

SWS... **BEST NEWS**

Record year comes to a close

It has been another successful year for the Group and I thank you for all of your hard work and enthusiasm in making this so. We continue to push our boundaries and to grow our market presence both here in the UK and in Canada. A little more on this later. As we approach the end of 2015 we look forward to celebrating our 25 years in business next year. Preparations for the big party are well underway and the event will soon be upon us. Not surprisingly, this edition of Best News includes stories and activities around our fund raising efforts in support of our chosen charity, Fisher House, which is running alongside our anniversary planning. It is encouraging to see that so many people have already embraced this charitable cause and are demonstrating their creative flair through a number of fun activities including Paws for a Cause and Elfies. We look forward to hearing more about your activities and the fun you are having along the way and will be posting updates on Facebook and Twitter so do Follow! Remember that every penny raised will be hugely appreciated and will make a real difference to people's lives.

In this issue we continue to celebrate the achievements of our people from across business divisions and geography. From local activities, such as supporting our customers on weekend events, to well-earned promotions and blistering performance figures, we recognise and acknowledge your positive contribution to our collective business. Thank you all for being part of these news stories and congratulations. As we grow as a company, we also grow as people as we meet new challenges and look to ways of being the best we can be. It is at times like these that the importance of working together becomes so apparent and also how good we are becoming at doing this as a Group of companies. The need for greater co-operation, collaboration and shared resource will become increasingly important in helping us remain competitive and at the top of our game. We will undoubtedly cover more stories along this theme in future issues.

Now to Canada. I was again fortunate to have the opportunity to spend some more time with our colleagues working for TBC and CPA in Canada. It is always a pleasure and I believe imperative for our international branches to feel part of the Group and that they are able to benefit from our direct support, work practices and systems that have worked well for us in the UK. We can all certainly learn from one another. Canada is a vast and wonderful country with a passion for sport – particularly baseball,

so it was also fun to spend some leisure time with the teams supporting the Toronto Blue Jays. They certainly work hard and play hard!

I would also like to add a few words on the company's finances. Firstly, we are in good shape as a business, having increased our turnover in 2015 to around £330M. This is an incredible achievement. Our staff numbers have also increased in line with our growth to approximately 875 employees.

Over the year, temporary workers' hours have surpassed 37 million; driver's hours, over 12 million which represents around 240 million miles or 10,000 times around the earth, or five return trips to the Moon! These incredible figures are only achievable because of you.

And finally, I am delighted to announce that our regional management team that includes, Darren Ainge, Lee Harris, Marcus Jepson, Darren Pollard, Dave Schilling and Phil Simmonds, have been appointed Directors of The Best Connection Group Ltd. This is an exciting decision that will strengthen our management team for the road ahead. Congratulations to all of you and thank you for your unstinting hard work.

As this is the last edition of Best News 2015, I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.



Andrew Sweeney

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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Andy Guest hired as Group Talent Acquisition Manager

Andy Guest has joined The Best Connection as Group Talent Acquisition Manager. Andy's main focus has been supporting The Best Connection in attracting the very best internal candidates along with supporting Bailey Employment Services, Bailey Care Services and CPA. Future plans include extending his role to assist all companies in the Strategic Workforce Solutions Group with their recruitment strategy.

Andy has a 15-year record in recruitment which began with Reed Accountancy. Latterly, he spent seven years at Prime Time Recruitment where he held a management position in its sales division based in Birmingham.

"We are delighted to have Andy aboard. He has extensive industry knowledge and brings with him considerable experience which is a key requirement for finding the best people. This new role is a great opportunity for him to contribute to the growth of our business as we expand our

operations and markets," said Group director, Neil Yorke.

In addition to filling current vacancies Andy has also had success in proactively sourcing senior level candidates with the ability to launch new locations. Based at SWS' Training and Development centre in Halesowen, Andy will support the company's directors and senior management in making key appointments.

"I was looking for a challenging role where I could add value to a successful company that places importance on its people and their development. This is just the role I was hoping to find. The Best Connection is committed to internal promotion and has a fantastic portfolio of training products to offer its staff which is a significant benefit to potential candidates in the industry," said Andy.

In order to increase the capacity of



Andy Guest

roles worked on and the value added to the recruitment process Andy has recruited a consultant - more about this in the next issue of SWS Best News.

Walsall Target Hitters

The Walsall Industrial Team have picked up their rewards for hitting their new business sales target for the year.

Daniel Edwards and Aidan Edwards have worked tirelessly to seek out new leads, following up meetings and closing deals.

"The servicing and business development has been first class throughout the year. All this effort enabled the plan to rise up the net margin league table and their vouchers are richly deserved," said Lee Harris, Director.

Daniel has chosen a gift voucher for Ikea as he is moving into his first house with his fiancée and Aidan opted for a gift voucher from Amazon to buy a present for his daughter.

Well done guys.



L to R: Aiden Edwards, Consultant, Wayne Tighe, Branch Manager & Dan Edwards, Senior Consultant.

Andy & James Visit Canada

"When he's in the branch his experience and knowledge truly inspires everyone and the stories he shares are always captivating," Elliot Mendoza, TBC Branch Manager.

"I remember the first day that Andy visited Mississauga and took the time to explain the origins of the board system - it was a pleasure to share some of his thoughts over triple chocolate fudge cake!" Milica Zivkovic, Consultant.

