



# A NEW MANDATE. TO BUILD A MARKET LEADER

Adam Elliott was appointed as the new CEO of The Concerto Group in March. *EP* met with Adam to understand why he took on the new role and his vision for the future.

**The appointment of Adam Elliott as the new CEO of The Concerto Group did take many by surprise as he had been successful in leading The One Group and in December had a heart operation.** Why, it was asked, would he want to start anew and take on a new challenge that would lead to a period of pressure and hard work instead of just enjoying the success he has had in his career?

There are undoubtedly many that would have opted for an easier road but that is not Adam; he is never happier than when taking on companies that need revitalising and building. In 2010, Adam became the CEO of The Lindley Group just after the death of its then CEO, Alex McCrindle and rebuilt the team and culture to lead it to a successful exit in 2013 with Centerplate. It was a journey that he enjoyed and there are many similarities with the task that lies with The Concerto Group.

The Concerto Group possesses genuine potential to be a highly potent and vibrant force in the market. It has an almost unique service model and a strong platform from which to build and develop. The company possesses a turnover close to £40m, four offices across the UK and a

number of offerings that really work well in tandem – encompassing event management, sales, production, venue finding, large-scale party management, venues and bespoke catering. The market is seeking new innovative ideas and the Group has the model that can deliver against this demand. However, it is still a relatively low profile entity and this will need to be one of the first steps in the change process.

The basis of the business was really founded in 1999/2000 when three companies – Ultimate Experience, Business Pursuits and Richard Groves – came together to create The Concerto Group. Since that time they have grown, adding in a number of acquired companies along the way including Full Circle, Mask and JD Parties. The real potential success of the

Group is that it does possess a strong model that can offer a genuinely substantial service to venues and a framework that can allow each company to work very effectively in support of another. As a model the potential is very good. However the events market has changed and is today highly competitive. The market's expectations of both event management and commercial return has

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grown and the challenge has changed for the Group just as the market has changed.

As stated, the profile is still relatively low. Those that know the company hold it in high regard. However in this market, the competition is fierce and one needs to ensure a high profile and to be in the mind of the client. At the same time though, the market is seeking new ideas, innovation and greater variety so this too opens doors to new opportunities. If one steps back and looks at the events market as a whole there are very few companies that could really work with a venue or location and build its offering on a number of levels, from commerciality to bespoke catering through to event and production management and business development. Concerto has the potential to go head-to-head with the majors and offer the flexibility and personal nature of an independent.

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Hence the argument for Adam taking on the position. Concerto has all the potential to grow and build a business of real value to clients and to the market. Building a business with a good platform is always a challenge that will attract good leaders. The events market has changed and is far more multi-dimensional and Concerto has the basis of an offer to meet the new demand.

In fairness to the Concerto Board it was a brave decision to appoint Adam. He had a proven track record but he had just been through a heart operation and they were seeking not so much a CEO as someone that could bring new vision and energy to the business. When they met Adam, they



believed that it was right that he took over the reins and this was an act of great faith in both the business and the potential. After 17 years, the Group just needed fresh drive and it can be the hardest of decisions for boards to take.

Adam is still in his early days but already can see a whole number of opportunities and it is clear that he has learnt much along his road with both Lindley/Centerplate as well as with The One Group. As one talks to Adam, it is clear that he doesn't just see the opportunity in Concerto's traditional business base but beyond – in hotel outsourcing, in rooftop bars and in sports to name a few.

“The big difference today is that the consumer is seeking experiences and that normal expectation is no longer competitive,” noted Adam. “One of the great advantages that Concerto can offer with its brands is the support expertise and structure to really create a unique experience that generates extra revenues.”

“There are a number of clear examples in the market. Rooftop bars and experiences are a premium and if one can find a great location, it can generate a strong following/fan group that in turn builds a good revenue line. Hotels too are seeking greater support in both how they interact with the market in their events and in their F&B space. Running a hotel is overseeing a range of disciplines that are all different. It is important to have real expertise in support so that they can offer a quality service and be competitive. In the field of sports, customers today want to not just leave as an event finishes but enjoy after sports experiences – but they need to be special. In the old days, the offer was built around the event on the field of play. Today the offer is as appealing as the event itself and needs to be a genuine experience in its own right.

“It's important we keep our business roots and generate real growth in these sectors. Alongside sport and hotels we are looking at heritage, leisure and arenas. We want to



engage in all concepts and have an objective of being 365 – all year round. Building a real platform for growth in these areas is an ultimate objective for the company now. We're driving new concepts and initiatives within our core businesses, and invigorating our brands so that we can be classed as the preferred route for our clients in weddings and corporate entertainment. There are many opportunities and now we are truly working towards an all year round model.”

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Adam is almost an old school-style leader – he enjoys nothing more than building teams and cultures that want to go out and develop the business. He loves being in the business working with clients, making a difference. He believes in these old-fashioned qualities that many have realised are so important in business – trust, loyalty, honesty, integrity. He may be office based at times as the role demands that of him but his heart is always out in the business with clients. It is that inner drive that makes him a

good bet on bringing success to the business. He has a journey to travel with the Group but what one can guarantee is that he will be visible, accessible and building belief and confidence in the team.

When Adam took over at Lindley, he inherited a culture that evolved very closely around Alex McCrindle who had been the glue that kept the team together. Lindley was a VC-backed business that wanted growth and success and Adam had to pick up a team

who had lost its leader, reinvent it, modernise the business and find the growth. It was not an easy challenge but it was achieved successfully. With Concerto, the platform and model is in place. It is about taking the business to a new level and

becoming the market leader that it really has the potential to be. It is about fulfilling potential.

Many have said to Adam that he should step back and take it easy but that is misunderstanding the man – he needs to lead, to have a team that he is interacting with and enabling a business to develop and grow. He is a competitor that will go the extra mile to ensure success. He will only rest when the company is progressing and only then when it is making a real difference to clients.