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'I spotted a gap in the market for innovative venues'

Scott Murray, managing director of Cru Holdings, likes to see businesses and people grow and was proud of protecting his team during the pandemic

PERSON BEHIND THE BUSINESS

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Inverness

Q How would you describe your business?

A Cru Holdings is a leading, locally-owned and run hospitality, travel and leisure company where we strive to provide an exceptional level of service. Whether booking a holiday or going out for a steak or a cocktail, we believe the underlying feeling should be that you are being looked after and getting value for money. We employ 120 staff across a range of activities. Murray Travel is

our holiday and travel business based at company headquarters in Strothers Lane with branches in Forres and Elgin.

We have seven bars and restaurants. In Inverness, there's Bar One in Academy Street; The Keg in Baron Taylor's Street; Prime in Ness Walk; Scotch & Rye in Queensgate; The Wee Bar in Ness Walk; The Whitehouse in Union Street, and in Nairn we have The Classroom in Cawdor Street.

During lockdown we also introduced Myxd, a cocktail home-delivery service.

We try to buck the trend and do something a little bit different while providing excellent customer service and respecting and valuing our staff, suppliers, and customers because people are the core of the business.

Q What led you into the business?

A I have travelled widely all my life and also worked in hospitality in hotels and pub chains. I didn't like the corporate structure and wanted a free rein to offer customers more.

There was an opportunity in Inverness which had very traditional pubs and sports bars at the time – if you wanted something a little bit special you had to go to a hotel or restaurant. There was a gap in the market for innovative venues and I have always enjoyed a challenge, trying to succeed, and seeing the reward.

I created Cru in 2009, opening The Keg and Bar One and we gradually added more ventures over the years when suitable opportunities arose.

Q What is your greatest achievement?

A Winning the best hospitality employer this year at the Scottish Entertainment and Hospitality Awards in



Scott Murray is managing director of Cru Holdings.

Glasgow was a big one. It was a nice way of drawing a line under the whole Covid crisis where we had made a concerted effort to make sure that we did not lose anyone – and everyone who came into the pandemic with us came out on the other side as well.

That was a big achievement for us in the climate where hospitality and travel was so severely affected.

Q Who do you admire in business?

A I read Lord Alan Sugar's book and my attitude to business appeared similar to his. I was lucky recently to meet Stephen Bartlett, of Diary of a CEO and Dragons' Den fame, who is a really nice guy who just wants to make things happen.

I don't do what I do to make money – but it's a great by-product. I like to see businesses and people grow and that's his mindset as well – although his is on a much bigger scale!

Q What's your advice to budding entrepreneurs?

A Calculate your risks but never be afraid to take them.

Failure means you have just got to find another way to succeed.

For example, Bar One didn't work – it took 18 months to make a profit. But we just had to keep plugging away at it until we got the concept and product mix right.

We learned from those mistakes and did not make them again.

Q Tell us more about yourself?

A Travel is my main passion and I want to experience different cultures. Perversely, I often enjoy being on a plane more than I do a destination.

Australia and the Antarctic are the only continents I haven't been to. Phuket in Thailand is my favourite place. It's where we got married and I have spent a lot of time and volunteered with a dog rescue charity there.

I am also a board member of Mikeysline and Highland Blindcraft and the company has supported the Highland Hospice.

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