

BEST NEWS

THE BEST CONNECTION IS 20!

Happy 20th Birthday to The Best Connection. As you all know, I am very interested in numbers and statistics, so . . . during the past 20 years the following has happened. The total turnover has been in excess of £1.3 billion, 86% of which has been generated in the past 10 years; we have filled 5.7 million bookings, billed 154 million hours to more than 40,000 clients, opened 63 branches, purchased and integrated five companies into TBC, launched our in-house training division and celebrated not only Mike's 50th birthday but also his 60th! As we look forward to the next 20 years we must focus on what to get him for his 80th!

2010 finished for us on 30th November, our year-end. We have now finalised the accounts for that year and as I suggested in the last edition of Best News, the result was indeed a healthy one as compared with the previous year and our budgets. Once again, congratulations to everyone for their hard work and dedication.

December was an exciting time for two reasons. No, not because of Santa Claus, but because we had an exceptionally good start to 2011 and just before the end of the year Cordant Group was not successful with its judicial review which should have heralded the end of Travel and Subsistence schemes at the minimum pay level. (See page 2 re. HMRC and BIS).

I say 'should' because it appears that we are still not to enjoy a level playing field and competitors are still writing business at ridiculous margins, based upon a new scheme. However, it is now clearly on the HMRC radar and hopefully schemes which give the entire benefit of tax savings to the agency have ended.

You will see in this issue that sending good news to Jan and/or Neil enables Best News to share it with the rest of TBC. Congratulations to all those who were successful in their regional competitions and also those who have been

promoted recently. Good luck to all of you who are working towards it.

I hope you enjoy reading a little fun insight about Lee Harris. I understand that Neil put all the RM's names in a hat and the next interviewee is a closely guarded secret. Lee must have great self-control; I've never seen him eating Wotsits!



Andrew Sweeney

Finally, as you know, Mike Cooper celebrated his 60th birthday recently. Due to your amazing generosity it was a memorable occasion. Mike has penned a little something for this edition and Jan has managed to edit it to a bite size feature!

2011 has got off to a good start and I'd like to wish you all good luck for the coming year.

Andrew Sweeney
Chief Executive



NEXT ISSUE...

Could you please contact Jan Blann if you have any topics for inclusion in the next issue of Best News or with subjects for future Press Releases.

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Victory in Court for HMRC and BIS Travel & Dispensation Schemes

Following a lengthy consultation period HMRC announced an amendment to National Minimum Wage Regulations which will render ineffective, schemes which require travel expenses to count towards minimum wage. The new rules came into effect on 1st January 2011, following a last minute attempt by the Cordant Group to mount a High Court challenge. The challenge failed on all counts and Cordant was refused permission to appeal.

So, do we finally have our 'level playing field' whereby exploiters of travel and subsistence schemes are prevented from enjoying lower Employers' National Insurance contributions and using the savings to subsidise lower margins?

Apparently, not yet, Whilst HMRC has declared war on any organisation not complying with the new rules, some of our competitors and various umbrella companies have already identified methods of circumnavigating the regulations. The use of salary sacrifice schemes at minimum wage level should have disappeared, if not let Mike Cooper know. Additionally, if any of your low wage earners suggest that they claim expenses for travel and subsistence from their previous/current agency, obtain a copy of their payslip and forward it to Mike.

It is only by forcing HMRC to act against the non compliant employment businesses and umbrella companies that we will achieve our level playing field.

Good things come to those who never give up!



Nygelle O'Hara

According to Darren Ainge, Regional Manager, promotion doesn't only come at the end of the season after all the matches have been played, it's happening all the time. Darren contacted Jan recently to remind us that with so much negative information in the news these days, it's easy to forget that there are still good things happening around the regions.

In Darren's region, during 2010, a number of people have benefited from continuing to use the skills they learned and honed during the recession (gained in a more optimistic economic climate). With new plans being opened at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, the good thing is nobody was relegated to make way for these promotions!



Mike Richards



Steve Causer

Name	Branch	Promoted to
Steve Causer	Wolverhampton	Senior Consultant
Sarah Hayhurst	Lancaster	Senior Consultant
Nygelle O'Hara	Preston	Branch Manager
Mike Richards	Crewe	Senior Consultant
Chris Glover	Warrington	Consultant level 1

"As well as congratulating each of these individuals, I would like to extend my thanks to all the managers and colleagues for their support in helping these people to reach the next level of their career. It's a great achievement which demonstrates that even through tough times, with the right focus, we can keep on top and do well," said Darren.



Chris Glover

New Training Room Facility at Halesowen

A new training room facility has been developed at Halesowen to accommodate a broader range of courses provided by the in-house training team to all TBC employees. Courses will include sales training, administrator training and the management course programme.

A bespoke telephone system will facilitate role-playing and provide feedback on sales courses. Recordings of delegates' sales techniques will enable both trainer and delegate to replay and critique audio recordings. A remote video facility and widescreen with audio has been installed which will also be utilised to record role-plays, e.g., the Introduction to Client Visit courses and for providing feedback to delegates from the trainers.

