

# SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

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**In Profile:**  
**Nicky Alberry**  
*Swindon's a wonderful town to work in.*  
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## The Top 100

Our comprehensive table of the area's largest companies

**Pages 7-9**

## Next Month . . .

**Focus on Chippenham**  
Analysis of a town on the up.

## News Brief

### 'Recession babies' come of age

Around one in eight Swindon businesses to have started in the tough markets of the past three years has achieved a turnover of £100,000, according to new figures from Barclays.

These 'recession baby' businesses show that the dream of running your own business is flourishing and potentially lucrative, the bank says.

Head of Barclays Business for South West Darren Farnell said the bank was supporting record numbers of people starting up a business.

"Clearly, there are a lot of opportunities out there for start-ups which our entrepreneurs are aggressively going after."

### Jobs fair invite to employers

Swindon employers are being invited to promote themselves at the first job fair staged by The Front Room, a work club for the unemployed.

Representatives of McDonalds' Swindon franchise and Oxford Brookes will make presentations at the event, which takes place between 10am till 4pm on February 28 at St. Augustine's Church, Summer Street, Rodbourne.

The Front Room, which has been going for two years, is financially supported by Swindon Borough Council.

For further information contact Simon Cox on 07787 602230 or e-mail [simon.cox11@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:simon.cox11@hotmail.co.uk)

### Coming up next month . . .

March's Swindon Business News will include a special report on Chippenham, looking at the success of the M4 town and its future development. We will also continue our series of export features with advice and guidance for firms planning on trading overseas, analyse the strength of the local pharmaceutical industry and look at business education, training, recruitment and outsourcing. For details of how to be involved in these features contact Anita Jaynes on 01793 615393 or email [anita@swindon-business.net](mailto:anita@swindon-business.net)

## Show of strength: Business showcase returns for second year



Photo courtesy of Calyx Multimedia

The second annual Business Show Swindon has been hailed a success with more than 500 attendees and 80 exhibitors.

Organised by GWE Business West, the day-long event at Swindon's STEAM railway museum, also featured an inspiring speech by James Averdieck, founder of luxury deserts maker Gü, speed

networking and an exclusive espresso bar for members of the GWE Business West's LinkedIn group. Exhibitors at the show, which was sponsored by Team South West, Relays, County Marquees and Manor Printing with Swindon Business News as media partner, were drawn from a variety of sectors. See Page 4 for full Business Show round up.

## New vision for town centre to be unveiled

A major project to rejuvenate Swindon's town centre is being drawn up and, according to a leading urban architect, a few relatively easy-to-deliver projects and some visionary thinking will transform its poor image.

A showpiece art gallery for the town's outstanding collection of modern paintings, a world-class music recital room and a science museum building on the town's engineering heritage could all be achieved, believes Robert Maxwell of London firm Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners.

The firm is working with Forward Swindon to look at ways of revitalising the town centre.

Two meetings have been held by Forward Swindon and Allies and Morrison to encourage ideas from businesses and community groups which they will use to build a new 'vision' for the town centre.

Mr Maxwell, who has acted for London's South Bank Centre and for the Royal Institute of British Architects, told businesses that the town centre needed to play to its strengths. By aiming for some relatively easy wins it could overcome its negative image and build a better profile. He explained how a new generation of urban art galleries was transforming towns such as Margate

and Wakefield. Swindon already had a fantastic modern art collection – yet this was hidden away in Old Town.

A small, high-quality music venue such as London's Wigmore Hall would be easy to achieve and put the town on the map while the Science Museum's collection at Wroughton could form the basis for a museum in the town centre celebrating engineering.

He also said Swindon was surrounded by organic farms and so could develop a very strong food market similar to London's Borough Market.

"These are all things that can be done," he told the meeting. "It is all here already in or around Swindon. It's about galvanizing what the town already has."

The meeting also looked at how other towns had used high-quality urban regeneration to transform central areas. The meeting also tackled the challenges facing Swindon, including further population growth – the town is forecast to be home to 250,000 people by 2031, up from 201,800 today. However, some guests said previous 'visions' had had little impact – of 10 developments promoted by the last exercise only the central library had gone ahead. "It's like groundhog day," said one critic.

All ideas from the two meetings are being considered and will be reported back at a further meeting on March 7.

## Administrators called in to motorbike dealer

Swindon-based motorcycle dealers George White remains in administration following last month's closure of the £25m turnover firm due to a cashflow crisis.

The business, the UK's largest independent motorcycle retailer with six branches across the country, has appointed joint administrators Richard Hawes and Robin Allen, of business advisory firm Deloitte, to closed it down.

The move follows poor trading results over the past two years coupled with the increasingly difficult market conditions and low margins. These led to cashflow constraint and in the absence of a significant cash injection into the company the directors were unable to continue trading.

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# SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

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Controlled circulation: In excess of  
8,000 copies per month

© Copyright 2011  
Published by County Business Publishing Ltd.  
Printed by Acorn Press

County Business Publishing also publishes a range  
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## People

• RSM Tenon has appointed **Raj Basi** as VAT manager within its Southern region tax team, which includes Swindon. Raj previously worked for HMRC, and has extensive experience in dealing with VAT tribunal appeals, including the first new regime penalty case, and complex money laundering regulations cases. He is a fully qualified solicitor and will be providing knowledge and assistance with VAT issues, tribunal appeals, judicial reviews, disputes and investigation, and HMRC processes and procedures. RSM Tenon regional head of VAT Duncan Stocks said: "Raj has a very strong and successful track record and brings with him a wide range of specialist skills and expertise that will greatly benefit our clients and further develop our VAT advice service."



*Raj Basi*

• Certification International has boosted its UK arm with the appointment of **Ben Salter** as certification officer. Ben's role at the firm, based on Swindon's Delta Business Park, involves approval of auditors and technical advisors, overseeing technical reviews and queries and conducting internal audits throughout the group. Before joining Ceritfication

International, which evaluates, analyses and rewards businesses across a host of standards such as ISO, Ben was self employed.

• **Neil Sherreard**, former managing director of Cowlin Construction, will be joining Swindon-based building contractor Beard as non-executive director to bring new thinking to the firm. Neil's extensive experience of delivering multi-million pound projects throughout the South West of England will now be harnessed in the drive to achieve 100 per cent success in 'prompt and faultless delivery.' Managing director Mark Beard said: "In the current market conditions where high quality service is demanded throughout Wiltshire, we were extremely keen for Neil to join us to benefit from Neil's availability and his expertise in customer service."



*Neil Sherreard*

• **Danielle Stewart**, Southern Region partner at accountants Baker Tilly, has been appointed by the department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) as one of its two Company Law Red Tape Challenge champions. In the role Danielle



*Danielle Stewart*

will review suggestions made to BIS for areas where existing company law regulations could be streamlined or reduced and represent these views to ministers in a Star Chamber. Danielle said: "I am very excited by the opportunity to be an official Red Tape Challenge champion, because I have been deeply involved in the development of better, more appropriate regulation since the early 90s. As a practicing chartered accountant, I have often seen smaller businesses, in particular, struggle with the weight and complexity of bureaucracy applicable to them." The Red Tape Challenge gives the public the chance to comment on regulations applying to each specific sector of business, as well as on the general regulations applying across all sectors, with a view to reducing and simplifying those regulations.

