



# Liam Dawson

Director

your future matters

## Job title / brief description of what you do:

Director, with 20 years of experience in helping to build brands online. Everything from design and build to search and social.

## How did you get into your job?

I went the usual route through school, college and then university. I studied BSc in Media Technology & Production at Teesside, which offered me a placement year. I went to Royal & Sun Alliance in Liverpool as a graphic designer and courseware developer. I loved it and this gave me so much experience in the world of work. I came back to finish my degree, and learnt of Graduate Business Units, which was an incubator program to help graduates set up a business. On the day I handed in my dissertation I picked up the keys to an office within the Innovation Centre and launched Oddesigns, a graphic design company. With a blank piece of paper I began to make my services known to the local business community any way I could. Pick up the phone, send a cheeky email...even write to people. It was tough but I won some work. A year after launching I began to do more in the way of website design so I partnered with another GBU business and we launched YUZU. A year after setting up YUZU we moved out of the GBU facility and moved into our own commercial office on Bridge Street East. It was tough, but we won some work with the likes of Virgin Atlantic and Moto-GP. After 7 years of running YUZU I was tired...My day job had changed from designing to running a company and new business. I needed a break so I closed YUZU and took some time out to understand what I actually did for a living. I decided I enjoyed the industry, but wanted someone else to have the worry and stress that comes with running a company. So I went to work for someone else. I joined England Agency as an Account Director at 27 years old, looking after some big accounts. Two years later I was running the agency both in Leeds and Kent. It was tough. I was approached and asked to head up a small digital agency outside of Leeds called Digital Welly. So I left England Agency and joined a small team in Otley. That team started to grow and after a couple of years, I took the reins - we rebranded and launched Grapple - a Leeds / London digital Agency where I was MD. 5 years, lots of awards and cool brands such as Puma, Crabbies Ginger Beer, Sony Music...I had the bug I had all those years ago when I first set up...but it wasn't mine. So I left a successful brand and team and headed back North East to set up my own agency again. And here I am, sat on Bridge Street East almost 20 years ago from where it began...a blank piece of paper, but with 20 years of experience...and yes. It's tough.

## What personal qualities do you need to do your job?

A thick skin, determination and focus. Never wanting to give up no matter how many times you are knocked. Dust down, get back up, learn and crack on.

## Who has been the most influential person in your life for helping you to get where you are today?

As a GBU I was introduced to (then) a young Neil Stephenson as a Mentor. At the time he was Sales & Marketing Director at Onyx. He later became CEO until it was sold for £65M. Still in touch with Neil today - even at the point of deciding to leave Grapple. His thoughts were part of the process.

## What would you tell your 16 year old self if you could go back and give them some advice?

Don't give up. Don't take things personally. And celebrate the mistakes... you are going to make loads.