During April this year, laptops and software for administrators will be installed to ensure administrators gain training on all of TBC's IT systems necessary in order for them to complete their roles both effectively and efficiently.

The new training room also has the advantage of having the facility of a break out room.

Iain Brown, training and development manager is supported by Kanez Khan and Fay Filsell, training and development officers, along with part-time training and development officer, William Harty.

Iain Brown commented: "The Best Connection continued

to invest in training during the recession, even when other companies had removed their training programmes. The company has recognised that training plays a vital role in both an individual's and the company's development.

"The new training room allows us greater flexibility, targeting both the individual and business needs. We have installed a purpose-built telephone sales kit which allows the trainers to listen 'live' to calls and review them with the delegate afterwards. The new room layout also lends itself to managers' training - promoting discussion and interaction - which has been invaluable in the new managers training courses we have run. The addition of computers will allow us to support our administrators' entry to the company much better than previously."



left to right: William Harty, Iain Brown, Kanez Khan and Fay Filsell pictured in the new training room

THE BEST CONNECTION GROUP PROVIDES LOCAL EMPLOYMENT BAROMETER

The Best Connection is seeing signs of an upturn in the local economy with greater demand for temporary staff in the retail, care, logistics, warehousing and engineering sectors - activities which underlie the core fabric of the UK economy.

The company has weathered a tough period since the banking crisis and has remained steadfast in keeping all of its 61 regional offices and remains optimistic for the future. Many businesses have put a freeze on permanent job vacancies but still need temporary staff to address the ebb and flow of business activities.

Neil Yorke, Director, said: "The past two years have been very challenging for the employment industry. Unemployment is very high and certain

groups, such as younger people have been hit particularly hard. With so much bad press around employment figures, political reform and financial measures to get the economy back on track, it is not surprising people are feeling insecure and uncertain about the future. There is no doubt that we are not out of the woods yet but there are some signs that businesses are now looking to utilise more temporary labour as demand for services begins to increase.

"The Best Connection provides temporary staff that undertake essential work in supporting the day to day logistics of business operations. Without these people, companies would not be able to function. An increase in demand in driving and ancillary staff is indicative of greater

activity, increased sales and growth. This is apparent across many business sectors and represents a good barometer for the local jobs market."

Pressure on the public sector to reduce costs has led to many job redundancies across the country compounding the already stretched job market. For many looking to get a foothold back into work, temporary roles may be an attractive option as the demand for greater flexibility in the market place increases.

"Throughout our branches we have seen signs of encouragement as many local businesses are beginning to show signs of growth. Companies often need to find people quickly to fulfil obligations and customer commitments so we anticipate an increasing demand throughout 2011," added Yorke.

Rob Vitols Bags Regional Sales Award and Promotion

Leicester's Rob Vitols has won a regional sales competition which ran throughout 2010, achieving an amazing 336 'points' to bag the coveted title and a well deserved promotion to Divisional Manager. The incentive, which was organised by Dave Schilling, regional manager, was a hard fought contest which saw great performances from runner up, Louise Moore, who took second place on 270 points and Mike Williams, third with 244 points.

"Rob was a consistent performer in the competition winning two quarters outright and scoring the highest overall. He runs a very successful

Industrial 2 plan in the Leicester branch and is a worthy winner," said Dave Schilling.

Rob started at The Best Connection in October 2007 as a senior consultant having already spent several years within the Industrial recruitment sector.

"Since joining us, Rob has shown a very determined attitude to achieving the divisional manager's role. I am delighted for him and know he will continue to develop a



Left to right: David Schilling, Regional Manager, Winner Rob Vitols - Divisional Manager - receiving champagne prize and Branch Manager, Paul Taviner

successful career with The Best Connection," added Dave.

Happy Birthday Mike!

Director, Mike Cooper, celebrated his 60th birthday on December 4th 2010. "Surely not" I hear you all say; "he looks nowhere near 60", "probably did 10 years ago," replied the Regional Managers in unison. Somewhat harsh but soon forgiven when Mike started to open a mountain of presents from all at The Best Connection.

Far too numerous to mention, however, the highlights included a Fuji HS10 camera and case, a £200 voucher for golf equipment which has funded the purchase of a top of the range Yonex Nanospeed Driver - apparently at his age Mike needs all the help he can get - a personalised volume of Pride and Prejudice in which Mike plays Mr Darcy (what typecasting) and his family play the other main characters, as well as a round of golf for two at the world famous Wentworth Golf Club. Mike has not decided who to take with him at present and will be open to all offers until the April tee off time.

He would like to extend his sincere thanks to all at The Best Connection for their generosity. The collection for 'help the aged' was much appreciated and Mike was truly moved as he opened present after present.



Mike Cooper

BEST PEOPLE

Some things you didn't know about . . . Lee Harris, **Regional Manager:**

How did you get into recruitment?

Stumbled into recruitment really, after serving seven years in the Royal Navy. I went in to register with a local agency, looking for sales work and they suggested that a career in recruitment would give me a great deal of satisfaction.

