



# Imran Hakim Biography

From an early age, Imran knew he wanted to run his own business. He started his first business, aged 15 with a £2000 loan from his father. Within days, he was trading in computer equipment, selling to college teachers and the local community. As he neared the end of his college education, he faced a tough decision, whether to grow the business or study to become an Optometrist at University. Unable to choose, he decided to do both.

As well as studying, he continued to build his business, almost being expelled from his course for failing to attend lectures - his passion clearly lay in business! Having successfully completed his degree and professional exams, Imran opened his first optical practice in his local community of Bolton, recruiting a University colleague as his first employee. He decided to set up a locum recruitment company employing the services of many of the students he had met at University.

Imran has gone on to build a portfolio of businesses, including the fastest growing group of independent optical retail practices in the UK. Imran came into the media eye in when he appeared on BBC2's Dragons Den to pitch his innovative iTeddy concept. Having successfully secured investment, Imran joined forces with Peter Jones and Theo Paphitis to create one of the biggest successes the den has seen to date with the multi award winning iTeddy.

Less than a year after the original idea came to light, Imran signed a worldwide distribution deal seeing the business reach the shores of 45 counties around the world. He has won many business awards over the years in recognition of his numerous endeavors including NorthWest Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Fusion Entrepreneur of the Year and most recently a Mosaic Award for Science and Technology from HRH Prince of Wales. His work on the iTeddy brand has earned him awards such as Toy Inventor of the Year, World Toy Innovation, Start-up Business of the Year and IOD's NorthWest Young Director of the Year.

Imran received an Honorary Doctorate in Enterprise and Innovation from the University of Bolton as well as making Growing Business's list of top 40 entrepreneurs in the country under the age of 35. He is also the youngest entrant into the NorthWest Power 100 list. In 2016 he was awarded a medal by the university of Manchester for his work in nurturing entrepreneurship. Imran's interests include expanding the optical group and his business portfolio by investing in other companies.

The Hakim Group saw double in 2018, when it was crowned as the UK's best company to work. Imran was also awarded NUMBER ONE Best Leader in the UK on the Sunday Times Top 100 list, which contained some of the leading CEO's in the UK. In 2019, Imran won the Overall award in the North for EY Entrepreneur of the Year and Scale-up Business of the year.

A key focus of his is to encourage entrepreneurship especially in the NorthWest, through mentoring and various ambassadorial roles. He is a board member of TIE entrepreneurs and ex-Director of Entrepreneurship for UMIP working closely with the universities in order to commercialise new intellectual property. He is also a member of the Prince's Trust Founders Circle working with His Royal Highness Prince Charles to eradicate poverty across communities in Asia.

Imran has gone on to build a portfolio of businesses, including the fastest-growing group of independent optical retail practices in the UK, as well expanding into the United States.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Imran also spearheaded the #StrongerTogether initiative, which provided independent optical practices with free access to vital business support through a series of thought-leadership webinars and online resources.

For further information, call Imran on 07973 623 022, email [imran@hakimgroup.co.uk](mailto:imran@hakimgroup.co.uk), or visit [www.imranhakim.co.uk](http://www.imranhakim.co.uk)



*Imran Hakim*

# The HG Journey

## How Did We Get Here?

**16 YEAR OLD BOOTS UP  
COMPUTER COMPANY**



**1994**

At 16 years young, Imran, the eldest of five siblings, takes his first steps in the world of business when he starts buying and selling computers.

Imran begins studying Optometry at the University of Manchester, maintaining the IT business throughout his studies. He qualifies four years later.

**1996**



Bolton



**2002**

Hakim Opticians opens as a new business in our home town, Bolton. Imran's sister Hafiza books their dad in as the very first patient.

Hakim Group makes its first ever acquisition; Bussins Opticians. The practice already has an established patient base and none of the difficulties of a start-up. The seed of an idea was sown!

**2003**



Failsworth

Our first acquisition

**HG IS BUSSIN  
AFTER NEW  
ACQUISITION**



Blackburn



Blackburn



Blackburn

**2004**

The EC Tyrrell Partnership in Blackburn is added to the group, shortly followed by two other practices in the town which would eventually be merged to create Tyrrells & Embery.

One of the UK's largest frame distributors, Metzler, enters administration. During the purchase of their assets Mark is invited to join the business and within a week, Muzza is also brought on board. A few weeks later Suaib joins the business and begins to structure the accounts department.

**2005**

Imran is approached by Vision Express to turn around the fortunes of an ailing practice in St Helens. During this process, Imran recognises the benefits of the back office support that the multiples enjoy and starts the plan to replicate this for the independents.

**THE DREAM TEAM  
IS STARTING TO  
TAKE SHAPE**





Hakim Group is officially formed and our innovative approach receives several awards.



2006



The portfolio of independent practices starts to grow, as two more Hakims complete their optometric qualifications and join the revolution.



After reviewing current joint venture models on offer, Hakim Group's JV partnerships are born, creating a fairer 'win-win' model where both parties work towards the bottom line. A true partnership.



2007

Managed by a dynamic team, exploration of business opportunities starts with the unlikely inception of iTeddy; which becomes one of the most successful products seen on BBC's Dragon's Den with sales in 45 countries globally.



