

TE

Think Enterprise

Quarter 3 — 2025

Preparing for the unexpected...

Resilient by Design: Building Business Success

Are you ready to take advantage?

How AI Is Redefining Start-Ups

All things enterprise with Rocketeer CEO, Richard Wood

Liftoff with Rocketeer: Fueling Enterprise Training

Opening New Doors

Lifelong Learning: Staying Ahead in 2025

Think Enterprise

Quarter 3 — 2025

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Contact Us

19 Victoria Road
Darlington
DL1 5SF

0845 467 4928
newsletter@ioee.uk
ioee.uk



Sarah Trouten **IOEE Chief Executive**

Welcome to the autumn edition of Think Enterprise.

In a world where industries are constantly changing and technology is evolving at a rapid pace, the ability to continuously learn and adapt is crucial for entrepreneurial success and personal growth. This edition explores how lifelong learning can help adults stay ahead in 2025 by building resilience and unlocking their full potential.

We look at the importance of having a business resilience plan to navigate challenges like economic shifts and supply chain disruptions. A solid plan can help you anticipate risks, adapt quickly, and even turn obstacles into new opportunities.

This issue also highlights the rising influence of AI, which is redefining how start-ups operate by helping them save time, work smarter, and grow faster. We also showcase the SFEDI Level 1 Award in AI Essentials for Business, a qualification designed to help people understand how to use AI in real business situations.

You'll find an article on the importance of enterprise qualifications, which can help learners stand out by proving they have real-world skills like financial literacy and strong communication.

We also have an article featuring Danny Broddle, founder of Passarella, who shares his experience of how the SFEDI Level 5 Certificate in Professional Business and Enterprise Support Services gave him the space to reflect and grow as both a business advisor and an entrepreneur.

Finally, we are proud to support events like NEA25—Neurodivergent Futures: Reimagining Entrepreneurship—which explores how neurodivergence can be a driver of innovation and opportunity. It's a reminder that diversity is at the core of entrepreneurship.

We hope this edition inspires you to embrace lifelong learning and equip yourself with the tools needed to thrive in the changing landscape of 2025 and beyond.



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Resilient by Design: The Secret to Long- Term Business Success

Running a business is full of challenges, but the key to long-term success lies in being prepared for the unexpected. Whether you're just starting out or have been in business for years, having a plan in place to handle uncertainty can make all the difference. A business resilience plan helps you anticipate risks, adapt quickly, and stay on track even when the economy throws a curveball.

No business operates in a vacuum. Economic shifts, supply chain disruptions, financial pressures, and changing customer needs are all part of the landscape. The good news? A solid resilience plan gives you the tools to navigate these challenges and turn obstacles into opportunities. But how do you make a resilience plan?

Start by identifying the risks that could impact your business, both internal and external. These might include financial pressures, industry trends, cybersecurity threats, or unexpected operational disruptions. Once you know what you're up against, you can put strategies in place to help manage them.

Financial resilience is crucial. Keeping a close eye on cash flow, maintaining an emergency fund, and exploring alternative revenue streams can provide a safety net during tough times. It's also worth looking into the different financial support options available to you, whether that's grants, loans, or investment opportunities.



Agility prepares your business for change.

Flexibility is another key ingredient. Businesses that can adapt quickly are more likely to thrive. This could mean embracing digital transformation, shifting to an online model, offering subscription-based services, or finding new ways to deliver value to customers. The more agile your business can be, the better prepared you'll be to handle change.

Having a crisis management plan in place ensures that if something does go wrong, you and your team know exactly what to do. This includes defining clear roles and responsibilities, establishing a communication plan, and outlining steps to keep operations running smoothly.

Strong business relationships can also make a big difference. Building a network of trusted suppliers, investors, and industry peers can provide valuable support, fresh ideas, and even collaborative solutions during tough times.

Resilience isn't about setting up a plan once and forgetting about it. The plan allows you to tackle the daily challenges, knowing that if the worst happens, you have a plan to guide you through it.

The business landscape is always changing, so it's important to regularly review and update your strategies. Keeping an eye on emerging risks and reassessing your approach ensures that your business stays ahead of the curve.

Ultimately, resilience is about being proactive rather than reactive. Taking the time now to strengthen your business means you'll be in a better position to handle whatever comes next. With the right plan in place, you can protect your business, seize new opportunities, and build a strong foundation for future success.

If you are interested in learning more about building business resilience, or generating a business resilience plan, head to [our website](#) to find out more about our new comprehensive programme.

