

SPOTLIGHT

ON BENJAMIN CROSSLEY



Angela Wilkins shines a light on our very own Shawston squad via the Spotlight series, a series of informal chats with key members of staff talking candidly about their roles within the Shawston group and how they have developed. It's simple really, aim the light and watch them shine.

Surprisingly, it's another rainy day in Manchester, but today is different, there is no doom and gloom here only good vibes and great banter. Today I have been given the opportunity to catch up with Shawston's resident master of all things design and comms, Benji Crossley. A unique insight into the mind of a 23-year-old, this is going to be fun...

Background

Benji started his role as Shawston's first ever

Marketing Assistant 2 years ago and has witnessed massive change in this fast-moving employee owned business. The pace of the change has been reflected in Benji's role and has allowed him to progress quite rapidly and become a respected and valued member of the marketing team.

A new string to his bow is his newly appointed role as co-head of the Internal Communications team where he is responsible for driving communication to all

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members of our network of 5 nationwide branches. No mean feat.

Benji on Shawston

After graduating from MMU with a 2:1 in Digital Media and Communications I was looking to stay in Manchester and started looking for a job that would excite me and enable me to use my degree, but I also wanted a job that would also allow me to continue to enjoy living in Manchester – what a great city! I did the usual graduate thing of applying for jobs in my field and had 6/7 interviews lined up. Shawston being my very first job interview – the panic was real!

At the interview I got a real flavour for the business. I really liked it and I soon realised that here was a job that would allow me more freedom and more opportunities than elsewhere. It also occurred to me that if I was successful in my application at Shawston I would have the rare opportunity to work for a company at the stage of “development”, a company that was clearly going places and I definitely wanted to be onboard.

I was offered the job on the morning of my next job interview. I was all suited and booted for job interview number 2 when I got the call from HR offering me the role at Shawston. Straight away I said yes. It was a spur of the moment decision, but when you know, you know!

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Benji on Share Ownership

A big part of my decision to work with Shawston was the option to buy shares in the business and become

a co-owner. I was aware of the offering, but I must be honest I wasn't quite sure how it was going to work. What would I have to do? How much money would I have to invest? How much of a say would I have?

I found the whole share ownership prospect interesting; you could say it was a dealbreaker for me. I really liked the thought of having a stake in the business, I think it makes it more yours and you become more dedicated to its success. So, I thought “I'm in, let's go all in.” and I invested a sizeable chunk of my money into Shawston. It's changed the way in which I work, I see it as my money, my business. I'm responsible because it's mine. Good enough isn't good enough, it's up to me to go the extra mile to help my business progress and develop. I really think share ownership changes the way you view the company. I am more willing to give people a nudge who aren't putting in the effort because it's my bottom line at the end of day – 100%. So, it's up to me to drive it forward.

Benji on Mentorship

As soon as I started in my role at Shawston I was placed on a mentorship programme. This was massively helpful for me. I am from a non-professional background and didn't have many professional influencers growing up, so at times working in such an environment was alien to me and I sometimes found it difficult to navigate my way through the business and the working environment.

To have regular contact with my mentor – James Collins - and build a relationship where I felt comfortable to approach him for whatever reason was reassuring to me at what, looking back, was a real step change in my life and career. James has been there to celebrate the good times and to offer

sound advice in the not so good times or times of frustration. I felt I could off load and be reassured which helped me a great deal. At times it was a real leveller, and I don't think I would have evolved into the person I am today without James' support. He has been my main form of inspiration; he's been a great role model for me, and I aim to pave myself a very similar path. I find James to be very relatable and we have a brother like relationship. He's a top man!