**For advertising  
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Anita Jaynes  
on  
01793 615 393**

## Events

- **Job Fair - The Front Room Work Club**  
WHEN: Tuesday February 28, 10am-4pm  
WHERE: St Augustine's Church, Rodbourne
  - **Swindon Mindful Employer Network. Bullying and Stress at Work**  
WHEN: Thursday March 1, 10am-12.30pm  
WHERE: De Vere Village, Swindon  
CONTACT: 01793 433571
  - **Will SEO work for your business?**  
WHEN: Wednesday March 21, 8.30am-10.30am  
WHERE: Jurys Inn, Swindon  
CONTACT: 01793 680866 or [jo@digitaltradingcreative.co.uk](mailto:jo@digitaltradingcreative.co.uk)
  - **Active @ Work**  
WHEN: Thursday April 19, 10am-12pm  
WHERE: Jurys Inn, Swindon  
CONTACT: 01793 433571
  - **Rabbit 2012**  
WHEN: Tuesday March 20  
WHERE: Brunel's Old Station, Bristol  
CONTACT: 01622 685078
  - **Swindon Connections**  
WHEN: Thursday March 22, 6pm-8:30pm  
WHERE: Lydiard House Conference Centre, Swindon  
CONTACT: [www.business-scene.com](http://www.business-scene.com)
- Send your events to Swindon Business News to [info@swindon-business.net](mailto:info@swindon-business.net)

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## Cardwave seals partnership with Chinese firm RunCore

Specialist technology services company Cardwave has forged a partnership with RunCore, one of the world's leading manufacturers of Solid State Drives (SSDs) used in mobile devices, gadgets and industrial hardware.

Devises-based Cardwave CEO and managing director Paul Norbury described the alliance as a major step forward for both companies.

For Cardwave the deal will establish RunCore as its preferred manufacturer of performance-driven SSDs and other formats of solid-state media targeted at high-end or high-performance markets.

Mr Norbury, who founded Cardwave in 2004, said: "Cardwave and RunCore share the same goal, which is to operate successful and profitable businesses, and this we will do by building a successful European partnership that will benefit both companies."

"From Cardwave's point of view, we intend to do this by re-selling RunCore's products and using our product and market knowledge, together with our advanced range of services, to give credibility and differentiation with the highest level of support to customers."

## Youth charity teams up with Prince's Trust to help teens

Swindon youth development charity Inner Flame is to work with The Prince's Trust to deliver its Team programme, a 12-week personal development course helping 16 to 25 year olds learn new skills and improve their confidence and motivation.

Participants take part in team-building activities, a week-long residential trip, a community project and two weeks of work experience during the course. They also get advice on how to write CVs as well as gaining a nationally-recognised qualification through a partnership with Swindon College.

Inner Flame trustee Graham Moates will be team leader of the first programme, scheduled to start on March 19. Graham said: "Too many young people feel they don't have the skills and talents to succeed in life. The Team programme really does help them turn their lives around."

More than 143,000 young people have benefited from the programme so far. Last year, more than three in four young people helped by The Prince's Trust moved into work, education or training.

## Write on: Pentel pens raise tens of thousands for cancer charity

Swindon-based pen manufacturer Pentel raised more than £46,500 for The Prostate Cancer Charity last year through sales of two of its products.

Foe each LineStyle blue-barrelled ballpoint pen sold 20p was donated to the charity, while each sale of an ultra cool version of the company's EnerGel Xm Retractable liquid gel roller meant a donation of 25p. The company continues to support the charity this year. The pens are available from many stationery retailers as well as Clinton Cards and Birthdays..

Pentel marketing manager Wendy Vickery said: "Prostate cancer is the number one cancer to affect men and we're pleased to show our support for the excellent work of The Prostate Cancer Charity through sales of our special products."

## Major IT network contract win for Etherlive at Goodwood Estate

Venue IT, the permanent infrastructure division of Brinkworth-based Etherlive, has installed a new communications infrastructure across the Goodwood Estate.

The IT network at Lord March's West Sussex estate covers more than 30 locations, including the Goodwood Hotel, Goodwood House, as well as the world-renowned motor circuit and racecourse.

Goodwood will now be able to provide a public wi-fi network for the first time, allowing greater scope for social media activity across corporate and consumer events, including an iPhone app exclusively used by race goers.

The technology will enable Goodwood to use wi-fi chip and PIN terminals for transactions, which Venue IT launched in 2011 in response to event organisers' complaints in relation to the poor performance of chip and PIN machines which rely on GPRS networks.

The core infrastructure upgrades has enabled The Goodwood Estate to improve functionality for customers and staff at a number of areas.

## Patient survey shows satisfaction high at private Ridgeway Hospital

BMI The Ridgeway Hospital in Wroughton has achieved an overall satisfaction score of 98.6 per cent from patients who rated quality of care as either good, very good or excellent.

The independent survey, conducted by market research firm Howard Warwick Associates, was carried out during the whole of last year.

The hospital received 1,484 completed patient questionnaires in the survey which measured patient satisfaction across a range of criteria including patients' overall

impression of admission, consultant care, imaging (x-ray) anaesthetists, theatre staff, accommodation and whether patients were treated with respect and dignity. Overall nursing care received a rating of 97.8 per cent.

Executive director James Lowe said: "The team here continually strives to provide our patients with the highest standards of care and appreciate the positive feedback from our patients as a reward for our efforts."

"We are all very proud of our hospital and we make it our priority

to work hard to make each patient's time with us as comfortable as possible.

"Our patient survey is an important indicator of how well we achieve this and we monitor the results very closely. Today's result is something to be very pleased about; however we need to make sure we build on this for 2012."

The 50-bedroom hospital, which has three operating theatres, employs 220 people and works with 95 consultants. Its major specialties are orthopaedics, gynaecology, urology and general surgery.

## Plan 500 year 2 launched



Lord Digby Jones

Former CBI director general and trade minister Lord Digby Jones gave Plan 500's year-two launch an international and political flavour with a wide-ranging speech taking in global competition, mobile phone calls to the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the need for young people to acquire new skills.

Enthralling the audience of business leaders and young people, he drew on his journey from a modest Midlands upbringing to leading the UK's largest business organisation and then touring the world promoting British trade.

He said it was vital young people were given the chance to show they could perform in the modern workplace. But there were serious challenges around literacy and numeracy that needed resolving.

In its first year Plan 500 beat its own target of 500 job opportunities for 16 to 24 year olds in Swindon, reaching 557 at its close in September 2011.

In its second year it aims to deliver:

- 150 new apprenticeships
- 150 new work experience opportunities
- 25 additional Business Mentors trained
- 100 Employers receiving Work Based Qualifications information
- 75 young people not in work, education or training, being assigned

a mentor

## The best of the old and new for print firm celebrating 25 years of success

Swindon-based printer Orchard Press celebrates its 25th anniversary this year and managing director Paul Rowley says its success in reaching this landmark is down to taking the best of the old and the new.

While Orchard Press has always been at the cutting edge of print technology, Paul has remained true to the values of his parents, who owned three companies in Swindon – including print company Rowhex Services.

His father, Barney Rowley, taught him print, and mum Daphne, once secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, taught him to treat customers as valued friends.

Since then, politics graduate Paul has taken excellent customer service to its limit.

"It may sound corny, but we genuinely love delighting our customers, and will jump through hoops for them," said Paul "There is nothing we won't do to get them out of a scrape."

"We've tried to see their businesses from their point of view, and then provide what they need. So we came up with Orchard Online, a 24/7 order and stock call-off facility, which allows all customers to place orders through our website any time, day or night. Customers love it, as it cuts their admin right down, and eliminates time-

consuming telephone or email tennis."

Paul, a passionate rugby and cricket fan and chairman of Lechlade Cricket Club, describes

Orchard Press as a lean, mean fighting machine – but it's a green one too.

As a member of a certified FSC Group Chain of Custody Scheme, Orchard Press ensures that every process and product is tracked for origin and sustainability.

"We've seen a lot of changes in 25 years," said Paul. "The print trade has reinvented itself several times, and there's a far greater need for speed. I

love this way of working, though. We're dynamic, and although the last three years have been challenging for many businesses, those of us that have been able to sharpen our games and be responsive have got a lot to look forward to.