The Building Business Resilience programme takes business owners, managers and leaders through the business resilience plan, its benefits and supporting you to develop your own resilience plan that fits your business.



5

Top 5

**tools for business
start-ups**

Becoming a business owner comes with a range of tasks. Finding the right audience, developing products and so much more. When launching a new business, selecting the right tools can make a significant difference in efficiency, productivity and scalability.

While every start-up has its unique needs, there are five essential categories of tools that entrepreneurs should consider when building the foundations of their business:

1. Financial Management Tools

Keeping track of income, expenses and cash flow is critical in the early stages. Tools in this category support budgeting, invoicing, and forecasting, giving business owners a clear view of their financial health. They can also assist in preparing for tax returns, managing payroll and tracking financial performance over time.

2. Communication and Collaboration Platforms

Whether working solo, with a small team, or collaborating with partners, tools that streamline communication are invaluable. These platforms help manage internal discussions, client communication and document sharing, which contribute to productivity and transparency.

3. Marketing and Social Media Management Tools

Strong visibility and consistent engagement are key for growing a new business. These tools enable entrepreneurs to plan, schedule and analyse marketing campaigns, manage content across platforms, and understand customer interactions—all of which help build brand presence and connect with audiences.

4. Project and Task Management Systems

Keeping track of to-do lists, milestones and team responsibilities can become overwhelming. Project management resources help business owners stay organised, allocate tasks, monitor progress and ensure that timelines are met. These systems are especially useful as the business begins to scale.

5. Learning and Development Resources

A successful entrepreneur is always learning. Access to resources that provide guidance on business planning, regulations, leadership and innovation can help build confidence and competence. These tools support personal and professional growth, while encouraging resilience and adaptability.

Choosing the right mix of tools early on can streamline day-to-day operations and lay a strong foundation for future growth. While it's tempting to invest in everything at once, it's often more effective to start with essentials that align with the business's current needs and evolve over time. Remember, this isn't a race. Take your time and set yourself up for sustainable success.

INNOVATIVE THINKING. HOW AI IS REDEFINING START UPS

INSPIRED BY THE SFEDI LEVEL 1 AWARD IN AI ESSENTIALS

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is the go to trend for 2025, and lots of small business owners are looking to make the most of the technology within their businesses. AI is now helping start-ups of all shapes and sizes to save time, work smarter and grow faster. For small businesses, using AI can mean getting more done in less time, and with fewer resources. It's becoming a real game-changer for anyone looking to start or grow a business.

The SFEDI Level 1 Award in AI Essentials for Business has been created to help people understand what AI is, how it works, and, most importantly, how it can be used in real business situations. Whether your learners are just starting out or looking to improve what they already doing, this qualification shows how AI can support small businesses to grow.

Running a business is challenging, with regular trend changes, shifts in the economy and customer loyalty being a thing of the past. AI tools can help by taking care of everyday tasks like replying to customer messages, managing calendars, or even analysing stock levels. This means business owners can focus more on big-picture thinking and less on admin.

AI-powered chatbots, for example, can answer customer questions at any time of day, even when the business owner is not online. Other tools can help manage cash flow, create invoices, or help businesses stay on top of their marketing campaigns. These tools don't replace people, they simply help small teams do more with their time.

Businesses today collect a lot of information, but making sense of it can be tricky. AI helps by sorting through data quickly and turning it into useful insights.

For example, it can show who the best customers are, what's selling well, or when a business is likely to be busiest.

The AI Essentials qualification helps learners understand how to use this kind of information in a smart and simple way. It gives real examples of how small businesses can use AI to learn more about their market and improve how they work.

AI is also helping start-ups come up with fresh ideas. From smart apps to creative tools that generate designs or suggest content, AI can support innovation in lots of exciting ways. For small businesses, it opens up possibilities that used to only be available to much bigger companies.

This technology can help new businesses offer something different, solve problems, and stay one step ahead of the competition. It's no surprise that more start-ups are using AI to come up with bold, new ideas. Although AI is more available than ever, it can still feel a bit overwhelming. That's where the SFEDI Level 1 Award in AI Essentials for Business comes in. It breaks things down into simple steps and shows how AI works through practical examples and exercises.

The qualification is designed to be approachable, even for those with little or no tech experience. It gives learners the confidence to explore new tools, try out ideas, and see how AI could make a real difference in their business.

To find out more about the SFEDI Level 1 Award in AI Essentials for Business, and how it could benefit your learners, [click here](#).





"We have been working with the IOEE for 6 or 7 years now. The recognition gives us that added layer of credibility, a high-level rubber seal that says our programmes are certified and monitored to a high standard."

