



Rachel Blackburn, founder and director of US2U Consulting Ltd

Picture: David Rochford / US2U Consulting

More input, more innovation - how to identify the skills shortage in your business

'Skills gap', 'skills shortage' - whatever label you put on it, the meaning is all too clear.

Rachel is the founder and director of US2U Consulting Ltd. She says she has 'a great team of loyal, hardworking people who are passionate about working together to deliver a wide range of projects for clients as diverse as recruitment, corporate films, 360-degree feedback, psychometric assessment, leadership development and organisational change'.

The challenge is, she says, 'to find someone with the skills, credibility, motivation and energy to help me proactively grow the business in the UK and internationally'. The reality is that the perception of the 'skills shortage' is that it exists in the more practical areas.

We hear all too often about the engineering firms or the construction companies who have a clear vision and a healthy order book but are struggling to deliver because they can't find people who can actually do the necessary skilled work.

US2U Consulting Ltd are not exactly without skills. Renowned for high standards and genuinely making a

This week, Norfolk Chambers of Commerce chief executive **Chris Sargisson** talks to Rachel Blackburn about the skills gap



positive difference to their clients' businesses, they are a 21st-century business. Rooted in the marketing concept that 'you can only sell needs' they have an unashamedly 'can do' attitude.

Ask her about her business in the current climate and it's no surprise that Rachel says it's about continuing to 'support a diverse range of businesses and organisations when we have more variables than usual to consider because of Brexit uncertainty'.

And yet, Rachel's challenge is to find people to help grow the business in the UK and overseas.

What this highlights is that sometimes an organisation can deliver the work, get on with the job and meet its clients' needs because it has all those skills in place.

It's the skills needed to gain that next bit of growth, develop that next stage of strategy that

are needed next.

Which is somewhat counter-intuitive to the popular perception of the skills gap.

There's no lack of determination. Rachel remembers being told in an interview, in the 1980s, that she was the 'wrong sex and colour' for the job. She's put that

lamentable judgement to shame, and succeeded.

But even she will admit that, sometimes, a business needs more input, more ideas and more innovation to get to the next goal.

Beware, then. Take a look at your own organisation. It might just be that your skills gap isn't where you thought it was. And it might be wider than you thought.

We'd love to hear your views on the issues facing business today. If you want your thoughts expressed in this column, let us know. Email nova.fairbank@norfolkchamber.co.uk.



diarynotes

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To see more event listings or to book on to those below visit www.norfolkchamber.co.uk

Two-hour Tuesday

King's Lynn: Set your alarm, bring your business cards, and join us bright and early for one of King's Lynn's friendliest, most rewarding and enjoyable networking on June 18 at King's Lynn Town Hall.

Hear from Mark Miller from Beneve Ltd, who will be delivering a talk on climate change and business at the event from 7.30am to 9.30am.

Everyone's welcome - all types and sizes of business.

South Norfolk Breakfast

Hethersett: We're delighted to have Dr Peter Floyd, co-founder and former managing director of Risk and Policy Analysts, with us for the morning of June 13.

The event will run at Park Farm Hotel from 8am to 10am.

RPA recently became an employee owned company through the establishment of an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT), and Peter will be talking us through his journey with this.

Great Yarmouth Breakfast

Great Yarmouth: Join us at The Boathouse to enjoy a summer morning of networking over breakfast as we bring over 80 businesses together to build new relationships.

The event takes place from 7.30am to 9.30am.

Our guest speaker is Ian Hacon, Founder of Energise Me, a collective of online energy coaches.

Coastal Co.nnect

Great Yarmouth: Join us for a relaxed morning of networking 9.30am to 11.30am on June 14 in the Assembly Room of Great Yarmouth Town Hall.

We're also very excited to have Glenn Saville from Aston Shaw with us for the morning as our expert, come along to hear more from him, as well as meeting and supporting other local businesses.

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