

Business Profile: Mike Cluskey, of Go Shred Ltd

American football coach Mike Cluskey has a few trick plays up his sleeve as managing director of Go Shred



Having a famous father can be problematic.

And being the son of Con Cluskey – one third of singing sensation The Bachelors – didn't do young Michael any favours at school. Arriving on the school run in a Rolls Royce could have made him a target for teasing – or worse – from his classmates. "I always asked him to drop me off round the corner," Michael recalls now. Luckily, a calm temperament and an ability to make jokes helped disarm the bullies. "You had to be pretty tough," he says. "Plus, I was quite a big lad!"

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Elland-based Con and his brother Dec still perform regularly to capacity audiences in theatres across the country – a work ethic that is equally evident in Michael’s varied career. And it’s a career that also brought him into the world of showbiz.

After graduating from Huddersfield University, Michael was chosen as one of 3,000 applicants for a scholarship apprentice at Yorkshire Television, working in post production on network drama. After training for two years as a film and television engineer, he became assistant editor and then post production supervisor for four years – working on programmes including A Touch of Frost, Heartbeat and The Governor and rubbing shoulders with actors such as David Jason and Keith Allen.

Later, he was headhunted to work for AMS Neve, a firm making equipment for the TV, film and music industry – selling audio mixing desks and musical equipment. “I did that for eight years and it was fantastic,” says Michael. “I went all over the world and met some pretty amazing people like Mark Knopfler and Eminem.

“It was very rock and roll. You needed to be very grounded. When people are going to nightclubs and drinking champagne at three in the morning, you need that bit of DNA in you that makes you want to go home and eat baked beans and watch Eastenders!”

Michael spent a lot of time in the Middle East. “I really liked Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Dubai and the Emirates,” he says. “I was also travelling to Paris once a week every month.”

Michael lifted turnover for his business unit from £600,000 to almost £3m in the space of two years – but he was made redundant following a buyout. “As normal when you are very successful, they think anyone can do it,” says Michael. “They said I was too expensive and they could sell things on the internet.

“I decided to get out of the industry altogether. I looked around for a new job and cast my net wide.” His CV impressed the bosses at PHS Datashred, a leading player in the information destruction industry. Michael landed a field sales role in Yorkshire and within a year was managing the northern field sales team. After two years he was appointed national account sales manager. He remained in this role for another three years before being approached to become sales director for regional shredding company, Russell Richardson & Sons in Sheffield.

After three years, that company merged with another business and Mike was made redundant again.

“I sat at home with my wife Belinda looking at options and putting out my CV. After much soul-searching we decided that I would start my own company. It was a family decision, We started Go Shred very modestly in February, 2014, with just one customer.” Now the business, based in Fixby, has almost 200 customers and is continuing to grow through recommendation and word of mouth.

Michael took advantage of a government scheme to get a cut-rate start-up loan – but also had to sell his prized Lambretta LI scooter and Lexus IS to raise capital to launch the venture. “It was a massive decision,” he says. “I was asking myself how am I going to pay the loan back? How am I going to get a wage? And how are we going to pay the mortgage?”

“Having your own business definitely concentrates the mind. But we started picking up customers fairly quickly by working to an extremely high standard and providing outstanding customer service. I’ve heard so many cases of customers over the years with every kind of gripe – and in most cases they are entirely justified.

“I spent a lot of time in marketing and looking at the level of customer service that people expect. I realised that if we provided a high level of

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customer service, we would do well. My two main competitors have turnovers of billions a year. If I am going to beat them, we have to be high on customer service and guarantee 100% security.”



Go Shred boasts a “very strong” web presence, while Michael’s nine-year-old son Miles has played a part in its distinctive branding – coming up with the font for the logo and the colourways.

Go Shred mainly works with business customers in West and North Yorkshire, but also has clients in South and East Yorkshire and Manchester.

While it seems obvious that banks, law firms and doctors’ surgeries need to shred confidential documents, Michael says many firms fail to realise the importance of protecting their own – and their customers’ – confidential information or the risk of “bin surfers” rooting through their unlocked skips for information they can use for criminal gain.

“I have been into premises where the managing director was not at all happy when I showed him what was being left in the office waste paper basket,” he says.

“Some companies say they are happy to take the risk of not having a shredding service – but there is more chance of your business being defrauded than burned to the ground. They will take out fire insurance, but won’t pay to get their documents shredded. That’s counter-intuitive.”

Go Shred supplies everything from roll-on-roll-off skips and secure cabinets to hessian sacks for the collection of sensitive and confidential documents. The paper is taken to be shredded at a site in Dewsbury. The resulting shredded strips are recycled to produce low-grade tissue.

Away from work, vintage scooters and American football are Michael’s abiding passions. While one scooter has gone, Mike still cherishes his 1970 Lambretta GP.

As for gridiron, he follows the fortunes of college side Navy and NFL franchise the Cincinnati Bengals.

Michael has played and coached gridiron since 1987 and is chairman of the Leeds Academy of American Football, based at Leeds Beckett University. He started the academy in 2013 to increase participation in the sport and has worked with more than 40 schools and 5,000 children since it started – including students at Salendine Nook High and Rastrick High School.

He played centre and guard for Yorkshire Rams – and says he is now paying the price with aching shoulders, arms and fingers. “I still help out on Saturdays, but I’m more involved off the field now, securing business partnerships. American football is big and grassroots interest has exploded.”

Role: Owner

Age: 46

Family: Married to Belinda with son Miles, nine

Holidays: We love Majorca and the Maldives

Car: Skoda Fabia – but I want to go back to owning a Lexus one day!

First job: Working in Sam Lumb's mill at Elland. I had a summer job when I was 13 and was paid £10 a week. I worked in six of the mills in Elland over various summer holidays. At university, I was a doorman at Johnny's

Best thing about the job? Changing people's perceptions and providing a great customer experience

Worst thing about the job? Overcoming the nagging uncertainty that affects every businessman

Business tip: From the governor of the Bank of England to the window cleaner – we're all winging it!

Work: Confidential document shredding and destruction specialists

Site: Fixby

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