance ⁶⁰





Owning our narrative

about emperor

Our business is built on strong relationships and cooperation. Our clients, our partners and society drive – and benefit from – all we do.



In this section

6 Who we are

8 What we do

10 Our ambition

27

Years of sustainable business

300+

Experts supporting our clients

4

Years employee owned

B Corp

Certified since September 2022

500+

Network of long-standing relationships

5

Creative hubs

Thinkers. Creators. Doers.

Emperor is an employee-owned strategic and creative communications consultancy.

We help organisations connect with their stakeholders to achieve great things. We're here to turn ambition into success through the power of clear, confident and consistent communications.



Established

Over 27 years we have created a powerful culture and a sustainable business model. We're now one of the largest independent agencies in the UK by size and scale, with a unique national and international presence.

Trusted

We earn the trust and confidence of our clients by understanding what matters to them. We have a 300-strong team of talented partners, all with a diverse blend of skills and experience, and the ability to deliver across channels.

Flexible

Emperor has scale and agility. Through our national network of creative hubs we deliver for our clients across the UK and internationally. We put dedicated teams together from across our business for each individual project, matching the right people for the right client with the right expertise at the right time. Operate globally, think locally.

Partner-powered

Employee ownership means we attract and retain a truly different kind of talent. Becoming partners in our business from their first day creates a unique culture of ownership and ensures our business remains strong and sustainable.

Responsible

After we became employee owned in January 2020, B Corp felt like a natural next step for us. We have a track record of responsible business and B Corp provides a framework with which to gauge our approach and guide us going forward. We're excited to now be part of this influential global movement.

Connected

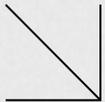
We have an extensive referral network. Our close links with industry bodies, regulators, standard-setters and thought leaders enable us to be our clients' eyes and ears. Through strong cross-team collaboration and breadth of contemporary and related services we solve our clients' challenges.

International

Today our clients represent 38 countries and are truly global in outlook and reach. Our Dubai office gives us a basis to look east and today we have over 15 clients in the MENA region.

Driving growth and success

Our client-centric, collaborative approach and partnership mindset drives our growth and success.



Client service

We deliver work to the highest of standards by focusing on client satisfaction and excellence.

- Relationship management
- Quality assurance, guidance and advice
- Planning and project management
- Technology choices and support development.



Creative

We are strategic creative communicators, delivering compelling and engaging solutions for clients.

- Concepts and ideas
- Storytelling and narrative
- Design and visual language
- Artwork and execution across channels.



Consultancy

We create insight and intelligence-driven brand, sustainability, communications and engagement strategies.

- Horizon scanning, research and analysis
- Audience profiling and communications planning
- Workshops and focus groups
- Strategic advice and content development.



Our expertise gives clients an advantage that creates an impact.

our specialities

Brand

Brand is about making connections that matter. By uniting strategy and creativity, we get our clients to the people they need to reach. As thinkers, creators and doers we have the versatility and experience to meet business needs; we are personally invested in helping our clients to be better, do better and achieve more.

Campaign

We engage external audiences to drive sales or change perceptions. We find the sweet spot between what clients want to say and what they want to hear to create a compelling, single-minded creative idea. From this, we can create assets for any channel, help develop a communications plan and work with a client's media agency for ongoing optimisation.

Digital

We empower our clients to harness the value of digital to communicate better, design effective services and ultimately do better business. We do this by combining our deep specialist knowledge of the corporate and B2B worlds to create innovative, creative and measurably better experiences.

Employee engagement

We support our clients to achieve their ambitions by engaging their people with their business. We activate behaviour to drive success, providing people with a purpose to truly believe in, reasons to belong and thrive, and relevant, meaningful communications that resonate.

Moving image

Business narratives are stories in their own right. At Emperor, we have a responsibility to recognise and tell them in the most compelling fashion. Film and animation is a powerful lens to train on any number of subjects, and a unique canvas upon which to uncover, explore and inspire.

Stakeholder communications

The best stakeholder communications build trust, enhance business reputation, and effectively engage audiences. We help companies navigate the evolving regulatory landscape, tell an authentic story that cuts through, and create connected and accessible reporting suites and communications that meet growing stakeholder expectations.

Sustainability

Sustainability is more than just a regulatory need. It drives innovation, creates value and is a springboard to shift perceptions, inspire action and spark long-term change. We create: sustainability strategies laser-focused on the issues that matter; award-winning reports that comply, inform and inspire; and communications and campaigns that radically differentiate from our peers and connect with all audiences.

Presentations

Lifting an audience and winning their hearts takes powerful stories that are clear, uplifting and dressed to kill. We create the most beautifully designed, animated and interactive presentation solutions to turn words, concepts and images into moments that stick.





A simple ambition

To be the most relevant, impactful and creative communications agency for the good of our clients, our partners and society.

Obsessed by our clients and their challenges

27 years on and nothing has changed. We still care deeply about our clients and the work we do together.

In this year's strategy refresh, we dedicated a pillar each to 'client obsessed' and 'connected services' to ensure we are anticipating and meeting the needs of our clients in the most joined-up way.

→ Read more on **page 12**

Empowered together in our fourth year of ownership

The transition to an employee-owned model reflected and reinforced our culture of collaboration and transparency.

Today a shared sense of ownership fuels engagement, motivation and investment in our long-term success.

→ Read more on **page 14**

Proud to work alongside our community

Partnership has always been central to our achievements.

Never more so than this year, our trusted, longstanding relationships and energetic, new collaborations power our business for the benefit of our clients, employees and future talent.

→ Read more on **page 16**



Obsessed by our clients and their challenges

Our clients' challenges may have evolved in scope and complexity, but our determination to solve them remains unchanged.

We spoke to 115 and surveyed 96 clients to find the top six challenges they are facing:

ESG

Regulation continues to grow, with more ESG (environmental, social and governance) reporting requirements to navigate and wider transparency initiatives to embed.

Proactive reputation management

Our clients tell us they are shifting from reactionary to proactive reputation management because of increased institutional attention and societal scrutiny.

Managing change

From transformation and mergers, to AI disruption, across sectors our clients are dealing with exponential shifts and transitions.

People power

Our clients need to attract, engage and retain the most talented and diverse workforce empowered by culture and technology.

Communications convergence

The convergence of internal and external communicators and communications requires joined-up thinking.

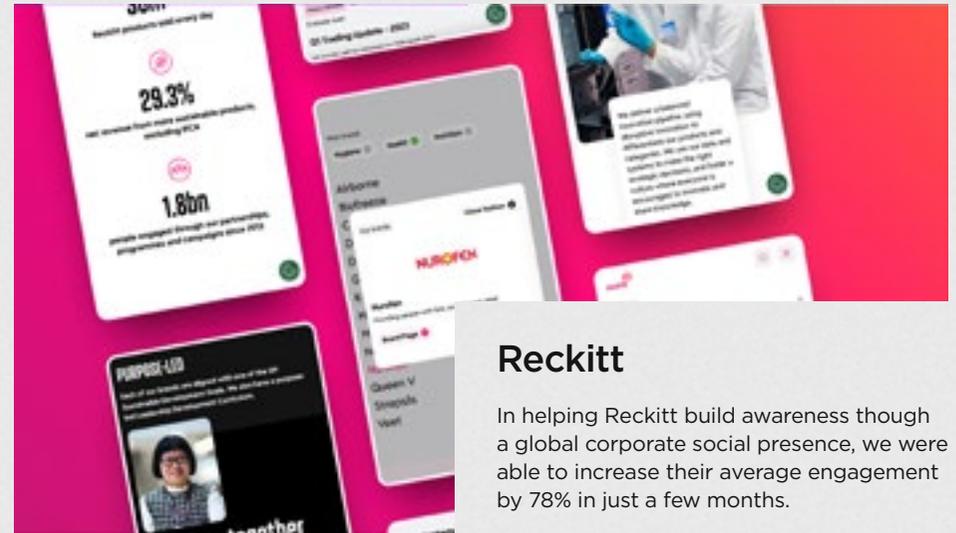
Macro

The unpredictability of the UK economy, ongoing recovery from Covid and inflationary challenges and market volatility give a unique environment for businesses to operate in.

Eight client solutions that delivered results.

ArcelorMittal

Guided by Emperor, ArcelorMittal, the world's leading steel and mining company, was one of the first organisations to start reporting towards the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) in their 2022 Integrated Annual Review.



Reckitt

In helping Reckitt build awareness through a global corporate social presence, we were able to increase their average engagement by 78% in just a few months.

Sibling Support

Through our work on the Sibling Support website, the demand for its resources increased. 1,800 bereavement resources were sent out in the period after the launch, with demand growing so much as a result of our campaign that many of these items were sold out within a week, as well as out of stock for ten days.



SSE

Focusing in on audience-led journeys and messaging we created a suite of five sites showcasing the new SSE brand in six months. We saw user engagement improve, with a 7% increase in time spent on content and unique page views on SSE.com growing by 16%.

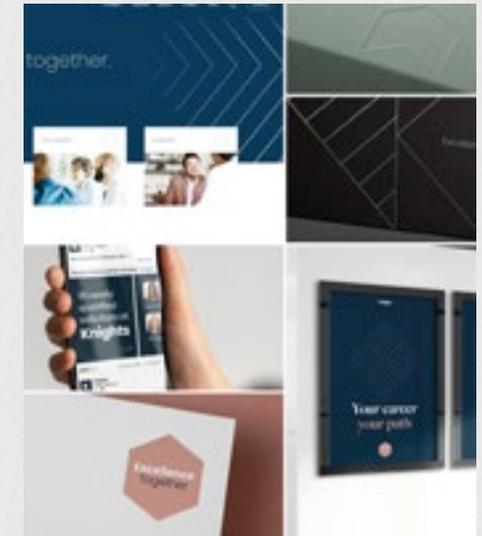
Helios Towers

Supporting Helios Towers to tell a joined-up story, we created their first integrated report. This subsequently was recognised as Best Integrated Report at the Communicate Magazine Awards.



Mondi

Mondi Group saw a material improvement in website performance following our strategy and redesign across pages per session (40% increase), engagement rate (30% increase) and session duration (100% increase).



Knights

Since launching Knights' EVP and refreshed brand in September, the business has seen a 30% increase in engagement and following on LinkedIn.

Saudi Tadāwul Group

We helped the Saudi Stock Exchange transform their Capital Market Forum into a world-class event by elevating their branding and communications.



Empowered together in our fourth year of ownership

As we celebrate another year of employee ownership, we're reflecting on how this transition has helped to shape and strengthen us.

employee ownership association highlights

The recent Knowledge Programme Report from the Employee Ownership Association highlights how employee-owned businesses (EOBs) are fuelling economic growth, while creating healthier, more fulfilling work environments. They are also significantly contributing to local communities, job creation and environmental sustainability.

93%

of EOBs invested in on-the-job learning and development training in the last 12 months, compared to 85% of non-EOBs; EOBs spend an average of £38,000 (12% more on training per company compared with non-EOBs.

+50%

EOBs are more likely than non-EOBs to provide cost-of-living support, with more than a 50% difference in levels of financial wellbeing support, one-off bonus payments and salary sacrifice schemes.

35%

EOBs are also more likely to have 'environmental sustainability' accreditation (35%) than non-EOBs (16%), such as Planet Mark, B Corp or ISO Standards.

>£500m

EOBs are significantly more likely than non-EOBs to provide community support, such as advocating on behalf of local community causes, and more than twice as likely to offer volunteering days as non-EOBs (43% vs 15%). EOBs are also considerably more likely to make charitable donations than non-EOBs (86% vs 55%). EOBs in aggregate give over £500 million more per year than non-EOBs.

"I can't believe it's four years since we became employee-owned. Our decision was all about ensuring that Emperor has a successful and sustainable future, that we remain agile and people focused, and that we preserve our great culture.

And what a four years it's been. We've gone into and come out of a global pandemic, had to adapt to new and different ways of working, changed leadership and are now, like many other businesses in the UK, facing the challenges of hybrid work in a slowing economy.

Being employee-owned doesn't guarantee financial success, and we haven't shirked from making tough decisions. We will continue to drive positive change and, as with all change, this may be unsettling for some. But being employee-owned means that our fabulous partners will always be Emperor's main stakeholders and will always have an important voice in driving our future success."

Steve Kemp
Founder



What it means for our partners

The transition to an employee-owned model at Emperor reflected and reinforced our culture of collaboration and transparency. Our partners' voices are an integral part of our creative tapestry, contributing to an environment where innovative ideas can thrive. A shared sense of ownership fuels engagement, motivation and investment in our long-term success.

We think of employee ownership as 'wearing two hats': the owner's hat and the employee's hat. By donning both, we collectively drive the business forward, understanding the wider business context and the individual or group impact of the decisions we make along the way. It's a shared journey where everyone benefits from our joint efforts and stands together during challenging times.

Every partner has a voice in decision-making, fostering pride, accountability and transparency. This means more of our people have a greater understanding of how business works and are in turn more knowledgeable about the challenges and opportunities faced by our clients.

What it means for our clients

In addition to their specialist areas of expertise, knowing more about our own business helps partners support our clients through changes, transformation and opportunities within their organisations.

For us, EO wasn't just a strategic move; it was a conscious effort to safeguard our independence and creative autonomy. For clients, this means we can make longer-term decisions and invest in growing with them as they grow.

And our partners share in our combined successes. If our projects and our clients are successful, we all ultimately benefit.

What it means for our social and environmental responsibilities

The Knowledge Programme Report highlights that EO businesses outperform traditional businesses against many social and environmental measures. Emperor's commitment to corporate responsibility goes beyond structure to the way we engage with each other. B Corp certification in 2022 underscores our dedication to rigorous standards of social and environmental responsibility. Our pledges, driven by our partners, guide our behaviour, care for our wellbeing and shape our culture. And the Emperor Foundation supports the causes that are important to us and our people.



What it means for our future

Navigating the complexities of shared ownership, decision-making processes and financial transparency requires concerted effort and adaptability. Strong leadership is essential to ensure we are all clear about our direction.

Since becoming employee-owned, we've charted a course through a pandemic and political and economic unrest; internally we've seen a change of leadership as Victoria Sugg and Cameron Gunn took on a joint CEO role, succeeding Steve Kemp. We've also grown significantly; our commitment to open dialogue and listening to partners has helped us address any challenges head-on, learn and continually refine our approach.

As Emperor celebrates four years of employee ownership, we stand at the forefront of a movement that values listening, two-way communication and transparency in fostering a thriving work culture.

“The Partner Voice sessions have created a unique safe space where, whatever your role or location, your voice can be heard.”

Amy Hancock
Junior Designer

Proud to work alongside our community

We are always innovating on our clients' behalf to ensure we can access the most relevant ecosystem of expertise. This year we have welcomed some exciting, new partners – to add to long-standing collaborations – for the benefit of Emperor clients, our employees and future talent.



Emperor has a strong commitment to being at the forefront of technological advancements and creates value for our clients by building partnerships with key industry leaders. In July, Emperor was awarded Enhanced Design Partner status by Workiva – one of only 11 in EMEA.

In November, our Director of Sustainability and Brand, Lara Sharrock, presented alongside the team at the Amplify EMEA Conference, debating how sustainability reporting is evolving today and in coming years, especially with the arrival of frameworks such as CSRD. The panel explored how the shift from CSR (corporate social responsibility) to ESG affected companies' approaches to sustainability and the way they report on progress.

“Through our partnerships with the best and visionary agencies we can drive meaningful change in the industry. We really value the close partnership we have built over the past year with Emperor.”

Gavin Marais

Director of Strategic Partnerships,
Workiva



Our carbon footprinting exercise identified four carbon hotspots, one of which is our commute. Emperor teamed up with Octopus Electric Vehicles to deliver our 'Electric Dreams' electric vehicle leasing scheme. Using salary sacrifice, our partners can expect to save around 30% of costs through income tax and National Insurance savings.

We have worked with fellow B Corp, Green Element to calculate our carbon footprint for the past five years, including increased scope based on learnings from previous exercises. We now have four years of emissions data, starting with a full working year pre-pandemic as our baseline and illustrating how our world of work has changed. We have a specific workstream looking at sustainable web design, how we can develop our ways of working and innovate new services for our clients. We are currently testing a tool created with Green Element to be able to measure the specific emissions of each of our projects.




This year we celebrate ten years of working with Vega IT. They are more than just our technical partner.

“As the CEO of Vega IT, I am thrilled to commemorate our remarkable ten year partnership milestone with Emperor.

Over the past decade, our collaboration has been characterised by innovation, mutual respect and shared success. Together, we have not only weathered challenges but also celebrated numerous achievements, fostering growth and development for both companies.

Our partnership has been instrumental in fueling the progress of both Vega IT and Emperor, as we've continuously supported and inspired each other along this journey.

This milestone not only reflects our enduring partnership but also underscores our commitment to mutual growth, innovation and success. Here's to the next decade of continued collaboration and shared achievements.”