Greatest Achievement

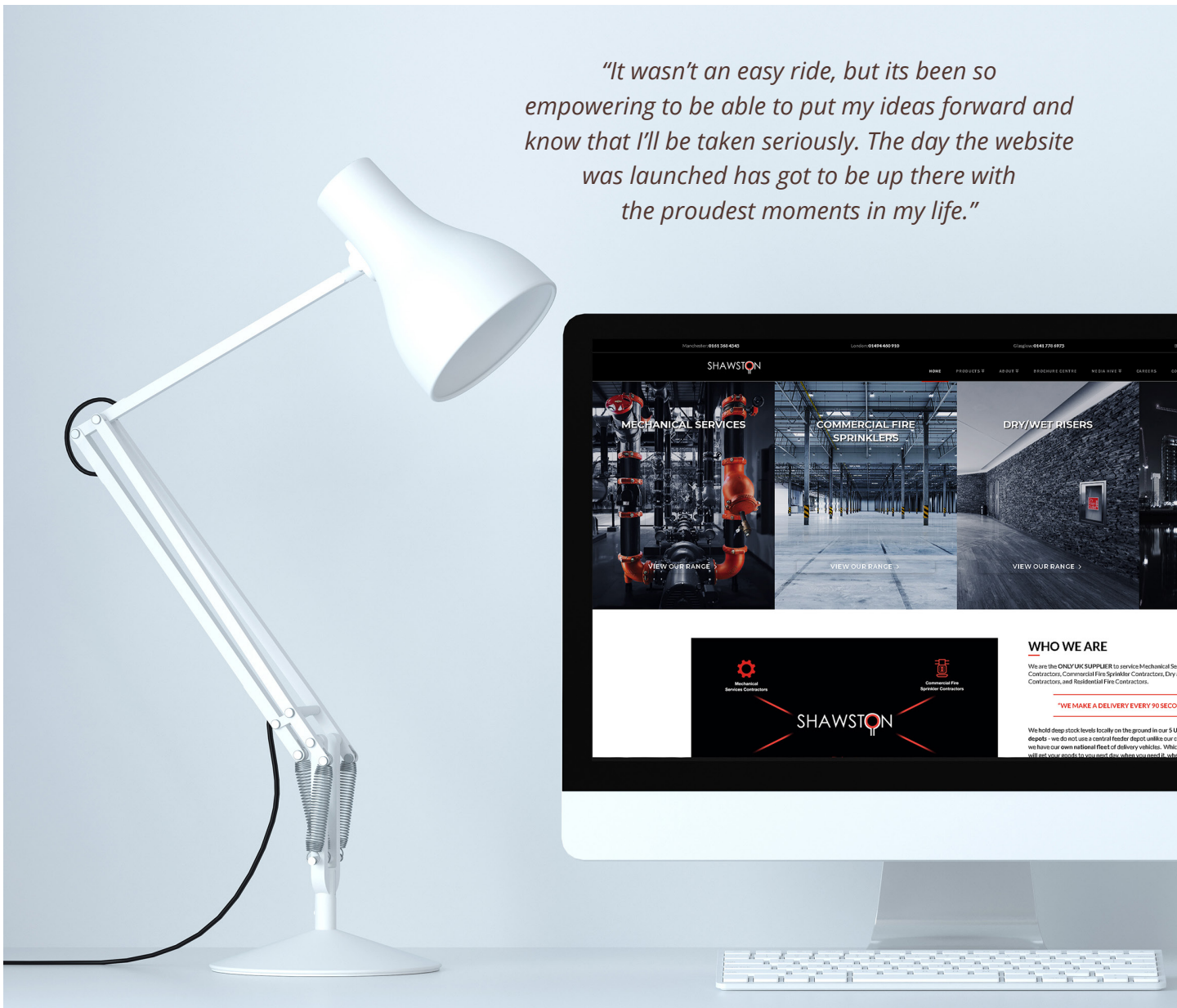
Well this is tricky. What to decide, what to decide. You know if you'd asked me a year ago, I would have said The Master Brochure without a doubt, but now it's got to be the Shawston website.

The website was the first major project that I took

the lead on and managed from start to finish. As part of their commitment to reinvest in the business the marketing team took the decision to bring more projects in house. This was a huge boost for me and it showed me how much faith both the team and the business had in my ability to deliver, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't slightly worried – could I pull it off? The good news is yes, I could.

The whole process of redesigning and redeveloping the website has changed my outlook and given me a deeper understanding on how to work to time pressures and how to manage a team. I have been able to develop and refine my project management skills, whilst being given the opportunity to learn new ways of working and to expand my horizons within website design. It wasn't an easy ride, but its been

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No Barriers

Working at Shawston is very empowering. There is a sense of freedom within the business that gives you room to manoeuvre and often offers up the opportunity to get involved in projects that are sometimes outside the scope of your job role. There is no micro-management, you are responsible for your own role and you take the rough with the smooth.

