# Robin Skidmore reveals the emotional highs and lows of agency exits and reinvention



In the inaugural episode of The Drum's "Exit Right" podcast, host Mike Silver engages in a thought-provoking dialogue with Robin Skidmore, the founder of digital marketing agencies Epiphany and Journey Further. Skidmore’s story is not merely about building successful businesses; it delves into the emotional and existential challenges that accompany such entrepreneurship, revealing a landscape often untouched by success narratives.

Skidmore's entrepreneurial journey commenced humbly, with a childhood car wash venture in a Leeds council estate. This early experience paved the way for his later achievements. He co-founded Epiphany at the age of 25, a venture that garnered significant acclaim and was sold for £18 million in 2014. This transition led him to experience what many founders face: the profound emotional upheaval of leaving behind a project born from years of dedication. Reflecting on his exit from Epiphany, Skidmore admitted, “I didn’t think beforehand that it would affect me too much, but it was really emotional. There were a few tears.” After a period of silence and introspection following the sale, where he embraced a nomadic lifestyle with family, he realised that passivity was not for him; he craved deeper involvement.

In 2017, Skidmore invested £500,000 to launch Journey Further, a digital marketing agency that sought to disrupt conventional agency structures. This innovative model involved senior analysts working directly with clients, effectively cutting out the traditional client services layer. The venture quickly flourished, growing from two staff to 22 in a short span and attracting esteemed clients such as Sky and Moët. This rapid growth can be attributed to Skidmore's strategic foresight and the advantages of operating from Leeds, noted for its talent retention and lower operating costs.

With a team now boasting 170 employees and a burgeoning presence in the United States, Journey Further has garnered attention from private equity firms. Skidmore acknowledged the growing interest, remarking, “There aren’t too many performance shops of our sort of size and capability left as independents now.” However, he is cautious about the future. “I think we’re naturally getting some interest,” he noted, indicating that he is not rushing into any decisions about a potential exit.

Unpacking the emotional complexities of his journey, Skidmore emphasises the significance of balance in professional life, a lesson underscored during his six-month global travels. He advocates for personal engagement in business, believing that the drive to grow and shape teams is fundamental to true leadership. Moreover, he expresses a desire to leave a lasting impact by establishing a digital skills academy aimed at supporting underprivileged youth—an initiative reflecting his commitment to legacy-building and community upliftment.

Skidmore’s story, steeped in risk-taking and reinvention, provides a rare insight into the often tumultuous world of agency leadership. It underscores that exits are not just final chapters but can be precursors to new beginnings, shaping a cycle of growth that many entrepreneurs must navigate. His experiences illustrate that for founders, the journey is rarely straightforward; instead, it's marked by introspection, adaptation, and an ever-present drive to innovate.

