

# UTOPIA COMPUTERS



## Living Wage Employer Profile

Utopia Computers was founded over two decades ago in the heart of Kilmarnock. At that time, Ian Hume saw a need for people to be connected to the world of technology. Armed with his passion and a willingness to help, he started a small business that would grow to become a leading technology solutions provider.

Back then Ian, his wife Sally, son Craig and their furry companion Thor, the German Shepherd, dedicated themselves to fixing basic IT problems and connecting people to the internet. While Ian and Sally are no longer in the business, their values of hard work, dedication and a love for technology live on and have inspired Craig to build a company that now boasts a team of experts, all of whom share the same passion for technology.



The talented team at Utopia repair, build and maintain some of the fastest computers in the world. These dedicated engineers and tech fanatics do not always join the business via the conventional route: ability, creativity and enthusiasm are more important to Utopia than formal training. On joining the business, staff are empowered with the skills and training needed to excel in the industry. This has certainly paid off, with many of the team having been recognised as rising stars in the UK tech industry.

Their dedication to the 'Utopia Experience' has earned the business a host of awards over the years, including winning Best System Builder more times than any other computer manufacturer.

Utopia's continued growth and success is powered by people, alongside values of innovation and education. They are a testament to the power of passion, dedication, and a willingness to help others. They can also put down the collective achievements and numerous customer service, fair work and technology awards they have won over the years to empowering their team and by rewarding them with perks including duvet days and blue sky afternoons.

What's truly inspiring is that Utopia's purpose is not just about building bespoke laptops, desktops, and workstations for clients all over the UK. They strive to provide sustainable solutions that help the planet, while nurturing and supporting people to recognise and achieve their potential.



I've been able to watch my team grow outside of work, and celebrate work anniversaries. Watching these guys get married, have kids, buy their first car, their first dog has been the greatest privilege of being a leader. This amazing retention of talent, in a time of silent quitting and the great resignation, is down to our values and the power of the Living Wage.

Craig Hume, Managing Director

## **The Motivation**

Craig freely admits that, as Utopia employed a lot of young people, they had fallen into the habit of paying minimum wage and had not examined the impact that paying more than this would have on staff, the business, and the community.

In 2014, an employee on the statutory minimum rate at Utopia turned 21 years old, raising their hourly rate from £5.03 to £6.50. This highlighted the difference in the statutory minimum wage rates and caused Finance Director, Katherine Hume, to pose the question of why that employee was worth less one day before. Subsequently, she floated the idea of uplifting everyone onto a Living Wage calculated according to the cost of living. This meant the employee in question had their pay uplifted to £7.85, a huge difference for them.

Craig and Katherine felt that by paying a Living Wage, they would not only be doing the right thing by their staff, but that it would also result in a workforce that was more invested in the company. Despite advice from peers that this decision would hit profits, the company took the plunge.

We had a very young and somewhat inexperienced team at the time, and it was a leap of faith. Looking back, it was the best business decision we have ever made. This was in 2014, and since then, Utopia has doubled in turnover and number of team members.

Craig Hume, Managing Director

## **The Process**

Implementing the real Living Wage was a significant financial risk to the company. As they were already paying most of their team the minimum wage, the uplift was substantial. However, on hearing the news, the team were inspired and immediately felt valued. This instigated further improvements to Utopia's culture that helped invigorate the company and ultimately drive growth.

Once wages were uplifted, Craig found the actual process of becoming accredited straightforward and appreciated the support available from the Living Wage Scotland Team who were on hand to answer any questions he had.

## **The Benefits**

For Utopia, the benefits of paying a real Living Wage are numerous and Craig is keen to inspire others in the IT sector to join the movement. The IT sector is among the most competitive in the world and has a high turnover rate so it can be difficult to retain talented team members.

Paying the real Living Wage is not only the right thing to do, but it's also good for business. By ensuring that Utopia's team are paid fairly, we create a positive and motivated work environment where the team are more productive, engaged and loyal. Paying the real Living Wage also reduces sick days and team turnover, lowering recruitment and training costs.

Craig Hume, Managing Director

### **Business Benefits:**

- Attract and retain top talent: by paying the real Living Wage, employers can attract and retain the best talent in the IT sector who are looking for a fair wage and recognition of their value. While IT businesses struggle to retain talent, Utopia is proud to have many longstanding members of the team.
- Increased productivity: employees paid a fair wage are more likely to be motivated and engaged, resulting in increased productivity and efficiency.
- Positive public image: employers who pay the real Living Wage demonstrate their commitment to their employees and the wider community, which helps a positive public image and reputation. This encourages consumers who are looking for a more ethical choice.

### **Employee Benefits:**

- Financial security: employees who receive the real Living Wage have greater financial security and stability, which can help reduce stress and anxiety and improve mental health – which is incredibly important in the current economic climate.
- Job satisfaction: when employees feel paid fairly for their work, it can improve their job satisfaction and morale, leading to a more positive work environment.
- Career progression: the real Living Wage can help create opportunities for career progression, as employees are more likely to feel valued and motivated to develop their skills and contribute to the company's success.

Craig and Katherine also believe that paying a real Living Wage is not only beneficial to the team and the business but also to the wider community.

"There are societal benefits to paying a fair wage, and it helps reduce poverty and inequality while supporting a more stable and sustainable economy. This is essential to building a fair and just Scotland and I would encourage employers to do the right thing."

Craig Hume, Managing Director

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The real Living Wage makes a real and immediate difference to the lives of workers and has proven social and business benefits. Living Wage accreditation is widely recognised as a mark of a responsible employer. The accreditation process is straightforward and there is a team of trained accreditation officers who can provide support and guidance.

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