"Many of our customers have been with us for all of those 25 years. And new customers, once they try us, come back. They say we impress them time after time. Which is great – we want them to love us!" For more information go to [www.orchardpress.co.uk](http://www.orchardpress.co.uk) or call Orchard Press on 01793 420642.

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The Property People



## Gü founder reveals his ingredients for success



James Averdieck

Every entrepreneur has a horror story of how their business nearly failed – but the key factor in their success is that when they were knocked down they got back up again.

That was the message from James Averdieck, founder of luxury desserts maker Gü, at the Business Show Swindon.

In a highly-engaging speech, he traced his career from working at St Ivel in Wootton Bassett, trying – and failing – to sell its Utterly Butterly margarine in Belgium, to the early stages of setting up his own business and its phenomenal success.

It was while working in Brussels on the ill-fated task of selling margarine to the Belgians that he hit on the idea of starting his own business.

"I'd always loved chocolate," he said. "Right from eating Curly Wurlys and Rolos as a five year old."

"I used to go into a patisserie near my office and see all the lovely mousses. I could smell them from my desk. I thought if I could wrap all that up in a brand I'd have a successful business."

Returning to the UK he decided to go for it and started in partnership with a friend who knew everything about money but nothing about desserts.

Gü's eye-catching branding came from another friend who, on showing it to James, pretended it was an existing Swedish company.

"I said 'this is amazing'. It's exactly what I want to do but they've got there first". He then admitted he'd made it up. But it worked."

Knowing how to get the interest of

supermarket buyers from his days at St Ivel, he began to market his first product – a chocolate soufflé – which was taken by Waitrose. He was convinced it would work as he had taken a fake Gü-branded box into Waitrose in London's Kings Road, put it among the desserts and watched as a customer picked it up and put it in her basket.

His horror story arrived when, having successfully launched in 2003 and got the product stocked in Waitrose and Sainsbury's, there was a heatwave and the desserts stayed on the shelves.

"We were being asked to come and clear our stock," he said. Fortunately the weather changed and the brand went from strength to strength – its biggest breakthrough came when Virgin Airways stocked small Gü desserts on all its flights.

James told the audience his three ingredients for success were finding the right people, looking after customers and innovation.

"We built the business on people," he said. "Everybody in the business knew how to make our products."

Putting yourself in the customers' shoes was important. Know what your customer service is like, he said.

And the only way to succeed was to innovate – look at new products and ways of doing things, he said.

Having sold the business two years ago he now finds he misses it.

"It is the process and the journey of building a business that is fun," he said. "I sold it and left and now I really miss it. I'll going to do something else, I just don't know what yet."

## Triumph for Business Show in its second year

The second annual Business Show Swindon has been hailed a success with more than 500 attendees and 80 exhibitors.

Now organiser GWE Business West is looking ahead to next year to make it even bigger and better.

The day-long event at Swindon's STEAM railway museum, featured speed networking and an exclusive espresso bar for members of the GWE Business West's LinkedIn group, along with an inspiring speech by James Averdieck, founder of luxury desserts maker Gü.

Running alongside the show in the morning was the annual conference of the Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership (SSEP).

Ian Larrard, director of the Initiative in Swindon and Wiltshire, GWE Business West, said: "From the feedback we have received so far the show was a tremendous success for the local business community by providing an arena to network and meet new business contacts."

"We look forward to building on the success of the past two years to create an even more exciting show next year."

Exhibitors at the show, which was sponsored by Team South West, Relays, County Marquees and Manor Printing with Swindon Business News as media partner, were drawn from a variety of sectors.

The speed networking sessions, which enabled people to network in a fun, fast-paced environment, were a resounding success having been fully

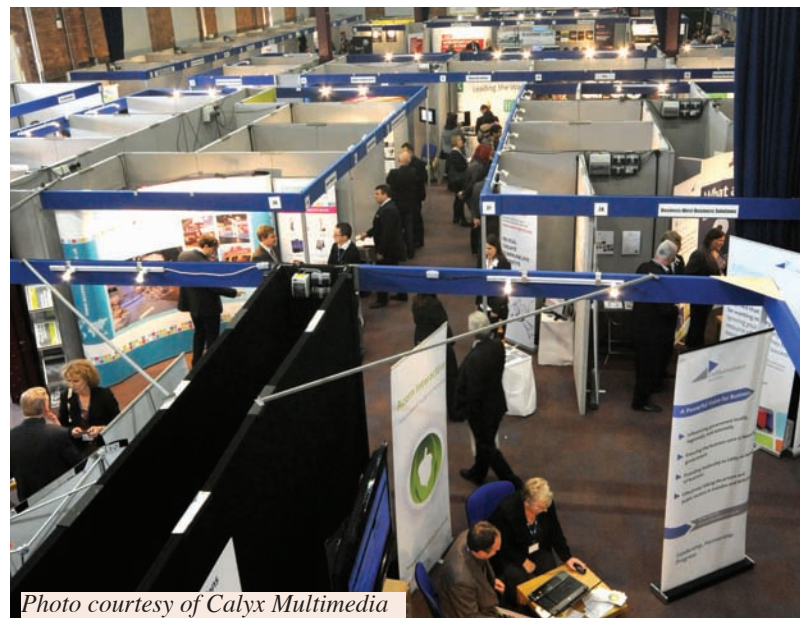


Photo courtesy of Calyx Multimedia

booked before the event.

The GWE LinkedIn group espresso bar also proved a popular way of bringing members together.

Business Transformers director Robin Johnson, who attended both the espresso bar and the speed networking, said: "The combination of speed networking sessions and the LinkedIn espresso bar meant this was an excellent exhibition for making connections."

Among the exhibitors was Swindon's Campanile hotel.

To keep pace with shifting customer expectations, Campanile maintains a progressive renovation programme for its hotels and restaurants in France and the rest of Europe.

In new generation Campanile hotels every last detail is carefully thought out for guests' wellbeing with top designer Patrick Jouin responsible for everything including rooms, restaurants and lounge bars. The hotel chain says its rooms are more comfortable than ever with premium bedding and duvet, quality materials, flat screen LCD television and free wi-fi. Also exhibiting was Hills Waste, a wholly-

owned subsidiary of the Hills Group, the Marlborough-based independent family-owned business which has been operating in the waste industry since 1957 providing waste management, treatment, recycling and disposal services to commercial and domestic customers across Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Bristol, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Dorset.

It was the first time at the show for Nexus Business Centre, which opens on March 1 offering attractive, keenly-priced, serviced offices, hot-desk packages and serviced/lease space – all under one roof.

It says the choice between furnished or unfurnished workspace, plus free parking, restaurant/coffee shop, business hub and high speed wi-fi internet access, mean working and doing business has never been more flexible – or affordable.

Another exhibitor which found the show useful was Soaring Worldwide, which helps businesses power reputations and grow through research, planning, PR, events, media relations, creative copy, emotive films, social media and more.

## New name and a new start at conference

The SSEP annual conference, which took place alongside the Business Show Swindon, provided Swindon & Wiltshire LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) chairman Paul Johnson with his first opportunity to speak since taking over in that role.

Describing himself as Swindon born and bred, he said he had spent most of his life living and working in Wiltshire, most recently as chairman at railway engineering firm Knorr-Bremse in Melksham. That gave him an invaluable insight into the county and its potential.

The LEP, he said, would be a catalyst for job creation and would build on the strength of the economy in Swindon and Wiltshire.

The challenge set for the LEP by the Government is to help create 10,000 jobs by 2015 and safeguard a further 8,000. This would be achieved through new business start-ups, new inward investment and by introducing superfast broadband across the county.

The county faced some major challenges, he said. Some 44 per cent of its 3,500 sq km were designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty. The 780 sq km of S

Despite being the 37th LEP to be approved out of 39, it had made rapid progress, he said. A business plan had been drafted and would be rolled out over the next few months. Importantly, £6.34m Government funding had been secured to help open up development areas. This

could involve helping local authorities fund infrastructure to speed up the development of business parks or housing schemes across the county.