Sasa Popovic
CEO, Vega IT



We collaborate with Warwick Business School on both thought leadership and Emperor's future talent ambitions (three of our current team came to us as WBS graduates). We held our 'Building brands for a more sustainable future' roundtable in March, facilitated by Professor of Marketing at Warwick Business School, Laura Chamberlain. We also took the CEO of POPYRUS and his team to set the students on their Business Masters course a branding challenge around engaging with those hard-to-reach audiences about suicide awareness.



In November, we sent a shout-out to partners to nominate charities to be considered for support by The Emperor Foundation – and POPYRUS was chosen. POPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide is a UK charity dedicated to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people. We are just at the start of our journey with POPYRUS and so far have raised £11k and we are proud to continue to fundraise and support them so they can continue to save young lives.

"PAPYRUS has been so warmly and generously supported by Emperor. It has been great to work with your comms teams and, through them, with the postgrad students at Warwick Business School. I am delighted to see the teams at Emperor getting involved in our work to prevent young suicide. Working together, we can and do save young lives."

Ged Flynn
CEO, POPYRUS,
Prevention of Young Suicide

DERWENT LONDON

Derwent is both our landlord for the Emperor London office in The White Chapel Building and our client for corporate reporting. We are proud that our reports for Derwent have been recognised this year in the Corporate & Financial Awards, Digital Impact Awards and IR Society Best Practice Awards. Derwent also joined us on the panel at our Serendipity Club event this November, where Vasiliki Arvaniti, Head of Asset Management at Derwent London, spoke on the future of flexible working. We are really enjoying all our relationships with Derwent London.



The Employee Ownership Association (EOA) represents the employee-owned sector in the UK. We have been members for four years and our founder, Kingsley James, is on the EOA Board. We worked closely with the EOA, its members and wider stakeholders on a refreshed brand strategy and visual identity, which will be revealed at the AGM this April. In response to requests from EAO members, we created the 'Proudly Employee Owned' badge, which is now worn with pride by us and many other employee-owned businesses across the country.





Growing with integrity

strategy and performance

We create strategic advantage for Emperor by prioritising client relationships, greater connections, continuous improvement internally and a higher-performance culture.



In this section

20	CEO review
22	CCO review
24	Our strategy
48	Responsible business
56	Financials

A photograph of two people, a man and a woman, smiling and looking towards the right. The man is on the left, wearing a dark suit jacket over a black shirt. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored t-shirt. They are standing in front of a blue and purple background with some text and graphics. The text 'WAYS' and 'ING' is visible in the background. The overall mood is positive and professional.

Cameron Gunn
Co-CEO

Victoria Sugg
Co-CEO

Capturing opportunity from change

We are in a period of political, economical and technological uncertainty. All of it affecting us, all of it affecting our clients. But the more things change, the more they stay the same, and our offer to clients remains relevant, focused and impactful.

Our clients are of varying sizes, sectors and geographies. But all are communicators who collectively value partners that deliver a brilliant client experience, demonstrate tangible value and unique insight into their world, and help them become better businesses.

Corporate stakeholder expectations and scrutiny continue to grow. Traditional boundaries between channels and audiences, between internal and external, are increasingly blurred. In this context, client stakeholder communication needs are broader and more diverse than ever.

Clients are necessarily moving towards a more joined-up approach to reputation management and communications – seeking to drive both greater effectiveness and efficiencies from their teams and their agencies.

new perspectives



Lara Sharrock
Director of Sustainability and Brand



Siobhan Hammond
Director of Employee Engagement

There's never been a more exciting time to be in corporate communications and this year has been packed and punctuated with some amazing Emperor milestones as we continue to implement our Thrive 25 strategy.

In our fourth year of employee ownership we were honoured to be chosen to create the mark for the EO. Our partners continue to be the heroes of our business. We never take our culture for granted and a particular highlight therefore was that, when asked, more than 90% of our people shared their ED&I data, allowing us to better understand the diverse makeup of our employees and ensure decisions and initiatives are reflective of and responsive to the needs of everyone.

We have welcomed some exceptional new people to the business to strengthen our propositions to clients – Lara Sharrock, Director of Sustainability and Brand, and Siobhan Hammond, Director of Employee Engagement, are but two examples.

We have also introduced some exciting new partners such as data and analytics agency, Braidr, and moved to a more formal commitment with other existing partners, not least Workiva with whom we have Enhanced Design Partner status.

“There’s never been a more exciting time to be in corporate communications and this year has been packed and punctuated with some amazing Emperor milestones”



2023 saw a welcome return to getting together with clients face-to-face, whether through ideation sessions, creative presentations or celebrating together in washups and at our own events – there is no substitute for connecting in person. This wasn't limited to the UK, as we saw an ever-increasing number of in-person client engagements in Europe and the Middle East.

And we celebrated with clients more than ever – being recognised in more awards ceremonies than ever before – and were proud to finish the year with the Large Agency of the Year accolade from Communicate Magazine.

We are excited about the next year and well-positioned to support our clients. The economic climate and increased emphasis on volume and consistency of disclosure means that differentiation is more important than ever before. As ever, we know the most interesting and existing milestones are yet to come.

Cameron and Victoria
Co-Chief Executive Officers

Adam Holloway
Chief Creative Officer

As our Creative Principles become entrenched in the fabric of Emperor – shaping our thinking, our understanding and our ways of working – they have pushed us to greater heights of both client and partner experience.

Transforming ambition into reality

Our Creative Principles make it clear what we believe in, how we do our best work and what we expect from both our clients and each other. A year on from their launch, they are now set in stone, underscoring their significance for us as creative business and a core part of who we are.

They've been instrumental in helping us produce the clear, confident and consistent communications needed in what has been a dynamic communications environment.

Creative Principles

Understand clearly

Think playfully

Simplify skilfully

Learn openly

Focus outwardly

Craft consciously



We've noticed their influence on our day-to-day operations, but they've also brought wider benefits. The role of creativity has proven to be a catalyst for success, transforming ambitions into reality.

Here are some themes we've observed:

Resilience

Creativity promotes flexible thinking, enabling our business to let go of outdated practices and embrace new, helping us stay strong in unstable markets. Creative routines involve learning from mistakes, which teach us resilience by improving our ability to bounce back from difficulties.

Problem solving

Our team uses our principles to tackle problems, leading to better and sometimes surprising outcomes. Viewing challenges from different perspectives leads to a wider array of solutions and this variety strengthens our ability to manage unexpected problems.

Adaptability

Our creative mindset allows us to swiftly adjust to market shifts and alter strategies as necessary. Our principles teach individuals to do more with less and to view constraints as opportunities for innovation. This resourcefulness is key in times of resource scarcity or budget cuts.

Culture

Creativity is a cornerstone of our company culture. It encourages our staff to think innovatively and share their ideas. This kind of environment promotes collaboration, and when diverse minds unite, we leverage our collective strengths to overcome challenges. By promoting foresight, we stay ahead of potential issues.



Client satisfaction

Our creative approach ensures we're always striving to do better, continuously evolving and adapting. Our ideas go beyond mere functionality; they captivate our clients with outstanding solutions and experiences.

Reputation

Our principles allow us to work in a way that our competitors do not. We're recognised as industry leaders, which draws in new talent, clients and partners.

Incorporating these creative principles has meant not only have we enhanced our ability to respond to immediate challenges, but we're also building a long-term foundation for thriving in a competitive industry.



Sharpening our focus

Our Thrive 25 strategy lays the tramlines for us to become the best company we can be. We're doing the work to capture all the incredible opportunity that's around us right now and in the future.

Our ambition is clear - to be the most relevant, creative and impactful creative communications agency for the good of our clients, our partners and society. And as leaders of an employee-owned business, we are unapologetic in our drive for our partners to share in the financial success of Emperor. Thrive 25 is what gets us there.

The four pillars of Thrive 25 act as our organising strategic framework: obsessed about our clients, better connecting our services, taking how we operate beyond ordinary to exceptional, and nurturing a high-performance culture for our talented people.

Our offer

We empower clients to do better and be better.

Our strategic ambition

To be the most relevant, creative and impactful communications agency for the good of our clients, our partners and society.

Client obsessed

Everything we do is about our clients. We're doubling down on understanding them better, building stronger relationships and delivering amazing outcomes for all of our clients. We're looking globally and targeting those clients that will help us to grow even further, faster.

→ Read more on **page 28**

Connected services

We're connecting and innovating like never before to tackle the breadth of client challenges head-on. We'll collaborate better internally, expand our expertise and become the go-to authority in our field.

→ Read more on **page 32**

Operational excellence

None of this works without being set up for success. We're streamlining and connecting better, from our teams to our data, to serve our partners and clients even better. We're also exploring new technology to stay ahead of the game.

→ Read more on **page 36**

Talented people

Our incredible partners are our secret sauce. We're investing in our people, making sure they have the tools and support to be exceptional, and creating an environment of high challenge and high support, with inclusion as standard, where everyone can excel.

→ Read more on **page 40**

Outcome

Greater returns and opportunities for all our partners.

Our impact in numbers

Helping partners go beyond their potential

2,636

Training hours

64

Participants in internal mentoring programme

18

Career progressions

2nd

Window of salary review introduced

2nd

Festival of learning

→ Read more on **page 54**

Embedding environmental ambitions within our operations

15%

Decrease on emissions related to partners working from home

52%

Decrease in GHG emissions from printing suppliers due to decrease in production volume

0

Scope 2 emissions from Edinburgh, London and Manchester offices (on 100% renewable tariffs)

→ Read more on **page 50**



SCIENCE
BASED
TARGETS

Science Based Targets verified by the SBTi

90%

Increased the scope of our supplier review to 90% of annual spend

5 years

Of emissions data captured



Championing equity, diversity and inclusion

20%

Of partners under the age of 24 or over the age of 55

3rd

Gender pay gap report

91%

Of our partners disclosed their ED&I data

→ Read more on **page 41**

Committed to best practice governance and transparency

18

Partner Voice sessions (five more than last year)

51

Pulse surveys

11

Partner Board meetings

6

Board meetings

→ Read more on **page 69**

Contributing to our communities

6,176

Hours of pro bono work, supporting 12 organisations



New charity partner selected in PAPYRUS

5

New interns

4

Apprentices

4%

Growth in permanent headcount

→ Read more on **page 53**

Connecting with our clients

8/10

Service average recommendation score

115

Client feedback calls

96

Client feedback surveys

25

Industry awards

183

Clients we have been working with for more than five years

→ Read more on **page 29**



Jenni Fulton
Chief Growth Officer

Our clients sit at the heart of everything we do. Our relevance, our success and our fortunes are intertwined.

Sharing in our clients' success

Awards are an interesting place to start for the 'client obsessed' pillar of our strategy.

I watched a huge 'bear hug' between a client and an account director as the client's name was announced as the category winner. The moment captured perfectly the excitement of the award but also the mutual recognition of months of collaboration, hard work and shared ambition.

It's the latter part that really matters when we talk about this strategic pillar. When we remain focused on the needs of our clients, understand the challenges and opportunities they face, while aligning our propositions, services and the way we work around them, we remain both resilient and in the best position to grow and thrive as an agency.

Three simple words sum up our thinking behind client obsession at Emperor - **know, love, grow.**

Focus areas

Know

To know is to go beyond an immediate brief and to really get underneath the skin of an organisation, to understand their ambition, their market and landscape. We encourage a culture of 'always learning'. It's one of our values. Asking questions, doing our research, keeping abreast of regulations, best practice and latest thinking.

Throughout the year there were a number of common themes that emerged in conversations with our clients - ESG, proactive reputation management, people power, managing change and transformation, communications convergence as well as the macro challenges around inflationary challenges and market volatility. Each of these present opportunities and challenges for our clients in equal measure.



Emperor and Helios Towers / Best Integrated Annual Report / Corporate & Financial Awards 2023

Sharing these learnings internally is important and we continue to hold Driving Client Success sessions every two weeks for all of our client-facing teams, upskilling them to better understand and support our clients.

We also have the benefit of a wide-reaching network of relationships with other advisory firms and bodies, as well as with PR, law and broker partners and beyond.

Over the course of the year we have joined panels, spoken at events and collaborated on a number of projects with our wider partners including Workiva Amplify, Equiniti's CGPro, London Stock Exchange and The Investor Relations Society.

We continue to invest in these relationships and recognise the value of our unique network.

Looking forward

For this year, we are continuing to investigate and understand what's on the agenda for our clients. By leveraging the insights from our wider network, we are part of the conversation and can equip our own teams with the right knowledge.



Emperor and Channel 4 / Editorial Design award for Channel 4 2023 Annual Report / The Drum Awards

recognition

We are winners...

Over the past year we have won 25 awards across nine awards bodies.



8/10

Service average recommendation score

Love

Brilliant and uncompromising customer service – that’s the second focus area for client obsession. It’s about being proactive in identifying solutions and delivering awesome work. It’s providing events and publications that inform our clients. It’s helping them win awards. It’s a safe pair of hands to deliver a smooth process and flexibility to respond to challenges that emerge. It’s being a partner that our clients can rely on through all seasons.

Our rigorous processes ensure those levels of customer service are maintained throughout any project but it’s an area we cannot get complacent about.

This year we added executive sponsors to many of our accounts to provide an additional line of support and escalation. We have implemented training, knowledge-sharing initiatives and professional and apprenticeship qualifications and programmes such as Pitch Stars and Supercharged Account Management. We also run our ‘Client Day’ events – where we gather our client facing teams for a day of brainstorming on how we better support our clients.

We also learn through feedback – the good, the bad and the ugly! We conducted 96 client surveys through independent Emperor partners – these provided invaluable insights on areas we can improve on but also some fantastic proof points of where we are making a difference.

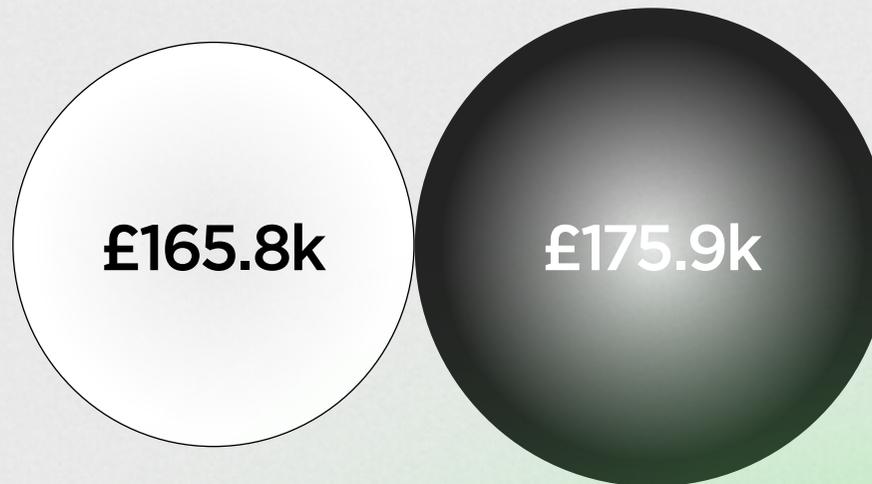
Across the summer, we hosted a series of events around the theme of building business resilience, conducted relevant research and published numerous papers, guides and insights to empower our clients. One of the highlights was Serendipity – our networking event for senior women. 2023’s London event covered the role of ‘place’ in business today – and especially how we can ensure a positive working environment, both physical and virtual, that delivers what individuals, teams and businesses need. We held our first Edinburgh Serendipity too with more than 50 attending. There were some fantastic conversations and connections made at these events. Our challenge for this year will be to book bigger venues to accommodate the growing number who want to attend!



average client spend

Average across 350 clients

Average across top 100



○ 2021/22 ● 2022/23

Looking forward

We are continuing to strengthen our client relationships, implementing improvements to customer service and processes that provide an even better client experience. An exciting pipeline of events and publications are planned to support our clients throughout the year.

100+

Guests hosted at Emperor events

246

Registrations for Building Business Resilience event series

66

New clients

Grow

The result of those first two focus areas is that we will grow with our clients. Grow the relationships we have, grow the mandates of work we are entrusted with and grow our revenue.

The scale and diversity of new mandates we have been entrusted with is fantastic. We supported Mubadala in developing the strategy, theme, messaging and visual brand for their annual employee forum. We partnered with Amazon to develop a creative manager engagement programme for the UK and Europe. We conducted materiality assessments and supported WeTransfer in developing and embedding their responsible business strategy. We partnered on developing new websites for clients such as Pets at Home, SmartestEnergy and AB Ports. And that's just scratching the surface of the reporting, brand, digital, moving image and sustainability projects we delivered.

Our growth is powered by understanding the evolving needs of our clients and offering relevant creative solutions. We saw the number of clients spending over £100k with us increase from 62 in 2022 to 82 in 2023. The average client spend increased 5.3% from £70,600 to £74,400.

