

Meet the entrepreneur

Sam Hufton, Pull The Pin Agency

Welcome to our series, 'Meet the entrepreneur', where we sit down with founders, CEOs and the like and get to know the person behind the business.

Say hello to Sam Hufton, co-founder of Pull The Pin Agency, as we take a look into this entrepreneur and his business.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about the business?

Sam: Pull the Pin (PtP) is a Birmingham-based digital marketing agency focused on revenue growth for clients. We address the market gap by providing a full digital strategy through a team of twelve experts in SEO, Paid Media, Organic Social, and CRM/Email. We aim to create a fun, balanced workplace while serving clients in professional services, recruitment, finance, and manufacturing.

Q: What is your Monday morning routine to get you in the mood for a successful week?

Sam: Survive! We have two children (3 and 6), so there is never one thing I can do as every morning is different.

On a serious note, when I get into the office I go through my Wiki, which lists all my jobs and what I have planned for the week. I use Notion for this, and I make sure on Friday I have all the tasks in the right place to hit the ground running on a Monday.

Q: What is your favourite podcast to listen to/book to read for business advice?

Sam: I have two. First, Uncensored CMO offers insights into marketing beyond boardroom politics, connecting listeners with top marketers, agency founders, researchers, and PR influencers. My second go-to is All-In, featuring industry veterans Chamath Palihapitiya, Jason Calacanis, David Sacks, and David Friedberg, who discuss economics, tech, politics, and poker.

Q: How do you navigate the digital world as an entrepreneur?

Sam: It's very hard due to the digital world always growing and always changing. I try to keep on the pulse of the changes and tactics that can work for our clients, but also making sure the team are delivering on the foundations of the strategies we execute for clients.

As any business owner knows, it can be very hard, and the support of your colleagues is vital and I feel very lucky that we have built a team with the very best people. They also tend to be a good place to soak up new ideas.

Q: What is your best IT infrastructure advice to other entrepreneurs when getting their business started?

Sam: Ensure you plan thoroughly before taking action. Starting with the wrong tool can lock you into a path that's hard to change. I like using Jeff Bezos explanation of the two types of decisions for this, which is:

Type 1: Almost impossible to reverse. Bezos calls them "one-way doors." Think selling your company. Or quitting a job. In short, figuratively jumping off a cliff. Once you make a Type 1 decision, there's no going back.

Type 2: Easy to reverse. Bezos calls these decisions "two-way doors." Like starting a side hustle. Or offering a new service. Or introducing new pricing schemes. While Type 2 decisions might feel momentous, with a little time and effort (often a lot less than you think) they can be reversed.

Also, everything can be streamlined in this world from accounts (Xero and Sage for example), through to your CRM database and marketing. I try and help build these live reports for our clients as they can then make quicker decisions as a business to get the best results. I also believe there is an amazing process where Artificial Intelligence can be used to help build quotes and streamline businesses.

Q: What are your biggest pain points as an SME?

Sam: The hardest part is dealing with cash flow during growth. Even friends with much larger businesses face similar issues. You can't do everything, so making the right decisions is crucial for growth. We're eager to develop more tools and use AI to support our team.

Q: What helps you wind down at the end of the day?

Sam: I have a 3-year-old and a 6-year-old. While things aren't exactly winding down, my oldest loves being a goalkeeper, so most nights are spent in the garden where I pretend to be a famous Aston Villa striker. My youngest is into tennis, so I'm juggling between the two sports. I make an effort to enjoy these moments as much as possible, knowing how quickly they grow up and seeing it happen right before my eyes.

Q: What did you want to be when you were growing up? Did you always see yourself being a business owner?

Sam: Becoming a professional golfer was always my dream, and I was fortunate to become England Champion at 14. However, my golf career faded until I was 21, when I landed my first job in the digital space.

Q: What do you see for the future of your business?

Sam: I see many opportunities for our industry with the rise of AI, which can help us stand out and deliver great results for clients. We aim to be one of Birmingham's top agencies, and with plenty of competition in the city, I hope we all push each other to improve. I'm passionate about Birmingham competing with Manchester and Leeds in the digital space.

Q: What do you do to stay ProActive (please excuse the pun) when times are hard as a business owner?

Sam: I'm a keen golfer and joined my local golf club's committee in the last year to bring a 'younger' perspective. It's been a great learning experience, offering a break from the daily business grind and connecting me with new ideas and a fresh network.

Q: What song would you play on a Monday morning to get you through the Monday blues?

Sam: Macklemore's song 'Downtown' is my 'go to' song when I need a boost.