"This is a one-off to kick start the LEP," Mr Johnson told the conference.

During the conference SSEP chair Nicky Alberry announced its name change to Influence.

She said the organisation would continue its role of "making sure the business voice is heard loud and clear, particularly around economic development".

There had been a number of major achievements during the year, she said, including the commitment to electrify the main railway line into Paddington and dual the Kemble line.

Influence was also lobbying to get the long hoped for direct rail link from Swindon to Heathrow.

The council had also been lobbied over the draft core strategy which had given business a greater say in influencing the economic blueprint for the town.

Forward Swindon chief executive Ian Piper described the economic development firm's successes including kick-starting the station forecourt regeneration, the start of work at Union Square – the new commercial zone for Swindon town centre – and the open access hydrogen refuelling station at the Honda plant which puts the town on the 'green highway'.

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The legal landscape is constantly changing, making it difficult for directors to keep up with a seemingly endless stream of new rules and regulations. Here, solicitors from Withy King's commercial teams in Swindon highlight a few recent developments and signal changes to be aware of over the next few months.

### Reminder to Mediate

A recent Court of Appeal decision reaffirmed that litigants are expected to seriously consider and engage in mediation, particularly when the value in dispute is disproportionately low compared to the costs of litigation. This means that a party who succeeds in his claim or defence but who has failed to engage in mediation without a legitimate excuse will be found to have behaved unreasonably by the court and is likely to be made to pay costs.

### Cookies Compliance

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published new guidance on compliance with 2011's EU 'Cookie Law' Regulations which changed the rules that apply to websites using cookies to remember a user's preferences. The guidance includes examples of good practice and details of where the ICO expects the regulatory focus to be. Website owners have until May 2012 to comply with the rules which generally require websites wanting to use cookies to gain the user's consent.

### Unfair Dismissal

With effect from 6 April 2012, the qualifying period for unfair dismissal will increase from one to two years. Any new employees starting employment on or after this date will have to work for two years before gaining statutory protection from unfair dismissal. Staff starting before 6 April will benefit from the current one year rule. It's also worth noting that from 1 February, the amount of a 'week's pay' for the purposes of calculating statutory redundancy payments increased from £400 to £430.

### Break Clauses

Not complying with the specific conditions of a break clause can render a tenant's break notice void. Recent case law emphasises the strict nature in which break clauses are interpreted; a tenant who had failed to pay 'default interest' on late payments of sums under its lease, had not complied with the break clause. It was held that the break clause had not been validly operated and the tenant remains liable for the duration of its lease.

*For further information on these or any other business issues, please visit [www.withyking.co.uk](http://www.withyking.co.uk) or contact Alex Pyatt, head of the commercial team at Withy King Solicitors in Swindon on 01793 536526 or email [alex.pyatt@withyking.co.uk](mailto:alex.pyatt@withyking.co.uk)*



Alex Pyatt, Partner, Withy King

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## Expert advice to be given for dealing with bullying at work

A leading specialist on mediation in the workplace is joined by a top Swindon lawyer and local representatives from public sector trade union UNISON in a special awareness session on workplace bullying and stress.

The free event is the first of 2012 to be staged by the Swindon Mindful Employer Network and takes place from 10am to 12.15pm on Thursday March 1 at Swindon's De Vere Village Hotel.

Paul Archer, employment lawyer at Swindon law firm Lemon&Co will look at the issue of workplace bullying and stress in the first half of the meeting. He will then be joined on the discussion panel by barrister and mediator Sarah Crayford Brown, of Chippenham-based Mediation In The Workplace, and Stuart Dark and Neil Harvey of UNISON, who will share their experiences of the impact of bullying on employees and the work environment.

Richmond Fellowship Wiltshire's David Latham who manages the Swindon Mindful Employer Network said: "It is important to get a private and public sector view on the prominence of workplace bullying and mental illness and I am very pleased that UNISON have agreed to join our discussion panel.

"The trade union perspective on this matter will be a valuable contribution to help employers understand how a negative business culture damages their efficiency and reputation. We are also delighted that Sarah will take part in this event.

"Her expertise on workplace conflicts and mediation – and her years in senior management at the Crown Prosecution Service – will make this a fascinating event for all employers."

Sarah added: "Tackling bullying within the workplace is an area which employers cannot afford to ignore.

"I spend much of my time working with organisations where a dispute has initially been caused through misunderstanding but has grown into a conflict with serious consequences for all the parties because inadequate action was taken at an earlier stage".

Stuart Dark of UNISON said: "Unfortunately we deal with frequent cases of bullying and see the harm it is having on people and the work environment. Understanding and awareness of some of the complex issues surrounding bullying can be an asset in reducing such cases."

Representatives from businesses of all sizes are welcome to attend.

*To book a place on this free event call David Latham on 01793 433571 or email: [smen@richmond-fellowship.org.uk](mailto:smen@richmond-fellowship.org.uk)*

## HW encourages small businesses to aim high

Smaller companies with strong management teams and a proven track record are uniquely well placed to grow right now.

Lots of owner managers and directors might be surprised to hear that, but the current business environment means that there are businesses out there to acquire. For companies on the acquisition trail, that's good news and there are bargains to be found.

Preparing a credible, proven growth strategy document for presentation and before seeking acquisition funding, will strengthen your position substantially. Lenders want to see that you know your own business, your own markets, your competitors and your customer bases and that you have accurately assessed your growth potential. They also want to see that you've done the due diligence on your proposed acquisition target.

There is help available says Mike Lloyd, senior partner at Haines Watts in Swindon: "Most people are very good at their particular trade or profession but when they start out they don't necessarily have the business grounding to have goals in place. We can help them work out a business plan for regular review which sets achievable goals for growth.

"We sit down and talk to our clients, encourage them to think about what they want to achieve, set out objectives, create the right

management structure and so on. Growth should be much easier if you have got the right product at the right price that people want to purchase. Growth needs opportunity and luck will play its part to some extent. However, you also need the ability to identify a new product or service that will be in demand."

If you're looking to acquire, your business still needs to be an attractive prospect in a challenging environment.

Finding funding is the main challenge for most. Banks will lend, but very cautiously and with minimal risk attached. Private equity, venture capital and business angels offer opportunities to grow and develop. Bear in mind, though, that if you do a deal here then you will be trading some of your equity against funds. At some point, you are going to have to buy those funders out or sell the business to pay them back.

All of these can be as selective as they please and many applicants are turned down simply because they lack the communications skills to pitch properly.

However high-tech a business is, owners and directors have to be able to communicate what it does and how it works to a non-specialist potential investor and building a good relationship with your bank manager is key to achieving your aims.

For further information, contact Mike Lloyd on 01793 533838 or email [mlloyd@hwca.com](mailto:mlloyd@hwca.com)



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## How to reduce your tax bill the smart way

Inheritance tax is often regarded as a tax of choice, but with an expected Government yield of £2.7 billion in the current year and the extension of the disclosure of tax avoidance schemes regime to include inheritance tax, what can be done to reduce your potential exposure to inheritance tax?

We review some basic inheritance tax planning ideas that can reduce your tax bill in the future.

Inheritance tax is payable if your assets exceed the inheritance tax "nil rate band". The current nil rate band is £325,000 and it will be frozen at this level until 5 April 2015. Lifetime gifts may also be included as part of your estate if you do not survive seven years from the date of the gift.

There are however some exemptions available. Assets left to your spouse and gifts to charity are exempt from inheritance tax. Any unused nil rate band may be passed to your spouse for use against their own estate in the future.

