

Sheik Maktoum, new jobs and global expansion: How fintech firm Total Processing is taking on the world

A Manchester fintech company has set its sights on further global expansion having already partnered with the Crown Prince of Dubai and set out plans to triple its headcount in the next two years.

Total Processing was established by Cameron Lee, Jean-Michel Soopramanien, Alex Leigh and Matt Hamer and has already attracted big name clients such as Nando's, Papa John's and Nespresso.

The payments company is now aiming to get regulated by the FCA and try to become an acquiring bank.

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In an exclusive interview with [BusinessLive](#), Cameron Lee reveals why stood down as chief executive earlier this year but remained with the business, the impact partnering with Sheik Maktoum has had on the firm as well as plans to open new offices in Europe and the Middle East and create jobs.

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Now 26, Mr Lee started his career at KPMG in its restructuring department ahead of joining GP Bullhound in its technology investment banking division.

He returned to his former employer shortly afterwards as M&A manager before joining his three co-founders and becoming CEO of Total Processing.

After serving in the role for six months, Mr Lee decided to step aside and instead focus purely on strategy.

Speaking to BusinessLive, Mr Lee has revealed why he made the move.



Total Processing is headquartered in Manchester

“The three guys and I who run the business were very young. I’m 26 and we have grown the business phenomenally well and we are now transacting billions of pounds a year.

“The next stage of our growth is to get regulated by the FCA and try ourselves to become an acquiring bank.

“As you go through that process you need some grey hair and experience.

“We brought in [chief executive] Rob Pailin who has spent the last 25 years, almost as long as I’ve been alive, working in corporate life and that makes the process a bit easier.”

On whether he would take on the role again, Mr Lee added: “It’s not something I’m thinking about right now.

“Our focus is on growing and doing what’s best for the business and letting Rob take over the reins as CEO was the best thing to do and let us focus on strategy.”

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Mr Lee, who is also a director at Boda Skins and Single Muslim, has also opened up about how Total Processing was founded.

Mr Lee said: “We were operating as merchants ourselves and we had a bunch of paying points with existing players in the system.

“There are two categories really – there are legacy players who have sprung out of big banks who have terrible technology, quite expensive and difficult to deal with.

“Then you have the newer players who have raised loads of cash from American investors but there’s no level of customer service, no account management; it’s just a FAQ page or a call centre in India, potentially, and again very expensive.

“So we decided to set up the business to essentially bridge the gap between the two and offer really good customer service to our merchants; that’s the core of what we do.

“We are also quite price competitive and agnostic to risk.

“We work with businesses of all sizes in all categories and try and do everything.”



Alex Leigh, right, will lead the new Dubai office
In [April 2021](#) the company opened its Dubai office, its first
outside of Europe.

Headed by co-founder Alex Leigh, the venture is setting the
template for the company's future expansion into other
markets.

"It's going really well and we've got almost ten people there
now, Mr Lee said.

"We partnered with Sheik Maktoum [the Crown Prince of Dubai]

and it's interesting seeing how that is going.

"It's very different to European business; it's very much built on relationships and trust is really important over there so it's very difficult to plaster a brand everywhere and expect to win business.

"You've really got to become ingrained in the community and even more with business leaders and influential people there.

"But we now process for some big brands including Nando's, Papa John's and Nespresso."



Total Processing's Manchester HQ

Total Processing struck a deal with Boost&Co in 2020 for a £5m investment which has allowed the business to " to accelerate growth across the company as well as triple in size over the last year and a half.

However Mr Lee said the firm did not need to dip into the extra cash to protect itself from the pandemic.

“We didn’t really dip into the cash too much because we were expecting Covid to be quite a difficult period but in fact more eyes were on the internet and businesses that we were working with were not themselves impacted as people were transacting more online”, he added.

“We piggy backed off the back of everyone else’s growth as well.

“While we did raise the money, we actually funded most everything ourselves.”

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Total Processing's team currently stands at about 70 strong but is "growing every single week" and Mr Lee has said he sees the company "tripling in size pretty easily over the next two years".

But he insists there are no firm plans to attract further investment.

"It's undecided at the moment. It just depends how aggressively we want to grow, he said.

"We're also looking at the possibility of opening offices in Europe and more in the Middle East.

"Germany will be Q1 next year and potentially some of the Scandinavian countries as well later next year.

"In terms of the Middle East, we're looking at Saudi and Qatar."

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