Liftoff with Rocketeer: How IOEE Recognition Fuels Learning Success

The IOEE nurtures an ever expanding network of training providers, from Universities and colleges to local authorities, private training providers and contract holders. Our academies deliver a range of programmes from Regulated SFEDI Awards qualifications to IOEE Certificates of Achievements. One IOEE academy that continues to innovate and deliver excellent training to their learners is Rocketeer. We spoke to Richard Wood, CEO of Rocketeer, to catch up on all things enterprise, entrepreneurship and training.

Richard began the call with a reflection of his time as an IOEE academy so far. He began,

"We have been working with the IOEE for 6 or 7 years now, the IOEE recognition gives us that added layer of credibility when we deliver our business programmes", continuing to say "the IOEE accreditation gives us that high-level rubber seal, to say our programmes are certified and monitored to a high standard".

The IOEE organisational recognition, as well as programme recognition, helps training providers to attract learners who are seeking a respected and certified training provider and programme. Rocketeer have had a number of their programmes recognised by the IOEE, and have

delivered these programmes to a number of learners over the years.

We went on to discuss Rocketeer's programmes, their approval and accreditation process and the results they have witnessed as a result of these programmes. Rocketeer have successfully delivered three IOEE recognised programmes Understanding Digital Enterprise, Preparing to Setup a Digital Enterprise and Creating and Starting a Digital Enterprise programmes for a number of years now, with great completion rates.

We asked Richard to tell us about his programmes and their reputation, he said "our



Rocketeer

programmes are promoted on our behalf, so our learners are people who really want to do our programmes”. The Rocketeer programmes are designed to take learners through the fundamentals of Digital Enterprise

and the business Start Up phase. Rocketeers works with learners in a variety of settings from Prisons to Local authorities. Currently delivering their programmes in Prisons, Richard mentioned how the learners are eager to learn and are looking to develop their academic and vocational skills. Richard has seen great results from the learners on the Rocketeer programmes and hopes to see continued success with future ventures.

Rocketeer delivered these programmes via internal funding within the prison network, but has had to review their offering as this funding has recently been reduced. Richard reached out to the IOEE to discuss how they could continue delivering recognised training programmes to their audience, in other areas of business and technology.

Richard brought their new AI programmes to the team at the IOEE who conducted a review of these programmes.

The new courses encourage learners to utilise AI in various roles within a business, from Marketing to Sales and Administration. The programmes provide learners with a range of knowledge to help develop their skills when utilising AI.

He told us that during his original accreditation process “it was all straightforward and simple, and that’s one of the reasons we like working with you”, going on to mention how the approval process was equally straightforward and how Rocketeer received great support via the approvals team. Richard is optimistic that the future for Rocketeer is looking bright, and the IOEE are excited to be a part of that future!

If you are looking to add value for your learners in the form of accreditation and certification, then get in touch with the team at the IOEE, who will be happy to discuss the potential routes to recognition.

Simply get in touch [here](#).

LIFELONG LEARNING: THE KEY

Lifelong learning is an important term, reminding us that education doesn't end once we leave college. In a world where industries shift, lifelong learning is an important term, Lifelong learning is an important term reminding us that education doesn't end once we leave college. In a world where industries shift, technologies evolve at pace, and customer expectations change, the ability to continuously learn and adapt is essential, not just for personal growth but for entrepreneurial success.

For adults, lifelong learning opens up new possibilities, builds resilience and helps turn ambitions into reality. Whether someone is taking the first steps towards self-employment, looking to grow a business, or aiming to future-proof their career, ongoing skills development is the key to staying ahead.

Supporting adults to engage in lifelong learning is about much more than providing access to training. It's about creating opportunities that are flexible, relevant, and designed to meet real-world needs. We help people build confidence, embrace change, and unlock their full potential. At the heart of it all is the recognition that learning doesn't stop at school or university. It continues through our working lives and beyond, in workplaces, communities, and homes. In 2025 and beyond, this mindset will be critical for anyone involved in business, enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Every adult learner has their own reasons for wanting to develop new skills. Some may want to set up their own business after years of traditional employment. Others may be seeking ways to diversify their income or simply looking to learn how to utilise new technologies. Many will simply want to feel more confident navigating change. What connects them is the need for learning that is practical, valuable, and able to respond to the challenges of modern day life. By engaging in lifelong learning, learners will develop the tool kit to do this, helping adults keep pace with developments in technology, consumer behaviour, and market trends.

When we look at the enterprise landscape for 2025, certain skills stand out as vital.

