

APRIL 2021



SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY EDITION

20 Years of Linear



HOW IT ALL BEGAN



2021 really is an exciting year for Linear Recruitment as we celebrate our 20-year anniversary. How did it all start though, and what has the business had to deal with in those 20 years?

Here Adam Turner, Linear's Founder and current Chairman, explains its roots back in 2001 and where we are at in 2021...

How did Linear Recruitment begin? I had been in recruitment for 16 years and I was living in the West Midlands. I had progressed to Operations Manager for Anders Elite, travelling the length and breadth of the country, managing offices in Cardiff, Bristol, Twickenham, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Edinburgh. I enjoyed my work but felt I had progressed as far as I could. I also wanted to move back to Sheffield, my home. Having discussed my options with my then-boss, I decided to take the plunge and start my own business. At that time there weren't many recruitment companies in Sheffield so it seemed ideal that my hometown should be the place where I would begin my own venture.

I came up with a very ambitious business plan employing 12 staff in swanky offices, fully computerised and using the latest recruitment software. Then after several meetings with accountants and banks I wrote and rewrote my business plans several times having understood the cash and cash flow required to support such grand plans! I remortgaged my home and eventually started on my own in April 2001 with a copy of The Yellow Pages and a box of index cards in an almost-derelict 500 square foot office in the Mazda buildings on Campo Lane in Sheffield.



Times have changed dramatically in the thirty six years since I started in the world of recruitment. Back then we didn't have mobile phones, computers or the internet. There was no email or social media, no job boards or instant responses. We did most of our work from a landline, The Yellow Pages and index cards. We advertised in the local paper every Thursday evening so we could get responses on Fridays for Monday morning fills. All Payroll for our workers was either PAYE, CIS, or 715; Payroll/umbrella didn't exist. We wrote letters and sent them through Royal Mail and used fax machines that we had to print sent receipts on as proof of sending. And yet we still thought we worked fast!



In the 20 years since we started Linear Recruitment so much has happened and so many milestones have been passed. We are proud that some of our first clients are still working with us today – both as clients but I can also count many as friends. When I first started my wife was doing the admin and my mother-in-law did the payroll. The office looked out over Sheffield Cathedral, and it was good to hear the Cathedral bells chime on the hour. I worked long days, and it was over a month before I could take on our first employee – Stewart Humble in June 2001. We grew very quickly and ended the year filling the 500 square foot office with 12 staff! We were interviewing candidates at our desks in the foyer and on the stairwells.

We did amazingly well and continued to expand, moving into new offices in St Peter's Close in Sheffield City Centre. We had 2500 square foot over 3 floors including the basement area. We continued to grow and started an Industrial Division in May 2002. Again we soon filled the office and had to move our Accounts team into the basement. We then opened Linear's second office in Leeds City Centre in 2003, covering the whole of Yorkshire. We took on our first Accountant, then our second, Gareth Tomkins, in May 2006, who is now our Managing Director. We then subsequently opened offices in Milton Keynes in 2009, Newcastle and London in 2010 and Birmingham and Manchester in 2014.

I remember starting our Rail Division and all the accreditations that come with it, becoming ISO Accredited, all the training programmes, our websites, SEO development, Job Boards.....then world events such as 9/11, the worldwide recession, the creation of Facebook and the iPhone, America's first African American President, and then Donald Trump! Add to that a global pandemic. All these things have shaped the way in which we live and work.

Having experienced growth year on year, the Recession in 2008 really felt like falling off the edge of a cliff. Our turnover dropped by 50% and we had to move into survival mode very quickly. We have overcome some tremendous challenges – along with the recessions there is bad debt and the global pandemic! We have changed and adapted as a company to meet the needs of our clients and our staff and now have three regional offices, along with Linear Industrial & Engineering based in new offices in Shirebrook. We employ over 50 permanent staff and payroll over 1200 workers a week and we have the strongest and most professional management team we have ever had.

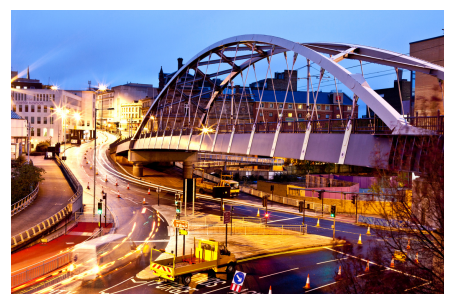
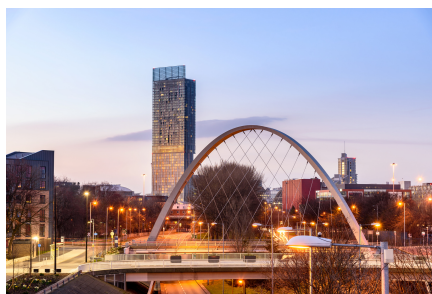
Our previous experiences of both a worldwide recession and the bad debts which we have unfortunately had to deal with have placed us in a good position to be able to work through the global pandemic. Our management team and our consultants have been superb in adapting to the situations that we have faced and have worked especially hard to help our clients and our candidates through the challenges that the pandemic has put in front of all of us.