Our colleagues in Canada were delighted to host Andy Sweeney and James Wilkins (CPA) when they visited Canada on a whistle-stop tour of the branches to rally the troops – with of course a little fun thrown in. There is no substitute for face-to-face meetings for building great relationships and this was reflected in the many positive comments received from the team members at TBC Inc regarding Andy's visits. Here are a few more comments:

"Andy's visit to Canada helped me to learn more about the company's vision. It was also great to hear of Andy's visits to my home country, India," Kanika Sharma, Consultant.

"It was such a pleasure to have Andy here. It's nice to know that the president of our company has such an interest in The Best Connection Inc. Canada." Jessica Weinhardt, Branch Administrator.

"I personally found it incredibly beneficial having the opportunity to work so closely with Andy to develop the way we roll-out payroll, invoicing and all things numbers!" Emma Baylie, Office Co-ordinator.

"Having only been with The Best Connection Inc. a few months, it was very humbling to have the support of the president from across the globe," Mark Pilipovic, Consultant.

"Andy's visits are a highlight. He is a great addition to our office culture and we are always sad to see him go. It is a privilege to share a cuppa with him!" Suzanne Lavigne, Consultant.

"It was great having Andy here in Canada for the third time. It's fantastic to know we have such great support and back-up in England," Alex Laurents, Consultant.

"It was great to see Andy over here in Canada. We received a lot of support from him and experienced Andy's fun side in and outside the office," Tom Stenlake, Resourcer.

"After many years with The Best Connection it's great to finally get to know Andy during his visits to TBC Inc," Joe Middleton, Operations Manager.



Andy Sweeney and TBC Inc team.

CPA Canada Halloween Celebrations

Here is the CPA Recruitment Canada team in their Halloween outfits – on the left, we have feisty Monica, aka the Princess of the Night – next to her, we have Jaimie, our swashbuckling Pirate of the Caribbean. In the middle is Heather in her leopard costume – Roarrrrr!!! 2nd from the right we have Trinity (Kelly on a regular work day) – watch out for her special moves! And last, but by no means least, on the right we have Nurse Martha, who is always there to heal the sick and needy in the office.



"Halloween came at the end of another successful visit to Toronto," said James. "This time I had the pleasure of sharing the week with Andy Sweeney. Unbeknown to us, this visit coincided with baseball's Toronto's Blue Jays play-off series for the American League and a chance to play in the World Series for the first time since 1993! We were definitely caught up in the fever of it all and found ourselves sharing a beer and wings in the sports bar in Fionn McCool's Irish pub in Oakville for the games.



"Sadly, Toronto lost 4-2 to the Kansas City Royals. A big thanks to Kelly, CPA's resident baseball expert for teaching us all there is to know - we are now both life-long Blue Jays baseball fans, Go Blue Jays!" added James.

The visits were such a success the team is trying persuade Andy and James to visit in February as it's the coldest time of the year!

Care Worker of the Month is awarded to . . .

Hard work doesn't go unnoticed at Bailey Care Services! Following the launch of Carer of the Month Award it is only right to share the exemplary work of these shining stars in SWS Best News. Here's a little background on those who have been singled out for their endeavours over recent months.



Phyllis Carty

Phyllis Carty

Phyllis joined BCS in March 2012. She is a very supportive member of the team to the office and community-based staff. Her characteristically positive approach to new ideas plays an integral part in shadowing new staff. Phyllis likes to keep up to date with her training and is happy to share her views for a better working partnership. At present Phyllis is completing her level 2 in Health and Social Care.

Congratulations to Phyllis on becoming BCS's first Carer of the Month in August.

Tracy Jacobs

Tracy joined BCS in April 2015 as a domiciliary care worker with no previous care industry experience. She has since developed her knowledge and understanding of the positive delivery of care. Although Tracy started prior to the mandatory Care Certificate being introduced, she is determined to gather as much knowledge as possible to fulfil her role and is at present

completing her Care Certificate at her own request. Tracy says she enjoys the challenge of learning new topics and has become a good role model for new staff, playing a large part in their training through shadow shifts. She regularly visits the office to pass on information regarding clients. Tracy is well liked by her clients and the families find her very helpful and supportive.

Well done Tracy on making Carer of the Month for September.



Tracy Jacobs

Sarah Riggs

Sarah started with BCS in May 2009 as a learning disability live-in support worker and transferred to the Swindon branch in June 2014 to continue with similar clients in a community-based role.

Sarah has a wealth of knowledge in this specialist area of Care and Mental Health and supports six clients with their individual needs. Sarah has excellent communication skills which clients and their families have commented on many times.

Sarah has just started her level 2 in Health and Social Care to further her knowledge and understanding of the support role she enjoys so much.

Well done to Sarah for being chosen as Carer of the Month for October.

Gary Gains Care Certificate

After much hard work and application, BCS's Gary Hodge has been awarded his Care Certificate.

Gary joined BCS in June 2015. He approached Bailey Care Swindon as he had heard the company has a good reputation. With over 20 years' experience in the social care sector, Gary has cared and supported many different clients in various ways. He was very impressed that the company puts staff through the Care Certificate and decided to sign up. Gary found completing the Certificate to be more useful and interesting than he thought.