An annual exemption of £3,000 per tax year is available to set against the value of lifetime gifts and small gifts of up to £250 to each recipient are also exempt from inheritance tax. Whilst these exemptions may seem very small, if they are utilised by a couple annually gifting say, £3,000 each to two children and £250 each to four grandchildren, this will provide a joint inheritance tax saving of £32,000 over a 10 year period.

In addition if you have surplus income this can be gifted, subject to satisfying certain conditions, and immediately is outside your estate for

Sharon Omer-Kaye



Inheritance Tax purposes. There are also a number of IHT efficient investment strategies which can be adopted to reduce your liability without losing control of the asset.

Business owners have additional inheritance tax reliefs available to them. Property used in a business and shares in unquoted trading companies may qualify for "business property relief" and land and property used in farming businesses may also qualify for "agricultural property relief". Both reliefs provide 100% or 50% tax relief from inheritance tax but particular conditions must be met to qualify.

RSM Tenon can advise on the most tax efficient business and wealth planning strategies involving basic and complex structures including trust arrangements to help reduce your potential inheritance tax liability.

For more information:  
Sharon Omer-Kaye  
tax director  
sharon.omer-kaye@rsmtenon.com

## Watersheds negotiates a successful exit for the MBO team at CQC

Watersheds, the Swindon-based Corporate Finance Specialists, has successfully completed the sale of CQC Limited for owners Mike Rennie and Pete Gulliford, to a group of private investors led by Simon Morrish, John Pelosi and Paul Perera for a substantial seven figure sum.

CQC designs and manufactures military load carriage, body armour and equipment for the armed services and Special Forces in the UK and overseas. The company has supplied equipment to the MoD for use in Iraq and then Afghanistan for a number of years and turned over in excess of £13 million in its last financial year.

Having acquired the company as a Management Buy-Out from Avon Rubber in the 1990s, the shareholders were approaching retirement age and keen to find an exit. It was critical to find a buyer with the ability to fund an acceptable purchase price in the current market, but who also brought with them a management team to facilitate the owners' retirement after a sensible transition. It was also important to them to find a buyer who would nurture and grow the business and its staff, and continue to deliver first class service to its high profile customers across the globe. John Pelosi, who has a long and high profile track record in the Defence industry, will take over as managing director, with Simon Morrish becoming chairman.

Sue Green of Watersheds said: "CQC is a strong and well run business, with a reputation second-to-none in its industry. However, we were under no illusion that current market conditions, with limited access to funding and global market



uncertainty, would make finding a suitable buyer and an acceptable deal extremely challenging. The lack of second tier management to replace the owners and the dependence of the business on key defence customers meant that finding a buyer required creativity, perseverance and sheer determination.

"After a couple of 'false starts' with buyers who simply couldn't raise the money to do a deal, I am delighted to have been able to achieve a great result for both Mike and Pete, and the company as a whole."

Mike Rennie said: "It was important to Pete and I that we found the right fit. We have long since considered ourselves to be the latest

custodians of a business which has endured for more than sixty years and we wanted to be confident that a new management team would appreciate and nurture our most loyal workforce. Sue Green was an ideal champion for our cause; she took the time to understand our business and was able to promote our company with confidence and professionalism. The whole process was a rollercoaster experience which Sue was extremely capable of steering to a very successful journey's end.

"We are very pleased that the new team have asked us both to remain as directors and shareholders and we shall use our best endeavours to ensure the company's continued success."



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## Monahans helps crisp entrepreneur become the big cheese at own firm

Specialist corporate finance advice and on-going support from Swindon accountants Monahans has helped food industry entrepreneur Melvin Glynn buy and develop a small cheese processing and wholesale business.

Mr Glynn is managing director of fast-growing crisps business Burts but wanted to acquire a business with potential. With a passion for cheese – he was previously commercial director of Ilchester Cheese Co and started his career at Western Cheese in Corsham – his new venture was likely to be in the dairy sector.

He chose Peter Lugg and Alison Bradshaw of Monahans Corporate Finance to help him acquire Windyridge Cheese, based in Wincanton.

The existing owners, Richard Harvey and Melanie Smith, had launched the company in 2002 and built a healthy small business, processing and wholesaling flavoured cheese as a sideline to their farming business.

Peter and Alison, who is based in Monahans' Swindon office, worked alongside London-based law firm Oghma Partners, specialists in advising European food and beverage companies, initially completing the financial due diligence for the deal.

They then helped Mr Glynn and his team access the right funding package and assisted with the financial forecasts required by the financiers. Monahans also provided specialist tax advice to ensure the acquisition was as tax efficient as possible.

Mr Glynn's team was so impressed with Monahans that they have appointed the firm to provide on-going accountancy support and Linda Boss from Monahans has already assisted them in a number of ways.

Under the new ownership, business at Windyridge has already gone from strength to strength with Christmas trading comfortably up on the previous year.

Peter Lugg said: "This acquisition gives the team



Alison Bradshaw and Melvin Glynn

the opportunity to build on a great small business, utilising all their skills and experience in the food industry. We look forward to seeing Windyridge cheese on many supermarket shelves in the near future."



# Swindon's Top 100 Companies

## Table showcases strength in depth

The Top 100 list of companies in Swindon and North Wiltshire has, over the years, become an indispensable guide to the area's most successful businesses.

Uniquely, it ranks by turnover businesses whose main trading office is in the SN postcode, offering a snapshot of the area's industrial make up.

But in the current chilly economic climate it also serves as a vital way of taking the pulse of the economy of Swindon and the surrounding towns – and as in previous years it proves that its strength is in the breadth and depth of its businesses.

Few areas across the UK can boast such a diverse range of companies. Businesses in the Top 100 span truly global players such as US microchip giant Intel, the number one-ranked business, and Japanese car giant Honda's UK manufacturing arm – at number 6 – to home-grown success stories such as household appliance pioneers Dyson in 10th position.

Much has been made over the past few years of the need for the UK economy to be rebalanced away from financial services to value-added manufacturing, advanced engineering and companies with export potential.

Swindon Business News' Top 100 table shows this doesn't need to happen in Swindon and North Wiltshire. The area already has a very mixed economy.

While there are some major financial services players – Zurich Assurance is at number four – the sector by no means dominates.

Of the top 30, only one other company – financial advice firm Openwork – is purely finance sector-based.

The remaining 28 span the power, electronics, logistics, automotive, retail, healthcare and manufacturing sectors.

Household names such as Dyson and WH Smith are ranked alongside companies which are barely known by the public such as Lubricants UK – although its core product Castrol is one of the world's leading brands.

The table shows the importance of the automotive industry to the area – and not just from Honda. The Japanese firm has three separate businesses in the rankings – Honda of the UK Manufacturing (its main car and engine production business at South Marston) at 6, Honda Trading Europe (its Kembrey Park-based purchasing and supply business) at number 13, and Honda R&D Europe (its research and development arm, also based at South Marston) ranked at 84.

But other automotive-related businesses are also strong – from fleet car giant Arval at number 3, to Melksham-based specialist tyre firm Cooper at 19, and from BMW's Swindon Pressings (which makes most of the MINI's body panels) at 21, to DTR VMS, the Chippenham-based producer of engine vibration management systems at 65.

The pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors are likely to become more important with an ageing population and the growing need for cost-effective treatment and care. This area is home to some major players in these sectors including global sterilisation group Synergy Health (14), and drugs makers Catalent (33), Patheon (38) and Alliance Pharma (51). Some of the area's traditional and long-standing engineering firms are still present, albeit under different names. Melksham-based railway engineers Knorr-Bremse has its roots in Chippenham's once mighty Westinghouse group of rail engineering businesses. DTR VMS was formerly an Avon Rubber subsidiary, as was Cooper Tire & Rubber. Swindon-based lingerie and swimwear maker Triumph International remains in the table (at 59) although it no longer manufactures in the town.