We also grow through adding new clients to our roster and our borders continuing to expand. This year we saw 66 new clients added to our roster, and we were delighted to begin our partnerships with British Land, easyJet, Hikma Pharmaceuticals, IAG GBS Oxford Instruments, Ricardo and Speedy Hire, among others here in the UK.

In Europe we added 13 new clients – including SIG, Conduit RE, We Soda, Puma Energy, Sandoz, Air Liquide and Sonepar. Our reputation continues to grow as does the size and scale of projects we are asked to support on.

We continued to see exciting activity in the Middle East, with Steve Kemp (our founder) overseeing our growth and expansion. Here, IPO activity has continued to generate opportunities, in contrast to the UK, and Emperor's reputation in the region has meant a steady stream of new projects and referrals, adding ten clients to our growing portfolio.

We also saw a number of projects cancelled, reflecting some of the macro-economic challenges our clients are having to navigate. Corporate activity, including mergers and acquisitions here in the UK, meant a number of our reporting clients no longer had an annual report requirement.

This is a trend that we are mindful of as we go into 2024; however, the need for organisations to communicate and engage with their stakeholders remains as critical as ever. As we continue to understand the evolving needs of our clients, we remain well-positioned to keep growing and realising the potential this presents for us.



Sustainability roundtable in Dublin



Emperor and Alliance Pharma / Best Communication of Sustainability – Small Cap / IR Society Awards 2023

Looking forward

Using our understanding of our clients' needs, we are connecting them with relevant services and solutions. Alongside this, we are always building our roster by adding new clients – here we'll be focusing on organisations that align to our resilient client policy and where we have scope to make a significant difference and impact. We will also continue to invest in the opportunities outside the UK.

Cameron Gunn
Co-CEO

We're committed to delivering a diverse range of contemporary and connected services that address our clients' most pressing challenges.

Harnessing collective power

Our vision is to bring unique perspectives and creativity to our clients' worlds to tackle these challenges head on. Doing so is critical to ensure we become the most relevant, creative and impactful creative communications agency in the industry.

A new world

Despite the rapidly-evolving agency landscape, we continue to cater to a wide spectrum of clients, from mega caps to smaller listed and private businesses. Emperor's scale has been one of our defining features as a business. Each client brings their own distinct set of circumstances to the table, making every day a unique experience for us.

We're now spending the time to better understand the different types of clients we have, recognising the importance of tailoring our approach to meet the needs of both 'do-for-me' and 'think-with-me' clients.

One thing that will never change is our unwavering commitment to provide our clients with what they need, when they need it, maintaining our position as one of the most trusted delivery partners in our field. But what we have also seen is that many of our clients are now wanting us to bring value beyond the successful delivery of projects.

Focus areas

Understanding different client challenges

For us, this means shifting our focus from merely looking at our share of clients, to begin understanding our 'share of challenge' - specifically the

needle-moving, business-critical moments our clients are facing and where are we in those conversations.

It is within this space that we show the creativity and insight of an Emperor partnership and how it can help our clients get superior solutions, faster.

Looking forward

To meet these head-on, we're ensuring we're set-up appropriately for these clients and assembling the right teams and individuals to tackle them effectively.

Not only is this an imperative for our clients, but it's also important for us. We embraced the opportunities AI gives us to supercharge our business.

But we also recognise the tectonic impact this technology will have on us and our industry. It's imperative that we generate value for our clients beyond production.

By infusing creativity and insight into our clients' worlds, we aim to demonstrate the tangible impact of our work and deliver genuine value, becoming relevant and trusted partners for years to come.

types of challenges

Reputation

- Are we perceived as we would like by our audiences/stakeholders?
- Does our reputation ensure we have a licence to operate? Are we trusted?
- Are we valued in a way that recognises the potential in our business?
- Do people understand who we are and what we stand for?
- How can we become an employer of choice?
- Are our Net Zero transition plans understood and believed?

People

- How do we best transform our organisation for growth?
- How do we attract the talent we need to be successful?
- Can we better engage employees post-Covid and in a time of change to retain the people we need?
- Can everyone be successful in this business?

Growth

- How do we best launch a new product/service in our market?
- Are we positioned like we need to be in our market?
- Are we easy to do business with?
- Do we know our clients/customers as we should?
- Are we standing out compared to our competitors?

Operational

- How can we successfully implement new processes and technology?
- How can we ensure that health and safety is embedded into our business?
- How do we mitigate cyber security risk while embracing innovation?
- What needs to be different for us to be ready for regulatory change?

“In today’s business environment, prioritising audience-driven employee engagement is paramount. By tailoring communications to resonate with individuals, we not only motivate and inspire but also empower everyone to feel a key part of the organisation. Elevating employee engagement ensures that everyone understands their role, encouraging a culture of inclusivity and collective success.”

Siobhan Hammond

Director of Employee Engagement

Converging propositions

Each of our propositions has taken a tailored approach to address their different opportunities. Our Thrive 25 workstreams of proposition growth and digital focus are dedicated to ensuring that each is well-equipped to grow and adapt to their market, with 90-day plans currently being implemented to address their specific needs.

We’re also committed to expanding our capabilities in high-potential growth areas, such as sustainability, employee engagement, and content and insight through strategic hires and potential acquisitions.

However, the real opportunity lies in the convergence of our propositions. By harnessing the collective power of our expertise, creativity, service, delivery and innovation, we can offer intelligent solutions to modern problems for our clients.

We’ve reinstated a proposition working group to foster collaboration across service lines, identify new cross-propositional services and establish us as authorities on corporate audience understanding and measuring effectiveness. This group will also focus on how we can develop T-shaped talent across propositions and build an insights team that can bend and adapt around our client challenges.

Looking forward

In addition to client partnerships, we also recognise the value of collaborating with other partners. As part of our commitment to building these relationships, we’re actively seeking out opportunities to engage with like-minded organisations and individuals. Whether it’s through joint ventures, strategic alliances, or collaborative projects, we’re always looking for ways to expand our network and create value.

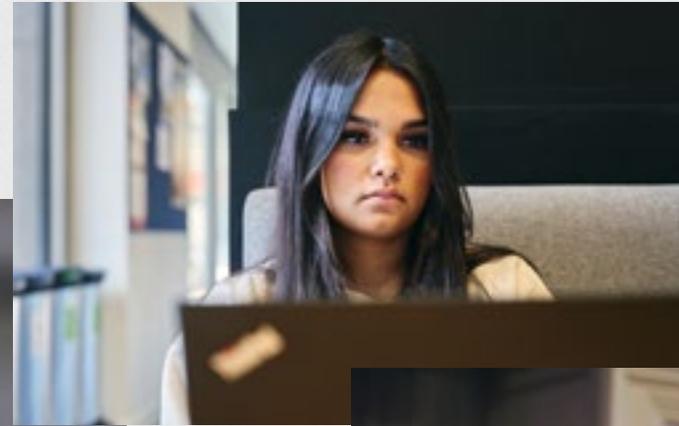
A new energy

As we step into a new era, there’s a sense of excitement at the energy inside Emperor.

We’ve welcomed new talent such as Lara Sharrock, Director of Sustainability and Brand, and Siobhan Hammond, Director of Employee Engagement, into our business. Both are responsible for growing and fortifying their propositions, and it’s been exciting to see them delivering immediate impact for us and our clients.

As we look ahead, building on a strong foundation to better connect our services, we’re well-positioned to drive the innovation, growth and results for our clients.





“By infusing creativity and insight into our clients’ worlds, we aim to demonstrate the tangible impact of our work and deliver genuine value, becoming relevant and trusted partners for years to come.”

Cameron Gunn
Co-CEO

Going further for excellence

Operational excellence is about continual evolution – balancing the needs of our clients, commercial health and people’s wellbeing.

Philip Franklin
Chief Operating Officer



Operational excellence continued

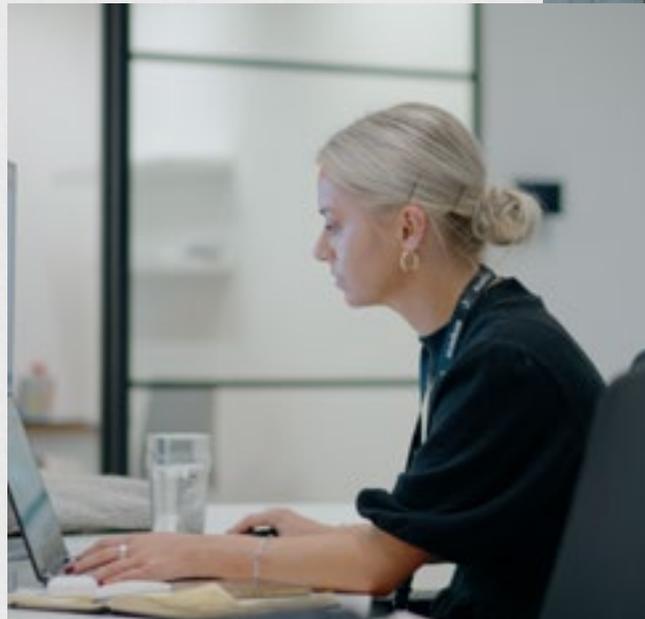
Following on from the exceptional growth of the previous year, we saw all the uncertainties that had been circling since the pandemic start to have a negative effect in 2022/23.

This translated into our clients' budgets being curtailed, projects being delayed or cancelled and scopes of work being reduced. And this meant our own revenue ambitions were increasingly more difficult. The first half of the year was tough, the second half tougher still. Our plans for growth in our non-reporting propositions were affected. We had invested in these services but, as they are reliant on discretionary spending, they were the most severely affected. Alongside this, the complexity of making hybrid working effective and efficient was a common theme throughout the operational leadership, compounded as it was by adverse market conditions.

Rarely in business, as in life, do we experience smooth, consistent success. We are disrupted by variables that are often difficult to see or even imagine. Emperor, as a business with 27 years under its belt, has felt disruption before and will, no doubt, do so again. But the past year has taught us we have to continually work hard for success – and harder still for excellence.

Responsibility for operational excellence brings with it a commitment to ensuring we are doing everything possible to understand and meet the needs of our clients, while thinking about our commercial health and the wellbeing of our people. We seek to balance these different, and sometimes competing, demands and create a culture where continuous improvement is our core philosophy.

We need to be conscious of complacency and continually test and validate our structures, systems and processes. If we don't, the market and our clients will. We cannot know the future but we can prepare and build in resilience to potential scenarios.



“The tough macro environment put pressure on our clients, our people and our culture. Profitability became strained. We found it more and more difficult to predict our future. Inflation was a factor at work and at home.”

Amanda Woodward
Chief Commercial Officer

Focus areas

Organisational structure

It is vital that our structure works for both our clients and our colleagues, providing a secure platform for delivering excellence, while supporting professional and personal development.

Benchmarked against these KPIs, then 2022/23 underperformed. Profitability was below where we would want it, and for the first time in over five years the curve went the wrong way. Staff costs to revenue ratio went up, while revenue per head went down. We can't ignore this underperformance and must reflect on how we use it to drive change.

In acknowledging the need to improve, we shouldn't lose sight of positive data. Client retention was strong, our core reporting offer continued to grow, average account size increased by >10% and we added 20 clients to our group of six-figure accounts. This is evidence of the continuing strength of many of our client relationships and must give cause for optimism.

“The unpredictability of workflows and budgets, coupled with meeting changing client requirements have made advanced planning difficult.”

Roy Carter
Commercial Director, Edinburgh



our KPIs

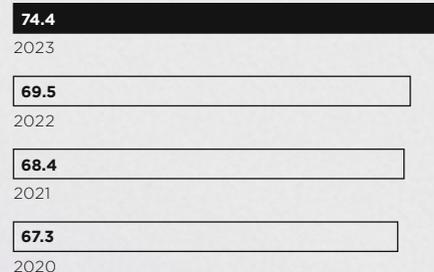
Profitability* %



A key KPI, which we monitor on a monthly and rolling 12-month basis. Our margins were squeezed by a combination of factors, inflation, a difficult trading environment and higher staff costs primarily because of the investments we made to manage the exceptional growth of the prior year.

* Earnings (before exceptional costs) before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation as a % of revenue

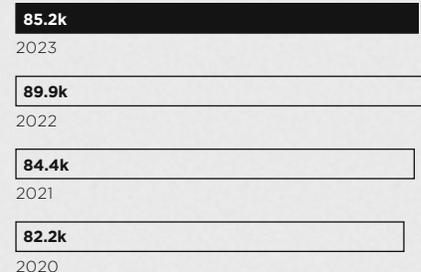
Staff costs to revenue %**



We track the staff costs to revenue ratio as a key measure of margin control. Increased staff costs combined with pressure on our revenues during the 2nd half of the year resulted in a significant negative shift in this key ratio. We are confident that measures we have taken during this year will move us back on track towards our 60% target.

** Total staff costs excluding shareholder salaries, including freelancers

Revenue per head* £**



We track revenue per head as a measure of efficiency. Given the challenges we experienced during the year it is no surprise to see a decline in revenue per head. However, it is encouraging to see that it still remained higher than 2020 and 2021. Our target remains £100k per head and we expect better performance this year.

*** Total revenue/average permanent headcount

Looking forward

Our structure, systems and processes all came under pressure during a turbulent year. We need to assess, review and reshape where necessary to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Data maturity and integration

Looking at data and proposition integration, it was difficult to make as much progress as we wanted. The robustness of our forecasting came under severe scrutiny, while exceptional volatility and movement created problems with accuracy. Our view forward, critical for planning, was increasingly obscured – we need to use the experience to build better tools and models.



Looking forward

Over the past three years, we've made real progress in both capturing and understanding the data that underpins performance. We should continue to develop this area and use recent experience as a spur to further improvement.

With our proposition growth and integration, our ambition remains to grow our non-reporting services. We continue to organise around our clients and respond to their growing need for a more joined-up approach to reputation management and communications while seeking to drive both greater effectiveness and efficiencies from their teams and their agencies.

“We’ve made progress in some of our data systems and started to embed a culture of rigour around data, which is really important. There’s no doubt this past year has thrown some curveballs and our goal has been to try and keep the teams focused on delivering quality efficiently.”

Sarah Lewis
Co-Head of Client Services, London

Hybrid working

There's been a tension between the promise and ideal of hybrid working and the practical realities of achieving efficiency and operational excellence. It's a tension we must find a way to resolve and, of course, we're not alone – hybrid working has become a significant issue across many sectors. We said last year that this was the biggest change in the working world for decades and the evidence so far is that finding the balance will be challenging for some time to come.

Adjusting course

‘When you can't change the direction of the wind, adjust your sails.’ That's what we need to do – the adjustment has already begun and will continue. In 27 years we've seen the graphs go up and down, recovered from global financial crises and global pandemics. A tough year is a year to reflect on and learn from, the past is not an accurate guide to the future but it can give you some valuable hints.

“Hybrid working is still coming together and we’ve focused on encouraging people back into the studio to help create that culture of collaboration and creativity that is at the heart of Emperor.”

Kristine Fackender
Co-Head of Client Services, London

“That the year was difficult goes without saying. On top of this, in Central we also had to find a suitable new office in Birmingham and the team showed fantastic fortitude to manage their way through an office move during our busiest period.”