"From studying the Care Certificate, I have learnt that social care provision is constantly changing and that we need to keep up the training and knowledge to

ensure that the services we provide meet the needs of the individuals," said Gary.

Gary is also a mentor for new staff through their shadowing and is very supportive of implementing change. As well as the Care Certificate, Gary has also completed the Dementia Training course.

"I found this training very beneficial as it looks at dementia care from a day to day aspect and not just from a medical and treatment perspective. It gave me a broader understanding of how staff can support and care for individuals with dementia in their own homes," added Gary.

Many congratulations to Gary on the completion of the Care Certificate.



Gary Hodge

Spotlight on new Bailey Care Services Registered Managers



Andrea Wood

Andrea is the new Trowbridge Registered Branch Manager for Bailey Care Services. "I have worked within the care industry since 2002 and have a varied background covering all aspects of care. I have the Diploma level 5 Leadership and Management qualification and have managed a variety of settings," outlined Andrea.

Her responsibilities at Bailey Care include compliance with all aspects of legislation, recruitment, training and professional development. Andrea ensures that high quality care is delivered and maintained with a commitment to promoting the well-being of all Bailey clients.

"My previous roles included working within the prisons in the South West of England as a Debt Adviser to prisoners and their families. I also worked for Wiltshire Probation as an Accommodation Officer dealing with high risk of harm offenders. I have also worked with children and young people and those that are in the care system," added Andrea.

When not busy at work, Andrea enjoys spending time with her three daughters and grandson. She also likes visiting London where she was born to see family and friends and loves going on holiday to relax.

Guy is the new Oxfordshire Registered Branch Manager at Bailey Care Services.

"I have worked in operations and regional management positions within social care since 2007. Prior to joining Bailey Care, I was a Regional Manager for Community Integrated Care managing domiciliary care, supported living, respite care and residential care home services across Hampshire and Dorset," said Guy.

Previously, Guy has also managed other types of services including a supported employment service, an independent hospital and NHS mental health service, IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies).

"I have been in the care industry in one guise or another since 1980. I was in the Royal Army Medical Corps employed as a combat medical technician, a pharmacy technician and finally as a medical support officer retiring as a Major in 2007 having served in hospitals and field medical units across the world," added Guy.

Outside of work Guy enjoys playing the electric guitar along with railway modelling and reading. His two main passions in life are his family and Sunderland Football Club. Guy also has two grown up sons, a grandson and two dogs, Sacha and Tess, a German Shepherd and Staffordshire Terrier.



Guy Rump

'It is a pleasure to welcome both Guy and Andrea into Bailey's and the SWS Group. I look forward to seeing these branches move forward in 2016 with your support and experience,' commented Lisa Rothnie, Operations Manager, Bailey Care Services.

Hull plans Truck Pull for Fisher House

As part of fundraising ideas for Fisher House, Hull TBC branch is planning an LGV Truck Pull having secured the use of KC Stadium in Hull to host the event over the Spring Bank Holiday 2016. As part of this mega-event, the team will run a 1km truck-pull competition around the perimeter of the stadium. This will be open to teams from various clubs and organisations including those from other TBC branches and SWS companies.

Other showpiece events under consideration will include a truck show

for hauliers to display their best trucks, trade stalls for members of the haulage industry and a recruitment drive for people wishing to enter the haulage industry with local training schools and companies promoting their apprenticeship programmes. In addition, the event hopes to attract members of the armed forces and associated cadet forces, representatives from Help the Heroes and other military support groups.

Although in its early planning stage,

the event is set to snowball into an extravaganza for the Fisher House fundraising campaign. Watch this space for further updates.

If anyone is interested in joining this event (especially those that want to supply a team!) can you please contact TBC Hull's branch manager, Garry Barber:

Office: **01482 610160**
Mobile: **07795 378449**

Email:
garry.barber@thebestconnection.co.uk

Mike Cooper's Special Birthday

Group Director, Mike Cooper, had a very special birthday on December 4th - it was his 65th. I know this is hard to believe – as he certainly doesn't look it. To mark the occasion, Andy Sweeney presented Mike with a host of apt presents that he will undoubtedly enjoy tremendously.

Gifts included: an hour's flying lesson in a 2 seater plane, a helicopter flying lesson, an entry for the William Hunt Trilby Golf Cup Tour for 2016/2017, 18 Titleist Golf Balls with inscription of 'Happy 65th Michael Love all at TBC', a copy of 'The Times' original newspaper for his birth day of Monday 4th December 1950 with a certificate of authenticity; the Daily Mirror book through the 1950's, His Lordship Mug with cover for use when travelling, a wine goblet (extra-large for his one daily glass of wine!) with 'Coops' inscription, a Penny Red Reserve - Red Wine from Halfpenny Green Vineyard, an Apron, BBQ branding iron, a Good Housekeeping 'BBQ & Grill' cookbook and Mary Berry's – 'How to Cook' and 'Kitchen Favourites' cookbooks.

Well, we can see a few themes emerging here so we might be flying over to Mike's soon to enjoy some great food and wine . . . if he's not out playing golf that is!

We wish Mike all the best and hope he gets the time to enjoy all of his great pressies. Three cheers for Mike! Hip Hip Hooray!



Mike inspecting his wine 'goblet'

Branch Administrator Development Update

It's happened! Branch administration has gone digital. It is true to say that 2015 has been a hectic year for the support team that keeps the business ticking. It's all been very positive though and one of the significant changes has been the development of the online portal.