Do you have pre-work duties?

No, the luxury of having no kids means it's fire up the laptop, check emails and get ready for the commute to work. Sod that exercise lark!

What is your favourite lunch venue/meal?

Locally to me, it has to be an Asian cuisine chain called Saffron's (in the West Midlands), it's a real delight both in terms of taste and service, especially the ice cold Cobra!

What part does travel play in your role?

As the region I work in is geographically demanding, commuting does play a significant part of my role. It can take in excess of two hours just to get to a branch at the start of the day, so my car is my office! Thank goodness for mobile phones and Bluetooth as catching up with the team is essential.

What would you do without your mobile phone?

In all honesty I would be totally lost; it is bad enough when Andy Sweeney tells me I cannot take it on holiday with me!

What makes you laugh?

The Villa losing, Prime Time, oh and comedians such as Keith Lemmon.

What's your biggest bugbear?

At work I would say the demand for cheap rates and rebates that our competitors rely on to win business - outside of work simply people lacking the common courtesy to respect all others.

What football team do you support and why?

Season ticket holder at Birmingham City for past 20 years (Glory hunting, lol!).

What do your friends and family think about the work you do?

Most of my best pals now work for The Best Connection in one form or another. Family have never discussed it with me and nieces are happy as long as the pocket money keeps rolling in.

Do you have any obsessions? Chocolate, fizzy drinks, tidiness?!

It has to be the Blues as we go everywhere seeking glory and the days out with the boys are legendary. Also love the odd game of poker, live or internet as well as a day out at the races.

How do you balance work and play?

Work is the easy bit; the partying though takes at least two days now to recover from so no beer on school nights for me!

Name your favourite:

Book – Anything by James Herbert

Film – Come on, there is only one - I am an avid Star Trek fan!

Place – Small Heath or Thailand - take your pick!

Song – 'Keep Right on 'till the End of the Road'

Hero – My old man

Music – Toss up between Kaiser Chiefs and Simple Minds

Crisps - Wotsits



Lee Harris

The Best Connection

EMPLOYMENT GROUP



Location	Tel Number	Fax Number
Birmingham	0121 628 8000	0121 628 8001
Bolton	01204 394400	01204 394455
Bristol	0117 957 6999	0117 970 8559
Burton	01283 545333	01283 545075
Cannock	01543 468260	01543 579248
Cardiff	02920 494700	02920 483188
Carlisle	01228 590690	01228 590790
Chesterfield	01246 209222	01246 209333
Coventry	02476 228040	02476 228042
Crawley	01293 515333	01293 516333
Crewe	01270 251100	01270 251117
Croydon	0208 256 0120	0208 256 0129
Derby	01332 291444	01332 291222
Doncaster	01302 341114	0114 275 8188
Dudley	01384 230003	01384 239691
Earls Court	0207 373 1129	0207 373 1770
Eastbourne	01323 887111	01323 430459
Gloucester	01452 383303	01452 521351
Hanger Lane	0208 998 9910	0208 998 6227
Hertford	01920 468770	01920 460272
Hull	01482 610160	01482 610686
Kidderminster	01562 66555	01562 825695
Lancaster	01524 383438	01524 383638
Leeds	0113 243 1033	0113 243 0951
Leicester	0116 251 2363	0116 251 2364
Liverpool	0151 236 0111	0151 236 0999
Luton	01582 405444	01582 488280
Maidstone	01622 664999	01622 664218
Manchester	0161 237 9333	0161 237 9444
Milton Keynes	01908 699466	01908 699477
Newcastle	0191 230 2007	0191 230 2008
Newport	01633 842164	01633 842135
Northampton	01604 629888	01604 627444
Nottingham	0115 958 5880	0115 958 5884
Nuneaton	02476 382211	02476 382233
Oldham	0161 626 4222	0161 626 4777
Oxford	01235 550077	01235 554024
Peterborough	01733 555672	01733 341073
Plymouth	01752 256360	01752 252680
Poole	01202 682282	01202 682482
Portsmouth	0239 286 4411	0239 286 4422
Preston	01772 201777	01772 201888
Redditch	01527 591141	01527 591142
Scunthorpe	01724 876111	01724 876222
Sheffield	0114 275 8181	0114 275 8188
Southampton	023 8033 3188	023 8033 3199
Staines	01784 450555	01784 450122
Stockport	0161 968 1964	0161 968 1965
Stoke	01782 209666	01782 209777
Sunderland	0191 567 1100	0191 567 1133
Swindon	01793 542211	01793 514213
Tamworth	01827 53333	01827 53090
Taunton	01823 330621	01823 256240
Tees Valley	01642 672655	01642 672654
Telford	01952 898242	01952 246065
Walsall	01922 639000	01922 636500
Warrington	01925 629666	01925 629777
West Bromwich	0121 553 7755	0121 553 7766
Wolverhampton	01902 773000	01902 773001
Worcester	01905 731777	01905 731888
Worthing	01903 234500	01903 234555

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