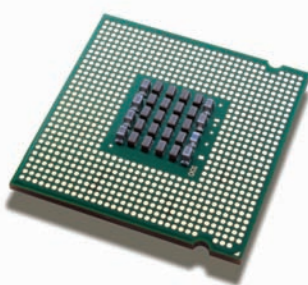
### COMPANY PROFILE: Synergy Health

Synergy Health was founded in 1991 through the introduction of surgical packs into theatres to reduce the rate of HIV infection. Since then the company has grown tremendously into the multinational organisation that it is today. Synergy is currently present in 13 countries and employs over 4,500 people worldwide, with plans to continue the growth in the years ahead.

Synergy Health has a strong employee centric culture and this is reinforced through the corporate values, which have been rolled out across the group on a global basis, these values are embedded into every aspect of working life and capture the essence of its brand.

This year Synergy Health celebrates its 20th anniversary with the harmonisation of its brand globally; helping to strengthen its position within the markets in which it operates in. Dr Richard Steeves, CEO comments:

"I am encouraged to learn that Synergy Health has been awarded as one of the leading companies in Swindon. Swindon has been the location of our head office for a significant period of time and we are committed to the continued development of the company."



**Intel - 1**  
*US microelectronics giant*

**Wincanton - 5**  
*Fast-growing logistics operator*



**Swindon Pressings - 22**  
*MINI car production*

**Dyson - 10**  
*Pioneering household appliance group*



*Synergy Health delivers a range of specialist outsourced services to healthcare providers and other clients concerned with health management. These services are aimed at supporting our customers to improve the quality and efficiency of their activities, whilst reducing risks to their patients and clients.*

#### Synergy Health has achieved market leading positions in the following areas:

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- Applied Sterilisation Technologies for single-use medical devices and other specialist products;
- Healthcare Solutions to manage the patient's environment, specialising in infection control, wound care and surgical products and services;
- Laboratory Services including clinical pathology, toxicology and microbiological services, together with occupational health programmes;
- Pharmaceutical Laboratories for chemical and microbiological analysis;
- Linen Management Services for healthcare facilities.

For more information about the range of services available from synergy Health please contact us:

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# Swindon's Top

POS	COMPANY NAME	Turnover £'000s Last avail. yr	Turnover £'000s Prev. yr	Profit/Loss before tax £'000s Last avail. yr	Profit/Loss before tax £'000s Prev. yr	Staff (UK)
1	<b>INTEL CORPORATION (UK)</b> <i>Semiconductor chip maker, Swindon</i>	3,589,331	3,297,834	125,560	70,378	891
2	<b>NPOWER</b> <i>Electricity supplier, Swindon</i>	3,130,000	3,304,000	-22,100	-11,200	8,098
3	<b>ARVAL UK GROUP</b> <i>Fleet management, Swindon</i>	2,999,521	2,843,696	65,258	25,459	910
4	<b>ZURICH ASSURANCE</b> <i>Insurer, Swindon</i>	2,674,000	2,280,000	381,000	225,000	n.a.
5	<b>WINCANTON</b> <i>Logistics, Chippenham</i>	2,180,400	2,361,300	-25,900	20,000	25,880
6	<b>HONDA OF THE UK MANUFACTURING</b> <i>Car manufacturer, Swindon</i>	1,980,848	2,039,374	7,204	-2,708	3,149
7	<b>SMITHS NEWS</b> <i>Wholesale magazine distributor, Swindon</i>	1,734,400	1,326,000	32,100	18,400	5,073
8	<b>WH SMITH</b> <i>Retailer, Swindon</i>	1,273,000	1,340,000	93,000	82,000	16,273
9	<b>FIRST GREATER WESTERN</b> <i>Rail carrier, Swindon</i>	902,842	766,710	-54,330	-12,514	4,784
10	<b>DYSON JAMES GROUP</b> <i>manufacture and sale of domestic appliances, Malmesbury</i>	886,500	n.a.	197,700	n.a.	2,730
11	<b>WATSON PETROLEUM</b> <i>Fuel supplier, Malmesbury</i>	834,140	500,066	8,129	8,784	667
12	<b>MAN UK TRUCK &amp; BUS</b> <i>Vehicle supplier, Swindon</i>	583,754	587,448	15,596	-20,510	715
13	<b>CAMBRIA AUTOMOBILES</b> <i>Sale and servicing of vehicles, Swindon</i>	373,303	255,466	4,656	2,331	960
14	<b>HONDA TRADING EUROPE</b> <i>Car parts sourcing, Swindon</i>	363,931	415,870	4,139	6,632	77
15	<b>SYNERGY HEALTH</b> <i>Healthcare and sterilisation, Swindon</i>	287,314	274,100	36,733	16,332	4,301
16	<b>DICK LOVETT COMPANIES</b> <i>Sale and maintenance of vehicles, Swindon</i>	261,922	224,456	6,152	4,796	464
17	<b>TYCO ELECTRONICS UK</b> <i>Electronics manufacturer, Swindon</i>	208,988	167,378	14,698	-8,789	1,510
18	<b>LUBRICANTS UK</b> <i>Blending and marketing of lubricants, Swindon</i>	200,827	202,600	-9,390	-27,081	723
19	<b>DIALOG SEMICONDUCTOR</b> <i>Semiconductor manufacturer, Swindon</i>	189,434	134,753	28,270	17,849	369
20	<b>COOPER TIRE &amp; RUBBER COMPANY EUROPE</b> <i>Tyre distributor, Melksham</i>	182,987	165,174	10,843	13,984	862
21	<b>WAVIN</b> <i>Pipe systems supplier, Chippenham</i>	176,249	98,852	9,548	4,374	1,146
22	<b>SWINDON PRESSINGS</b> <i>Manufacturer of car body pressings, Swindon</i>	147,361	162,297	3,315	7,730	841
23	<b>FAIRCHILD SEMICONDUCTOR</b> <i>Manufacturer of semiconductors, Swindon</i>	140,157	91,347	386	101	45
24	<b>STONEGATE HOLDINGS</b> <i>Egg producer, Corsham</i>	137,325	147,542	4,132	4,613	519
25	<b>AVON RUBBER</b> <i>Manufacturer of rubber components, Melksham</i>	107,600	91,688	10,212	991	750
26	<b>ECOLAB</b> <i>Hygiene products manufacturer, Swindon</i>	104,368	100,102	-589	-3,600	980
27	<b>KNORR-BREMSE RAIL SYSTEMS (UK)</b> <i>Manufacturer of braking systems for rail, Melksham</i>	100,351	71,841	10,846	5,577	351
28	<b>UNITED OILSEEDS MARKETING</b> <i>Commodity merchants, Devizes</i>	100,346	54,625	819	1,027	27
29	<b>FONTERRA (LOGISTICS)</b> <i>Importers of dairy products, Swindon</i>	97,945	87,980	145	565	3
30	<b>T. H. WHITE HOLDINGS</b> <i>Agricultural and automotive services, Swindon</i>	96,325	99,197	2,247	2,562	481
31	<b>OPENWORK HOLDINGS</b> <i>Financial advisers, Swindon</i>	94,622	n.a.	-8,692	n.a.	331
32	<b>COTSWOLD OUTDOOR</b> <i>Leisure retailer, South Cerney</i>	88,904	72,678	4,164	3,841	1,127
33	<b>INTRINSIC FINANCIAL SERVICES</b> <i>Financial services, Swindon</i>	87,343	73,420	-2,282	-3,125	141
34	<b>CATALENT UK SWINDON ZYDIS</b> <i>Pharmaceutical developer and supplier, Swindon</i>	81,122	63,867	24,242	11,960	586
35	<b>CAPITA SECURE INFORMATION SOLUTIONS</b> <i>Financial and asset advisers, Chippenham</i>	78,144	110,600	6,378	10,485	964
36	<b>FISH BROTHERS (HOLDINGS)</b> <i>Car dealer, Swindon</i>	77,611	72,409	1,474	1,357	289
37	<b>HERMAN MILLER</b> <i>Furniture manufacturer, Chippenham</i>	76,740	85,309	-2,544	2,200	318
38	<b>HILLS UK</b> <i>Waste management, Marlborough</i>	76,567	66,329	5,275	2,344	398
39	<b>PATHEON UK</b> <i>Pharmaceutical manufacturer, Swindon</i>	76,508	57,908	24,384	4,075	603
40	<b>MW HIGH TECH PROJECTS UK</b> <i>Engineering and construction, Chippenham</i>	68,700	47,171	2,187	-5,448	80
41	<b>SWINDON COMMERCIAL SERVICES</b> <i>Maintenance and waste management, Swindon</i>	66,691	n.a.	150	n.a.	552
42	<b>ZIMMER</b> <i>Manufacturer of orthopaedic implants, Swindon</i>	65,731	65,060	4,046	3,863	120
43	<b>CARTUS HOLDINGS</b> <i>Insurance, Swindon</i>	65,053	71,302	3,572	9,573	341
44	<b>T. QUALITY</b> <i>Fish and chip shop suppliers, Swindon</i>	64,006	62,673	569	585	218
45	<b>QUADRANT CATERING</b> <i>Caterers, Swindon</i>	59,062	65,465	9,549	10,374	1,450
46	<b>ACCESS PLUS MARKETING SERVICES</b> <i>Print management and business communications, Swindon</i>	56,715	26,337	-1,800	2,202	214
47	<b>DANISCO (UK)</b> <i>Food manufacturer, Marlborough</i>	54,890	49,969	3,877	18,604	102
48	<b>ZEPHYR INVESTMENTS</b> <i>Investment management, Swindon</i>	53,446	69,787	-20,494	-938	11
49	<b>VYGON (UK)</b> <i>Medical supplier, Swindon</i>	52,622	52,506	8,512	9,144	135
50	<b>SCOTTS</b> <i>Specialist retailer, Swindon</i>	52,252	50,907	2,057	249	203