Digital literacy is at the forefront. Today's entrepreneurs, business owners and employees need to be comfortable using a range of digital tools, not just for marketing or sales, but for managing operations, analysing data, and improving efficiency. Artificial intelligence, for example, is becoming increasingly accessible, and those who can harness AI tools effectively will be better placed to innovate, personalise services, and work smarter.

Financial understanding remains crucial. In uncertain times, the ability to manage cash flow, plan for the unexpected, and make sound financial decisions is more important than ever. Skills in budgeting,

1 TO STAYING AHEAD IN 2025

forecasting, and financial reporting help business owners build stability and plan for sustainable growth. As access to finance changes and new funding models emerge, entrepreneurs also need to be equipped to explore different options and understand the implications of their choices in both the short term and the long term.

Adaptability and problem-solving are also high on the list. The most successful entrepreneurs in 2025 will be those who can pivot in response to challenges, identify new opportunities, and find creative solutions to issues as they arise. Lifelong learning plays a vital role here, not only in teaching specific techniques but also in helping individuals develop the mindset needed to embrace change and overcome setbacks.

Communication and interpersonal skills are equally important. Whether leading a team, working with customers, or collaborating with partners, the ability to communicate clearly, build relationships, and inspire trust is key. As businesses become more customer-focused and as collaboration across networks and supply chains grows, these skills will help entrepreneurs stand out and build lasting success.

So, how can adults stay ahead of the game through lifelong learning? First and foremost, it's about adopting a new mindset, being open to new ideas, seeking out opportunities to develop, and seeing learning as an ongoing part of personal and professional life.

This might mean enrolling on formal programmes that lead to recognised qualifications or professional accreditation. It could equally mean engaging in informal learning, through mentoring, peer networks, webinars, podcasts, or reading. What matters is that learning remains active, intentional, and relevant.

At its core, lifelong learning is about helping people realise their ambitions and make a positive contribution to their businesses, their communities, and the wider economy. It gives adults the tools they need to navigate change, and achieve success on their own terms. In the world of enterprise, it underpins innovation, inclusivity, and growth. And as we look ahead to the future, it will continue to be the key that helps adults stay ahead of the game, whatever challenges and opportunities come their way.

At the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs, we are proud to support and recognise programmes that empower adult learners and help make lifelong learning a reality. By working alongside training providers, academies, local authorities and other partners, we create opportunities that open doors for adults at every stage of their journey. Together, we can ensure that lifelong learning is not just an idea we talk about, but a powerful force that transforms lives and builds stronger futures.

Where Ideas Take Flight: ARU and Connected Cambridge Empower Emerging Entrepreneurs

Since September 2023, Connected Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) have partnered to nurture student and graduate entrepreneurs by connecting them to the Cambridge enterprise ecosystem through Entrepreneurs on the Move – a series of monthly networking events for entrepreneurs.

The series, founded by Peter Hawkins (also founder of the Centre for Business Innovation Limited), has been running for several years for people to meet physically and in cyberspace to exchange ideas, contacts, inspiration, and introductions.

The first joint event, hosted on the ARU Cambridge campus, welcomed ARU students and recent graduates, and local entrepreneurs and professionals from Cambridgeshire. The participants attended a guest speaker talk by Ruth Everard, a dynamic entrepreneur with a passion for creating a positive impact, followed by a Q&A session, and concluded with a networking segment.

Following the success of the event, Connected Cambridge offered ARU students and graduates the opportunity to pitch in front of the audience at future events and receive valuable feedback while testing their ideas. The collaboration saw several aspiring entrepreneurs gain confidence, mentoring, and support from local entrepreneurs to launch or scale their business ideas.

After connecting with the Anglia Ruskin Enterprise Academy (AREA) at ARU, several attendees also became valuable mentors and supporters for the university and participated in guest lectures and pitching competitions as panel members.

Despite moving back to its initial home at the Eagle Barclays Lab in Cambridge, Entrepreneurs on the Move continues to stay open to ARU students and graduates and to help them polish their ideas and expand their network.





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GAIN NATIONAL ACCREDITATION
CONNECT. RECOGNISE. GROW.**





QUALIFICATIONS: THE KEY TO STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

In today's competitive job market, the value of regulated enterprise qualifications, cannot be underestimated.

With employers are placing increasing value on qualifications that do more than tick a box. They're looking for proof of real-world skills, such as strong communication, financial literacy, and the ability to navigate emerging technologies like AI within the context of a business.

For training providers, this makes it more important than ever to offer qualifications that are not only recognised and respected, but that also deliver meaningful impact for learners.

