

# After work

Events, webinars and books  
page 62

Win an incredible prize  
page 65

How Capita almost collapsed  
page 66



## THIS MAN ROCKS AROUND THE CLOCK

# Michael Beech doesn't fret when running his two accounting firms, thanks to his relaxing guitar-teaching side business

WORDS ANNIE MAKOFF-CLARK

Michael Beech runs three businesses in the West Midlands: his own practice, a new venture with business partner Ali Jaw, and Twang-Tutor, his guitar-teaching company.

"I set up Twang-Tutor because I wanted to share my knowledge; I wanted others to enjoy playing the guitar as much as I do," he says. "I mainly taught myself, but people progress a lot quicker with a tutor so that's been my motivation – to help those who might be struggling to learn. I get paid for it, but I don't see it as a job; it's a hobby. I love teaching guitar."

Music has been a constant in Beech's life. His father bought him a keyboard for his 12th birthday and he's never looked back. He thinks it was inevitable that, even with a busy accountancy career, he was never going to give up his musical passion.

He moved on to the guitar when he was 15 and, like most rock-loving teenagers at that age, he started a band with friends and played a few local gigs. "We were called Va Mourir, which translates from French

Michael Beech bouncing ideas around with his business partner, Ali Jaw



as Go and Die!" he recalls, sheepishly. "It's not a very nice name really, but I guess we thought of ourselves as a free-spirited punk rock band."

### Confidence-building

It was an enjoyable experience, even if Beech looks on the memories more fondly than he

does the music. More than that, it set him in good stead to run a business in the future.

"It's all transferable skills," he says. "My musical background has actually given me a lot of confidence. Being on stage and playing at gigs when I was younger made it easier for me in later life to deliver

## Shorts

### BOOK

**How Leaders Decide (out now)**  
Using examples of tough choices throughout history, Greg Bustin explains how to become better at making decisions.

### WEBINAR

**AAT: Winning over clients (14 May)**  
People management expert Toni Trevett offers advice on how to win and keep clients.

### BOOK

**Artificial Intelligence in Practice (out now)**  
Want a better idea of how AI will affect you? Take a look at how businesses are using it.

### EVENT

**AAT: The fraud and cybercrime epidemic (14 May, East Surrey)**  
This branch event will look at the fraud landscape and how to deal with it.

### BOOK

**Dealing With Difficult People (out 3 June)**  
Someone at work driving you absolutely mad? This book might have the answer to all of your problems.

### BOOK

**The Infinite Game (out 6 June)**  
Simon Sinek, the author of *Start With Why*, applies game theory to determine what makes a business great.



presentations to clients and stakeholders.”

He is also part of the AAT Birmingham branch, which puts on CPD events and talks. “I like to take part in that; it’s important when you have your own business. My musical background has given me a lot of confidence with it.”

Beech set up his own Birmingham-based accountancy practice, Michael Beech Accountancy, in 2013, going it alone after working in accounting and finance roles for various engineering, procurement and environmental firms for several years. He co-founded Worcester-based AM Accounting and Business Advisors with Ali Jaw two years later: “I thought it would be good to go into business with

and the latest legislation. You have to keep at it. I think guitar playing is a bit like that – you’ve just got to keep practising.”

More than anything, playing guitar is about relaxation for Beech, particularly after a stressful day. It’s got him through some tough times in his career, he explains. One such time was during the 2008 global recession. The accountancy firm where he worked turned from a place full of “happy, buoyant, smiley faces” to

## “It’s nice to get back after a long day and pick up the guitar. I play everything from rock and pop to jazz, blues and some classical”

someone else to share the burden. It works really well; we bounce ideas around.”

### Two roles in perfect harmony

With two thriving businesses, it would be easy for Beech’s guitar-teaching business to fall by the wayside. But he makes time for it in the evenings and at weekends. “It’s escapism for me, but there’s a social element too,” he explains. “And I think the two complement each other really well. It takes a certain amount of discipline to learn a musical instrument. It’s the same in the world of accounting, really. Things are changing all the time, and accountants have to keep up with technology

a soul-crushing, downbeat environment. “That was really tough,” he admits. “I was a European accounts receivable credit controller. Imagine calling French and German territories asking for money right as the 2008 crash hit.”

Now, however, things are good. His two accountancy firms are keeping him busy, and the guitar-teaching business is a welcome respite after the accountancy work is done. “It’s just nice to get back after a long day and pick up the guitar, especially as a lot of music tends to be computerised these days,” he says. “I play everything from rock and pop to jazz, blues and some classical.”

Led Zeppelin’s *Stairway to Heaven* and Nirvana’s *Smells Like Teen Spirit* are particular favourites to play with students, with the likes of Ed Sheeran and The Beatles thrown in for good measure. “There aren’t many music styles I don’t like,” he says, “except maybe punk and country and western. Don’t ask me to play those!” ■

#### EVENT

##### AAT Annual Conference 2019 (13 to 14 June)

Join us in Stratford-upon-Avon for two days of learning, networking and insight.

#### EVENT

##### AAT: One-day MBA (27 June, Birmingham)

Get the benefits of a full MBA at a fraction of the time and cost. You’ll learn critical business skills.

#### WEBINAR

##### AAT: LinkedIn masterclass (27 November)

This free webinar will show you how to showcase your skills and experience on your LinkedIn profile page.

#### EVENT

##### AAT: Payroll and pensions update with CIPP (3 and 5 December; London and Birmingham)

A full-day update on all things payroll and pensions.

#### BOOK NOW

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