Polly Barnard
Head of Client Services, Central

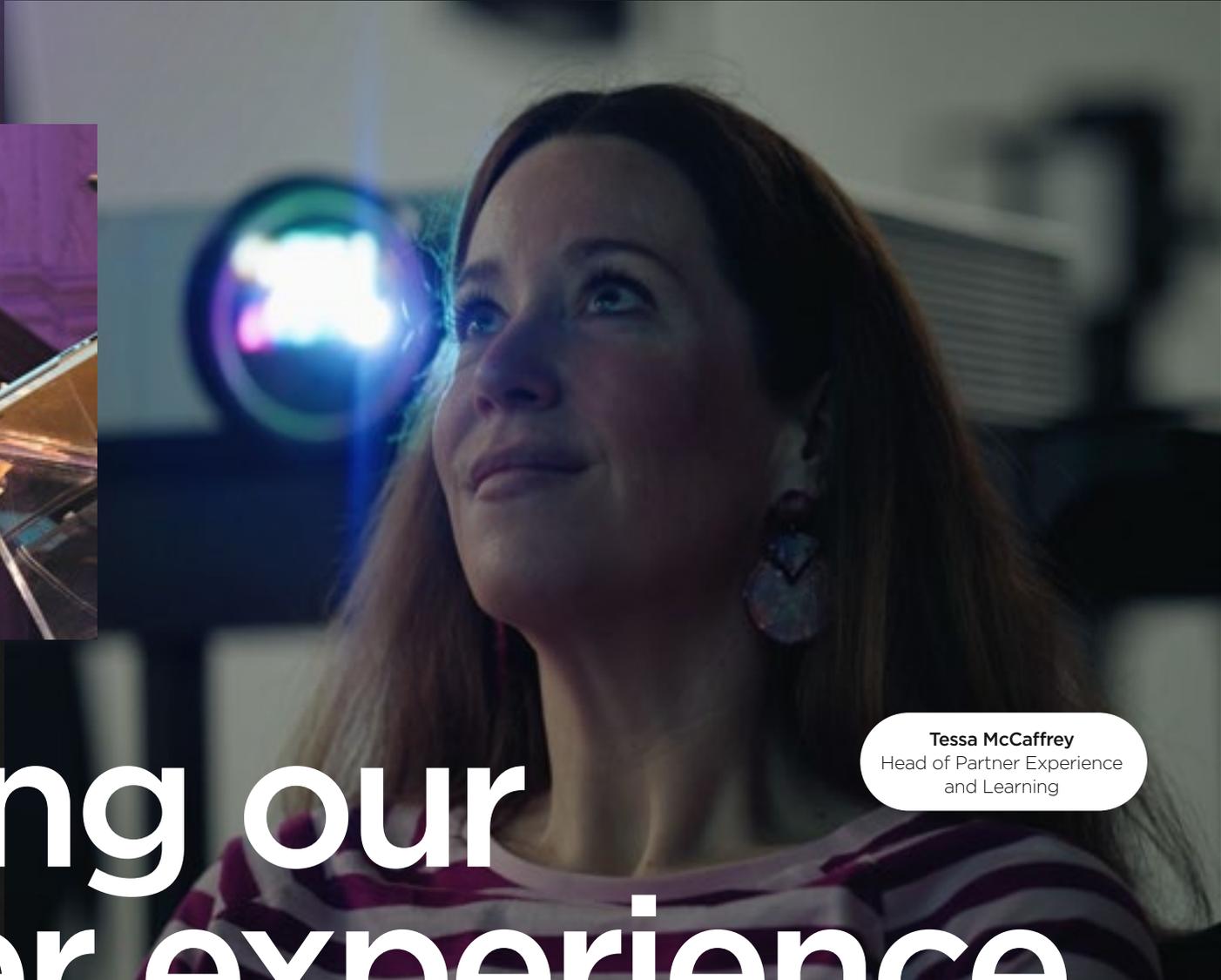
Looking forward

We take the learnings from an incredibly disruptive period with us into next year and continue to continuously improve our structure, data and capabilities to better serve our clients.





Sam Lipman
Chief People and Talent Officer



Tessa McCaffrey
Head of Partner Experience
and Learning

Evolving our partner experience

We've been on a mission to transform Emperor into the best possible place to work - empowering careers while delivering outstanding work.

Talented people continued

Emperor has been built on a belief that its people and culture are core to its success – and through a year of turbulence, we focused on protecting this while shaping a best-in-class people function.

We've been on a mission to transform into something bigger and bolder, to drive an even better partner experience. An organisation that attracts, develops, empowers and retains the very best people. A high-performance culture that delivers outstanding work for our clients.

Performing to our potential

In a time of economic uncertainty, our commitment to our culture takes on even greater significance. It's a strategic imperative, with tangible and measurable benefits, and an investment in our people, performance and profitability.

By strengthening our culture, we not only preserve our identity but support a more resilient future for Emperor.

The People function has evolved in line with renewed Emperor ambitions, and we've started to make great progress which will continue into 2024. We've revamped our infrastructure, embracing enhanced technologies and streamlined processes, as we establish an environment where transparency, accountability and recognition drive success.

Focus areas**Data-driven understanding**

By encouraging our partners to voluntarily disclose their equity, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) data, we were able to create a more comprehensive and accurate picture of our workforce. More than 90% of our people shared their data, allowing us to better understand the diverse makeup of our employees and ensure decisions and initiatives are reflective of and responsive to the needs of everyone.

We automated the offer and onboarding process by implementing a system for seamless and efficient job offer generation. This has resulted in a better candidate experience and smoother introduction into the agency. We also allowed for more self-service for partners and managers, allowing people to access their team's people data in a timely fashion.

“We've used this data to tailor policies, programmes and communications. This data helps us identify areas for improvement, implement targeted initiatives, and make more informed people decisions that align with our commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace for all partners.”

Tessa McCaffrey

Head of Partner Experience and Learning



Edinburgh management training session



London studio monthly meet-up presentation

Looking forward

Through automation, data collection/dashboards and specific success measures, we are continuing to evolve our processes and ensure data – not anecdotes – drives our decision making.

Benchmarking our benefits

We hired a permanent Talent Acquisition Partner who undertook a comprehensive salary and benefits benchmarking exercise for every role and region within the business. This included conducting market research, speaking to trusted recruiters, new starters and returning partners. We are committed to complete this on a regular basis to ensure we are competitive and remain an employer of choice.

Looking forward

We are reviewing our remuneration and recognition strategy to ensure we reward fairly, recognise high performance and continue to attract top talent. We are keen to broaden our approach and implement a strategy that allows us to celebrate key employee milestones and personal moments.

Developing future stars

We're aiming to build a queue of diverse, talented people wanting to join Emperor via a 'grow our own' pipeline. We focused on direct hiring wherever possible and using our partner-referral network and alumni. We also started pro-actively talent pooling and have built a strong pipeline of future candidates. This has included supporting the Middle East team with their rapid growth.

Working with current partners, we invested in training and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Alongside a range of opportunities, including manager development, professional and apprenticeship qualifications and programmes such as Pitch Stars and Supercharged Account Management, we are also offering regular peer-to-peer learning initiatives.

“We have introduced two windows for review. Partners can expect an annual salary and promotion review but there is now an additional window to reward changes in role or promotion.”

Chris Phillips
HR Manager

We evolved our approach to performance management, emphasising the importance of continuous 360-degree feedback at meaningful moments throughout the year. This shift reflects our desire for a culture of ongoing improvement and collaboration.

57%

Reduction in recruitment costs year-on-year

7.7%

Employee turnover

Looking forward

By implementing an attraction strategy, we can ensure a pipeline of diverse, talented people. Alongside this, we are expanding existing programmes to improve access to the creative industries from under-represented groups in all of our regions, improving career opportunities and growth with illustrated career pathways and accessible internal mobility processes across all hubs and teams.

We are also supporting the growth and expansion of our Dubai and international presence with more opportunities for partners.

And we are enhancing our approach to partner engagement and development by implementing a new engagement platform, allowing us to take action against a broad range of factors.



Talented people continued

Midweek office lunch in London

New ways of working

The formal introduction of hybrid working marked a period of transformation within Emperor. We anticipate huge benefits in allowing employees to observe and immerse themselves in cultural cues, supporting learning and mentorship from one another, encouraging spontaneous collaboration, cultural events and celebrations, clear communication and reinforcing a clearer culture of accountability.

Looking forward

We are empowering managers with a set of 12 manager behaviours, across a multi-year development cycle, as well as distributing ownership and accountability for ED&I across Emperor, including the launch of Employee Resource Groups.

“I love what hybrid working means for ease of collaboration and the opportunities to learn, but most importantly I love what it means for building relationships with colleagues who I wouldn’t cross paths with otherwise. It’s these connections that make Emperor, Emperor.”

Sarah Eklund

Internal Communications Manager





Dubai team walk for mental health awareness

Keeping partners informed

Since we appointed a dedicated Internal Communications Manager, we've streamlined communications to better engage partners through initiatives like Planet Emperor, our weekly internal newsletter. It supports our ambition to be an inclusive and informed workforce, hosting a mixture of content, including employee, business, and client-related updates and news. It has set a standard for our partners' expectation of clear and consistent communication.

Alongside this, to help partners we've reviewed processes to make them more efficient and easy to use, while providing them with better access to tools, information and resources.

“We're developing automation that results in best-practice support and guidance and a greater level of empowerment for our people managers.”

Sophie Powell
HR Administrator

Looking forward

We are looking to streamline our people processes to make them as efficient and accessible as possible. We need to understand how we can use technology to be faster, smarter and generally better, considering how to use and embed AI to have better insight into our Partners and the business needs.



Birmingham locals exploring the area

82%

Annual appraisals completed

7

Returning former employees (or boomerangs)

18

Promotions



Black History Month event with Sami Rhymes in London

Adapting to the new working world

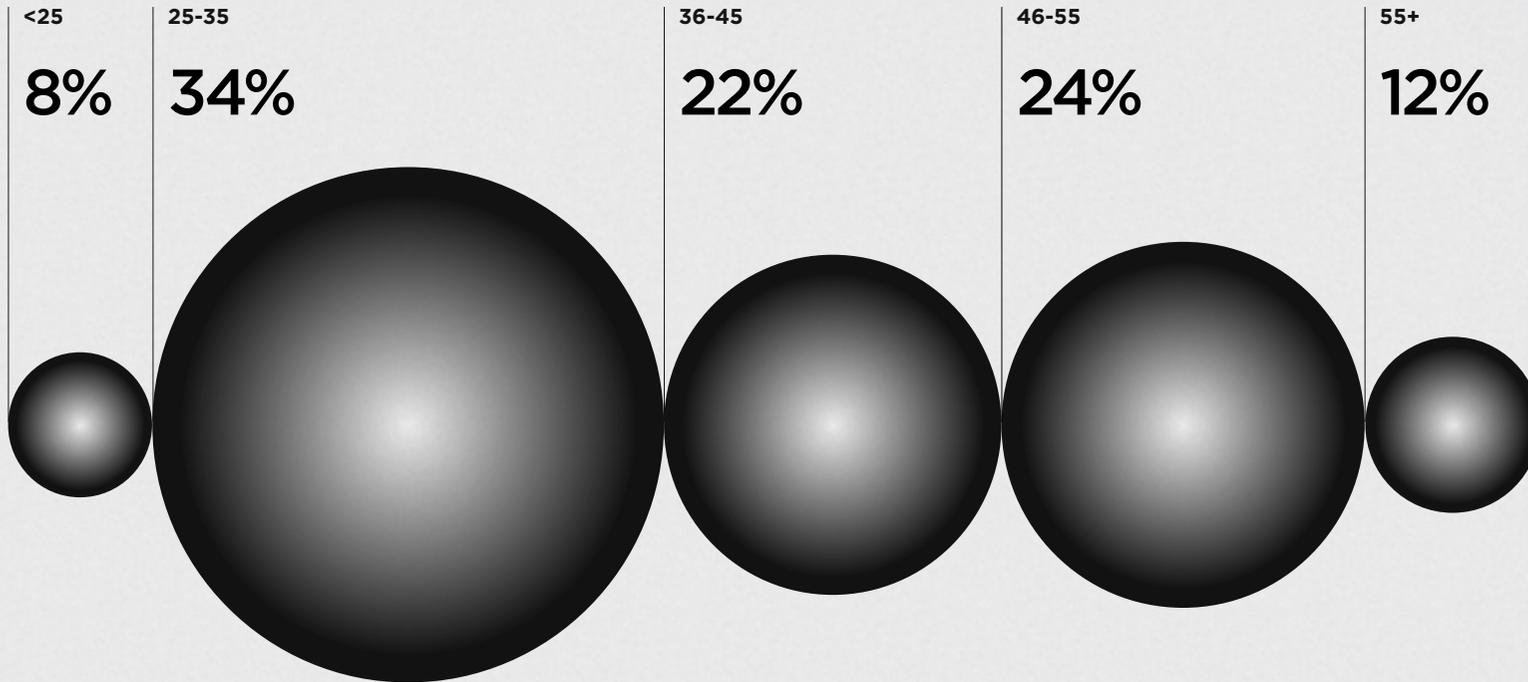
This past year has been a testament to our adaptability and resilience. We remain focused on not only attracting and retaining exceptional talent, but also developing an environment where our partners can flourish within a high-performance culture. We also recognise the need to continue to be agile and recognise that people want different things from their career at Emperor.

We'll adapt to the way the workplace is changing, embracing best-in-class approaches, policies and exploring new opportunities for growth, for both Emperor and our partners.

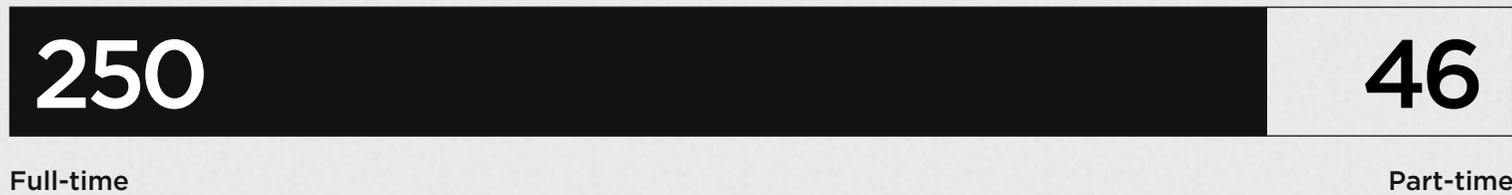
Talented people continued

people data

Age range



Employment type



Key figures

43

New joiners

37

Leavers

5

Internships

4

Apprentices

2

Fixed-term to permanent

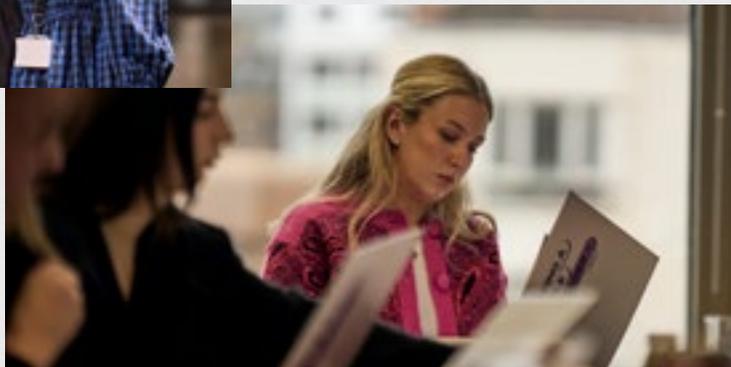
Taking action on the pay gap

We are dedicated to building an inclusive and diverse culture at Emperor and our gender pay gap data each year is a key data point for review.



The gender pay gap is described as ‘the difference between the average earnings of men and women across the workforce’. But there is so much more behind the headline figures. The gender pay gap data is a snapshot that reflects our UK gender split at a specific point in time (5 April 2023).

We use this data as just one reference for our actions in the ED&I space. It acts as an indicator for areas of the business that we need to investigate and improve.



Just like the insights we received from our ED&I data collection that 91% of partners completed.

First things first, it’s important to note that ‘gender pay gap’ and ‘equal pay’ are not the same. Equal pay refers to men and women performing the same work or job, being paid the same. Emperor pays partners equally for doing the same job.

The gender pay gap refers to the difference in the average earnings of men and women across the whole of Emperor at a specific period in time regardless of their role. Even when employers have effective pay policies that promote equal pay, there might still be a gender pay gap in the organisation if, for instance, most of the men employed there have higher-paid jobs compared to women.

Compared to 2022, the 2023 figures for Emperor do show a slight increase in the gender pay gap. But there is also some good news so it’s important that we look at these figures in more detail and understand why.

In April 2023, our gender split was 128 men and 173 women. That’s 43% men and 57% women. In 2022, it was 45% men and 55% women, so we’ve seen a 2% shift here.

The mean difference in the average rate of men’s and women’s pay is 15.1% when compared to men, while the median difference between the midpoints in the range is 12.8%.

Compared to 2022, that’s a 1.9% and 4% increase across both averages. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) publish the median average which sits at 14.3% which is a slight decrease from 14.9% in 2022. We sit below the national ONS average at 12.8%.

