



Gareth Magee

Scott-Moncrieff partner Gareth Magee recently visited the US operations of technology clients, which led him to consider the contrasting business styles on either side of the Atlantic

The comeback country?

Recently I went to the United States, with my colleague Donald Forsyth, to visit a range of Scotland-based, US technology clients.

A recent US edition of *Newsweek* reported “America’s back!” That might be stretching the truth a bit depending on who you speak with. However, we saw real evidence of them getting on with it and “manning up”. The clients we visited are all doing well, there is a sense of achievement, a real spark of enthusiasm and a willingness to just get on with it and maximise the potential of every opportunity.

However, what they also have in abundance is a zest and energy which pervades so much of their business culture and is, arguably, lacking in ours. Their positive “can do” attitude to work – from employer to employee – is markedly different. Employers have the attitude: “I pay you for eight hours per day, I expect you to work for eight hours a day.” Staff will never question this and, as a result, productivity is the real winner.

The employee has the motivation to work, not due to any welfare safety net, but because they feel it is their duty to do so.

Walk into any public building and you’ll see further evidence of this. These buildings are staffed with people who give real service. Ask them a question and you are

not met with a shrug of the shoulders and a mumbled answer, but with a genuine offer of assistance, to the point that they’ll go that extra mile to conclude your query if they need to.

Like us, they are not out of the economic doldrums, but they are making a significant effort to be more purposeful and positive in their outlook. Look closely at their “can do” and level of competency. As one commentator aptly said: “Give American small-business owners the freedom to be entrepreneurs and they will

“Americans are making an effort to be positive in their outlook”

supply America with innovation, jobs and new tax revenue.”

So, if it’s within your culture to be exposed to a good model and you get immersed in it, then the easier it becomes to put it into practice. There is so much we can take from that here in Scotland.

Our American cousins seem to have much less in terms of support, but they do not let that get in the way of rolling up their sleeves and achieving great things. They appear to be better

equipped to bounce back while perhaps we’ve become too accustomed to the kid gloves approach to business and innovation.

Although we see them as having a global market on

fight our corner.

Sir Tom Hunter, in a recent *Scotsman* article, referred to the

University of Strathclyde’s Global

Entrepreneurship Monitor, which ranked Scotland among the least developed countries in business start-ups from a list of 20, ahead only of Belgium and Japan. The Strathclyde report suggests the effect of the global recession on Scotland is

worse than for the UK as

a whole. Investment

in other people’s

business was

also the

lowest of

any partici-

pating nation. Hunter’s clarion call for entrepreneurs to come forward and build businesses that will help shape our future by finding alternative employment for those cast adrift by the public sector is to be applauded.

For entrepreneurs, an appetite for risk is innate not taught, but with the excellent support mechanisms we have in place, combined with this “American” zest of self belief and motivation, we might just turn the corner sooner than others might give us credit for! ■

GARETH MAGEE is a corporate advisory partner with Scott-Moncrieff.