We look forward to coming out the other side of this pandemic to continue to develop and grow the company as the lockdown eases. We have some very exciting times to look forward to as well and we are hoping to have a summer ball to celebrate not only 20 years in business but also the easing of lockdown, surviving the pandemic and returning to something of a “normal” life once again.

And where did the name Linear Recruitment come from? I had found choosing a name to be tricky. I ended up putting all my family's names into an anagram word finder tool. “Linear” was a name that stood out – it simply means direct and straight forward and that is exactly what I wanted; a simple, honest, direct, straight-forward approach to recruitment. Recruitment is not complicated but it is extremely hard work at times, and you do get out what you put into it. I really believe we have that today at Linear – a simple, honest, straight-forward approach to recruitment.

We do what we say we are going to do, we keep it simple and work hard for both our clients and our candidates, and that is why we still have customers and candidates working with us 20 years down the road.

A big thank you to all our staff, they have been magnificent and a big thank you to all our clients and our workforce – it is because of their help and support that we are able to continue to grow and develop in this ever-changing world in which we live.



 **linear**
recruitment

 **linear**
Industrial & Engineering
making recruitment better; standing out by fitting in

AN INTERVIEW WITH

*"I believe
in hard
work and
trust"*



It has been almost 15 years since Gareth Tomkins joined Linear Recruitment, starting his time with the Company in the role of Company Accountant, before subsequently becoming Financial Director in November 2008 and then stepping up to the role of Managing Director in January 2019.

We talk business, global pandemics and what lies ahead for Linear with Gareth, in a year that will see Linear Recruitment celebrate its 20 Year Anniversary.

Tell us a bit about yourself Gareth

I was born and have lived in Sheffield all my life. I love the city and could never imagine living anywhere else. I am married with two young boys who keep me busy, I love my football although my team is not one to shout about this year, and I enjoy keeping fit. When I get the time at a weekend I enjoy cycling and like to get out on the road or mountain bike.

What did you work-wise do before you joined Linear?

My first full time job was at 18. I'd finished my A Levels and decided university wasn't for me. Before I'd even taken my exams I had a job lined up as a Junior Accountant at a small practice in Sheffield called Wells Richardson. I learnt so much working in a small practice and working for a range of companies from small sole traders to large company audits; the variety gave me so much experience.

After four years my then manager left to make the move into Industry. After a few months he talked me into joining him and I moved to United Carpets - I didn't want to leave Wells Richardson but I had plans to move into Industry at some point in my career so I took the plunge. After a couple of years my manager left and I was promoted into his role, and it was at United Carpets where I qualified as an Accountant in June 2005. Later that year I then decided to move on. I wasn't in Sheffield and I felt I needed to move in order to accelerate my career, and that's when I joined Linear in May 2006.

Why the recruitment industry?

I didn't really join Linear in order to get into the Recruitment Industry, I was open to most Industries but I wanted a company that had a clear vision and values that were aligned with mine. Ideally I was looking for an SME that was growing and one that I could really add value to and help with that growth. Linear was the first interview I had and the company had everything I was looking for. It had a strong financial footing and an ambitious owner in Adam Turner, with a clear plan for growth. The company was only four years old but had done amazingly well in those four years so the fit was perfect. I would, however, add that due to the rapid growth and the fact that there was no Company Accountant in place, the Accounts department was in a bit of a mess! It probably took a good twelve months to get the correct systems, processors and team in place before we were in a good place.

What makes Linear different?

Although the company grew into a £32m turnover business and opened four new offices along the way there was and still is a family business feel about the place. Adam Turner has always been hands on and we have always worked to our company values and looked after our fantastic employees. We have always had an environment that promotes success and one where our team feels empowered and is empowered, and one where we are continuously creating opportunities. Many of the Directors and staff have been with the business for a very long time; this helps create the family feel, sets us apart from other agencies and has helped build very strong and long-standing relationships with clients.

What are your values as a company leader?