# 100 Companies

POS	COMPANY NAME	Turnover £'000s Last avail. yr	Turnover £'000s Prev. yr	Profit/Loss before tax £'000s Last avail. yr	Profit/Loss before tax £'000s Prev. yr	Staff (UK)
51	<b>WADWORTH AND COMPANY</b> <i>Beer and ale producer, Devizes</i>	52,090	52,590	4,675	5,873	632
52	<b>ALLIANCE PHARMA</b> <i>Pharmaceutical manufacturer, Chippenham</i>	49,881	31,237	12,872	5,740	48
53	<b>HOCHTIEF (UK) CONSTRUCTION</b> <i>Construction company, Swindon</i>	47,567	43,452	650	481	128
54	<b>TAMURA-EUROPE</b> <i>Electronics manufacturer, Calne</i>	47,273	39,310	-324	32	437
55	<b>EW BEARD (HOLDINGS)</b> <i>Construction company, Swindon</i>	46,481	50,073	608	726	163
56	<b>SCISYS</b> <i>IT developer, Chippenham</i>	43,591	41,720	1,576	510	426
57	<b>QMP (HOLDINGS)</b> <i>Property agents, Swindon</i>	43,449	68,362	1,890	3,231	23
58	<b>VECTURA GROUP</b> <i>Developer of inhaler technologies, Chippenham</i>	42,900	31,200	-13,300	-19,600	256
59	<b>GRANT ENGINEERING (UK)</b> <i>Engineering company, Devizes</i>	41,598	n.a.	484	164	58
60	<b>TRIUMPH INTERNATIONAL</b> <i>Underwear retailer, Swindon</i>	41,565	46,052	-5,726	-4,933	251
61	<b>STANLEY SECURITY SOLUTIONS</b> <i>Security provider, Swindon</i>	41,476	52,768	2,949	4,455	392
62	<b>EXCEPTION GROUP</b> <i>Printed circuit board supplier, Calne</i>	41,397	n.a.	2,010	n.a.	375
63	<b>FSG HOLDINGS</b> <i>Fleet management, Chippenham</i>	40,811	38,817	2,428	1,908	128
64	<b>LATCHWAYS</b> <i>Protective equipment supplier, Devizes</i>	39,563	36,960	9,325	8,309	225
65	<b>TCG BARS</b> <i>Pub management, Swindon</i>	39,113	41,545	-1,914	-657	800
66	<b>DTR VMS</b> <i>Manufacturer of dampening equipment, Chippenham</i>	35,643	28,680	641	-469	179
67	<b>RENELEC</b> <i>Construction suppliers, Devizes</i>	33,848	31,050	55	1	452
68	<b>WESTCODE SEMICONDUCTORS</b> <i>Semiconductor manufacturer, Chippenham</i>	33,722	28,704	2,061	1,242	222
69	<b>TICAN UK</b> <i>Meat suppliers, Chippenham</i>	33,645	36,401	460	214	197
70	<b>G PLAN UPHOLSTERY</b> <i>Furniture maker, Melksham</i>	33,598	37,675	3,892	3,804	6
71	<b>IS-RAYFAST</b> <i>Equipment supplier, Swindon</i>	32,900	22,790	6,781	5,050	241
72	<b>KOCH FERTILISER</b> <i>Fertilizer distributor, Marlborough</i>	32,569	21,893	155	252	121
73	<b>INTERCONNECT PRODUCTS</b> <i>Electronic component distributor, Swindon</i>	31,543	n.a.	5,040	2,314	8
74	<b>REFLEX ELECTRONICS</b> <i>Electronics, Swindon</i>	31,543	n.a.	4,781	n.a.	18
75	<b>TM GROUP (UK)</b> <i>Online systems provider to conveyancers, Swindon</i>	31,208	32,408	450	617	18
76	<b>CELLULAR OPERATIONS</b> <i>Manufacturer of electronics, Swindon</i>	30,931	40,002	4,158	4,309	65
77	<b>CANBURG</b> <i>Furniture maker, Devizes</i>	27,359	27,359	-4,451	-4,451	n.a.
78	<b>RAILSTON DESIGN</b> <i>Shopfitters, Swindon</i>	26,681	18,829	712	359	269
79	<b>SAICA NATUR UK</b> <i>Paper manufacturer, Malmesbury</i>	26,571	16,324	907	1,462	248
80	<b>MULTIVAC UK</b> <i>Packaging supplier, Swindon</i>	26,485	19,286	2,255	1,159	73
81	<b>BATHWICK TYRES (HOLDINGS)</b> <i>Tyre supplier, Chippenham</i>	26,323	23,683	190	376	29
82	<b>THREADNEEDLE PORTFOLIO SERVICES</b> <i>Financial services, Swindon</i>	26,140	24,973	5,604	4,458	80
83	<b>JB GLOBAL</b> <i>Furniture company, Swindon</i>	25,913	n.a.	1,885	n.a.	197
84	<b>CPI ANTONY ROWE LTD</b> <i>Book printers, Chippenham</i>	25,362	19,211	2,091	499	30
85	<b>HONDA R &amp; D EUROPE (UK)</b> <i>Automotive research and development, Swindon</i>	23,895	18,708	674	665	113
86	<b>INTERGRAPH (UK)</b> <i>Engineering software supplier, Swindon</i>	23,344	18,294	923	1,721	273
87	<b>MANULI PACKAGING (UK)</b> <i>Packaging supplier, Corsham</i>	22,972	18,462	271	90	63
88	<b>BALL AEROCAN UK</b> <i>Aluminium can manufacturer, Devizes</i>	22,881	19,797	4,766	3,894	122
89	<b>GEMINI MOTOR COMPANY</b> <i>Car dealer, Ashton Keynes</i>	22,553	21,176	546	369	38
90	<b>SOUTH MARSTON DC</b> <i>Suppli chain management, Swindon</i>	22,553	25,288	1,638	851	103
91	<b>CHIPPENHAM MOTOR COMPANY</b> <i>Car dealer, Chippenham</i>	22,553	21,176	503	332	70
92	<b>SPORTS TRADERS ALLIANCE GROUP</b> <i>Buying group, Swindon</i>	22,375	n.a.	882	n.a.	490
93	<b>OMITEC GROUP</b> <i>Diagnostic equipment supplier, Devizes</i>	21,945	28,111	17	-752	70
94	<b>THRINGS LLP</b> <i>Solicitors, Swindon</i>	21,452	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
95	<b>CRANE MERCHANDISING SYSTEMS</b> <i>Vending machine supplier, Chippenham</i>	21,247	17,284	-305	-680	244
96	<b>RYZEX</b> <i>Barcode scanner provider, Chippenham</i>	20,951	14,108	573	22	304
97	<b>LINVATEC UK</b> <i>Medical equipment supplier, Swindon</i>	20,444	n.a.	405	318	76
98	<b>DELORO STELLITE</b> <i>Anti-wear product manufacturer, Swindon</i>	19,769	22,562	-424	176	3
99	<b>GALILEO PORTUGAL</b> <i>Trading stamp promotion, Swindon</i>	19,720	18,419	990	1,155	n.a.
100	<b>OUTSOURCE UK</b> <i>IT recruitment, Swindon</i>	19,359	21,931	542	549	100



