

SPONSORED: This Rising Star winner believes in taking every opportunity you can get

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The LeicestershireLive Women in Business Awards are back for 2021, as we prepare to celebrate the businesswomen who push Leicestershire's industries forward.

The awards, with headline sponsor Growth Partners, will be held on September 9 – with nominations closing on July 23. To enter, or for more information on the awards, visit the [official website](#).

One of the most important traits in business is perseverance – and the past year has required those in business to persevere through intense and unexpected challenges as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. With the pandemic constantly changing the economic terrain and limiting how businesses could operate, Leicestershire's industry was forced to adapt in order to survive – rethinking the way business was done and innovating new ways forward.

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Headline sponsor, Growth Partners, is on a mission to make employers' and employees' lives easier, happier and healthier so businesses can thrive. The Leicester-based company say it gives SMEs access to the same tools and services that help larger businesses prosper.

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Growth Partners say businesses who become SMART Employers enjoy an all-in-one solution for payroll, pensions, benefits,

wellbeing and employee engagement services. This means...

- More time to focus on your people, your culture and ultimately business growth
- Increased profitability through reduced costs and increased performance
- Peace of mind for the business owner and their employees

The awards will celebrate the businesswomen in Leicestershire who helped lead this effort, and turned a challenge into an opportunity to grow even more. Ahead of the event, we spoke to Jigna Varu, who won Rising Star at the 2019 awards, and who believes that this ability to adapt is key to success.

Despite her impressive achievements – having been made CCO of anti-bacterial treatment company Microfresh after only seven years working there – Jigna said that her winning Rising Star was a total surprise. “It was a really memorable moment for me – one that I’ll absolutely cherish.”



Even with the difficulties presented by the pandemic, the last year has been a big one for Jigna and Microfresh. Although the pandemic has affected many businesses negatively. “It’s had a positive impact on our business,” she said.

In 2020 Microfresh launched a new business, Homefresh – which is designed to help prevent the growth of mold and bacteria in home interiors. This was a project Jigna was involved in from the start, having been her very first project at Microfresh. According to Jigna, the pandemic also opened up a new avenue for the company, with it gaining antiviral testing approval.

“It’s been challenging, but you’ve just got to embrace all the opportunities,” said Jigna, arguing that a key part of success is that “you are going to get knocked down, but it’s how

quickly you get back on your feet again. “

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Perseverance despite obstacles has been a core part of Jigna’s work ethic since the very beginning – having started at Homefresh in an entry-level part-time role after dropping out from a degree course and applying with no experience. Despite this potential disadvantage, Jigna says she resolved to produce the best work she could nonetheless, and “deliver to the best of my ability, because the only thing I did know was how to be me.”

Jigna’s efforts paid off, and in the seven years since, she’s been made CCO of Microfresh, and was named the CEO of Homefresh when it launched. Since then, Jigna has only continued to accomplish big things, including a contract with Emirates that she oversaw entirely.

For Jigna, this willingness to seek out and take opportunities is the most important thing, as well as the ability to find possibilities even in failure. “I spotted that opportunity and grabbed it with both hands – anyone could have done the same,” she says. “If you start a business and it fails, you’ve learnt a valuable lesson.”

Jigna firmly believes that the chances are out there, but they require dedication and a leap of faith, and concluded: “No-one’s gonna make it happen for you, you’ve got to do it for

yourself.”

There are businesswomen all over Leicestershire just like Jigna, with the drive to succeed and some incredible accomplishments to their name. We want to celebrate as many of them as possible – so if you feel you’ve achieved something noteworthy, or you know someone who has, enter the awards via the [official website](#).

The full list of categories is as follows:

- **Apprentice of the Year**
- **Rising Star**
- **Sole Trader of the Year**
- **Inspirational Woman of the Year**
- **Digital Ambassador**

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- **Innovation in Business**
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- **Women in Construction**
- **Entrepreneur of the Year**
- **New Business of the Year**
- **Small Business of the Year**
- **Lifetime Achievement Award**
- **Businesswoman of the Year 2021**

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