It really is about keeping it simple. I believe in hard work and trust when I look at my values. I have always believed that leading by example is the way to go and I have always worked extremely hard throughout my career. I think that if you empower people and trust them then you will reap the rewards.

What challenges does Linear face on a day to day basis?

Linear faces many challenges on a day to day basis and they are constantly changing. In our Industry there is an abundance of competition and it comes in all forms. This can be the big corporates such as Hays and Randstad or a small one-man band working from their bedroom. We have positioned ourselves in between these two; we are very professional with a vast amount of experience and coverage but still provide a very personal service. To get the better of the competition we really have to be on top of our game in order to get in there first and provide the best service possible for clients.

Constantly changing legislation is also a challenge and keeping on top of those changes. We have had so many over

GARETH TOMKINS

the years, and of course we have the IR35 off payroll working changes to deal with. We do however turn these challenges into opportunities to offer our clients an enhanced service and take away the stress of dealing with the red tape.

What has been your biggest challenge and how did you overcome it?

I think moving from the Financial Director role to Managing Director was a huge challenge and one I am still working on two years in. For the first time in my career I am involved in driving sales and working with sales activity KPI's rather than the financial KPI's that I am used to. To make the transition even more challenging we haven't brought in a new FD. As such I am still running the Finance team on a day to day business, but thankfully have a fantastic team around me and they help massively with this.

What are your greatest strengths?

I really do believe that it is genuine hard work that has got me to my position today. I would also say that I am pretty level-headed and due to the challenges that we have faced over the years I am well equipped to handle adversity when it hits you unexpectedly.

What's your greatest achievement in your career?

My biggest achievement was passing my ACCA Qualifications and becoming a qualified Accountant. I was working in the day and attending university at night so it was a real hard slog.

How is the world of recruitment performing given what we have experienced in the last year and what do you predict going forward?

The world of recruitment in the last year has obviously been very tough. With unemployment surpassing 5% and many companies putting a freeze on their recruitment plans the industry, as with most industries, took a hit. The recovery will be sector-specific and thankfully for us the construction/engineering and industrial markets that we work in have a big part to play in the recovery of the UK economy. We have had a fantastic start to the year and I can only see it getting busier as confidence returns and new projects start. The biggest challenge we are set to face in the industry is a candidate and skills shortage, however we have a vast database of candidates to call on who we have long-standing relationships with.

I do believe the temporary labour market will also have a big part to play in the recovery of the jobs market. Companies may be reluctant to take workers on a permanent basis in case there are further lockdowns and so contract workers will pave the way forward in order for clients to start to grow again.

How have things changed regarding sourcing candidates and ensuring that they are right for your Clients' businesses?

Since we opened our doors in 2001 there have been fundamental changes in the identification, sourcing and qualification of candidates. The proliferation of internet Job Boards and social media (especially LinkedIn) has meant as a recruitment business we have a lot more immediate information and a greater access to candidates at our fingertips than ever before.

With this comes new issues as we now spend a lot more time 'qualifying' candidates to ensure not only a candidate's suitability to the position in hand, but also their motivation to gain new employment. We will always endeavour to meet our candidates face to face before they meet a prospective client, but we are also

"Recruiting the right staff is fundamental in any company"

embracing video interviewing to ensure a good fit with our clients' requirements.

In addition to sourcing and qualifying, there is a lot more emphasis on compliance, especially within the temporary market. Linear Recruitment has a full Compliance Department that makes sure all our candidates have all the necessary documentation to be able to carry out their designated position, ensuring our Clients are fully protected.

What would you say to someone who hasn't used a recruitment agency before? Why should they?

Recruiting the right staff is fundamental in any company; if you get it wrong the costs can run into thousands. A recruitment agency will help you with that process and give you a much better chance of making the correct decision. Our consultants are experts in this field and work hard to find the correct fit for clients and candidates whilst making the process much smoother. There might be a fee to pay for the service but there is a very good chance that it will save you money in the long term. As I mentioned before the temporary recruitment market is going to have a big part to play as we move away from the pandemic. If companies are nervous about taking on new staff a contract worker can give you that confidence to start growing again. Additionally a recruitment agency like ours takes away all the searching through CV's, the compliance and the paperwork so clients can concentrate on doing what they do best.

How are you planning on marking Linear's achievement of 20 years in business?

It really is an amazing achievement and I am so proud of it! We are hoping to have a big summer bash to celebrate but obviously this depends on restrictions. There are a number of Linear employees including myself running in the Sheffield half marathon as part of a Team Challenge, where we are raising money for the Sheffield Children's Hospital – given it's a special year for us, we want to smash our fundraising target and raise as much as we possibly can for a charity that is close to a lot of Linear employees' hearts.