Learners want more than a certificate. They want a qualification that boosts their confidence,

sharpens their skills, and supports their progression into employment, self-employment, or further study. SFEDI Awards Regulated Qualifications offer exactly that. These qualifications provide practical, purposeful learning designed to meet the needs of the learners and today's employers.

Regulated qualifications, like those awarded by SFEDI Awards, bring real benefits to both learners and training providers. As an OFQUAL-regulated awarding organisation, SFEDI Awards ensures its qualifications meet high standards, providing consistency, quality, and national recognition. For training

providers, this means delivering courses that meet strict benchmarks, boost credibility, and reassure learners that they're getting a qualification that matters.

For learners, choosing a regulated qualification means they know their certification is recognised across the UK. It proves their learning has been independently assessed and meets national standards, giving them a strong foundation for employment, self-employment, or further education.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship skills are more important than ever. Whether someone wants to start their own business,



improve their employability, or develop problem-solving and innovation skills, enterprise education offers real-world benefits. SFEDI Awards qualifications are designed to equip learners with practical knowledge they can apply immediately—covering essential areas like business planning, resilience, finance, and marketing. Whether launching a start-up or bringing entrepreneurial thinking into an existing workplace, learners gain the tools they need to succeed.

For training providers, offering SFEDI Awards qualifications is a smart move. They provide national accreditation, giving learners and stakeholders confidence in the quality of training. They also meet a growing demand for enterprise skills, helping providers attract

a diverse range of learners looking to build businesses or enhance their careers. And with flexible delivery options—including face-to-face, blended, and online learning—training providers can tailor courses to different learning styles and needs.

Achieving an SFEDI Awards qualification gives learners a clear pathway for progression. Beyond gaining essential business skills, some qualifications, like Enterprise Spark, even carry UCAS points—opening up further education opportunities for those who want to continue their learning journey.

By choosing regulated enterprise qualifications, learners know they're investing in a respected, widely recognised certification that can support their ambitions. And for training providers, offering these qualifications means delivering high-quality programmes that make a real impact.

SFEDI Awards is dedicated to developing the next generation of entrepreneurs and business leaders. By providing qualifications that are both practical and industry-relevant, training providers can strengthen their offer, support learner success, and play a role in shaping a more enterprising and resilient workforce.

To find out more about SFEDI Awards qualifications, and how to deliver them, head to **[SFEDI Awards](#)**.

Passarella



Learning to Advise, While Building a Business

When you are both supporting business owners and actively running your own venture, you develop a unique perspective on what it truly means to offer meaningful, effective advice. For Danny Broddle, the founder of Passarella, this dual role has given him valuable insights into his own capabilities, as well as the opportunity to grow as both a business advisor and entrepreneur.

His journey through the SFEDI Level 5 Certificate in Professional Business and Enterprise Support Services has been a defining step in

this development.

The level 5 business support qualification is specifically designed for business support professionals who are ready to consolidate their skills, benchmark their practice and gain recognition through an industry standard qualification. For Danny, the qualification provided exactly that - alongside something just as valuable, the space and time to pause and reflect.

Danny brought a dual lens to the course - learning not only as someone supporting other



entrepreneurs but also as someone who is running a business himself. Passarella is a brand shaped by creativity, ambition and, like many start-ups, the need to constantly adapt. Danny's experience meant that each unit covered in the programme had an immediate relevance to his own business, as well as those he will support.

“I found myself asking the same questions I’d ask a client—what are my goals, where are my challenges, and how can I evolve this to the next level?”

This practical and reflective approach is exactly what the SFEDI Level 5 Certificate encourages. Developed by SFEDI, and recognised as the industry standard for business support professionals across the UK, the qualification combines theory with applied learning, empowering advisors to build confidence and capability.

One key element Danny highlights is the invaluable support from Leigh Sear, SFEDI’s specialist trainer and a leading figure in the business support sector.

“Leigh’s input made the learning experience really impactful. His understanding of enterprise challenges, and the way he brings scenarios to life, was really helpful.”

Scenario-based learning, peer discussions, and networking opportunities brought the course to life and offered Danny the chance to benchmark his experiences against others in similar roles—building not just skills, but confidence.

Danny went on to discuss how the course really did focus on building confidence and awareness. Self belief was another element that was really important to for Danny, giving him that chance to reflect on his practice.



The Level 5 Certificate is a means to enhance professional standing and ensure that those working in business support are equipped with a consistent, high-quality standard of training. Danny’s experience is a testament to the purpose of the SFEDI business support qualifications. He walked away with a sharper sense of his own strengths, a deeper understanding of how to advise others, and a stronger business.

