

Sidestepping move to London led to lucky chance here

Development of employees is McDonald's franchisee **Craig Duncan's** greatest achievement, he reveals in our first monthly Person Behind the Business feature



Q How would you describe your business?

A I am a franchise owner-operator based in Inverness for the multi-national McDonald's restaurant company and run nine outlets offering sit-in, take-away and drive-thru services.

Two are in Inverness – in the High Street and Inshes retail park – three are in Aberdeen as well as Elgin, Fort William, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

We currently employ 940 staff and that will rise to

1000 over the busy summer months.

Q What led you into the business?

A I trained in art and design at college in Manchester, but the country was in recession and there were no jobs. I moved back to Scotland and joined McDonald's as a trainee manager in Dundee.

Between 2001 and 2007, I worked my way up through promotions to operations manager for all company-owned restaurants in Scotland. The next step would have been to a post in London, which I did not want.

At the time the company was going to be franchising a lot of restaurants in Scotland, so I was lucky enough to be offered the chance to take ownership of the restaurants in Inverness and Fort William which had both been under-performing. A year later I added Elgin.

In 2016, we had a major expansion taking on three restaurants in Aberdeen and also Peterhead.

Three years ago, we added Nairn and Fraserburgh. However, I have just transferred ownership of Nairn to a new franchisee.

Q What is your greatest achievement?

A The development of my employees. My area managers for Aberdeen and Inverness, Calum Reid and Sean Forbes, both started as hourly-paid crew members, and now they manage £20 million of business each.

It is a proud moment to see people coming through the ranks and becoming business managers and area supervisors.

It is also satisfying to know that McDonald's trusts me to look after the brand and has given me the opportunity to expand. It



Craig Duncan is a McDonald's franchisee.

gives you a sense of pride to have 1000 people who want to work for you – and many stay on, like our managers who have been with us for many years.

Q What's your advice to budding entrepreneurs?

A Have a great product or service and don't be scared to take a risk and work really hard at it. You get back what you put in and, with the right attitude, and it will grow.

When I first moved to the Highlands, I took on two restaurants that were under-performing and difficult to staff and had very low volume. I had to take the risk, but I had a great product and I knew I could sell it and get the rewards from hard work.

Q Can you tell us more about yourself?

A I have managed to get franchisees local control of our bag tax and it will amount to around £100,000-a-year for local charities in my areas.

Nationally, this money originally built the £3 million Ronald McDonald House in

Edinburgh which is a 60-bedroom house next to the kids' hospital where families can stay free of charge to be near their children when they are ill.

Moving forward, I have managed to get a new charity created called Scottish Franchisees in the Community and I am determined that every penny collected in bag tax will be paid out to local charities. The reason I am passionate about it is because it has been collected by our business and can make a massive difference to good causes.

I work 40-70 hours a week. When off, I play golf and spend time with the family.

I am currently an active director of Inverness BID, having previously been chairman. BID as an organisation has been an enormous benefit to the city centre economy.

As the business expanded east I also joined the board of Aberdeen BID. I am also franchisees representative for the Scottish market on McDonald's National Leadership Group for policy-making.

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