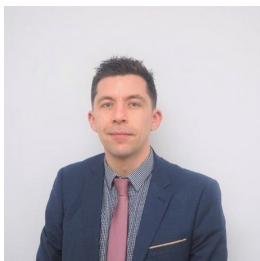


What are you most looking forward to post-pandemic?

A pint in the pub and of course seeing friends and family. On a work perspective I am really looking forward to getting back to normality. I cannot wait to start visiting our offices again and seeing all our staff on a more regular basis.

LINEAR'S SENIOR

We have the strongest and most professional management team we have ever had – of which two are “home grown”. Here we take a closer look at who they are, what they have achieved and what we have to look forward to at Linear.



Geoff Taylor – Operations Director

Geoff oversees both Linear's North East and Yorkshire offices. He lives in Newcastle and spends his spare time desperately trying to impart his Yorkshire accent onto his two Geordie daughters. Unfortunately for him, he is also an avid supporter of Bradford City Football Club.

I joined Linear Recruitment in 2003 as a fresh faced 22 year old soon after graduating from Sheffield University with a degree in Business & Economics. I certainly didn't expect to still be working here 18 years later! In my time at Linear, we have seen many changes both internally and externally, worked through booms and recessions and everything in between. Initially based in our Head Office in Sheffield, I ran our permanent residential desk recruiting managerial staff for House Builders both large and small across the Yorkshire region. In 2010 I relocated to Newcastle and set up Linear Recruitment's first foray into the North East region, and have since built the office to a team of 10, working across the Residential, Construction, Civil and Engineering Sectors. The last year has been extremely challenging, but as we slowly move out of the current lockdown situation, recruitment continues to be an ever-changing and competitive environment to work in; there are not many barriers to entry for new start-ups and so there are many more recruitment businesses working within the Construction sector than when I started out. The ones that survive will be the organisations who are adaptable and are able to meet the ever-changing needs of their clients, offering services over and above that of a traditional transactional recruitment process.

Having been in the industry for nearly 20 years, it is the continually changing position of the recruitment process within our clients' practices that keeps me motivated and challenged, and keeps me focused on continuing to develop the Linear Recruitment brand across the North of England.



Caroline Oberman – Regional Director, North West

Caroline runs Linear's North West office, having joined the business in 2014. She lives in Cheshire with her two dogs Georgia and Hudson and spends a lot of time walking them through Cheshire and the Peak District. She plays for Knutsford Netball Club and has recently bought a 1930s house to start her first renovation project.

Before I started in the world of construction and recruitment, I worked in the fitness industry, as a Membership Sales Manager for Fitness First, and was subsequently promoted to Assistant General Manager, responsible for all sales, revenue, customer care and operations. I then entered the world of recruitment, working as a Trainee Recruiter then Consultant for Beresford Blake Thomas, working within the housebuilding sector. I joined Search Consultancy in 2007, initially working as a Recruitment Consultant and building up a Construction team. Then the recession hit in 2008! I set up a new division within Nuclear Engineering and Power, and had teams in Manchester and Liverpool. I later re-established the Construction sector, working my way up to Divisional Manager.

I joined Linear Recruitment in 2014 after meeting Adam Turner for a coffee in the Radisson hotel to discuss his plans to open a North West office. Having worked for a large corporate company previously I was excited to take some autonomy and set up a new region for Linear and I was really inspired by Adam and what the company had already achieved so far. At that time I had been considering leaving recruitment but meeting Adam and the team at Linear gave me back my passion for the industry. I am so pleased I joined the Linear Recruitment family! I set up Linear's North West region, covering all areas of construction, and we continue to grow year on year.

I really enjoy working with my team and training and developing them. It is a real pleasure to see people succeed and I take great happiness in celebrating all their successes and being their support when things aren't going too well. I also love the relationships I have been able to make within the construction sector and I am now able to call long term clients friends. Being a natural sales person I also still enjoy developing business for the region and still get a high from winning new business. One of the things I am most proud of is my live interview on BBC Breakfast with Steph McGovern in 2018. I was invited on the show to discuss the skills shortages within the UK construction industry – made more proud by the fact that I have a great fear of public speaking!

Throughout the global pandemic, I've felt incredibly lucky to be part of the Construction Industry. Whilst we did experience a large reduction in supply, it was for a relatively short time at the beginning of the lockdown early last year, and the industry is now back to being very busy once again, as construction has had continued support and investment to bolster the economy. There will be some positives to come out of the lockdown as we realise the benefits to having a more flexible working arrangement. We can now have meetings with people all over the country more easily with the introduction of Teams and Zoom. I do however, very much look forward to getting back out and seeing everyone face to face!