As he continues to grow Passarella while supporting other entrepreneurs, Danny’s journey proves just how powerful this qualification can be. The SFEDI Level 5 Certificate isn’t just about delivering advice—it’s about developing as a professional who understands what it truly takes to run a business.

Whether you’re an established advisor or a business owner stepping into a support role, the SFEDI suite of qualifications ensures you’re not just offering advice—you’re offering insight, built on experience, empathy and evidence-based learning. To find out more, head to the **SFEDI Directory**.

Breaking Barriers: How Prison Education Unlocks Skills and Reduces Reoffending !

Enterprise education is key in providing individuals with core skills such as problem solving, creative thinking and communication skills. SFEDI and IOEE work within a range of training establishments from colleges and Universities to independent training providers and Prison Education Departments. We recently caught up with Amina Bodhanian, Head of Partnerships at Novus, to discuss the various programmes the Prison Education Departments deliver to their learners, and the impact it has on their future careers and reoffending rates.

Amina began the discussion with some really interesting insights into the role of prison education. She began by outlining the processes that are in place to support learners with their educational journey, practical work experience and job searches. Amina explained that in addition to providing prison education, Novus Works Team support learners in all aspects of their job search, from finding potential job matches to aligning the learners skills with job roles they may be suitable for.

Amina discussed how, upon release, many people who have spent time in prison face additional boundaries in gaining employment due to their criminal record. Novus help in breaking down these barriers, by providing learners with educational opportunities to develop a skills toolkit. Exploring employability, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills is crucial in preparing the learner for re-entry into society. Another way the Novus education departments support their learners to break down these barriers is by exploring self employment as a viable career path with the learners, as opposed to the traditional employment routes. Amina went on to say that a combination of industry specific vocational training, alongside

enterprise training makes for a great framework for learners who never considered self employment as an option on release. She went on to discuss how some learners have gone on to set up beauty therapy or, plastering businesses and many other self employed ventures.

The Education Departments within Novus prisons deliver a range of SFEDI Awards qualifications, from the Level 1 Award in Understanding Enterprise through to Level 3 Award in Innovation, Sustainability and Growth. Each qualification takes learners through the key skills and techniques needed to thrive in the enterprise and entrepreneurship landscape, guiding learners towards employment or self employment.

Amina mentioned that education and employment is a great way to develop the learners' skills, but also to reduce reoffending rates. Amina went on to tell us how "reoffending costs the government around £18.1 billion a year", but that employment is one of the best ways to reduce this rate. She went on to say that "everytime someone is employed or self employed, they are contributing to the economy and putting money back in the public purse".

Amina also shared thoughts on how the SFEDI qualifications help their learners to gain employment via skills development. "Lots of our learners had negative experiences with education when they were in school, so we do things differently by introducing education via arts and creative courses for some learners initially which will helps to build their confidence and self-esteem and allows them to progress to other



qualifications.” Amina continued to say that the SFEDI Awards qualifications are offered to learners who are nearing their release date and focusing on resettlement and employment options .

Speaking specifically about SFEDI, Amina said “our enterprise learners are already motivated, but the SFEDI qualifications boost their confidence, awareness of enterprise and their self-belief and resilience actually goes up too”, which are important skills to develop.

Within the prison network, alot of learners also complete personal development units such as Working as Part of a Team or Communication Skills which can be found in our Passport to Enterprise and Employment qualifications. Amina said some learners are serving longer sentences, but by the time they reach their vocational training, they are keen to learn and develop those important enterprise and employability skills to prepare them for their job searches.

We then asked Amina to explain the potential delivery methods within a prison setting. She explained that Novus employs a range of delivery methods to meet individual learning needs. For example we have traditional classroom setting delivery which works for

some learners along with contextualised work based delivery for other learners.” Amina gave an example of how a learner on a painting and decorating course will have to cost and source paint as part of their business plan and financial forecasting. She went on to say that the Prison Education Departments “have good teaching and learning facilities” again explaining how they are breaking down barriers for their learners by providing excellent resources.

Education is an important part in everyone’s lives. Gaining knowledge, skills and techniques helps us to thrive in specialised subjects and potentially find a great self-employed career opportunity. It was great to catch up with Amina and see how SFEDI Qualifications are being used by learners within the Prison Education Departments, to really make a difference to their career paths. We look forward to continuing to work with Novus and their various Prison Education Departments across the UK.

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Entrepreneurial Decision Making: Balancing Rationality and Creativity[!]