The new and exciting Branch Administration Training Portal was launched in July and delivered by training gurus Jodi and Kanez who travelled UK-wide to deliver instructive roadshows. The feedback suggests that the information on the Portal has been well received offering a useful reference facility. The portal will be updated with material and news stories on a regular basis. Particularly popular are the Resources section and the Branch admin 'spotlights'.

The project team are now working hard on the design of the foundation

programme for new administrators which is due to be launched early next year. The training programme will provide a structured introduction to the role with modules covering all the key areas including Staff Plus video tutorials. At the end of the programme the administrator will be equipped with the

knowledge and skills to carry out their role.

Newcomers will be allocated a mentor who is responsible for support and guidance throughout the programme. In addition, the training team are creating three face to face training days that will include an induction day at Topaz, Time Management and Organisation and Interpersonal Skills.



Neil Yorke with the Project Team

Spotlight on Aaron Biggam, Matrix Training Assessor

Aaron has been working at Matrix Training and Development for just over a year. He was taken on as a Functional Skills Tutor and Trainee Assessor and was tasked with attaining the TAQA (Training Assessment Quality Assurance) Assessor qualification.

"To begin with, I was given a caseload of learners who were mainly functional skills-based followed by four Business Administration Apprentices that I worked with from start to finish to gain the TAQA award. The award comprises two parts; understanding the principles and practice of assessment and assessing occupational competence in the workplace," said Aaron.

Much of the training in unit 1 consisted of a series of knowledge questions that Aaron had to research from the internet and through specific books. Unit 2 covered the practise of assessment, choosing which structure for their programme and assessment planning and assessment methods.

"I completed the TAQA Award in October this year and have now become an Assessor. Alongside my TAQA qualification I provided Functional Skills training with learners that required additional learning support whilst working through their Apprenticeship programmes," commented Aaron.

"Although my time at Matrix has been short, I can honestly say that the company is a very professional, supportive company

that is committed to staff development and achieving organisational goals. The staff are all very friendly and pull together to work towards personal KPI's and company goals. I thoroughly enjoy working at Matrix and find supporting learners and watching them grow in confidence from the start of their journey to completion extremely rewarding," added Aaron.

With his TAQA Award under his belt, Aaron would like to improve his knowledge of Customer Service, Team Leading and Management programmes and has his eye on achieving the Internal Verifier award.

"Aaron was appointed to the company to provide staff and learners with valuable support for functional skills qualifications along with developing his role as assessor for vocational qualifications. He has developed into a key member of the team and has provided many learners with the extra help they needed to complete their Apprenticeship Frameworks," commented Phil Hutchinson, director, Matrix Training & Development.



Snapshot Profile - Sue Tunks



For those of you who do not know her, Sue Tunks is an Internal Verifier and accredited IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) trainer at Matrix where she has been part of the team for the past eight years. She is responsible for the internal quality assurance of QCF - Qualifications & Credit Framework (formerly NVQ) and Functional Skills (maths and English). In this capacity she is involved in sampling assessment teams' assessment decisions relating to apprentices, during and on completion of qualifications.

Sue conducts a final quality check to ensure the completion paperwork is included and completed accurately before passing on to Tracy Price, the office manager, who requests certificates and completion payments. The programmes Sue is responsible for include customer service, business administration, team leading and management as well as warehouse and storage. But it doesn't stop there as Sue is also responsible for her own small caseload of learners. Busy girl, Sue!

Fisher House – Tuck Shop fundraising

Leanne, Amy and Yasmen from Matrix have set up a tuck shop to raise funds so that they can zip wire down Snowdonia for the Fisher House charity.



L to R: Leanne Price, Amy Williams, Yasmen Holyday

They each need to raise £120 and have so far reached £31 in four days – well done girls and good luck with selling lots of sweeties!

Elfies for Fisher House

Let's face it, selfies could be considered a bit of a strange social activity. Mobile phones clasped to the end of a pole or 'selfie stick'. It's also a bit of fun! At Matrix this activity has been taken to a whole new level under the guise of Elfie Selfies. But it's all for a good cause.

The idea is simple. Over the Christmas period you may find yourself attending parties and functions that may entail dressing up in some interesting outfits. If you do, we would like you to share your selfie pictures on the Matrix Facebook page along with a voluntary donation to the Fisher House charity.

Sounds fun? Wackier the better please (subject to the usual censorship checks!). It'll soon be time to brush down your fancy dress and share with the world your rip-roaring selfies. Ask your friends and family to get involved as we need to raise as much as we can. There will be chocolates for the best entry – so get snapping!



A day in the life of . . . **Debbie Shore** Senior On-Site Account Manager



// How do you start your working day?

At approx. 6.20am the race is on to see who will wake me first . . . my alarm clock or the shouting of my two year old daughter! I then have the normal working mum challenge of getting myself and my daughter ready and out of the door on time in a presentable manner and then the day begins! As I work at a different location every day, I set off and start to make calls to my teams from the car for a catch up!

What does a typical day consist of?

