

The shredding firm boss who worked in music and TV industries

PROFILE

*Go Shred's Mike Cluskey worked for Yorkshire Television and a mixing desk firm, getting a credit on a top duo's LP. Now his firm has a product that may help it reach new heights, writes **Ismail Mulla.***

On the face of it, the document shredding industry and one of the biggest selling music artists of all time, Eminem, may seem worlds apart. But bridging these two different worlds is Mike Cluskey, the managing director of Huddersfield-based Go Shred.

Mr Cluskey started his career at Yorkshire Television back in 1994 as an assistant editor for network drama.

"I worked on *Heartbeat*, *A Touch of Frost* and various other programmes that Yorkshire Television used to make," he says.

Four years later he was headhunted by AMS Neve to sell its professional mixing desks to studios.

Mr Cluskey said: "When I first started off I was taken on to look after just the North of England but I eventually ended up being the worldwide sales manager for a product line there that went into the music industry.

"They actually headhunted me from Yorkshire Television because we used their sound mixing equipment."

It was at AMS Neve that he started to rub shoulders with the who's who of the music industry like the Bass brothers, producers for Eminem, and even gained a credit on the Lighthouse Family's third studio album *Whatever Gets You Through the Day*.

"I got a credit on the album because of the amount of help I gave them," Mr Cluskey says, "supplying them equipment and things like that."

He also spent a lot of time at Parr Street Studios, in Liverpool, as a then-unknown Coldplay were recording their first album *Parachutes*.

The Dewsbury-born managing director of Go Shred still can't believe some of the experiences he had during his time at AMS Neve.

"It brings a smile to my face," Mr Cluskey says. "I'm sitting here beaming from ear to ear."

However, when he was made redundant in late 2006 from AMS Neve, Mr Cluskey noticed that there had been a shift in the music

industry. He said: "I just thought I don't want to stay in the music industry anymore because what was happening was, and we were seeing it before our eyes, people were starting to make music on laptops and PCs.

"The days of huge, half a million pound mixing desks were going. It was becoming more difficult to sell high end equipment."

Mr Cluskey viewed the world as his oyster and it was when his CV from a recruitment agency landed on the desk of a national sales manager for a shredding company that he took the bridge across into the shredding game.

"I turned him down at first and then a month later I rang him back and asked him 'did you fill that vacancy?' and he said 'no' so I told him I'd like to come and work for you," Mr Cluskey says. "He said 'you're either going to be doing this for six months or you are going to be doing this for the rest of your life. It's one of those industries.

"That was in 2007 and here I am 14 years later, still doing it and owning my own shredding company."

It was in 2014 that Mr Cluskey decided to go into business for himself after he had been made redundant from his sales director role at another shredding firm

Mr Cluskey said: "I just thought to myself, I've made people a lot of money over the years from my skills and my experience. Why should I make other people more money when I can be making this money for myself?

"The other thing is most people are frightened to do that because they think it is too difficult. It is difficult but it's not too difficult.

"They also think all these people are better than them or whatever but everybody is just winging it. I just thought I could wing it with the best."

Setting up Go Shred was not easy. Mr Cluskey had to sell his beloved vintage Lambretta scooter to raise funds.

Did it pay off? Eight years later, Mr Cluskey has two Lambrettas

and more importantly he is "really happy".

The Huddersfield-based business has eight staff today but scaling up has been difficult. Mr Cluskey said: "At first it was just me on my own and a van and a laptop and phone. That wasn't too bad.

"The big challenges have been scaling up, taking on staff and making calculated business decisions.

"I can't just leave and go work for someone else. It's my business. I have people who depend on me."

Go Shred hasn't escaped the turbulence of the last 18 months with businesses having to close offices in March 2020 during the early days of the pandemic.

Mr Cluskey said: "It affected us in a big way because we're in and out of businesses and in and out of offices all the time servicing them.

"We had nobody to service except for our NHS customers and the schools that remained open. That meant that in March 2020 we fell off a cliff."

The business could have continued to charge contracted customers but it decided not to. Instead Go Shred took a "huge hit" to its income.

Ultimately the decision has served the business well and is one that reinforces Go Shred's ethos.

Mr Cluskey said: "A lot of the big shredding companies – especially if they are beholden to shareholders – couldn't be as flexible as we were. Some of them were charging their customers for missed visits.

"In the long run this has served us extremely well because we are actually getting people moving to us."

Go Shred also has an ace up its sleeve in the form of its Mini Shred product. Domestic shredding has long been the "holy grail" for businesses in the sector.

"It is a huge untapped business," Mr Cluskey says. "Where in the past this was just individuals who would be shredding their personal documents now more people are working from home."

Mini Shred is specifically aimed at home shredding and the founder of Go Shred says it puts the business at an advantage.

"The major international players in the shredding market have this year launched similar products," Mr Cluskey said. "We have a seven-year march on these people. We're way ahead of the curve with a fully developed product that can be scaled up for home workers."

Whatever comes Mr Cluskey's way, it doesn't sound like the music is stopping on his career in the shredding industry any time soon as he continues his sustainable and ethical approach.

CURRICULUM VITAE

- Title: managing director of Go Shred
- Date of birth: January 20, 1969
- Lives: Fixby in Huddersfield
- Favourite holiday destination: Maldives or Majorca
- Last book read: Boomerang – Michael Lewis
- Favourite film: Napoleon Dynamite
- Favourite song: Today it's New York Morning by Elbow but I have a top 5,000 that changes every day
- Car driven: Mercedes Benz E Class Coupe
- Most proud of: My son and my beautiful wife



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BOSS OF GO SHRED: 'A lot of the big shredding companies – especially if they are beholden to shareholders – couldn't be as flexible as we were,' says Mike Cluskey. PICTURE: GARY LONGBOTTOM