Mean and median gap

Mean

↗ 15.1%

2022: 13.2%

Median

↗ 12.8%

2022: 8.8%

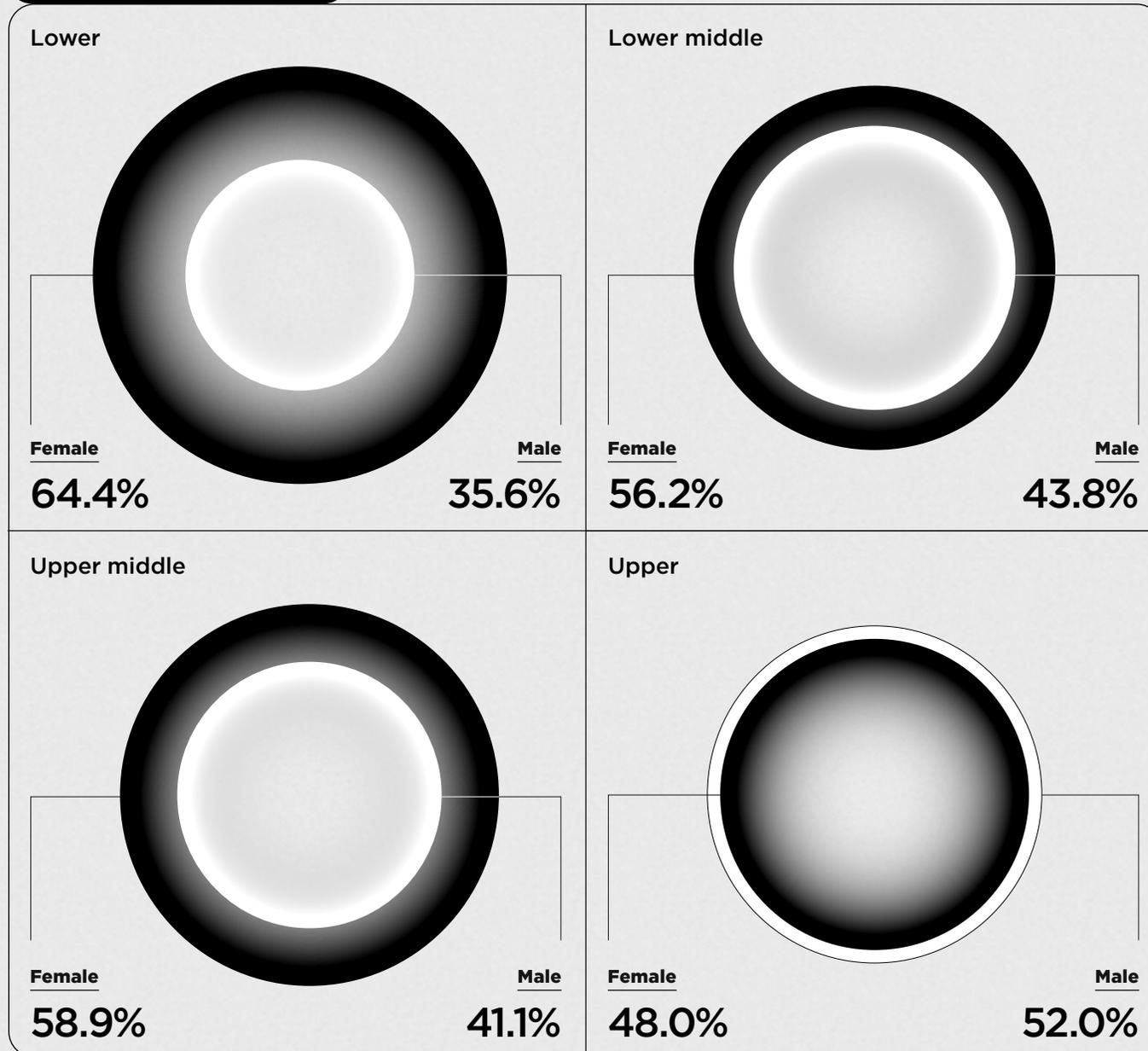
Median (ONS)

↘ 14.3%

2022: 14.9%

The mean average rate is calculated by adding up everyone’s salary at Emperor and dividing by the number of people employed at that time. The median average rate is calculated by listing all salaries at Emperor in order, from the lowest to highest, and pinpointing the salary in the middle.

gender pay gap comparison



we all play a part

As an employee-owned organisation, all partners have an active part to play and we must hold each other accountable to this. Over the past 12 months:

- 91% of our partners disclosed their diversity data
- We launched our Maternity Leave Returners Manager Toolkit
- We planned the launch of our Employee Resource Group, the Women's Collective. A group where our partners can build community, share experience and consult and advise the business
- In collaboration with the Women's Collective, we co-designed and launched our Reproductive and Menstrual Health Policy and Manager Toolkit
- We actively participated in events, including Serendipity, Good Shout, BIMA Women & Assertiveness for Women Programme
- We supported over 40 women through the second year of our internal mentoring programme, POP!

Although the GPG data is useful, we know there is still significant and ongoing work we need to do in the ED&I space. GPG is just one data point that can be an indicator for further enquiry.



Louisa Holgate
Brand Strategist



Simon Tappenden
Group Operations Manager

Creating value for all

Being a responsible business is baked into everything we do, and is brought to life through employee ownership, our pledges and our commitments.

When business is a force for good, it creates value for all our stakeholders. It supports and drives the growth of the business, attracting and retaining clients and talented partners.

This is our commitment to being a responsible business. It's brought to life by employee ownership, our pledges and our commitment to continuous improvement, in line with B Corp's five impact areas: governance, employees, environment, community and clients.

Impact reporting

Within Thrive 25, our refreshed strategy, responsible business no longer has its own pillar but is woven through all four pillars. This reflects the fact that responsible business is baked into everything we do: our culture, processes and decision making. On pages 26-27 we have included an impact data overview sign-posting to different aspects within the review.

Focus areas

Data-driven environmental impact

We are focused on reducing carbon emissions, a shared objective through our operations, our ways of working and our services.

As a result of over two years of continued effort by our Environmental Operations Team to collect four years of emissions data, we are now up-to-date and aligned with our financial reporting. We have also improved and extended the scope of data, all of which gives us a more accurate picture of the changing shape of our footprint and where to prioritise action.

During the year our science-based targets were verified by the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi), our London and Edinburgh offices received ISO14001 recertification, and we worked hard to engage partners with our strategic focus areas: Avoid, Reduce, Rethink, Restore, Offset.

Being a better B Corp

How we build on the achievement of our certification is to become an integral part of the B Corp community, supporting the movement and make a positive difference for people and planet.

Emperor's B Corp journey began in 2020. We became employee owned in the January and B Corp was a natural next step. We had a track record of responsible business and B Corp has provided a framework to gauge our approach and progress and then guide us going forward. We submitted our B Impact Assessment (BIA) in April 2021 with a score of 113.4 points and received confirmation of certification in September. We're excited to see how going forward embracing a B Corp mindset will influence our ongoing commitment to creating value for all our stakeholders. We are working towards submitting for our recertification at the end of February 2025.



Looking forward

Our next step is a detailed materiality review of Scope 3 emissions to establish our Net-Zero pathway, as outlined by the SBTi.

Our pledges

Our pledges are a key element of our approach to responsible business. They are a set of 12 promises and commitments that focus on issues we're passionate about and are an integral part of our culture.



We give back



We give youth a chance



We are most welcoming



We help you go beyond your potential



We trust



We look after the whole you



We are always accessible



We encourage innovation and ideas



We recognise excellence



We are social



We support you through thick and thin



We care for the environment

Calculating our carbon footprint

During the year, we worked with B Corp and Green Element to calculate our carbon footprint for 2022/23, including increased scope based on learnings from previous exercises. We now have five years of emissions data, starting with a full working year pre-pandemic as our baseline and illustrating how our world of work has changed.

The 2022/23 scope included:

- **Five offices:** four in the UK, one in the UAE
- **On-site activity:** electricity, gas, water, waste, refrigerant
- **Off-site activity:** business travel, hotels, commuting, homeworking
- **Purchased goods and services:** digital emissions, paper and printing, IT equipment, food and drink, furniture and renovations.

The chart demonstrates the change in total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over four years, which included several lockdowns and a shift to hybrid working.

The data is split by activity and shows where emissions have increased and decreased as a result of changing working patterns and an ambition to stick with the good habits that have benefited the environment.

We offset our operational footprint with B Corp Ecologi, whose carbon avoidance programmes are Gold Standard. In addition we planted 2,500 trees, supporting nature restoration projects.

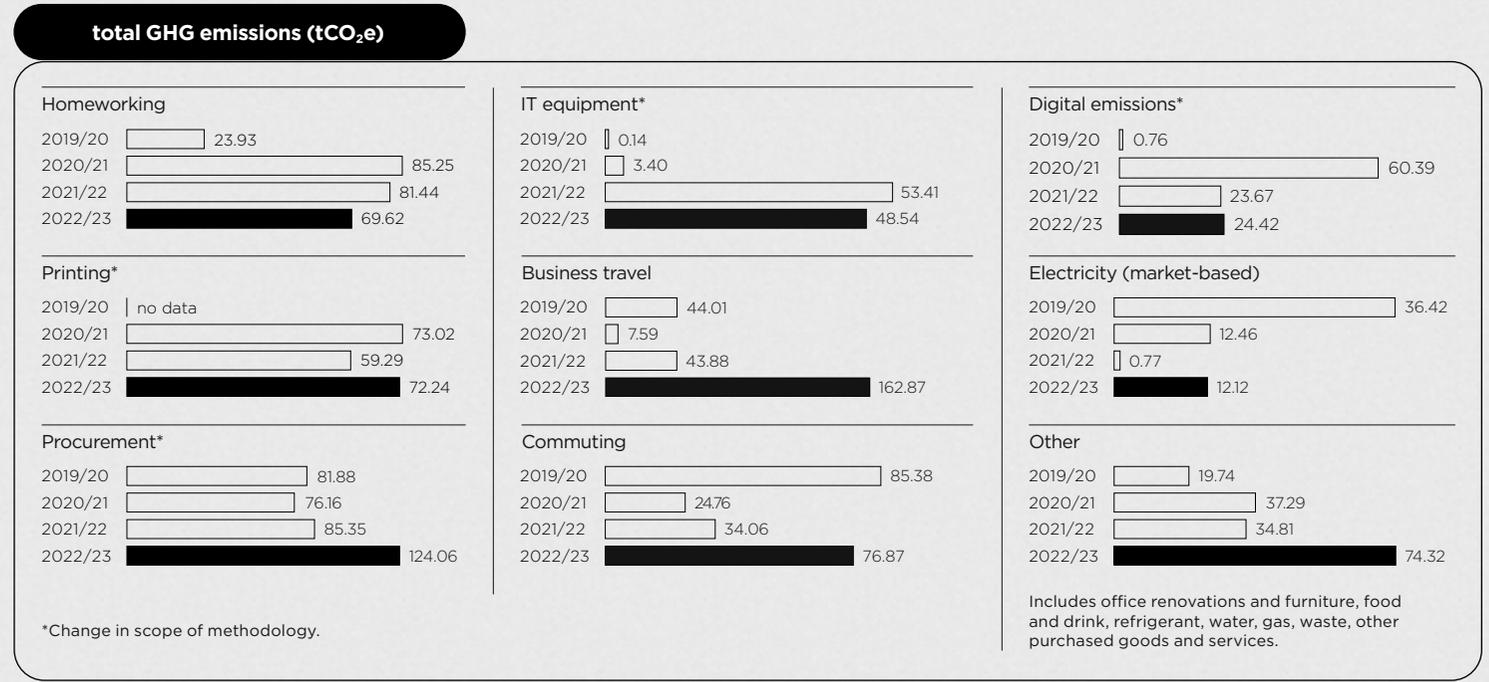
We are also a Climate Friendly Workforce, partially offsetting the personal footprint of our partners. Going forward we are in conversation with our partners Green Element to ensure the most effective approach to investing in offsetting.

Looking forward

Building on the strong work from this year, we will continue to focus action on our carbon hotspots, while using our data to innovate ways of working and services.



Manchester team on the Hopewalk, supporting PAPYRUS



total GHG emissions (TCO₂E) carbon hotspots

Our 2018/19 and 2019/20 data revealed four original hotspots that required action.

Business travel

While GHG emissions from business travel have nearly returned to pre-Covid levels, they are still lower than the baseline year, with a 25% decrease since 2018/19.

In 2021, we launched a responsible business travel policy, alongside a decision-making toolkit for partners and air travel targets for 2022/23. This commits us to avoiding a return to pre-pandemic levels of air travel and reduce the number of flights by 30% on our baseline year. We are putting systems in place to monitor progress against our targets quarterly, which will be key as the latest data shows business travel increasing significantly following the end of restrictions and a desire from colleagues and clients to connect in real life.

Electricity

The Edinburgh, London and Manchester offices were on 100% renewable tariffs, which resulted in zero Scope 2 emissions for these offices. The increase in Scope 2 emissions from last year is largely due to the Warwick to Birmingham office move, as electricity at this new office was no longer a 100% renewable tariff. We will continue to work with our landlords on environmental efficiencies and 100% green tariffs.

Commute

Data shows a 126% increase in emissions on last year relating to our commute as we spent more time working in the office and an increase in the number of partners by 9.6% which meant more commutes to account for. We launched a pilot electric vehicle leasing scheme that, so far, has enabled six partners to switch to electric. Our 'We care for the environment' and 'We look after the whole you' pledge teams are working together to launch a new cycle club to encourage partners to consider cycling to work.

Print and paper procurement

GHG emissions from printing suppliers decreased by 52% since last year. While this was partially due to a 27% decrease in production volume, it was also a result of data quality. Alongside continuing to advise our clients on best-practice environmental printing and reduced print runs, we have improved the scope of our data in this area to separate out emissions related to print suppliers and paper brands. This is helping us to identify opportunities for reduction going forward. For example, we are avoiding carbon-intensive papers and working with printers operating on a 100% renewable energy tariff.

Our data continues to show three emerging hotspots for prioritisation:

Working from home

Although emissions relating to partners working from home (WFH) decreased by 15% on last year, they have grown significantly on our baseline year as a result of the shift to hybrid working. During the year we built on the progress of our Virtual Green Office Policy with the five actions of our environmental strategy front of mind at home as well as in the office.

Going forward, we will use the data collected from our WFH and commute questionnaire to find ways to support partners and reduce emissions.

IT equipment

IT equipment currently accounts for 9% of our carbon emissions, down from 14% last year. This includes a recent change in methodology by Green Element, using more specific carbon factors published by relevant suppliers. DEFRA also published updated GHG emissions factors for IT equipment that showed 76% of related GHG emissions came from monitors which are particularly carbon intensive due to the raw materials and manufacturing energy consumption. We will therefore examine our current approach in light of the data provided and develop a plan to address this new hotspot.

Digital emissions

Digital is a central part of our business, and an area where we have significantly improved data collection. We grew the sample size from five in 2020/21 to 97 websites in 2021/22 and 170 in 2022/23. This means we have established a more accurate understanding of related emissions. We have a specific workstream looking at sustainable and inclusive web design. We have defined 'Carbon-efficient' principles and recommendations based on clients' requirements and a number of different options we can provide to them.

Suppliers that match our ambitions

Our purchases, partners, suppliers and customers are all part of a chain that links us to the world. This reflects who we are and what matters to us. Our vision is to be part of a supply chain that's as ambitiously positive, resilient, collaborative and responsible as we aspire to be. That's why with every decision we take and every connection we make, sustainability should always be at the forefront of our thinking.

Building on last year's first steps, we've continued to develop our Supply Chain Management Programme with a new review and scoring process. Going forward this equips us with:

- A clear gauge of preferred suppliers
- A mechanism with which to select and onboard new suppliers
- An assessment of valued relationships and where we need to help improve their score
- A clearer picture of risks in our supply chain which need to be addressed.

Looking forward

We will embed our new approach into the selection and onboarding of new suppliers, while developing our targets and KPIs.

Clients

We believe in B Corp's mantra of business as a force for good and want to build relationships with like-minded companies committed to an ambition to be better and balancing people, planet and profit.

Building on the momentum of open and transparent discussions about who we work with and why, we formalised a new Resilient Client Selection and Review Policy and formed a Resilient Clients Committee. We shared the data with partners as part of three 30-minute 'Shaping our sustainable future' sessions. These sessions were focused on raising awareness of the new policy, examples of decisions it had informed so far and the launch of a questionnaire asking partners to tell us who they'd love to work with, what makes a great brief and what issues they are keen to see being addressed by the companies we work with.

Looking forward

We will keep focusing on engaging partners in our 'Shaping our sustainable future' initiative, developing a business development plan from the results of the partner questionnaire. We will also record and review data being captured by our teams implementing the new policy and cases being raised to the Resilient Clients Committee. We are clear that we will always work with companies that have a genuine commitment to a more sustainable future.

Supporting an active ecosystem of responsible business

In last year's report we said we would establish a network of responsible business champions across Emperor. When setting out to define what we wanted to achieve and how this could work, we identified an already active ecosystem of partners immersed in different aspects. For our company-wide summer update, we created a video to bring to life the different ways in which people across Emperor are involved in responsible business every day.

Looking forward

Going forward it is key that our partners understand our approach to responsible business and make connections with their own role and responsibilities. This will help us to further activate our plans and achieve our goals. A particular focus for the coming year is to increase the number of partners with specific performance objectives as part of our annual review process encouraged by the rollout of specific training and ongoing communications.



A spotlight on some of our pledges in action.

We care for the environment



Healthy herby heroes

The Big Spring Plant was back, better and - yes - bigger than ever. For its second year, after seeing great success last year's tomato growing, we planted a variety of herbs. Our green-fingered Head of Digital Strategy, Simon Bennison, guided us through, supported with recipes from Senior Account Manager and Environment representative, Cath Fleming, to make the most of the flavour.



We give back



The gift of time

There are so many ways we can give back to the community. But it often starts with us donating our time. During the year, our partners gave a total of 501 volunteering hours, working with the following organisations to help with volunteering, mentoring and coaching programmes:

- Spitalfields City Farm
- Aleto Foundation
- Help to Ukraine
- Onhand
- Long Covid Support
- Olive Academies Trust
- Edinburgh College
- Barnado's
- Kerning the Gap
- Two + Two



While we have been steadily increasing the number of hours volunteered over the past two years, we still have a way to go to broaden participation. Team-based initiatives and mentoring partnerships remain our focus.



