

The 20 year old start-up is now a Sunday Times 100 Best Small Company



VOLUME
THE AI AGENCY

AT A GLANCE

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turnover company

Originally a digital marketing agency, founded 20 years ago in Chris Sykes' two bedroom maisonette in Lower Early, Volume AI is now a £9.3 million turnover company with an enviable client list, a beautiful digital campus in Buckhurst Court, Wokingham, and a shiny new award as a Sunday Times 100 Best Small Company.

The transformation from digital marketing to artificial intelligence happened three years ago, when Chris Sykes and his team attended a demonstration of IBM's 'Watson', the supercomputer that combines artificial intelligence (AI) with sophisticated software to create a system capable of answering questions posed in natural (human) language.

Pull don't push

As Chris explained, this was an absolute light bulb moment for them, “No longer would people search for things, they'd simply ask. The 'push' system had become 'pull', and Volume was going to be at the forefront.”

A year later they'd replaced their traditional website with Lusy, the world's first CAP (Conversational AI Platform), now instead of searching for information, you simply ask and it's delivered. You have to try it! www.volume.ai.

Launching something so revolutionary is a risk for any small company, but they had to do it. Thankfully they haven't looked back.

Today, the 20 year old start-up has become a leader in artificial intelligence marketing applications. Changing direction at this stage shows you're never too old as a business, or too well-established, to start over if it's the right thing to do.

You can't beat face to face

Even in a technology-driven world, human contact is still key, and Chris believes you can't beat a face to face meeting with a client to build a relationship and grow a strong business. Which means location is vital.

Being in the Thames Valley means they're in the UK's technology heartland, with easy access to London and most of the country. It's also where most of their clients are based.

Business networking opportunities in the area are excellent. “They're an invaluable way to meet key influencers, establish your name, and make contact with local professional services such as banks” notes Chris.

“I sat on the Thames Valley LEP action committee for SMEs for over a year, and know only too well the invaluable contacts and benefits they can give a growing company.”

Finding the right people is key

Berkshire has a rich talent pool, and having Reading University and Henley Business School close by has been a real advantage, both for Volume AI and the students who attend their workshops.

Chris admits that while the bright lights of London have a certain draw for young technology graduates, Berkshire's proximity to London, lower cost of living, excellent career opportunities and better work-life balance are proving their own draw. Finding the right talent hasn't been a problem.

Looking to the next phase of scaling up

Until now, the growth and development of the business has come from self-investment, £3 million worth of hours have gone into AI robotics alone.

Chris is keen to continue scaling up, "For our next phase of growth, we'll be looking for investment. Again this is where our location is of great benefit. While investment can and will come from any corner of the globe, being in Berkshire means access to like-minded investment partners."

As for what happens next in this leading AI business, you'll have to ask Lusy!