I arrive at the onsite location of the day and make the team a brew! Then it's time to have a good catch up on what's going on at the site, understanding any key issues that need to be dealt with and gaining a general overview of what's happening, including weekly figures. Every day is different onsite and nothing can be ruled out so it's always a challenge, which I love. I tend to work at each site the day of the weekly meeting so I can be involved and support the team, especially at peak times of the year where the meetings can get a little tough! We always have a pre and post-meeting brainstorm session to make sure we have covered everything we need to and ensure tasks get completed. We then agree a plan for the week ahead until I am next at site. Throughout the day I will be in contact with my other teams/Managed Services Department/branches via email and telephone whenever needed, as there is always something happening to keep us all busy!

What keeps you going through the day?

Coffee!! I also love the challenges of the job; it can be stressful at times but I love that there is always something new to learn and really enjoy seeing my teams develop and achieve their goals. Positive feedback from the client is a massive feel good factor, although they don't give praise easily so we have to work extremely hard to receive this! I also enjoy supporting my team members and seeing them enjoy their job - we try to keep the fun factor wherever possible as onsite life can be overbearing at times!

What is a good day for you?

When I get lots of tasks ticked off the 'to do' list, have a positive meeting with the client and my team is happy and in good spirits!

A bit about myself

I have worked for TBC now for 10 years. Starting as an administrator at 18 years old, I have worked covering many different roles throughout the business to get to where I am today. I live in Sheffield and love spending time with my family and friends. I also enjoy exploring the great outdoors with my daughter whenever possible!



Liane celebrates 10 years at CPA

Well done to Liane Stockman for completing 10 years at CPA. Liane joined CPA as a graduate in 2005 after completing a BSc in Food and Consumer Management. She originally came to CPA with the hope that we would help her to secure a role in the food industry, but we were so impressed with her we managed to twist her arm with the offer of a role in recruitment instead!

She is now a Divisional Manager for CPA's retail division specialising in the placement of Food Technologists, Technical Managers and Retail Food Auditors, working with clients such as Sainsbury's, Tesco and Ocado as well as major auditing bodies, such as SAI Global. Liane is currently in the process of growing her team to help build the division, with another new starter in January.

Liane was also fortunate enough to meet her husband Russell at CPA and outside of work she enjoys spending time with her four-year-old daughter, Imogen.



James Constable gives Liane Stockman her flowers for 10 years' service

BRAKE's Awards - FleetMaster 'Highly Recommended'



In only its first entry for the BRAKE Fleet Safety Awards, FleetMaster has received a 'Highly Recommended' in the Fleet Safety Product Award by the judging panel for its innovative Young Driver Academy apprenticeship programme.

"The Young Driver Academy is a 12-month apprenticeship that has been developed by FleetMaster to improve the competency of young employees under the age of 25 that need to drive a van in their job. This is done through on-the-job training and assessment," said Jamie Boocock, Director.

The objectives of the apprenticeship are to improve road safety and general Health & Safety in the workplace by enhancing driving standards. This translates to good driving behaviours and positive attitudes towards driving. By giving young drivers the right tools and knowledge, the programme helps drivers to become safer along with improving customer service skills. This contributes

to an improved customer experience and stronger brand recognition. As a direct outcome to the training, vehicle collisions are reduced which in turn decreases vehicle running costs. In addition, there is a positive effect on the environment through reduced carbon emissions from better driving techniques.

"In the case of British Gas, we achieved a reduction in the number of avoidable claims by 56% leading to a cost reduction of 79%. The number of unavoidable claims was also reduced by 19% which equated to a cost saving of 83%. In total, from pre-YDA for all claims there has been a 44.6% reduction in the number of claims and a total cost reduction of 80% based on figures from July 2013 to the end of March 2015," added Jamie.

There have been some additional benefits that the business has seen, such as a 15% reduction in fuel

consumption. Along with excellent feedback about the course the YDA is a must for safer roads and driving. Spread the word!



Jamie Boocock

Rob Mittell – a success story

It was smiles all-round for Rob Mittell as he accepted a bottle of bubbly from director, Dave Schilling, to mark his well-earned promotion to Senior Manager. Let's take a look at his path to success.

Rob began his career at TBC as a Branch Administrator in Derby in May 2003 on a temporary contract but soon became a permanent member of the team in August 2003. He was then given the chance to become a Trainee HGV Consultant in February 2004, joining a team of three HGV specialists in Derby that peaked with over 100 drivers out per day. Having demonstrated his steel, Rob was promoted to HGV Consultant in January 2005 and Senior HGV Consultant in December 2006. He transferred to TBC Chesterfield in 2007 to progress his career. When Rob started, the plan had 11 drivers out. By

2009 they had topped the national league table, achieving a peak of 60+ drivers each day and smashing margin targets. All was going well.

He then moved to Nottingham for a six month spell before re-locating to the north-east for personal reasons; joining the Middlesbrough team in 2010. In true form, he took the HGV plan to the top of the national league tables, peaking at 67 drivers out per day.

"Rob asked Martin Recci and myself about the possibility of starting up an Ipswich office, which we agreed to. However, until the business was established, Rob needed to operate from the Peterborough office. He did this for almost nine months until it was time for a permanent presence in Ipswich," commented Dave Schilling.

The doors to the new Ipswich office opened in April 2012. Rob put the HGV



Rob Mittell set to celebrate his promotion

plan on the map once again by hitting top position of the national league table in August 2013 and has consistently remained in the top five. Since then, Rob has taken on a second branch in Norwich which opened in August 2014. Norwich quickly established a solid client base across both Industrial and HGV and is currently achieving significant margin figures. As a further reward, Rob will receive his third branch 'Chelmsford' that will open in the summer of 2016.

