

## Kindred – Working together for a better future

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Kindred FM is a well-established soft services facilities management company specialising in cleaning. Working within both the education and corporate sectors across the UK, they currently have around 3000 staff working for them.

FM Director's Claire Middleton recently caught up with Simon Wrenn, Kindred's CEO to chat about all things Kindred – their journey so far, the secrets to their steady and impressive growth, the evolution of the business and the goals that they are working towards over the next few years.

Can you tell us about the growth of the business over the last 5 years?

The growth of the business has been very stable. We've achieved on average 20% growth every year over the last five years and our turnover this year will be just north of £32million. It's a consistent and stable story of organic growth.

To what do you attribute this growth?

I attribute it to three key things. The first one is the team of people we've got working with us. We have some real loyal, committed and passionate individuals who are absolutely committed to delivering amazing service.

Secondly, the length of our customer relationships. We don't win contracts, operate them for three years and then let them go. We work really closely with our customers to make sure that we stick with them as long as we possibly can. I could take you to several sites that we've cleaned for 15, 20, even 25 years. And we've been able to do that by consistently delivering on our promises, and refining and improving our

service provision over time to make sure it really meets their needs.

The third thing is our partnership approach. We're exceptional at adapting to our customers' needs. We're brilliant at understanding what they need and then building a solution that carefully mirrors those needs and continues to do so as they change over time.

Talk me through your leadership style. How has this contributed to the company's growth?

My natural leadership style is pretty hands off, empowering the people that work with me. I see myself as someone who should be attracting the talent to work with us and empowering that talent to deliver on their own passion, talent and enthusiasm. For me it's just about getting those people together and enabling them to deliver what they can. Often we find that people can sometimes be very dictatorial and micro-manage staff, but then people don't feel empowered to do their best because they are a little hesitant that they may have done the wrong thing. So, for me it's about really making sure that people know that they have the full scope to do all the things that they can do and to bring their enthusiasm, and passion and commitment to do the absolute best for our customers.

Please tell us about the transition and evolution of the business – any structural changes?

The business has been operating for well over 30 years, having been set up in 1988. Over that time the business has grown organically, but in 2021 we decided we wanted to rebrand the business and give it a new look, feel and corporate identity. To investigate how to go about that, we began by conducting many hours of interviews with our team members – cleaners, supervisors, head office staff, management staff – to try and understand what it meant to work with us. We wanted to know what was important to them were about coming to work, if they liked coming to work, and why.

We saw several recurring themes in peoples' answers. Those themes included shared purpose, family spirit, feelings of togetherness and a commitment to a shared objective. From that we ended up coming up with the name 'Kindred' which neatly mirrored the things that our staff said they valued about the business.

The rebrand has been the most significant change within the business in recent years. And through that, we've been able to re-mould what the business looks like a little. We created a new senior team with a 50/50 gender split. We also wanted to move towards a more values-led business and so we founded our three key pillars – people, community and environment – with active initiatives in each of those areas.

Can you talk us through the three pillars and some of the key initiatives around all of them?

The first pillar is People. We are a recognised living wage service provider and last year we were proud to win the recognised service provider award for our work in bringing hundreds of our people up to the living wage from the minimum wage. This recognition was fantastic for the whole business.

Our second pillar is Community. An example of one of our initiatives around this the fact that we work with a small charity called School Readers. They supply volunteers to listen to children read at primary schools all over the country.

We wanted to work with that charity for two main reasons – firstly, early reading and literacy standards are really important for children's development. It's something that's instrumental in helping their learning in

later life and early exposure to reading is something that makes a massive difference.

The second reason for choosing that charity was that the fact that it's run largely by volunteers, which means it's a very efficient charity. We know that we're not giving money to a charity that has a huge bureaucracy behind it, meaning we're able to get huge 'bang for our buck' in terms of donating to them. We've given them over £12,000 now which has meant there are hundreds of children, largely in more deprived areas, that have been able to experience reading, have someone listen to them read or be read to, that wouldn't have otherwise been able to, which is really great.

The third pillar is the environment. We've got loads of active initiatives surrounding this one, such as our environment days where we go out and do something as an organisation such as cleaning up the beach or planting trees. These days are something we can get our customers involved in, and any of our team – it's a great thing to be able to do and it's great for team spirit – it's us together trying to deliver something meaningful and long-term.

What are your sustainability strategies right now?

In terms of our additional work on sustainability, this is clearly a key area that we could talk about for a very long time. It's something that we all have to be focused on, there's no getting around it. We've worked really hard to develop good systems and strategies to improve our sustainability credentials.

The first key thing is that we've measured and verified all our Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions. We're also able to offer full carbon footprint reporting of our services to all our customers, which is something they find very valuable. We also have a full carbon reduction plan in place, and we're able to offer a fully carbon neutral service to any of our customers that want it.

Sustainability is a key focus for us within this business, as it should be for every business. We're able to demonstrate the progress we've made on that front and we're also able to demonstrate, more importantly, to our customers, exactly what they're getting if they buy into Kindred.

What are your goals for the next five years?

The goal for me is to continue to attract the best, brightest and most talented people to work with us. The thing that motivates me to come to work every day is working with great people, and those great people love working with other great people! So being able to keep bringing those people together to work and to innovate and do the absolute best for our customers is something that's hugely motivating for me and the rest of the team at Kindred.

Secondly, we want to be able to bring our service provision to more customers. We want to be able to increase our geographical spread of work and increase the number of people who get to experience working with Kindred.

We want to continue to learn from our customers. We want to know what we can do better and how we can make our provision even more efficient, and what else we can do to support our customers. We need to really make sure we understand our customers and continue to do deliver everything we possibly can to them.