We can also give back through our work. By supporting organisations that are doing great socially-responsible work with our creative and strategic communications skills for free, we can help them reach further, build deeper engagement and ultimately have a bigger impact. This year, we've given 6,176 pro bono hours - smashing our target of 2,000 hours - in our work with the following organisations:

- Elton John Foundation
- Employee Ownership Association
- Art Against Knives
- Climate Tech SuperCluster
- FCT
- Maggie's Massiliote
- Mubadala
- Ocean Generation
- The Rivers Trust
- The Rock Trust
- Schools Out
- Sibling Support



Go beyond your potential

Learning more from one another

A deeply-embedded culture of learning means a key part of our development is learning through each other. This year saw the second year of our flagship programmes: Be Your Best Fest and POP!

Be Your Best Fest is Emperor's very own festival of learning. We offered over 25 workshops across offices and virtually with a specific focus on connected propositions, sharing insights to enable us to better understand and serve our clients. Peppered alongside, we also joined creative workshops with topics ranging from iPhone photography to the influence of skateboarding culture on art

as well as classic professional training like presentation skills. All partners had the opportunity to be their best and we're already planning year three!

POP! is our mentoring programme where we match Partnerships Of Potential. We started to see the tangible outcomes of our pairings, including career pivots, elevated management skills and deeper knowledge and relationships building throughout the business. Again, we had over 20% of partners participate in this programme that continues to benefit both the individual and Emperor.



We look after the whole you

Little things that make a big difference

This pledge is a testament to our commitment to fostering a supportive and thriving work environment. By offering a diverse range of initiatives such as meditation, wellbeing capsules, financial wellbeing workshops and inviting guest speakers for events, we continue to prioritise the holistic wellness of our partners.

We held events for both World Mental Health Day and Stress Awareness Week and had the opportunity to trial a wellbeing app called Mood. Finally, this year we formalised our Summer Hours programme and encouraged partners to leave early on a Friday and enjoy the sunshine.

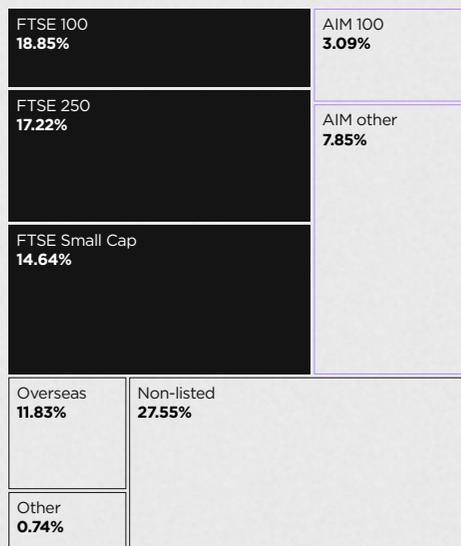
client disclosure report

Committed to transparency

Following on from our first data collection aligned with the Creative Climate Disclosure initiative – our second year of insight continues to provide useful context to our client base. We have reported against established review categories by type and sector. The initiative was established in 2015 and challenges the creative sector to consider how it uses its expertise to support businesses and disclose how much revenue comes from high-carbon clients.

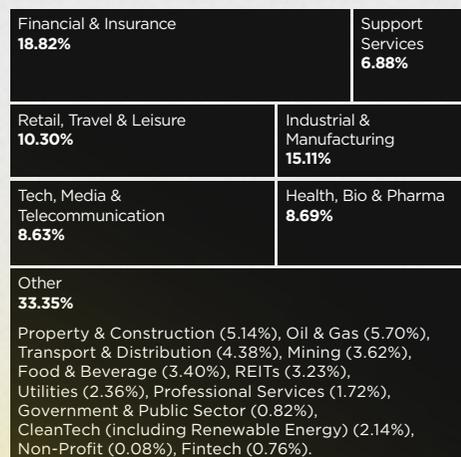
Transparency is an important aspect of our commitment to using business as a force for good. We understand that we have a role to play in the movement to transform the global economy to benefit all people, communities and the planet. The data will help inform decision-making, ensuring that we are shaping a resilient client base and considering all our stakeholders.

% Revenue by type of business

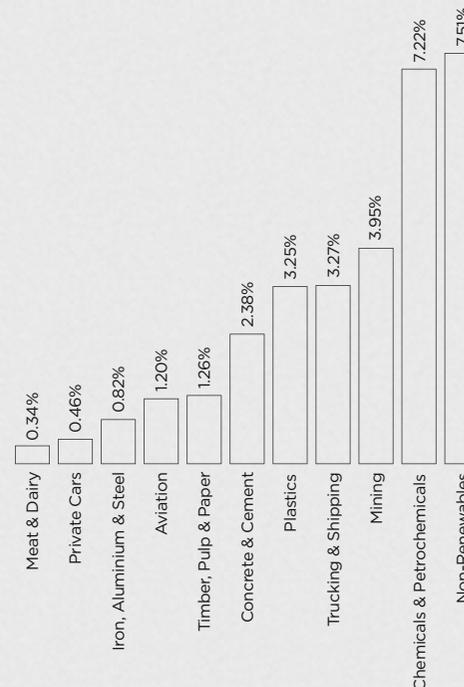


■ Main market □ AIM □ Other

% Revenue by sector



% Revenue by carbon intensive sector

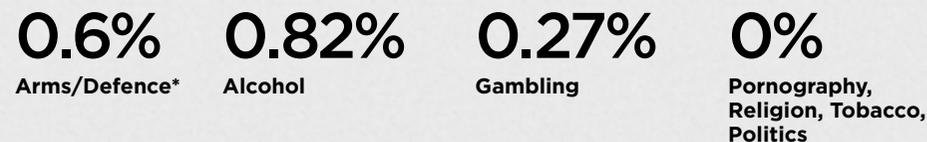


↑ Non-renewables (above left) and Oil & Gas (above right) currently includes all our energy clients who have business divisions and investments in renewables, bioenergy, EV charging, hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage. We are currently exploring the benefits of more granular analysis of this category in particular. We have introduced Mining in light of the scale of our work with this sector.

Top 10 clients by % revenue

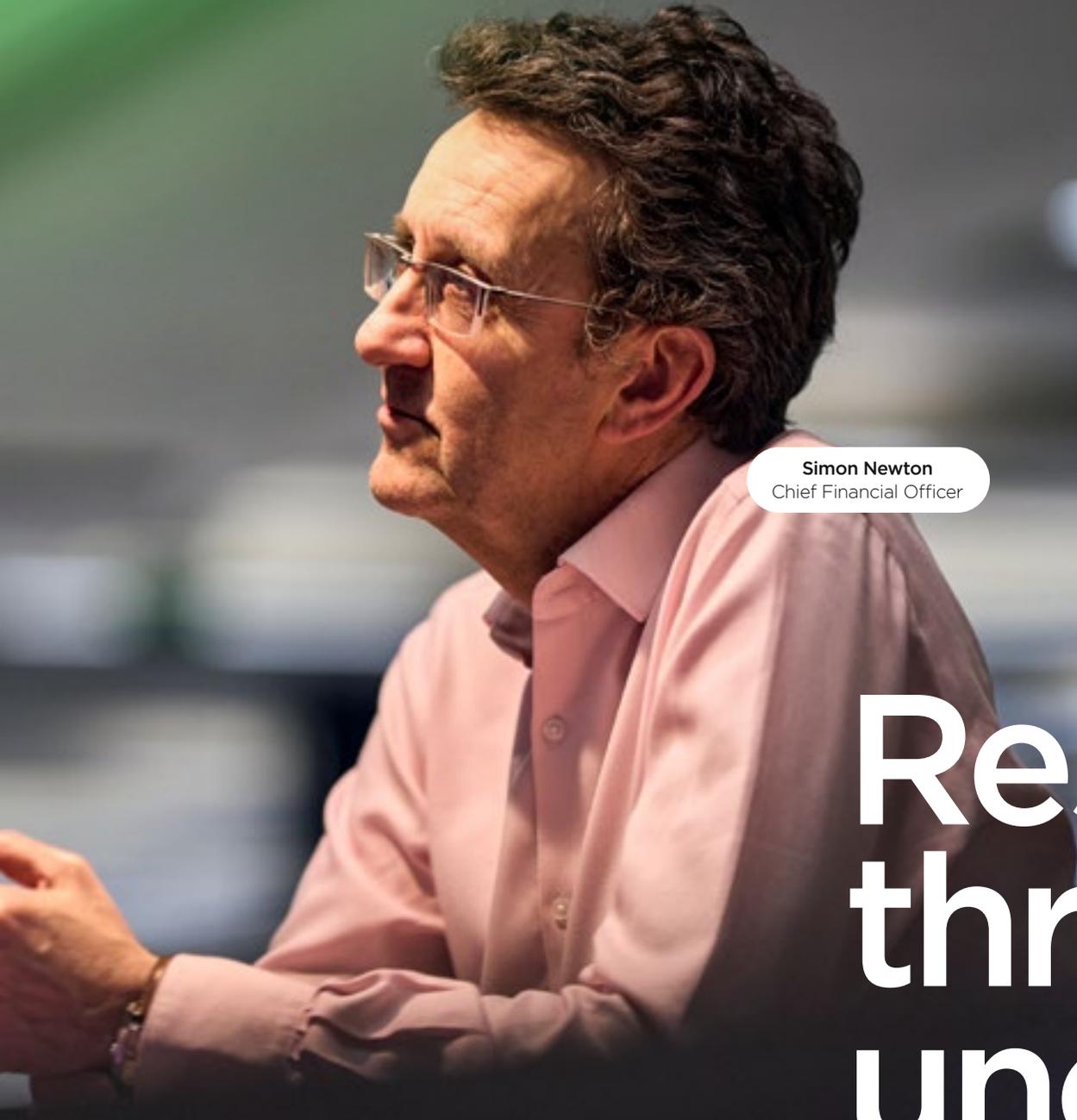
01 Health, Bio & Pharma: Corporate reporting, employee experience and stakeholder engagement	3.75%
02 Financial & Insurance: Corporate reporting, brand and stakeholder engagement	2.52%
03 Tech, Media & Telco: Corporate reporting and stakeholder engagement	1.86%
04 Industrial & Manufacturing: Brand and stakeholder engagement	1.79%
05 Financial & Insurance: Corporate reporting and stakeholder engagement	1.53%
06 Industrial & Manufacturing: Brand and stakeholder engagement	1.50%
07 Retail, Travel & Leisure: Corporate reporting, brand and stakeholder engagement	1.29%
08 Oil & Gas: Corporate reporting and stakeholder engagement	1.26%
09 Utilities: Corporate reporting, brand and stakeholder engagement	1.23%
10 CleanTech (inc. Renewable Energy): Brand and stakeholder engagement	1.19%

% Revenue by controversial sector



↑ Our work with these sectors is focused on regulatory investor communications.

* Defence is only one market of the three technology and engineering clients included in this 1%.



Simon Newton
Chief Financial Officer

Despite extremely tough trading conditions in the second half of the year, the numbers show a robust performance.

Resilience through uncertainty

In the year to August 2023, we faced significantly tougher trading conditions than we have for some time. This was particularly evident in the second half of the year, notably impacting our propositions that rely on client discretionary spending decisions.

The results for 2023 presented here are in our management format but reconcile directly to the statutory accounts, which will be filed at Companies House later in 2024.

The headline numbers show a resilient performance. Consolidated turnover (that is, the consolidation of Emperor Design with its 51% subsidiary, Emperor Presentations)

for the year was £32.5 million, in line with 2022. Our key indicator of business activity, revenue (turnover less direct bought-in costs), was £27.2 million, an increase of £500,000 (2%) on the previous year.

In the main Emperor Design business, performance was strong in the first six months to February 2023 with revenue on budget and 8% up on the previous year. In the second half of the financial year, trading conditions deteriorated rapidly and materially. Our revenue for that period slipped significantly behind our budget and the prior period, such that on a full-year basis our revenue growth was only 2%.

In the light of falling revenues, we evaluated our cost base and made a number of reductions which will help our profitability going into 2023/24. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) for 2023 was as a result materially below our budget expectations at the start of the year and also significantly below that of the prior year.

Emperor Presentations also experienced a more challenging year in 2023, its fifth year of trading, with revenue of £1.7 million in line with 2022 and it delivered EBITDA of £350,000 (2022: £529,000).

Operating profitability

Our costs in 2023 increased considerably over the previous year.

A significant component of this has been the annualisation impact of the additional staff costs that we took on across 2022 to deliver the 30% increase in revenue we achieved in that period.

We have also opened up exciting new office spaces in Birmingham and in Dubai which, though adding to our cost base, will form important platforms for future growth.

We, along with all other organisations, suffered in 2023 from higher utility costs across our offices.

EBITDA was £1.4 million (2022: £3.2 million) and the margin at EBITDA level was 4.9%, down from 12.7% in 2022.

Consolidated statement of comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 August 2023

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Turnover	32,535	32,352
Bought-in costs	(5,289)	(5,609)
Revenue	27,246	26,743
Administrative expenses (excluding depreciation)	(25,871)	(23,507)
EBITDA	1,375	3,236
Depreciation	(207)	(193)
Interest payable	(183)	(35)
Profit before taxation	985	3,008
Tax on profit	(260)	(599)
Profit for the financial year	725	2,409
Profit for the financial year is attributable to:		
Owners of the parent company	592	2,203
Non-controlling interests	133	206
	725	2,409

Five-year consolidated revenue



Cash flow highlights

In 2023, Group net cash from operating activities was £1.1 million (2022: £2.6 million) primarily as a result of the poorer trading performance. Capital expenditure was much more limited at £100,000 compared to £400,000 of the previous year.

We made payments of £1 million (including £800,000 to the EOT and £200,000 of interest) in relation to our quarterly repayments of our Santander loan for which this is the first full year of repayment.

At the year end, the Group had cash reserves of £2.1 million (2022: £2 million). Emperor Design has a revolving credit facility provided by Santander Bank of £2.5 million which remains fully drawn down. Santander also provide a working capital facility of £500,000, which was utilised only briefly during the period and was not outstanding at August 2023.

Balance sheet highlights

The Group has a strong balance sheet and good liquidity. At 31 August 2023, we had cash of £2.1 million and net current assets of £700,000. The revolving credit facility of £2.5 million was drawn down on 19 May 2022. It is repayable on the fifth anniversary of the draw down.

Consolidated statement of financial position

As at 31 August 2023

	2023		2022	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets		425		523
Current assets				
Stocks	160		216	
Debtors	5,737		6,606	
Cash at bank and in hand	2,054		1,960	
	7,951		8,782	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(7,212)		(5,569)	
Net current assets		739		3,213
Total assets less current liabilities		1,164		3,736
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year		(217)		(2,576)
Provisions for liabilities		(68)		(44)
Net assets		879		1,116
Capital and reserves				
Called up share capital		1		1
Profit and loss reserve		655		878
Equity attributable to owners of the parent company		656		879
Non-controlling interests		223		237
		879		1,116

£27.2m

Revenue

2%

Year-on-year revenue growth

Consolidated statement of cash flows

As at 31 August 2023

	2023		2022	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cash flows from operating activities				
Cash generated from operations		1,889		3,106
Interest paid		(178)		(35)
Income taxes paid		(569)		(449)
Net cash inflow from operating activities		1,142		2,622
Investing activities				
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(113)		(435)	
Proceeds on disposal of tangible fixed assets	3			
Interest received	23			
Net cash used in investing activities		(87)		(435)
Financing activities				
Drawdown of bank loan	-		2,356	
Capital contribution to EOT	(815)		(3,866)	
Dividends paid to non-controlling interests	(147)		(319)	
Net cash used in financing activities		(962)		(1,829)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		93		358
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		1,961		1,603
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year		2,054		1,961

£2.1m

Cash reserves

next steps

Outlook for the next financial year

It is clear that the macro-economic outlook remains uncertain with little economic growth anticipated across the UK and Western Europe, at least for the next year.

The very start of 2023/24 proved difficult and we have carried out a second round of cost reduction to mitigate revenue not coming through as we had targeted. We have, however, in the last five months seen encouraging signs with consecutive year-on-year growth revenue months and the EBITDA measure starting to benefit from the lower cost base.

We do see particular opportunity in the Middle East where we are building our team and where the economic outlook is more positive.

Most commentators continue to predict multi-year slowdown, and we are proceeding with some caution. One of our primary concerns, as ever, is to do our best to support our partners and provide them with job security through this period. As ever, our partners have worked tirelessly throughout the past year and they should be proud of the exceptional work they have delivered and the financial performance they have helped to achieve.



Showing the way

governance

We are clear on our responsibilities and they guide us forward. Our robust governance and commitment to responsible business ensures we are creating long-term sustainable success.