Congratulations to Rob on his promotion.

Paperclip Challenge

for Fisher House



Stuck for a fund raising idea for Fisher House? Why not give Paperclip Challenge a go? The idea is simple and challenges your creativity, sales and negotiation skills to the max. This is how it works.

You start with a single paperclip. Using your powers of persuasion, you must attempt to 'trade up' to another higher-value item. No money passes hands. Continue to do this as many times as you can to maximise the value of your final object. With a little imagination there is no limit to where this task could take you! At the end of the competition, the final items will be auctioned off to raise real cash. Up for it?

Some rules:

No limit to the number of trades

No money passes hands

No borrowing

You must take a picture of each item that you trade and email it back to Kinny Rock, SWS Training & Development department kinny.rock@thebestconnection.co.uk

Good Luck!



The Great Topaz Bake Off

BAFTA winning The Great British Bake Off has been an incredible success that has inspired a nation of would-be cooks. No bad thing to have a baking renaissance in the kitchen. Continuing this theme, six businesses at Topaz, including SWS Group, agreed to run their own charity-week competition to raise some dough for good causes and the results unveiled some hidden talent in our midst.

The organisers included Nicole Leckie (Barnett Waddingham), Ellen Husbands (FCA) and Martin Thorogood (SWS), who were the brainchildren behind The Great Topaz Bake Off which was held at SWS Group HQ.

After a hotly-fought contest we can announce the jubilant winners. For the best Tray Bake, the judges could not decide between two mouth-watering entries and awarded joint first place to Frances Mander from Handelsbanken who produced a stunning salted caramel tray bake (& she also won the cake section with delicious cupcakes) and our very own Oliver Darley-Usmar with his peanut butter brownies. Due to the draw situation it was decided to have a 'wild-card' entry which was picked up by Natalie Lindsay from SWS Group for her amazing scones. Andy 'Paul Hollywood' Sweeney was on the esteemed judging panel (it was a difficult job but someone had to do it!).

Hat's off to all the chefs and congratulations on raising a brilliant £142.65. But it didn't stop there! As well as the Bake Off there was a raffle and dress-down day that raised a magnificent £464 and a brain-teasing quiz, compiled by

Martin, which added a further £112, making a grand total of £718.65. The money raised was donated to Birmingham Children's Hospital and Brain Tumour Research.

A huge well done to all involved - what an awesome effort and from all accounts great fun.



Topaz Bake Off champions Natalie and Oliver



Leaving is such sweet sorrow! Have your cake and eat it

It has to be said that people do not often leave The Best Connection, however, from time to time, people's lives take a new direction and we have to say a sad goodbye and this gives us cause for celebration! In what was a double whammy for TBC Crewe, Sean O' Driscoll announced that he was moving to Australia and Kevin Gleave had decided to pursue a career in an alternative sector. In recognition of their contribution and just to say thank you and good luck, one of the team, Josh Graham, asked his mother to bake a cake in celebration. This didn't turn out to be just any ordinary cake as you can see from the picture. Josh's mother has made a brilliant job of recreating the infamous blue board set up and the guys made a great job of making it disappear, along with Sean and Kevin, who we all wish the best of luck.

Amarjeet Singh - a World Champion in the making



Have you ever been asked to tell people something they might not know about you? If you asked Amarjeet Singh, he might tell you he is the English WKA and WKA martial arts champion.

On November 7th Amarjeet, from TBC West Bromwich, became the English title holder for both belts following an unbeaten run. Amarjeet is now set to challenge the current champions for both British and European titles in 2016 and then hopefully he will go on to achieve his ultimate goal of becoming a World Champion.

Since joining TBC in August 2014 as an apprentice, Amarjeet is now an integral member of the team and constantly strives for more in both his professional and sporting endeavours. Amarjeet's ambition to succeed in all that he does is admirable and he is enjoying resourcing for the requirements of the West Bromwich branch.



Amarjeet (left) in action

Louise delivers Sandown Project for John Lewis

Saturday, October 3rd, Sandown Park. This famous location, more associated with horseracing than retail events, was the backdrop for a retail sale extravaganza organised by John Lewis Partnership. Customers were enticed by an assortment of customer-returned and near-perfect items, at irresistible prices. But before the turnstiles could open, a logistical operation was required to collect stock from its UK locations and safely store until required. Enter City Transport Solutions.

Standing on a blustery runway at the heart of Westcott Airfield in rural Buckinghamshire, CTS's Transport Manager, Louise Gaunt awaits her clients. Its days of active service long since gone, the World War II base now functions as an industrial estate offering a variety of services including trailer storage.

In a scene more reminiscent of a post-war movie, the John Lewis team drive onto the tarmac and survey the environment. There was nothing clandestine about this rendezvous, however, as they had arranged to meet Louise to check the suitability of the location to support the Sandown project. The response was positive - it was perfect - so all that was needed was the right team to deliver. Following a series of questions from the customer to determine CTS's capacity, Louise was assigned to the project and it was green for go.

Grasping the opportunity with both hands, Louise established that 40 trailers and a team of professional drivers would be required and set about organising a logistical programme to carefully manage the collection and deliveries in line with the customer's requirements.