Listening to the full episode reveals not just the business acumen of a seasoned entrepreneur but also evokes the human experiences that underline every venture's success. For those contemplating their exit or merely curious about the journey of agency founders, Skidmore's narrative offers invaluable insights into the emotional and strategic dynamics at play.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/28/how-robin-skidmore-mastered-agency-growth-and-the-exit-strategy-then-came-back-do-it), [[2]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/business/what-robin-skidmore-did-next-entrepreneur-back-with-new-firm-289689)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/28/how-robin-skidmore-mastered-agency-growth-and-the-exit-strategy-then-came-back-do-it), [[5]](https://www.prolificnorth.co.uk/feature/what-ive-learnt-robin-skidmore-ceo-founder-journey-further/), [[6]](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/alumni/our-alumni/alumni-stories/2003-robin-skidmore/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/business/what-robin-skidmore-did-next-entrepreneur-back-with-new-firm-289689), [[4]](https://ldc.co.uk/top-50/robin-skidmore/), [[7]](https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/yorkshire/news/744521-epiphany-co-founder-starts-new-journey-with-leeds-agency-launch)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://bdaily.co.uk/articles/2017/01/10/epiphany-co-founder-robin-skidmore-invests-500k-to-launch-new-leeds-agency), [[5]](https://www.prolificnorth.co.uk/feature/what-ive-learnt-robin-skidmore-ceo-founder-journey-further/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://ldc.co.uk/top-50/robin-skidmore/), [[6]](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/alumni/our-alumni/alumni-stories/2003-robin-skidmore/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2025/05/28/how-robin-skidmore-mastered-agency-growth-and-the-exit-strategy-then-came-back-do-it> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/business/what-robin-skidmore-did-next-entrepreneur-back-with-new-firm-289689> - In May 2018, Robin Skidmore, founder of Epiphany, launched Journey Further, a new digital marketing agency in Leeds. After selling Epiphany for £18 million, Skidmore invested £500,000 to establish Journey Further, aiming to disrupt traditional agency models by having senior analysts work directly with clients, eliminating the client services buffer. The agency quickly grew from two to 22 staff and secured notable clients like Sky and Moet. Skidmore attributes the success to the team's dedication and the advantages of being based in Leeds, including talent retention and lower overhead costs.
3. <https://bdaily.co.uk/articles/2017/01/10/epiphany-co-founder-robin-skidmore-invests-500k-to-launch-new-leeds-agency> - In January 2017, Robin Skidmore, co-founder of Epiphany, announced the launch of Journey Further, a new Leeds-based agency specialising in PPC and programmatic display advertising. Skidmore invested £500,000 to recruit senior staff, secure city-centre office space, and build the brand. The agency aimed to employ 30 staff within 12 months and was led by Managing Director Matt Kwiecinski, who joined after 18 years at Omnicom Group. Journey Further's team had 12 years of search advertising experience, including campaigns for brands like Virgin Holidays and AXA.
4. <https://ldc.co.uk/top-50/robin-skidmore/> - Robin Skidmore, founder and CEO of Journey Further, was featured in LDC's Top 50 in 2022. Skidmore grew up on a council estate and co-founded Epiphany Search at 25, selling it a decade later. After travelling the world with his family, he established Journey Further in 2017, which now boasts 170 staff and has expanded into the United States. Skidmore aims to set up a digital skills academy for underprivileged children from backgrounds similar to his own, expressing a desire to leave a legacy.
5. <https://www.prolificnorth.co.uk/feature/what-ive-learnt-robin-skidmore-ceo-founder-journey-further/> - In January 2020, Robin Skidmore, CEO and founder of Journey Further, shared insights into his professional journey. After selling Epiphany, he spent six months travelling with his daughter, leading to the realisation that his passion lies in growing businesses and watching people flourish. Skidmore founded Journey Further in 2017, aiming to replicate Epiphany's success in half the time. He emphasised the importance of balance in work and life and recommended the book 'Deep Work' by Cal Newport for enhancing focus and productivity.
6. <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/alumni/our-alumni/alumni-stories/2003-robin-skidmore/> - Robin Skidmore, a 2003 Business graduate from Leeds Beckett University, co-founded Epiphany in 2005. The university provided invaluable support during the first 12 months, enabling Epiphany to grow from two to 160 staff, with offices in Leeds, London, and Sydney. The company was turning over nearly £10 million per year when sold in 2014. Skidmore also expressed plans to launch a digital skills academy in partnership with the university, aiming to bring recent graduates into the agency and provide on-the-job learning in digital marketing and communication.
7. <https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/yorkshire/news/744521-epiphany-co-founder-starts-new-journey-with-leeds-agency-launch> - In January 2017, Robin Skidmore, co-founder of Leeds search marketing firm Epiphany, launched Journey Further, a new agency offering PPC and programmatic display advertising to leading UK brands. Skidmore invested £500,000 to recruit senior staff, secure city-centre office space, and build the brand. The agency aimed to employ 30 staff within 12 months and was led by Managing Director Matt Kwiecinski, who joined after 18 years at Omnicom Group. Journey Further's team had 12 years of search advertising experience, including campaigns for brands like Virgin Holidays and AXA.