UN-BEAR-LIEVABLE SUCCESS FOR ITEDDY



2008

As Hakim Group strengthens, our entrepreneurial roots are recognised with further business awards and Imran's appointment as the global 'Face of Finnair' and advisor to 10 Downing Street on the 'Backing Young Britain' campaign.

After a couple of years exploring unrelated business interests, our focus returns to the optical industry. The vision is refined, creating a model that sees Hakim Group enter a phase of exponential growth.

2010



2011



The expanding group outgrows its Bolton home and relocates to India Mill Business Centre in Darwen.

A full calendar of events is arranged, which develops into the culture that we know and love today.

FISH PRINCIPLE CREATES EXCITING OPPOR-TUNA-TIES



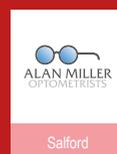
The FISH philosophy (Finding Inner Self Happiness) is born. This revolutionary approach saw us receive a number of national awards including Gold Accreditation from Investors In People.

2012



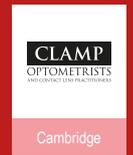
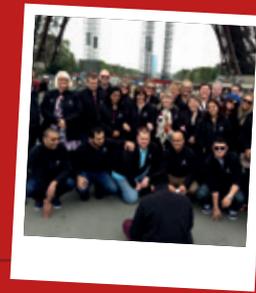
Our first overseas practice!

The group continues to expand and improve. Infrastructure investment starts with new methods of working, including cloud based collaboration and real time financial management.



The HG philosophy starts to gain momentum within the optical industry with several appearances on the optical events circuit. Our FISH go international with the first 'Fishtank on tour' in Paris.

2013



St Neots

Cambridge



Shrewsbury



Pelsall



2014

Our first annual charity barbeque takes place in Morecambe in support of Vision Aid Overseas. As our culture continues to evolve, charity is one key aspect that we ensure is deep rooted in our DNA.



New Mills



Thornton-Cleveleys



Bridgnorth



Madeley



Wellington



Rochdale



Wellingborough

As news of our success spreads, practices flock to our approach of running an independent practice as part of a wider family. As HG grows, we showcase our Independent Opticians Reinvented model in Dubai.

2015



Netherton



Leyland



Bognor Regis



Newmarket



Coppull



Eccleston



Parbold



Standish



Bradmore



Market Drayton



Annan



Lockerbie

2016



Our first practices in Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland join the group!



Knutsford



Westport



Glossop



Sheffield



Lostock Hall



Leicester



Ballyclare



Enfield

As the group reaches its tenth year, it has become a rapidly growing business with hundreds of team members. It has grown from a small practice start-up to a huge family of practices connected through our core values.



Another amazing year of acquisitions and growth culminated in an amazing milestone, with HG ranking in the top 30 Times 100 Best Small Companies To Work For upon our first ever entry!

2017

(continued)



Chelmsford



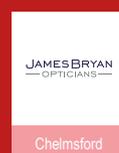
Alvaston



Kimberley



Oakwood



Chelmsford



Oakwood, Leeds



Heswall



West Kirby

Burnham-on-Crouch	Cheltenham	Huyton	Old Swan

# 2017

(continued)

Huddersfield	Cambridge	Shrewsbury	Malvern

Ellesmere Port	Great Sutton	Brighton	Oxford	Reading

Ryde

A record breaking year for acquisitions is made perfect when HG is announced as The Sunday Times 2018 UK's Best Small Company To Work For in the Best Companies Awards.

Weybridge	Winchester	Woking	Killamey	Ellesmere Port

Halston

Carlisle

HG's portfolio now numbers over 100 practices!

Stoke-on-Trent



**HG IS CROWNED AS BEST COMPANY TO WORK FOR!!!**

THE SUNDAY TIMES  
**100**  
BEST SMALL COMPANIES TO WORK FOR 2018  
**NUMBER 1**

London

Blackpool

# 2018

Bury	Milnrow	Ramsbottom	Walkden	Carlisle

Amesbury

Barrow-in-Furness

Ulverston

Stone

Bisham

Bedford

Oxford

Salisbury

Epping

Dersingham

King's Lynn

Harpden

Heswall

Upton

Kendal

As an added cherry on top, Imran also receives a special award for best leader of 2018, beating some of the UK's highest profile CEOs.

Pennith	Bedford	Liverpool	Galway	Kingswinford

Shanklin

Our first Welsh practice! We now have practices in all parts of the UK!

Swansea

**DOUBLE AWARD SHOWS HG IS GROWING NICEL-EY**

EY Entrepreneur Of The Year

Ilkley

Leeds

# 2019

Cleethorpes

Ryde

Leyland

Exeter

Ottery St Mary

Axminster

Budleigh

Seaton

Sidmouth

Rotherham

Weston-Super-Mare

Lancaster

Longford

Galway

Horden

Barnard Castle

Darlington

Richmond

Shildon

Weston-Super-Mare

# 2020

(continued)

Maghull

Hythe

Cleethorpes

Minehead

Maghull

Kettering

Market Harborough

Olney

Rothwell

Thrapston



2020

(continued)



Despite the covid pandemic impacting lives and businesses around the world, the business continues to grow and sets new records for acquisitions.



HG launches Stronger Together, to offer help to independents outside the group, helping them to survive the challenging climate.



2021

(so far)



# The Journey Continues!



 PRACTICES AS **INDIVIDUAL** AS YOU ARE