**In this section**

62	Principal risks and uncertainties
66	Partner Board
72	Leadership

Preparing for challenges

Our risk management framework manages principal risks as they emerge.

Principal risks are formally reviewed four times a year by the Executive Committee and twice a year by the Board. The current list of principal risks, the changes in the list since last year and the mitigations in place are set out in the table overleaf.

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low

Risk	Description and impact	Developments since last review	Controls and mitigations
Recruitment and retention of talent Previous risk level ■ Risk level ■ Business impact level ■	<p>The market for talent is highly competitive in several key disciplines in our sector.</p> <p>Failure to attract the talent we require can have an adverse impact on our ability to win and deliver work to the appropriate standard.</p> <p>The loss of key talent can impact on the continuity of client relationships and the depth of our expertise and capabilities, putting future fees at risk.</p> <p>Using recruitment agencies can add significantly to costs and reduce margins.</p>	<p>The impact of the increased cost of living continues to put pressure on salaries, further fueling the market.</p> <p>Our new flexible working policy has not had any significant impact on our ability to retain and recruit talent, but we continue to monitor this closely.</p> <p>Competition for talent is increasingly coming from in-house corporate teams as well as agencies in our sector.</p> <p>The recent headcount reduction has caused some instability in the business, further adding to retention risk and reputational risk in the market.</p>	<p>The independent benchmarking exercise on salaries has been completed and shared with senior managers. Attempts have been made in the last two rounds of pay reviews to ensure that our partners are remunerated in the appropriate band.</p> <p>We are also committed to a full review of benefits in 2024. This will include a review of total reward.</p> <p>We have launched a revised performance review system which focuses on providing high-quality feedback and contributing to a high-performance culture. The system has specific criteria for partners to be assessed against, two review windows and encourages ongoing conversations. It should ensure that we reward and recognise top performers amongst our partners.</p> <p>We continue to focus on protecting our culture and top talent. We are undertaking several initiatives to support this, including line manager training, Employee Ownership workshops, implementation of ERGs and a summer hours review, in addition to implementing an updated flexible working policy and guidelines.</p> <p>We have continued to focus on direct hiring and managing the pooling of talent.</p> <p>A continued investment in, and clear strategy for, learning and development is intended to mitigate the loss of talent, despite the challenging environment.</p>

Principal risks and uncertainties continued

Risk	Description and impact	Developments since last review	Controls and mitigations
<p>Employee health and wellbeing</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>Our partners' health and wellbeing have a direct impact on the quality of work we produce, both in terms of our strategic and creative output, but also the quality of client relationships.</p>	<p>We are now operating in a hybrid working model, but some partners are finding it challenging to balance conflicting priorities and responsibilities. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis also continues to impact our partners.</p>	<p>We continue to provide a range of initiatives and activities focused on supporting the health and wellbeing of our partners.</p> <p>A key focus has been supporting our managers to look after their teams. During our regular strategic talent reviews, we identify any early signs of wellbeing concern. Managers are supported to make adjustments to partners' roles, workload or accountabilities if required. We have also included a focus on managing in a flexible working environment as part of our Impact: Managing Effectiveness programme.</p> <p>We have regular workshops focused on financial wellbeing and have held workshops on budgeting and remortgaging. We have also increased promotion of Perkbox and the shopping discounts available.</p> <p>Employee-led pledges activity continues to support wellbeing with regular meditation groups, book clubs and volunteering days. We are planning to launch Employee Resource Groups with an initial focus on women and neurodiversity. We also continue to celebrate the diversity of our partners with activities associated with Black History Month and Diwali.</p> <p>Our summer hours initiative was well received with most partners able to make use of an early Friday finish at least once in August. We are reviewing how we might implement a similar initiative in 2024.</p>
<p>IT systems and security risk</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>The cyber threat to all businesses is persistent, evolving and growing.</p> <p>A cyber-attack could result in operational disruption, reputational and financial damage, depending on the type and extent of it.</p> <p>Emperor is continually investing in appropriate mitigation measures, software and monitoring processes to protect our operations, our clients and our people.</p> <p>Human error is possible when sending client-specific information by email. This could result in data leaks with potentially significant implications for clients and a financial impact on Emperor.</p>	<p>There has been an increase in phishing attacks during the year and in particular so-called 'spear phishing attacks' – attacks that target a specific person or group and often include information known to be of interest to the target.</p>	<p>The IT Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing all elements of IT system access and security. Processes and policies are in place and include our Cyber Incident Response Plan and Data Security Handbook. Cyber security awareness training is provided to all partners on an annual basis.</p> <p>We increased our investment in the Darktrace software to cover all 'end points' in our network.</p> <p>There has been increased communication and explanation of the risk of spear phishing attacks, and a process implemented to respond when they occur.</p> <p>Following a review, we have strengthened our current working practices with password protection and/or increased use of OneDrive providing greater control.</p> <p>We have also completed a recent review of our operations, which has led to the appointment of our new Group Operations Manager who has oversight and input into our IT and security risk systems.</p> <p>We have cyber risk insurance cover to £2 million.</p>

Risk	Description and impact	Developments since last review	Controls and mitigations
<p>Evolving flexible working model</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>Building trust, maintaining culture and fostering team cohesion in a flexible working world is a challenge. Our partners have expressed different preferences for blended working arrangements between home and office. The role of the office is changing but still has a crucial role to play. If Emperor is unable to create the conditions and workspaces that support an effective blended working model, we risk compromising quality, collaboration, productivity and client service levels, as well as diluting our key strategic pillars.</p>	<p>We planned the launch of our flexible working policy and guidelines, moving to a revised model from 4 September 2023. A working group was set up and feedback taken via the Partner Board. This has provided clear guidance on what is expected and the benefits of regularly being together in the office. Initial feedback on the policy was mixed, but this has settled down.</p> <p>We have agreed to review the policy at the end of February 2024.</p>	<p>As the opportunities arise, we are committed to making changes to our offices to create inspiring environments equipped with the technology for our partners to do their best work, collaborate with colleagues, and host clients and contacts. We continue to monitor and assess each office, making sure that the environment remains fit for purpose.</p> <p>We seek regular input and feedback from partners adapting systems, processes and management when necessary. We continue to use technology platforms to ensure people stay connected.</p> <p>There are clear policies and procedures in place to support new ways of working. Training is available for line managers focused on managing remote teams.</p>
<p>Underinvestment in innovation</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>To meet the changing needs of our clients and to keep ahead of the competition, it is important that we continue to innovate our services and products, as well as our delivery functions and operations. Failure to do so could lead to client attrition, a loss in productivity and reduction in margins.</p>	<p>During the year we have seen increased demand from clients for projects using emerging technologies, and we have delivered projects working with partners in areas such as virtual and augmented reality.</p> <p>Some competitors are developing their own systems to enhance efficiency and client experience for the delivery of our core stakeholder communications offering. There are also new software entrants to the market.</p> <p>The potential for artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to improve the efficiency of our propositions is becoming clearer.</p>	<p>We have established partners in several areas to support the delivery of projects using technologies or techniques that we do not currently have the capabilities to do in-house.</p> <p>A team headed by our Technical Director has a specific mandate to explore technical innovations in our service portfolio.</p> <p>We are in close dialogue with our competitors around the development of technologies to improve the efficiency of delivery of projects and the overall client experience. There is an opportunity to work collaboratively with them to mitigate risk to us.</p> <p>We are engaging with new software entrants on the market to ensure we understand their offerings and make the correct decisions regarding future partnerships.</p> <p>We are closely monitoring relevant developments in AI and machine learning.</p>
<p>UK market conditions</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>An uncertain macro-economic environment often results in reduced marketing and communications budgets and a reduction in discretionary client spend. In turn this can result in a loss of clients and an increased risk of bad debt.</p> <p>A lack of IPO activity on the LSE reduces the size of our UK market for stakeholder communications.</p>	<p>The economic environment continues to impact our clients and their discretionary spend.</p> <p>There has been a slowdown in client decision making and some confirmed projects being put on hold.</p> <p>The IPO market in the UK remains slow with more companies currently delisting than coming to the market.</p>	<p>Our broad UK client base across industries reduces our exposure. Our core service offer, mandatory stakeholder disclosure, makes up c.60% of our revenues and hedges us against a reduction in discretionary spend.</p> <p>We continue to focus on cost control, weekly monitoring of aged debtors and maintaining a strong new business pipeline.</p>

Principal risks and uncertainties continued

Risk	Description and impact	Developments since last review	Controls and mitigations
<p>Impact of global economic and political instability</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>Economic and political uncertainty globally could impact client spend as well as increase operational costs of the business.</p> <p>The failure of banks could result in issues for our clients and threaten their ability to pay us in the short term or their long-term financial stability. It could also impact on the stability of key suppliers.</p> <p>With an increasing proportion of revenue coming from overseas (mainly the Middle East) we are becoming more exposed to the current significant currency fluctuations.</p>	<p>The current economic and political uncertainty globally, including the war in Ukraine and conflict in Gaza, could have increased impact on our international clients.</p>	<p>A significant proportion of our revenue outside of the UK comes from our core stakeholder communications proposition.</p> <p>Revenue from outside the UK or impacted by global economic and political uncertainty remains a relatively small proportion of total revenue.</p> <p>We do not operate in any areas directly currently impacted by conflict.</p>
<p>International expansion</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>Expanding outside of the UK, either through establishing offices with local employees or through a remote working model, has inherent and specific risks.</p> <p>Failure to establish the correct legal, tax, operational, management and resourcing structures could result in both financial loss and reputational damage.</p>	<p>We have a growing team on the ground in the UAE and we are operating across the Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Saudi markets. The clients and projects are significant in the context of Emperor as a whole and fundamental to our growth plans.</p> <p>The UAE team is relatively inexperienced, and the management structure is new.</p>	<p>The UAE team has tripled in size over the past 12 months. We are building strong relationships with local partners and referrers and continue to seek out the best local talent.</p> <p>The local team is supported by an experienced UK-based team which travels regularly to the region.</p> <p>The regulatory and tax regimes are constantly evolving in these markets. We are taking local advice on all key areas of law and tax.</p>
<p>Supplier concentration</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>A reliance on a small number of suppliers for key services may cause concern should those suppliers run into difficulties that affect their fulfilment of those services.</p> <p>This in turn can lead to dissatisfaction from our clients and loss of current and future year revenue, or increased costs for Emperor for sourcing alternative suppliers.</p>	<p>During the year, a full review of our supply chain has been conducted to meet our responsible business objectives. This has further highlighted the risk of supplier concentration.</p>	<p>Relationships with our key suppliers are longstanding and collaborative. Their financial status is continually reviewed.</p> <p>Alternative suppliers are being trialled in several key areas with a view to bringing them on board once their suitability and capabilities have been proven.</p>
<p>Resilient and responsible client base</p> <p>Previous risk level ■</p> <p>Risk level ■</p> <p>Business impact level ■</p>	<p>To meet our responsible business and broader strategic objectives, it is important that we continue to build a resilient client base that has a social and ethical 'licence to operate' for the long term. This may result in short-term loss of revenue as unsuitable opportunities are declined or existing accounts aren't re-signed.</p>	<p>During the year there have been new opportunities we declined to pursue as they do not meet our resilient client requirements. We have also disengaged with existing clients for similar reasons.</p>	<p>A Resilient Clients Selection and Review Policy and Resilient Clients Committee are in place providing a process and framework to help us evaluate existing clients and new client opportunities. The Committee includes three Board Directors and other representatives from around the business.</p> <p>The Resilient Clients Committee ensures that controlled decisions are taken, and the full financial impact of decisions is considered and understood.</p>

Amplifying our voices

New CEOs. New offices. New growth in the Middle East. A rollercoaster of external uncertainty. It was certainly a year of exciting opportunity, but one with its fair share of curveballs. Against that backdrop – and in our fourth year of employee ownership – the Partner Board offered some continuity.



Partner Board continued

Our role as the conduit between leadership and the partners remained unchanged. Our own experience and understanding of the business and partner sentiment meant we could support the leadership through communicating change, while providing structure and a space for feedback.

Our purpose is to enable all employees to input into the success of the business. We do this through facilitation of regular Partner Voice sessions and feedback. As part of the governance structure, we hold the Board and Executive Committee (Exco) to account to ensure they communicate openly and honestly.

**Miriam McKay**

Chair (PB) and Emperor Non-Executive

**Helen O'Brien**

Manchester Hub

**Henry Ker**

Support services

**Sam Trillwood**

London Hub

**Samer Anjoukeh**

Edinburgh and Dubai Hubs

**Chris Gloster**

Birmingham Hub

**Katie Eustace**

Client relationships

**Louisa Holgate**

Under 30s

How our partners' voices made a difference

Sep '22

Personal and career development

Partners were keen to see more learning and development (L&D) opportunities for mid-career/late-career people. In addition to broader L&D topics, we are now embarking on more manager training.

A clearer EO story

After several years of employee ownership and turnover in staff, partners wanted to redefine what EO means for them and the business. A plan to develop an updated narrative was put in place, with interactive EO workshops kicking off in late summer 2023.



Nov '22

B Corp certification

Partners were looking to understand more about what B Corp means and how we can use and maintain our status. Lynn Dickinson, our Chief Responsible Business Officer, ran a series of information sessions.



Apr '23

Effective integration

Against the backdrop of lots of positive integration between different teams and Hubs, partners discussed ideas about how we can work more effectively together, share knowledge and develop deeper client relationships.



June '23



Hybrid working

This conversation has been active in the business since lockdown. We continue to find the balance for Emperor that recognises our responsibilities to each other and our clients, while allowing a large degree of flexibility.

Partner Board Chair succession

Kathryn Cearns stepped down as Chair of the Partner Board, with fellow Emperor Non-Executive Director Miriam McKay replacing her in the role.

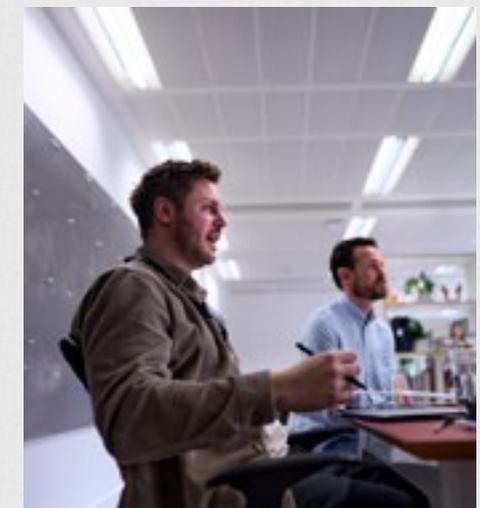
July '23

Increased financial oversight

In response to difficult trading, partners felt increased financial updates would help manage expectations and focus our combined efforts. We now include financials at each Huddle and a dashboard has been developed and will be rolled out in 2024.

Partner Board's term extended

The current Partner Board agreed a six-month extension to their term to offer consistency, support the business during a period of change, and to move the next set of elections out of the reporting season and into the summer months.



our year in numbers

18

Voice sessions

6

Exco presentations

9

Jostle posts

4

Board papers

51

Pulse surveys

11

Partner Board meetings

Partner Board voices

Knowledge, dedication and thoughtfulness

I was honoured to be asked to chair the Partner Board. Being employee owned is a fundamental component of Emperor's DNA, which differentiates the way the company does business. Kathryn Cearns provided sage advice and support as I moved into my new role, for which I am very grateful. From my first Partner Board meeting, I have been very impressed by the knowledge, dedication and thoughtfulness of my fellow Board members.

In the course of my tenure so far, the Partner Board has proved its value to the business by providing advice to the Executive Committee around some of the difficult issues the business has confronted. Emperor is stronger when it makes full use of the skills of the Partner Board.

Miriam McKay

Partner Board Chair and Non-Executive Director

**Finding our balance with hybrid working**

During the year, businesses across the globe grappled with hybrid working and how to balance the needs of the business, its customers and employees. We saw some companies mandate a full return to the office five days a week, and others shift to a fully remote workforce.

Emperor was not immune to this – and had to consider how we onboard new joiners effectively, junior members are well trained, employees feel connected, teams have the opportunity for face-to-face collaboration, and our clients feel they have enough visibility and access – while still offering flexible working to our partners.

Redefining our understanding of ownership

We've been an employee-owned business for nearly four years. A lot of new partners joined since we made the change and expectations around what that means were different between partners and, perhaps, from the reality.

Emperor shifted to a two-day a week hybrid working model. The business learnt a lot from the way the announcement was delivered, and it was positive to see Exco acknowledge the role that the Partner Board can and will play in consulting with partners in the future so their voices are heard.

Katie Eustace

Senior Engagement Strategist and Partner Board member



This became evident particularly during key moments throughout the year, with questions about some of the major decisions. While continuing to evolve our communications approach with partners, there was an underlying problem to address – aligning all partners on what being employee owned means.