Entrepreneurs are constantly faced with the need to make a wide range of decisions, from day-to-day operational choices to long-term, strategic ones whose complexity and risk level keep changing depending on the different stages of the entrepreneurial journey and can have a major impact on the development of an organisation.

Like other professionals called to make decisions, entrepreneurs need to consider the impact of a series of external constraints such as, for example, limited resources, the role of technology, changing client requirements, and the surrounding socio-economical conditions.

However, entrepreneurial decision-making can differ significantly from the way in which managers or non-owner leaders make a business choice.

It would be impossible to discuss in detail all the different layers of complexity involved in how entrepreneurs make a decision, but there are three distinctive aspects that characterise entrepreneurial decision-making.

1. Creating Innovative Solutions

Many entrepreneurs owe the success of their business to the ability of identifying and developing innovative ideas, products and solutions, as a way to stand out from the competition and fulfil their entrepreneurial purpose. As a result, they do not simply need to make decisions by choosing one of the existing options, but they should find ways to change them and invent new, creative approaches that respond to the evolving customer requirements and business needs.

This often entails moving away from mainstream ideas and towards unique, counterintuitive perspectives to remain competitive and, in the best cases, help pave the way for a whole sector. So, from a practical point of view, what key skills does this require?

Be confident and think independently.



Entrepreneurs need to develop high levels of awareness in their own knowledge and abilities as well as take the risk of standing by their opinions and beliefs, even when they lead them off the beaten track.

Be proactive. Effective entrepreneurial decision-making requires the courage to actively take initiative and create new opportunities, not as a passive response to the surrounding environment but as a way to be at the forefront of the change.

Be decisive. The amount of data and information currently available to decision makers can be overwhelming and may lead to the so called 'analysis paralysis' that may prevent entrepreneurs from moving forward as quickly as needed. This can be overcome by being decisive and taking rapid actions, even when working under pressure

and within time constraints.

Be flexible. Even though planning and strategising is key for business success, entrepreneurs need to be ready to change direction and pivot quickly, accepting less effective decisions and setbacks as learning opportunities to recover quickly and move forward.

Be resourceful. Very often, especially in the beginning of their entrepreneurial journey, entrepreneurs can only count on a limited number of resources and opportunities, so they need to maximise the impact of their decisions and strategically leverage what is available to them.



2. Fulfilling Multiple Goals

A second factor that should be taken into consideration is the fact that entrepreneurs usually do not make decisions in silo within specific business units but should take a helicopter view of the cross-departmental needs of the business and, consequently, devise overarching strategies.

In addition, even though very important to achieve organisational success in the long-term, financial returns are not necessarily the only motivating factor for entrepreneurs. Non-monetary elements like self-fulfilment, financial and professional independence, the achievement of purposeful goals and the creation of a meaningful legacy also play an important role in how entrepreneurs make decisions. This might create an often-conflicting

set of requirements and objectives that turn decision-making into an even more complex process. What can help overcome this potential pitfall?

Understanding the ultimate reason and motivation behind the need to make a specific decision.

Breaking down objectives and challenges to identify clear priorities and tasks that can inform the decision-making process. For example, the simple but still relevant Eisenhower Matrix can provide a high-level framework to assess what is truly important, time-sensitive and worth an investment of time and resources.

Taking calculated short-term risks to achieve long term objectives and fulfil the ultimate business purpose.

In particular, entrepreneurs need to think about the implications of their decisions beyond immediate returns and across different parts of the business in a way that encourages the creation of a solid, viable business that can survive the multiple challenges it will face throughout its lifecycle.

Thinking critically. When possible, entrepreneurs should leverage the data and insights available to make informed decisions by analysing them logically in the context of their business requirements.

Surrounding yourself with **trustworthy people** who have the knowledge, experience and ability to provide diverse expertise and a wide range of different perspectives.

3. Managing the Emotional Component

When it comes to entrepreneurial decision-making, critical thinking, data-driven analysis and rational judgement are only part of the way in which choices are made. Especially in the early stages of business development, entrepreneurs feel particularly protective about and emotionally involved in their business and the decisions they make. Their business is a direct representation of who they are, their ideas and beliefs and it was probably made possible thanks to the efforts they made over multiple years. As a result, 'getting it right' takes a completely different meaning because entrepreneurs feel personally responsible for its success and put an incredible amount of pressure on themselves to make the 'right' decision.

In addition, entrepreneurs have very often a clear vision of what they would like to achieve and how, and may therefore set for themselves unrealistic goals. This might prevent them from having a truly objective perspective of what is the best for the business. Even though such an emotional link to their business may obviously be a downfall, it can also be turned into a positive force. But how?