"We had 30 days to deliver the project, which was demanding to say the least, but we did it and all went to plan," said Louise.

Needless to say the project was a logistical success. For CTS, to have established John Lewis as a direct customer was a major achievement and following this successful engagement CTS has since signed a formal contract with the John Lewis Milton Keynes distribution centre as one of only two ad-hoc suppliers.



Louise Gaunt

"Female Transport Managers are a rare commodity in the male-dominated world of haulage. Louise bucks this trend having spent many years running a family haulage business that was sold some nine years ago. Louise runs a first class team from Leighton Buzzard which posted a record sales month in October 2015. This was a huge achievement and testament to her knowledge, skill and a motivated team," added Mark Gooden, Managing Director, CTS.

So, Louise can wistfully reflect on that windy day at Westcott with some satisfaction of a job well done. Chocs away Gaunty!

Dartford Branch – Two Years On

It's never easy in sales. It requires focus, determination and staying power. Starting from scratch is particularly challenging but with the right approach and attitude anything is possible. A classic example is TBC Dartford which opened its doors to a world of new opportunities in June 2013. Two years on, what has changed? SWS Best News spoke to Senior Branch Manager, Andy Clark, about how things are going.

"Since we started our operation in 2013 it has been really hard work with loads of sales and a few hard knocks along the way but we have overcome the challenges and have given a team of five local people an opportunity for a

great career with TBC," said Andy.

"We still have three of the original team and have built a fantastic team spirit and atmosphere in the branch which helps immensely to keep us motivated. The region is quite industrial so there has been lots of business development in the area and it is continuing to grow which can only be good news for TBC.

"Our main focus has been on securing contracts in small to medium sized businesses using tried and tested business development tools and high levels of sales activity. We source the highest quality assignments for the highest quality, local candidates and this approach has worked for us. As a result, we now support over 100 temporary

workers out per day which is a great collective achievement.

"Some of our other achievements include having the highest placed driving plan in the southern region in June, July and August which was 5th in company and in the TBC average weekly margin rankings. We also achieved 3rd place in the Burning Badger Cup regional sales competition against stiff opposition," continued Andy.

The journey hasn't been without challenges we understand, but the team have worked hard to overcome these, building the brand along the way and making TBC a leading supplier of staff in the Dartford area. Andy tells us that the team are looking forward to a great future and we wish them well with their continued success.

Maidstone Burning Badger Cup Winners!

Since its launch, Burning Badger has roused the competitive spirits of the southern region and has gone from strength to strength. The competition is judged on the number of client visits and conversions and new client gains over a set period.

Taking the theme one step further, director, Marcus Jepson, announced that it was time for 'something completely different', with the launch of the 2015 Burning Badger Cup. The epic clash matched 13 TBC branches battling against a different branch each week to seize three additional points to bolster the Southern Region Sales table. Scores were accumulated and averaged by the number of consultants to allow all the branches to compete on an equal footing.

After 13 weeks of exciting and extremely cut-throat and competitive games, especially amongst some of the closer branches, Maidstone emerged as cup winners by a narrow margin to win £150.00 and the prestigious Badger Cup. Well done Maidstone – it may just be a bit of fun but even so, victory is sweet! And so to the results; 1st, Maidstone, 2nd Eastbourne & 3rd Dartford.

Flying high above all the 'contestants' and crowned Consultant of the Season for outstanding individual effort and performance was Hussain Hadermota from Hanger Lane

Branch. Great performance Hussain!

In total, the region achieved 415 new visits and a massive 249 new clients. An amazing effort and by all accounts a lot of fun too! "Here's looking forward to next year!" said Rene Hawkes, area manager.



Faurecia Open Day Raises £2,500 for the British Red Cross

Recent world events have led to mass migration and its associated challenges and tragedies. In support of efforts made by The British Red Cross with regards to the crisis, automotive manufacturer and TBC client, Faurecia, organised a fund raising event which the TBC team were happy to support.

Faurecia has been a TBC client for over 13 years and the company employs over 200 TBC temporary workers operating across Burton, Tamworth and Cannock. In a joint event, Faurecia raised £2,500 for the British Red Cross through a variety of activities including a family Open Day at its plant in Fradley, Lichfield. This included site tours which featured a new Range Rover Sport showcasing a number of Faurecia-manufactured products.

As part of the open day a team of TBC staff attended and ran the 'toss the horse shoe' game where children could win sweets by successfully tossing a horse shoe onto a pole. They didn't go hungry either as a mobile pizza and hot dog stand were on hand to help keep the team's energy levels up!



Left to right TBC staff - Harry Keanes, Chris Prince, Tom Pickford and Svetlana Bazilaka. The event was also attended by our two onsite representatives Neil Hannigan and Richard Conlon.

Focus on National Sales

The national accounts department was set up in 2004 by Sue Harwood to develop a structured approach to competing for large, UK-wide contracts that often required dedicated onsite personnel. Sue handed over the reins in 2013 and now runs a national sales team of four people that have been instrumental in winning many new household brand accounts.

Due to the nature and size of the clients targeted in national sales, the focus of the business is on winning opportunities in specific areas such as on-site contracts, national agreements, central booking clients, specific local volume-user clients and City Transport Solutions. Winning these types of contracts can be a lengthy and in-depth process and often involves a range of activities that may include tender responses, proposal writing, creating and delivering presentations, onsite analysis, business defence, market research and activity analysis.