MANAGEMENT TEAM



Gareth Arnold - Director, Power & Utilities and Highways & Infrastructure

Gareth heads up Linear's Power & Utilities and Highways & Infrastructure Divisions, both with a national remit, from our Sheffield office. Outside of work he has a love for horse racing, rugby league and Sheffield Wednesday. Gareth's wife and son also have to listen to him singing and playing guitar most nights as he explores his love of music!

Having joined Linear way back in 2004, I've been with the company nearly half my life! As a teenager, I wanted to be a Rugby League player, but this changed whilst at college and university as I became the singer and guitarist in a band. We turned out to be pretty good, playing loads of gigs and being a resident band at Under the Boardwalk (for those that remember it). After graduating, I enrolled on a Teacher training course, but whilst enjoying parts of it, I knew it wasn't for me.

My first job was as a Management Trainee for an engineering company. I was there for four years and progressed to Logistics Manager. I learned a lot there, but left to pursue a sales career with another engineering company. After a while, I realised I needed to do something else and somehow drifted into recruitment. My dad and brother both worked in construction, so Linear seemed a great fit!

Now in my 17th year with the company, I've seen a lot of changes. Whilst the pandemic has shocked the world, I'd still say the hardest time was during the recession; winning business felt like being in a modern-day Oliver Twist plot (not that any pockets were picked, of course). Things are looking incredibly busy now, so I really think the best is yet to come for us.

My favourite parts of being in recruitment have always been sales; visiting clients and developing business with the great candidates we've met & spoken with along the way. I've also always enjoyed training and coaching colleagues, helping them improve and progress. Overall, it's the interaction and fun with people that make recruitment for me. I feel lucky to be in it.



Dean Plumb - Managing Director, Linear Industrial & Engineering

Dean is the Managing Director of Linear Industrial & Engineering – Linear's Industrial recruitment business. He lives just outside of Sheffield and has three children. After giving up football in his thirties, he has tried many other recreational pastimes. After spending years trying to perfect his golf swing, he is now a keen cyclist!

Prior to working at Linear I worked as a Steel Worker in a Chesterfield Foundry, where I trained and worked in many different departments within the foundry including Core Making, Moulding and Casting to name a few. Unfortunately I was made redundant, so then I went into an Engineering Machine Shop setting and operating manual lathes and milling machines until I had the opportunity to move into recruitment.

My first position in recruitment was to resource candidates for the Foundry and Engineering sectors and because of my background in those industries I had a lot of success. I joined Linear Recruitment in 2009 and the move certainly proved the making of me in recruitment. With the guidance and full support of my then-managers and Directors I quickly managed to move to the next step in my development and started making some really good margins and having a lot of success.

I was promoted to Branch Manager within 3 years and then worked hard with my team to become Director. More recently due to the continued success of the Industrial and Engineering division, the decision was made to make it a stand-alone business in its own right, as a sister business to Linear Recruitment. I became Managing Director of Linear Industrial & Engineering in January 2021 and we have our new website launching soon, with lots of exciting times lying ahead for us.

Whilst these are indeed exciting times for Linear, it is also incredibly challenging times for everyone. The pandemic has meant that many of the usual (or old fashioned as my team keep telling me) ways of daily recruitment life have changed and so have our clients' businesses. Sadly there are some businesses that haven't managed to make it through, especially those in the retail sector who have suffered closures and therefore job losses across the country - I offer my sincere regret to those businesses and the people that have been affected in that way.

However there is now a light at the end of the tunnel with some industries now taking the first steps towards recovery, with vacancies starting to rise in Manufacturing and Warehousing in particular. The predictions for continued growth are promising and I raise a lockdown glass to that!

it's personal
we're better together
we do what's right
straight to the point
we go beyond ”

Head Office

18 Paradise Square, Sheffield, S1 2DE

0114 2634888 | feedback@linearrecruitment.co.uk

Linear Recruitment Sheffield

18 Paradise Square
Sheffield
S1 2DE

0114 2634888
feedback@linearrecruitment.co.uk

Linear Recruitment Newcastle

Grainger Suite, Dobson House
Regent Centre
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 3PF

0191 2325460
newcastle@linearrecruitment.co.uk

Linear Recruitment Manchester

Trafford House
Chester Road, Stretford
Manchester
M32 0RS

0161 2147940
manchester@linearrecruitment.co.uk

www.linearrecruitment.co.uk



@linearrecruitment



@LinearRecruit



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