

Member Showcase: Peter Watson

Peter Watson, Chairman of First Contact Health, discusses how having helped drive the changes in the Optical and Veterinary marketplace for over 35 years, he recognised and anticipated similar developments in the MSK industry. He describes how MSKPN is helping him on this journey.



What drew you to MSKPN?

First Contact Health joined MSKPN in December 2021 as a Tier 1 member. I was very interested in MSKPN's network to help our understanding of the MSK market and how we could influence and share best practice with other members.

What are the benefits of being part of MSKPN?

- The ability to talk to others on a freer basis – because they know you are a member, everyone is open and willing to talk about solutions.
- You can talk to people in so many different ways. I've started face to face networking and equally am using the WhatsApp group. As an example, I needed advice about booking systems and I got an instant reply, with 2-3 software packages to look at.
- It's a great network from the point of view of helping you with the more difficult topics and the practical problems of running a practice.

MSKPN offers a way of challenging how MSK care is delivered.

One of our mantras is to try to do the best for the patient and get them back to work and fitness as fast as possible.

MSKPN offers an environment for challenging the way MSK has always been done. A way that optimises resources and considers the prevention agenda. I'd love to see common standards and practices in terms of the best way of treating patients. There isn't a national NICE of MSK.

MSKPN is a helping hand when you don't know the answer.

I think it gives help and support for all the complex things that you don't know when you start a business eg. legislation to comply with, where to go for the online courses or for governance purposes etc.

I like the WhatsApp group where you can pose a question and get some very honest answers back.

For example, we've been having a few problems with insurance companies and it was interesting to see others were having the same issues. A few of the members suggested the use of a new portal – we didn't even know the portal existed and as a result we've joined the portal and received payments a lot quicker than ever before.

[**Read on to learn more about Peter's background and career**](#)

Peter founded Vets4Pets, making it the third largest veterinary group in the world.

I left school and trained as a Merchant Navy radio officer. My family have always been involved in retailing and after a short period in the army, I joined the family business. I married an optician and came to live in Guernsey. I joined Specsavers and eventually became their Business Development Director.

After 5 years and opening 230 new stores at Specsavers, I was offered a role at Vision Express and joined as Managing Director but after 6 years, wanted to come back to live in Guernsey with the family. I looked round and asked myself, what are my core skills? I had a lot of experience working with medical professionals in a quasi-medical environment.

This led me to establish Vets4Pets in 2001, supplying all the backroom services to help the vet build their practice as owners. We carried on expanding to 430+ practices, employing over 4000 staff. Pets at Home bought the business and I supposedly retired!



A One-Stop Shop for MSK.

An Orthopaedic Surgeon, Ranjan Vhadra, and a Physiotherapist came to talk to me about opening a Physiotherapy business. The model took the patient from assessment all the way to recovery or surgery – the complete process to get people back on their feet quickly under one roof.

We stayed in Guernsey and bought an extremity MRI scanner and just quietly expanded the business. We do the MRIs, CTs, ultrasound, injections, and we believe in looking around Europe and the world in terms of alternative therapies with clinical evidence. I'd describe First Contact Health as a one-stop shop for MSK on the high street with known, transparent pricing.

First Contact Health was founded in 2018, and we've recently moved into a 6,000 square foot location on two floors, with 11 consulting rooms, 3 imaging rooms, a gym, Podiatry and an Orthopaedic Surgeon in St Peter Port, Guernsey. We're putting in a full body MRI scanner, investing over £2m.

What advice would you give other practices?

First Contact Health will be opening over 100 clinics in the UK over the next few years, using a tailored version of the tried and tested joint venture concept where the clinicians are the owners with us supporting them. Benefitting from state of the art equipment, these clinics will become the preferred place for ambitious musculoskeletal clinicians to practice. The potential for each clinic is excellent in business terms, but also there is the potential for a good quality of life, along with professional and personal development.

“It's very helpful to see the issues that MSKPN members are grappling with are common to many of us.”

Learn more at www.mskpn.co.uk