Entrepreneurial decision-making is increasingly characterised by uncertainty and complexity and, though challenging, it provides a unique opportunity to develop a wide range of skills and high levels of intuition and experience-based wisdom.



These can be essential in the creative process, especially when the data and insights available are limited and ambiguous. There are a few activities that might help leverage the emotional component:

- Developing self-leadership skills, as a way to understand and mitigate cognitive biases, increase awareness on one's decision-making skills in different situations and successfully manage emotional components.
- Actively pursuing experiential learning to improve intuition and increase wisdom and business acumen.
- Continuous learning.
- Channelling emotions into encouraging creative thinking and innovation building.

In conclusion, entrepreneurial decision-making presents a set of very specific opportunities and challenges, especially within the current high-pressure, low-resource, fast paced business environment. Making the right decision is not an exact science, and it combines objective elements like data-driven insights, long-term strategic planning and critical thinking, with more subjective components like intuition, imagination and creative thinking.

By actively fostering a combination of continuous and experiential learning, diverse thinking, intuition-based wisdom, and critical thinking, entrepreneurs can continue to hone their decision-making skills and find the right balance between rationality and creativity.



NEA25

Neurodivergent

Futures: Reimagining

Entrepreneurship



Entrepreneurship, at its core, thrives on diversity. This November, the values of diversity, perspective and creativity will be at the heart of NEA25 – Neurodivergent Futures: Reimagining Entrepreneurship, an event led by Rob Edwards, CEO of the Neurodiversity & Entrepreneurship Association (NEA). Taking place on 27th and 28th November 2025 at the new Durham University Business School's Waterside building on the banks of the River Wear, with online access also available, NEA25 will bring together academics, entrepreneurs, advocates and aspiring self-employed people to explore how neurodivergence and enterprise intersect.

The NEA has set out three clear objectives for NEA25: to share new research into neurodivergent entrepreneurship and its impact, to highlight best practice for supporting neurodivergent people in business, and to discuss entrepreneurship and self-employment as a vital part of the wider neurodiversity conversation. This

combination of research, practical insight and lived experience is designed to give a fuller picture of what neurodivergent entrepreneurship looks like today, and what changes are needed for a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Speaking with us about the event, Rob highlighted several key areas where greater awareness is essential. He noted that traditional business programmes are rarely designed with neurodivergent needs in mind. From sensory environments to rigid systems, various barriers prevent equal access to opportunities. He also stressed the importance of focusing on strengths, as neurodivergence often brings unique advantages in entrepreneurship such as creativity, resilience and problem-solving.

Rob explained that enterprise education and training should go beyond basic adjustments and instead be proactively designed to include neurodivergent learners. This means flexible assessments,

peer support and recognition of non-linear progress. He also emphasised the value of community and networking, noting that bringing people together with shared experiences helps reduce isolation and build confidence, creating stronger entrepreneurial journeys.

What to Expect at NEA25



Over the two-day event, participants will hear from leading voices in academic research, business ownership and policy. Confirmed keynote speakers so far include globally-renowned neurodiversity & business expert Dr Maureen Dunne; Alex Partridge, host of award-winning podcast ADHD Chatter and founder of UNILAD and LADBible; Professor Ute Stephan of King's College London, leading expert on the psychology of entrepreneurship; Dr Sharon Zivkovic, Founder & CEO of the Centre for Autistic Social Entrepreneurship; and Nicola Jayne Little, CEO of Celebrate Difference, empowering neurodivergent founders throughout the North-East.

The sessions have been shaped to provide a balance of academic insight and lived experience. The event is open to those attending in person at Durham and to a global

online audience, ensuring accessibility and wider participation.



Why This Matters

Raising awareness of neurodiversity in entrepreneurship is not just a matter of inclusion—it is also a driver of innovation and opportunity. Neurodivergent thinkers often bring fresh approaches and ideas that challenge established ways of working. Equal access to entrepreneurship helps reduce barriers faced in traditional employment, while self-employment offers autonomy and flexibility, enabling individuals to build businesses that play to their strengths.

At the Institute of Enterprise & Entrepreneurs, we are proud to highlight NEA25 and support its mission to boost awareness of neurodiversity in entrepreneurship. By creating platforms for dialogue and action, events like this shape a more inclusive future, one where diverse perspectives are recognised as a powerful resource in enterprise and entrepreneurship.

To book into the two-day event, head to the NEA site [here](#). IOEE members can use code NEA25IOEE to obtain a 15% discount on the standard registration fee.

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