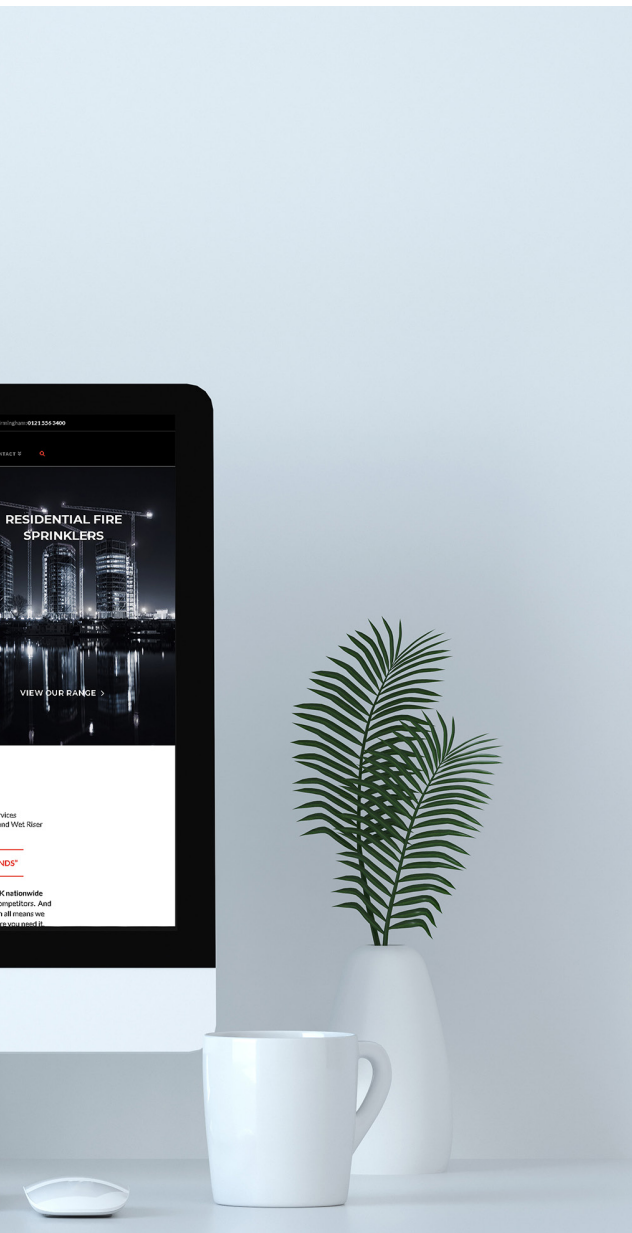
Working this way also allows you to understand why rules do exist, I prefer to call them guidelines. A simple template that guides you to "own" your

role. I have Senior Leadership input when I need it, but the job is mine to own. I run my role how I want to and how I think it needs to run within the marketing team. I've been allowed to do that.

Rather than be dictated to and told what to do, the onus is on me to figure it out myself. It's such a great environment to be in, there is a sense of community spirit where everyone wants others to do well. One of our key values is to work hard and enjoy it which is certainly easy to do here. I enjoy my job; I work with a brilliant team who are all free to discuss ideas and have the freedom to voice opinions or challenge ideas. Between us we always figure it out, there is a confidence in the team, in ourselves, so there is never an issue. It's an enjoyable place to work.

Benji on the future

I would say that I'm driven by a need to do better, that's very important to me. I like to keep pushing my boundaries, it gives me a sense of achievement knowing that I'm continuing to move forward rather than stagnating. I want to keep learning and developing my skills, I also want to keep exploring new avenues and roles, there are lots of opportunities here at Shawston and I intend to make the most of them to further my career. I'm keeping my options open as to where I'm heading, but it's upwards. I'm aiming to go as high as I can, and I see it being 100% achievable. ♦



Shawston has so many more amazing examples of meritocracy – sponsorship of MBA's, graduate development schemes, and a strong record for internal promotion to name just a few. And the common theme is that all these people made a choice – the choice to improve, to be better, to progress, and to shine. And that's the essence of Employee Ownership. We encourage a freedom of expression rarely seen in business, we push people to be better versions of themselves, and we give them the space to make choices.

So, if you're interested in a career with Shawston, make the choice to email us your cv and a covering letter to hr@shawston.co.uk or [visit our website](#) to read more about choosing to hop on board to a new career.