

CEO's Letter

Steve Kemp
CEO



CHANGE WITHOUT COMPROMISE

25 years into our Emperor journey, we remain in the midst of a truly unusual and unsettled period. But while change continues at an extraordinary pace in all walks of life, one constant is our partners' positivity, creativity and dedication.

It was certainly an exceptional year in so many ways. In our first full year as an employee owned business, as we celebrated our 25th anniversary, our performance was materially ahead of expectations. We grew for the 24th year out of 25 (2008 being the only exception) but I can't remember a year where we've achieved so much, despite the very uncertain environment. The quality of our work has never been higher and I'm still truly amazed that this sustained period of working from home hasn't compromised our creative output.

CEO's Letter continued

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It’s also been great to witness the world coming back to life and for Emperor there continues to be many positive signs of momentum and further proof that our service offering is resonating. In a period when everyone’s life changed in some way, it’s no surprise that almost all businesses changed as well – and we’re no exception. Businesses and people alike appreciate there are different, more progressive ways of working, communicating and interacting. And while the global pandemic is not over, as we come out the other side of lockdown, I see this as a big silver lining.

Unprecedented communication

A highlight for me has been the unprecedented amount of communication, collaboration and new initiatives introduced by Emperor post lockdown that have been sustained and embedded within the business. We used to have a company meeting twice a year; since March 2020, we have had over 50 virtual ‘Huddles’, and they have become a real unifying force with many different voices throughout the company contributing. As we transition into a new way of hybrid working, the need for clear communication will be even more important.

50+

Virtual Huddles since March 2020



We're in an exciting space

Our services are more relevant today than ever before. Old demarcations are disappearing, as our reporting, brand and engagement propositions find themselves converging on the same opportunities.

In addition, many companies – in part due to the pandemic – are challenging their existing business models and strategy and evaluating whether their brand and digital estate is fit for purpose. These are all things that we can assist with and we will continue to ensure that Emperor is set up to deliver an ever-more integrated suite of services.

Strategic priorities



Focused growth

The right way



Operational excellence

Delivering quality efficiently



Responsible business

Beyond profit



Talented people

Investing at all levels

Strategic progress

Producing our first annual report last year has been hugely beneficial in keeping a stronger focus on our strategic progress. Not only do we have partners accountable for strategic pillars and priorities, there has been a far greater collective determination to deliver on what we said we would. We will cover this in more detail within the report but I've outlined below some of my highlights.

CEO's Letter continued

Focused growth

Our focus on **winning the right type of business, with the right team at the right price**, combined with a much greater emphasis on client development, have been the key ingredients in fuelling Emperor's better-than-expected growth.

We broadened and deepened our client roster. Significant new business wins include assignments from **Lloyds Banking Group, Anglian Water, Trainline, WeTransfer, Three, Currys, Moonpig Group, SThree, Workspace, CVC Capital Partners, Phoenix Group, Trustpilot, and musicMagpie**, among others. In addition to winning a record number of new mandates, we also turned down more opportunities than ever. This was when they weren't commercially, reputationally or propositionally right.

I mentioned above that I love sustainable initiatives and one of these has been the introduction of a fortnightly **'Driving Client Success'** forum, superbly run by our Managing Director, Jenni Fulton. These sessions regularly see over 60 people present, listen and share insight, such as how we won a certain pitch, a propositional area of interest, or client service top tips. It's provided an opportunity to give the virtual floor to partners who wouldn't normally present and it is so rewarding to see them speak eloquently and enthusiastically while growing in confidence. It's also been a great way to educate more people on what we do, how we pitch and how we grow accounts.

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25
years of sustainable
business

Operational excellence

We've been working hard over the past few years to bring a stronger commercial acumen across the group and having split the business into 11 squads last year, we are starting to see the benefits. Driven by our Chief Commercial Officer, Amanda Woodward, we now have greater visibility on job profitability, the pipeline and utilisation. We have also just commissioned data consultancy Ammonite to further enhance our in-house data and analytics capabilities.

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Responsible business

Led by Lynn Dickinson, who joined last October as our first ever Director of Responsible Business, we have made strong progress on our societal commitments. In the year of COP26, we've introduced a new environmental strategy that is rigorous, ambitious and with clear measurement.

We also launched a new supplier code of conduct and have advanced, on all levels, the work needed on our journey to B Corp accreditation. Our 20-strong equity, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) team, formed in July 2020, also has a clear framework, with short, medium and long-term priorities.

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Talented people

I wrote last year about having an ambitious manifesto for talent and am pleased to report that we have made significant progress on all fronts. Tessa McCaffrey joined Emperor as our first ever Director of Learning and Development, with Natasha Sara as our Talent Acquisition Manager. We have established a roadmap to improve our training and development and appraisals across the business and at all levels and are focused on baking ED&I into everything we do around talent attraction, retention and development.