The role of the branch network plays an essential part in securing many of the new contracts by providing local information and support. In recent months, the team, in collaboration with the local branches, has secured many contracts for high profile clients. In 2016 the national sales team will need to win eight new on-sites and five national accounts; therefore, branch support will be crucial in achieving this target.

So let's take a peek at the people in the team and uncover some lesser known facts.

Susan Harwood – Head of National Sales. Sue has been with TBC for nearly 12 years. She started national accounts and is now developing the national sales team. Her main focus is developing the national sales strategy for on-sites, national accounts, CMS and CTS businesses. Sue tells us the best part of her role is working with the branches and taking an opportunity from a canvass call through to contract and implementation. The branches are an active part of this end to end process. "It takes teamwork to deliver strategic sales and I am looking forward to capitalising on our success in 2015 for 2016 and delivering our targets," says Sue. Lesser

known facts: Sue has a daughter called Grace who she adores. As a child Sue was a ballroom champion with a partner called Trevor. On Christmas Eve 2014 Sue eloped with her partner and daughter to get married on the west coast of Scotland.

Matt Slater – is the comeback Kid! Matt managed the Oxford, Banbury and Redditch branches before a stint with another agency (but we won't tell anyone!) and has now returned. In his own words, Matt decided to 'come home' to TBC. He is a focussed canvasser who uses many methods to obtain information and in the two months since his return he has already delivered some high profile onsite appointments. Matt is enjoying the variety in the new role and getting to know the branch teams.

Julian Thomas – Sales Manager. Julian has been with TBC for almost 10 years and has been working with Sue for six years. He is, by all accounts, a fantastic canvasser and along with Matt (the new boy) is fiercely competitive in putting appointments on the board – nothing can keep Julian from hitting the phones, not even a near fatal heart attack! For his sins, Julian is a big Birmingham City fan. In his previous life he was also a chef and still likes to cook.

James Morgan – Sales Manager. James has been with TBC for five years. He is the creative one of the team we are informed. James has a marketing background and provides essential support to Sue with responding to tenders and developing marketing literature. He is best known for his company car ending up in a farmer's field (we won't ask). It was lifted out by a crane as he forgot to put his handbrake on. Likely story @!

Natalie Lindsay – Sales and Marketing Support. Natalie – or Nat to her friends, provides support with tenders and processes and generally keeps the team in line. Apparently Nat's voice is most vocal when she calls the guys to either obtain important information for a project or to chase up those KPI's. We are told that Natalie once placed a celeb, Lorraine Pearson from pop-group 5 Star, into a temporary assignment (hope it wasn't singing!).



L to R: James Morgan, Matt Slater, Sue Harwood, Julian Thomas and Natalie Lindsey

Paws for a Great Cause



Preparations for our 25th anniversary are underway! A significant part of this is raising money for the injured service personnel charity, Fisher House, and a target of £200,000 has been set. To help us along the way we have recruited four cuddly avatars. Well, not so much recruited – as created! Here’s the story of the – not three, but four bears.

The training team thought that every charity event needs a mascot, so they came up with the idea of making four bears that represent the four SWS Group company directors; Andy Sweeney, Neil Yorke, Martin Recci and Mike Cooper. Once created they would be ‘tasked’ with travelling far and wide across the SWS organisation, having adventures along the way and helping with raising the all-essential cash. Clearly they don’t have real human features and capabilities so your creativity and help will be required to assist with their individual journeys. First stop – Build-A-Bear Workshop. Yes – we didn’t make it up - it really exists!

The dextrous volunteers tasked with the responsibility of creating the cuddly-incarnate lookalikes were TBC’s Kinny Rock and Kanez Khan.

“I could barely wait to get my bear hands to work,” said Kinny. “It was great fun being able to make your own director bear,



Andy Sweeney

let alone four of them! I didn’t have time to paws for thought and could barely pull myself away from the task. I hope they like them, I wouldn’t want them to be overbearing or a bugbear,” she added.

Now here are the rules. All branches will get the chance to look after at least one of the bears for up to a week. None of the bears can go back to a location they have previously visited. It is up to you to choose where the bear goes next – please contact the relevant branch and arrange for transportation - the bears cannot be sent in the post in case they experience unbearable travel sickness! Every location that receives the bear must send at least one photo and a brief description of the bear’s adventures!

Feel free to take your bear outside of your branch, perhaps to the shops, up a mountain or even to a teddy bears picnic! The choice is yours. The bears’ journeys will be tracked and plotted online for everyone to see and pictures will be posted on Facebook and Twitter. Make sure you take lots of pictures of the bears and their exploits and send them to Jan@marketnotions.com along with a short description (50 words maximum).

It’s down to you to create ideas for using the bears to raise money. Whilst at your branch, the bears will have a donation box with them. A donation page will allow us to track how much each location has raised. The running totals will also be published on the SWS website. Before the bears are moved to the next location, please empty the



Mike Cooper



Martin Recci

donation box, calculate the proceeds and add to the Just Giving page. There will be a prize for the branch that takes a bear on the most memorable (for the right reasons!) journey.

Please take care of the four bears as they will be auctioned off to good homes at the 25th Anniversary party. Good luck and have some brilliant fun for a great cause.



Neil Yorke

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