The Partner Board, with the support of the People team, facilitated in-person workshops in the different offices to ensure we capture feedback from our partners. This was then shared with our Executive Leadership team and an updated manifesto and narrative launched in 2024.

Samer Anjoukeh

Project Director and Partner Board member



Digital Kick Off 2024 in London



Celebrating four years of employee ownership in Birmingham

Finding our new Birmingham home

It had become clear that the Warwick workspace didn't fit the needs of a post-Covid office space. The Partner Board worked with the Central team to fully understand the challenges experienced by partners and how it could be improved.

We ran an in-depth survey and group sessions that looked at location, transport, office space and design, size, facilities and local amenities. After presenting the insight to Exco, the team started looking for alternate locations that would fit with the feedback and the leadership team made the decision to move forward with a new site in Birmingham.

Communication throughout was very important for us. We gave, and pushed for, regular updates to partners at Central Huddles, on calls and via email.

We were fully aware that this process takes time, but that it is still constantly in people's thoughts; any change in location can really affect everyone. The People team ran one-on-one consultations with those most impacted.

The new office is a great step forward and a space that will encourage great work, more collaboration and impress clients while being a place the team can be proud of. I am sure the positive outcome was far stronger because of the involvement of the partners.

Chris Gloster
Studio Manager and
Partner Board member

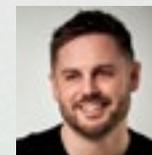


Empathy and independence

Change at Emperor this year wasn't just confined to the business and external environment. The Partner Board have to continually review how we operate, where we can lend the greatest support and adapt to help our partners and leadership team as best we can.

During particularly challenging times – with the cost-of-living crisis, international conflict and economic volatility – this understandably generates anxiety and worry among our colleagues. This meant the Partner Board often served as an empathetic ear during our Voice Sessions. Acting as an independent and open channel to raise concerns and as somewhere for partners to look for support, we could direct them to relevant resources and flag growing trends for leadership to address. Sensitivity was key here, as each partner experienced the impact of 2022/23 changes in personal ways.

Henry Ker
Editor in Chief and
Partner Board member



Change and consistency

As the Partner Board, our response to change is to constantly keep listening, sharing and evolving.

In July, we thanked Kathryn for her insight, guidance, joyful straightforwardness and calm fairness in her role as Chair since the foundation of the Partner Board and welcomed Miriam into the role. Miriam brings a wealth of experience in group communications and investor relations, and is a Non-Executive Director on the Emperor Board.

To maintain consistency and respond to the needs of our business and partners as we navigated what became an increasingly unsettled year, the current Partner Board members agreed to a request from the Board to extend our term for an additional six months. In summer 2024, we will have our next rotation of membership.

After nearly two years as a valued member of the Partner Board, Rosie Lauder stepped down. We are incredibly grateful for her contribution as the Under 30s representative who has worked in both the Edinburgh and London Hubs. We immediately set about recruiting a new Under 30s representative, with Louisa Holgate joining the team. Our commitment to a diverse Partner Board representing a broad cross-section of our business remains as strong as ever.

Helen O'Brien
Creative Director and
Partner Board member



Partner Board continued**Partner voices****Edinburgh: Building bonds with colleagues**

As part of an employee-owned company, I feel that my colleagues and I have bonded more – we genuinely support each other through thick and thin.

Taking a piece of the ownership of Emperor means that we think about how we work now. We are kept informed about company performance in a clear and transparent way. Hybrid working has found its balance now, with staff who want to work at home are able to, and others who like the hustle and bustle of the office come in to be with friends and colleagues.

Ali Hamilton

Client and Staff
Services Manager

**Manchester: Every level has a voice**

The Partner Voice sessions have created a unique safe space where, whatever your role or location, your voice can be heard. As a junior designer, it's given me the opportunity to engage in important conversations happening throughout Emperor, whether that's been actively sharing my opinions, or simply listening to others and gaining a greater understanding of my colleagues different perspectives.

Amy Hancock

Junior Designer



Birmingham team on the Hopewalk, supporting PAPHYRUS

Birmingham: Finding a space that was right for us

Moving office is not often the choice of employees, but as we are employee owned we were given the opportunity to have a stronger say in the space that was right for us. Our move to Birmingham has widened opportunities to grow and become better united.

Ruth Hinman

Account Director

**London: Bringing our authentic selves to work**

Emperor being employee owned is an enormous plus for to me, not just in the working culture it creates but also the benefits it has offered me from a mental health perspective. I've found it really grants us all a voice, means that people genuinely care for each other and gives us permission to bring ourselves to work.

Toby Bull

Head of Digital



Edinburgh book club

Agile and accountable governance

Chris Stamp
Independent Chair

Our governance is about leadership structures that support, guide and enable the business to flourish.



Leadership continued

Sustaining the financial progress of recent years, given the 2022/23 market, has been a challenge. However, ambition is not about circumstance, it is an attitude and the collective minds of the Board and leadership teams within Emperor have never lost sight of their ambitions for the company.

The external business environment remains heavily affected by global uncertainty and the downturn in the UK economy put pressure on discretionary spending decisions. As a result, the financial performance of the business suffered in the final half of the year.

Our challenge was how to return the business to the level of financial fitness that would enable us to relaunch our Thrive 25 strategy as the framework for our ambitious growth aspirations. This process required a careful balance between investment in the growth opportunities that we still have in front of us, particularly in the Middle East, while managing our cost base prudently in the short term.

For the Board and Executive Committee (Exco), these decisions also required careful balancing of stakeholder interests – primarily our partners and bank, Santander, whose financial backing gave us a firm roadmap towards ‘financial freedom day’. This is the point at which our partners will be able to fully realise the benefits of an employee-owned business. We recognise the importance of clear and regular communication with both stakeholders.

Engagement with partners, both directly and via the Partner Board, has been led by the CEO’s supported colleagues on the Exco and monitored by the Board through regular reports from the Independent Chair of the Partner Board. Engagement with the bank has been led by the CEOs and Kingsley James, with regular review and guidance from the Board.



↑ **The Emperor governance structure** includes our four key forums, all of which work together and communicate as one to ensure cohesion and alignment. The Partner Board makes sure that each forum always considers the voice of our partners.

Highlights

- ☉ The refreshed Thrive 25 strategy was unanimously approved by the Board in March 2023.



- ☉ The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) forum took shape and helped to provide clearer and more transparent communication with senior managers around the organisation.
- ☉ We reviewed our Board effectiveness early in the year, which provided a useful check on our progress. We also reviewed the role of the Board in the light of changing financial circumstances that have reset both the role and the composition of the Board.
- ☉ Regular communication and meetings between the Partner Board and Exco have helped improve collaboration between the two forums, ensuring that business decisions always take into consideration the view of our partners. A review is underway to see how we can improve this further.
- ☉ The Founder Directors roles and remuneration are now confirmed and in place, helping conclude the final phases of the succession process.

Focus areas

Our objectives for this financial year:

- To continue promoting and monitoring implementation of the Thrive 25 strategy and ensuring it delivers growth within a framework of smart financial controls.
- Ensure that cash management supports the achievement of our financial and commercial objectives, in tandem with comfortably meeting the requirements of the bank refinancing (which was originally completed in May 2022) so that we can resume regular partner dividends.

- Further development on our impact reporting and renewal of our B Corp certification to continue being a responsible business; fair and transparent governance for the interests of all stakeholders.
- After three years of employee ownership, evolve the structure and activities of the Partner Board to provide improved channels for dialogue with partners.
- Embed our new Board remit and priorities and progress a discussion about how Emperor needs to be organised for future growth.



The future of the Emperor Board

The Board spent time in 2023 considering its own structure and composition, taking into account circumstantial factors. These include succession planning, the need for the Board to be more focused financially and more closely aligned with the CEOs in implementing the Thrive 25 strategy, to grasp the Emperor's growth opportunities over the next few years. As a result, it was agreed that the Board will have four scheduled meetings a year, each with a specific strategic and financial purpose.

There have also been some changes to our Board. Kathryn Cearns stepped down as a Non-Executive Director at the end of the 2023 calendar year. Since first getting involved with Emperor in 2017, Kathryn's knowledge, insights and support have been invaluable, both as a key member of the Board and, particularly, as Chair of the Partner Board since its inception. Establishing the Partner Board as a meaningful forum for engagement and dialogue, particularly during the pandemic, was not a straightforward task and this makes her legacy all the more special. She leaves with our sincere thanks for her considerable contribution to Emperor and very best wishes.

We are delighted that Mandy Brown joined the Board on 1 January 2024. Mandy is a chartered accountant who led the specialist media practice at accountants Moore Kingston Smith for many years prior to establishing the firm's media M&A practice and chairing their governance board.

Mandy will bring valuable financial experience and sector knowledge to help the Board and the executive team during the coming months as we invest in growth but maintain sound financial control.

The final change is that I stepped down as Chair on 31 December 2023 after six years. It has been a privilege to serve on Emperor's Board and, as a governance specialist, I am particularly pleased that the governance framework at Emperor is now set up to facilitate the ambitions we all share in a mature and responsible way. In this context, it has become clear that the cadence of Chair/CEO conversations needs, for a while at least, to have a more strategic and commercial dimension. The Board therefore agreed it was a natural step to appoint Steve Kemp as Executive Chair of the Board to draw on his unique knowledge and experience and support our CEOs as they lead Emperor through the next chapter.



An exciting new chapter

"As the newly-appointed Executive Chair, I am excited to take on this role in our esteemed organisation. Firstly, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to Chris Stamp for his dedicated service and guidance throughout his tenure. His commitment to bringing stronger governance and scrutiny to Emperor has undoubtedly laid a strong foundation upon which we can continue to build and grow. I extend my heartfelt thanks.

As we transition into this new chapter, I am eager to work closely with our senior team to propel Emperor forward. Having founded the business 27 years ago, I bring a depth of understanding and I sincerely hope that – as well as my insight – my challenge, advice and guidance will add value. I am confident we will continue to overcome challenges, seize opportunities and build upon our long track record of success."

Steve Kemp
Founder

wates corporate governance principles for large private companies

Emperor continues to apply the Wates Corporate Governance Principles for Large Private Companies to help shape and inform our approach to good governance. This statement explains how Emperor has applied the six principles during 2022/23.

Purpose and leadership

The Thrive 25 strategy was approved in March 2023, and presented to our partners at the Summer townhall in June 2023. The Board recognised that the strategy clearly aligned with Emperor's purpose, culture and values and was the right approach to promote ambitious growth.

Board composition

There were no changes to the Board in FY22/23 and therefore its split remained 64% male and 36% female. A skills matrix exercise was conducted in June 2023, and demonstrated a solid mix of skills and experience. In the medium term there will be opportunities for the Board to become more diverse. The short-term changes to the composition of the Board are described in this report and the gender mix is now approximately 55% male and 45% female.

CHAIR: CHRIS STAMP

CO-CEOS: VICTORIA SUGG
CAMERON GUNN

NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS: PAUL MATTHEWS
KATHRYN CEARNS
MIRIAM MCKAY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS: STEVE KEMP
KINGSLEY JAMES
NOEL O'CONNOR
PHILIP FRANKLIN
JENNI FULTON

→ Read more on
page 77-78

Board responsibilities

The Board met six times in FY22/23, and during those meetings the Board received updates from the executive team on strategic priorities, financial performance, operational performance and sales and business development. The Board also signed off the following:

- Modern Slavery Statement in February 2023
- Annual report and impact statement in February 2022
- Financial accounts in December 2022
- Code of Conduct in September 2022
- Whistleblowing policy in September 2022
- Anti-bribery and Corruption policy in September 2022.

Opportunity and risk

Opportunity and risk were assessed by the Exco and formally reported back to the Board twice in FY22/23. Analysing our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats always remains important, but it was even more crucial for the business due to the instability of the external environment.

Remuneration

The Remuneration Committee met once this financial year and agreements have been made on the Founder Directors remuneration. Due to the uncertainty in the market and the importance of ensuring that Board-level remuneration is aligned to remuneration trends for all partners, no further changes were made to Executive Directors' remuneration.

Stakeholder relationships and engagement

The Board and Exco continued to make business decisions for the benefit of our stakeholders, ensuring clear, transparent and consistent communication that provides stakeholders with the information they require. As discussed earlier in this report, the Board has been particularly focused on engagement with Partners and with Emperor's bank during the year.



Leadership continued

The Board oversees our corporate strategy and operations. The day-to-day running of the business is the responsibility of the Executive Committee, led by the co-CEOs.

B Emperor Board **E** Executive Committee

¹Chris Stamp stepped down on the 31 December 2023.
²Kathryn Cearns stepped down on the 31 December 2023.
³Steve Kemp was appointed Board Chair from 1 January 2024.

Kathryn Cearns OBE²

Non-Executive Director and
Chair of the Partner Board

I am a chartered accountant and a non-executive director of various bodies, mainly in the public sector, including the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, National Highways and the UK Endorsement Board. I have chaired the Partner Board since its inception and became a Non-Executive Director of Emperor on 1 January 2022.

B**Paul Matthews**

Non-Executive Director

I have more than 30 years' stock market knowledge, working with UK listed companies on all forms of shareholder and employee engagement, allied with strong corporate governance knowledge.

B**Chris Stamp¹**

Independent Chair and
Non-Executive Director

I oversee Emperor's corporate governance at Board level. In 2002, following an in-house career as a company secretary, I established Prism Cossec, a leading company secretarial practice which was acquired by Equiniti Group in 2012. I am a Fellow of the Chartered Governance Institute and hold a BA (Hons) from Southampton University and an MBA from Warwick Business School.

B**Miriam McKay**

Non-Executive Director

I am a highly experienced communications and investor relations professional with extensive knowledge on business communications, strategy development and the investor community.

B**Steve Kemp³**

Founder Director

As one of the founders of Emperor and former CEO, over the past 26 years I have led Emperor's growth to become one of the UK's leading creative agencies. With over 30 years' experience in corporate communications, I have advised many different companies with their reporting, brand and digital strategies.

B

Noel O'Connor

Founder Director

I co-founded Emperor with Steve in 1996 and have over 30 years' experience in the visual communications industry, having worked across a diverse range of clients and sectors, from FTSE 100 companies to AIM and private businesses. In 2003 I established our first creative hub outside London in Edinburgh, which is now one of the largest corporate design agencies in Scotland.

**Kingsley James**

Founder Director

As an Executive Director of Emperor, I have Board responsibility for finance, IT, legal, property and corporate development projects. I joined Emperor 23 years ago and my background was originally in finance, mergers and acquisitions, having qualified as a chartered accountant with EY.

**Victoria Sugg**

Co-CEO

In June I proudly became co-CEO of Emperor, having previously held the role of Group Business Development Director for six years. In sharing the role with Cameron Gunn, my focus is specific: to ensure there's a queue at the door both in terms of future clients and future talent - and that we hold ourselves to account on our responsible business ambitions and commitments.

**Cameron Gunn**

Co-CEO

In 2022, I became co-CEO of Emperor in partnership with Victoria Sugg. My focus is to drive strategy, ensuring we have a contemporary and connected service offer, and that operations and finance functions are fit-for-purpose. I joined Emperor in 2019 as Head of Digital and have more than ten years experience in marketing and communications.

**Jenni Fulton**

Chief Growth Officer

I'm responsible for driving growth across Emperor and ensuring that our reputation and reach continues to expand. I'm committed to maintaining a client-obsessed culture and ensuring that our clients' needs are at the heart of how we operate. I have over 20 years' corporate communications experience, joining Emperor after leading, growing and selling my own agency in 2016.

**Philip Franklin**

Chief Operating Officer

I'm responsible for ensuring we are achieving our goal of delivering quality efficiently. I work across the Group, listening, guiding, advising and directing, as well as talking to clients to hear their feedback. With 30 years' experience in marketing and communications, having started a marketing agency in 1990, I've now been with Emperor for ten years.



Leadership continued**Simon Newton**

E

Group Chief Financial Officer

I'm responsible for all financial, legal and compliance matters and I oversee health and safety and office operations in London. Most of my time is spent preparing, analysing and communicating financial information, though I am also heavily involved with client procurement. I am also a trustee of the Emperor Foundation. Over the past 25 years, I've held a number of senior finance posts at Uniq plc, Kingfisher plc and Omnicom Group Inc.

**Amanda Woodward**

E

Chief Commercial Officer

My role is part operational and part commercial. In the last year I have joined the Exco to which I bring my 25+ years of agency experience of looking after clients and ensuring quality standards. Driving profitability to enable us to be the sustainable agency for the future for our clients and partners is a key principle of my role at Emperor.

**Sam Lipman**

E

Chief People and Talent Officer

My role sits at the heart of ensuring our partners are attracted, engaged and developed. I am responsible for implementing a best-in-class people strategy and encouraging a diverse, inclusive environment. I oversee people operations and development, talent acquisition and internal comms. With more than 20 years' experience of driving transformational change at agencies including Omnicom and WPP, my expertise is with fast-paced environments with strong, high-performing cultures.





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