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Impact Statement for 2021

In June 2021, Emperor updated its Articles of Association to reflect our commitment to responsible business practice. As part of this change, we committed to publish an Impact Statement that provides a balanced analysis of the impact we have in relation to society and the environment. We take an integrated approach to strategy and reporting, which means our impact in relation to people, planet and profit is captured throughout this annual report. Specific information relating to our key stakeholders can be found in:

- **What we deliver for our clients, our colleagues and our communities.**
Page 9
- **Contributing to our communities.**
Pages 23-27
- **Seeking to work with like-minded suppliers.**
Page 50
- **Changes and improvements to governance.**
Page 67-70
- **Embedding environmental ambitions within our operations.**
Pages 45-51
- **Championing equality, diversity and inclusion.**
Pages 53-57
- **The company we keep.**
Page 50

CEO's Letter continued

“I’m incredibly proud to be taking the reins as Co-CEO. The business has never been stronger or with more market opportunity.”

—
Vic Sugg
Business
Development
Director



“The chance to build off everything we’ve achieved over the last 25 years is something that I’m incredibly proud of and energised by.”

—
Cam Gunn
Head of Digital



Handing over the reins

As I mentioned in our last report, **this coming year will be my last as CEO.** Having led the business for 25 years, I feel now is the appropriate time to hand over to new leadership.

Our succession process has been rigorous, with much of the focus on the structure of the role, recognising, in particular, Emperor’s unique culture and status as an employee owned business, as well as its strong growth aspirations and responsible business ethos. Using these criteria to guide us, we have concluded that the successful growth of Emperor is most likely to be achieved by internal succession rather than external recruitment. We also considered the possibility of creating a Co-CEO role and have researched how this structure works in other companies.

It is therefore with great pride that we have invited two of our partners, **Victoria Sugg (currently Business Development Director) and Cameron Gunn (Head of Digital),** to become Co-CEOs. They will take up this role on 1 June 2022. In Vic and Cam, we have two outstanding leaders with complementary skills, who are held in great respect by our partners. They live and breathe the values, have a track record in getting things done and will bring new ideas and energy to a business that is already in good health and with strong foundations. Supported by our talented senior leadership team, **they will, I believe, form a formidable partnership.**

I have made it clear that I’m stepping down but not stepping off, and have an exciting new role lined up around client and business development, senior counsel and bringing positive influence wherever I can. It’s been an honour to watch the business I started with Noel and Kingsley 25 years ago go from strength to strength and grow into the brilliant agency we have today. Now, I look forward to an illustrious new chapter.

What a team!

Our strong performance is testament to the way the Emperor team has responded to the challenges of the past 18 months. We are proud to have a group of skilled and motivated professionals dedicated to serving our clients, working in a more collaborative way than ever before and showing exceptional levels of resilience and commitment. I would like to thank each and every Emperor partner for their commitment, hard work and determination under exceptionally challenging circumstances.

Emerging stronger

The current year has started significantly ahead of expectations and for that there’s no one reason. We’re winning bigger contracts, we have exceptional client and people retention, clients are wanting to do more with us, we have a record number of enquiries, and our reputation is growing.

I’ve never been as excited as I am today for Emperor’s future. I believe we’ve never been better positioned to benefit from the need for companies to communicate in a clear, authentic, transparent, regular, consistent way, to all stakeholders and across all channels.

From a personal perspective I’m proud to be stepping down at a time when Emperor is flourishing.

—
Steve Kemp
CEO

CEO's Letter continued
Company milestones

20/21



MAR

One year in lockdown

A year since lockdown began: It feels like an odd anniversary to recognise. And one which has brought plenty of reflection. We produced a video to recognise the efforts of our team.



We achieved **Living Wage accreditation** and introduced a new family friendly parental policy.

Partner powered for a sustainable future

We published our first annual report, an important milestone in improving our corporate and financial transparency, as well as an opportunity to apply our own principles for great communications.



APR

We submitted our B Corp Impact Assessment



#Wecareforthe environment

We signed up with **Ecologi** to become a Climate Positive Workforce.



MAY

Stepping up on equality

We created our first **EDI Committee** and partnered with Inclusive Group to develop our EDI roadmap.

Established our **Environmental operations team**, including champions in each hub and in our finance team.

JUN

In June we celebrated 25 years

since **Steve Kemp and Noel O'Connor** opened Emperor's doors for business. Happy birthday Emperor!

#BetterTogether

We celebrated **Employee Ownership day** under the theme of #BetterTogether, because, even if we are physically apart, this isn't a barrier for us being better together in business and as colleagues.

We updated our **Articles of Association**.

JUL

Began working with **B Corp Green Element** to measure our carbon footprint.

AUG

Another first

Reflecting our success over the past 12 months, August saw us award our first partner dividend.



SEP-NOV

Our operational model

We introduced our new **operational model**, deconstructing the business into squads, tribes and hubs. Meanwhile, we further integrated our consultancy team, embedding skillsets such as sustainability throughout the business.

DEC-FEB

One year old

20 January marked one year since we became an employee owned business and we took a moment to reflect on all that had been achieved and celebrate our partnership.