## Jury's Hotel takes on TBG Learning to recruit staff

National training organisation TBG Learning has secured a deal to become Jurys Inn's preferred recruiter in Swindon – and the Fleming Way hotel has taken on three new staff members as a result.

TBG Learning, a not-for-profit owned organisation, with a centre on Station Road, is delivering the Government's flagship Work Programme on behalf of JobFit, which helps the long-term unemployed into work through a tailored package of support and assistance.

Among the three new joiners at Jurys Inn is Sally Fry, of Pinehurst.

Fifty-two-year-old Sally has joined the hotel's guest service team after years struggling to find full-time employment. She was introduced to the hotel by TBG Learning advisor Helen Saunders.

Sally said: "The hotel is a really nice place to work and has a really lovely atmosphere."

"It has been a while since I had a full-time job and to be honest everything happened quite quickly

from being introduced to TBG Learning. Helen and the team gave me a few pointers and helped me with my computer skills in particular, which was a great help because I was a bit of an IT novice.

"There's a nice vibe at the centre and it is also good to know I can contact Helen or anyone at TBG Learning at any point over the next two years if I have any issues at all."

Jurys Inn Swindon's human resources manager Carly Whitcombe said Sally was a welcome addition to the team and the hotel had already struck up a strong relationship with TBG Learning.

"The training TBG Learning offers through the Work Programme ties in very well with our own pre-employment programme and they support their customers extremely well," she said.

"First and foremost, Jurys Inn Swindon is interested in the friendliness of potential candidates rather than people with experience in the hotel industry."

"We're keen to work with the



Sally Fry with Helen Saunders from TBG Learning Swindon and Jurys Inn Swindon's HR manager Carly Whitcombe

local community and the local workforce, to ensure the hotel is a valuable asset to the area. So far we've employed three new staff who have been on the Work Programme, and they've been fantastic additions to our team.

"We're currently actively recruiting again using TBG Learning's services and will be

holding further interviews very soon."

Helen Saunders, of TBG Learning, added: "We've worked closely with Carly to help Jurys Inn to fill roles in the hotel's waitressing, food and beverage and kitchen teams and we're really pleased Sally and her new colleagues have settled in well."

"The Work Programme is proven to help people develop and hone their skills, boost confidence and ultimately help people back into work."

"We're continuing to grow our support across Swindon and help more and more people get back into work, and long may it continue."

## Many different course options available for students and firms

Swindon College is offering a wide range of part-time courses with many brand new subject areas relevant to the current skills marketplace in the Swindon area.

For those looking to learn a new skill, retrain or gain a new qualification, Swindon College aims to provide course and study options to suit every budget and provide as much flexibility as possible to access the right study options. The guide is also a great resource for employers looking to improve their business efficiency and

performance, enabling employees to gain valuable new skills which are available as short courses or even bite-size units, so training can be tailored to very specific requirements.

For those who would like more information on any of the courses available at Swindon College, contact student services on 0800 731 2250.

Business interested in discussing their staff development needs to find the right training solutions, please contact our Business First team on 01793 498404.

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\*City & Guilds, Building Business Through Apprenticeships Report - February 2011

March's Swindon Business News will include a special report on Chippenham, looking at the success of the M4 town and its future development.

To be involved in this feature call Anita on 01793 615393 or email [anita@swindon-business.net](mailto:anita@swindon-business.net)



# Business edge: IT simply applied

Ray Smyth of Swindon-based The IPstore says, "Business Continuity is the result of properly planned, expertly executed IT... It is 100% proactive; the rest is just blind panic..."

For an organisation using Information Technology (IT) as a routine part of its day-to-day work, the most modest of problems can cause real frustration, quickly impeding business operations. For understandable reasons, Business Continuity (BC) is often overlooked, which is a mistake.

BC addresses itself to every aspect of an organisation and it is not limited to IT; it must be informed and appropriate. IT is both the subject of BC provision and a means to deliver it.

IT in Business Continuity planning

To start with, an understanding of the risks and events your business is exposed to, and its attitude to each one is vital. A professional services organisation may continue trading in the event of a catastrophic loss of its offices, providing its staff can access the firms' data, as well as adequate Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services. Conversely, a manufacturing facility may not be so obviously resilient.

Technologies such as High Availability Computing, Virtualisation, and Cloud Computing, can deliver affordable BC services that were once the preserve of large Enterprises, to all organisations.

## Continuity of IT

As IT plays a bigger role in commerce, it is important to make sure that it doesn't adversely impact business operations, or create business failure. The considerations are specific to each organisation, but here are some universal considerations.

- Mobile computing. Ensure that mobile devices use known secure connections.
- Discontinue the use of passwords for system and data access.



Ray Smyth

- Establish low cost facilities, as contingency, to allow all staff to carry out their duties remotely in case of emergencies like volcanic ash, snow, flooding and the approaching Olympics.
- Prevent the loss of data, a large fine, damage to reputation, and loss of business by encrypting data.
- By managing and tracking computing devices, you can add extra safeguards, allowing data to be deleted from stolen and lost devices and enhance device recovery.
- Data backup is rarely taken seriously and there are services to augment the measures mentioned above, substantially improving continuity.

Every single IT related decision will have its impact on business continuity. It is only when defined business needs drive technology, that the IT dividend can be assured.

A longer version of this article is available at [www.theipstore.co.uk/news-store](http://www.theipstore.co.uk/news-store)

# Be aware of data security issues with printers and scanners, firms urged

Many firms using digital copiers, printers and scanners are unaware that they can cause data security problems.

Depending on their configuration, confidential data is often stored on the hard disc which can be retrieved, while passwords that should be reserved for engineers and administrators are often found on the Internet or in the associated manuals.

In addition, network systems are also easy to 'crack' as a result of missing IP filters and incorrect settings.

Swindon-based printing equipment supplier UTAX has integrated comprehensive security features in its printers and multifunction systems and provides support to specialist dealers with the implementation of IT security concepts in output management.

UTAX director Thomas Grethe said: "We provide holistic data security support to users by offering various different local security features on the system itself but also by ensuring broad protection at network level."

UTAX says it can meet strict security standards in critical sectors such as banking, tax advisory services and health services as all its equipment and software protect data against any unauthorised access.

Only those users who authenticate themselves by means of a PIN or contactless card readers will be allowed to print, scan or copy documents on the devices. In addition to the local registration on the system, UTAX systems also allow the USB host to be blocked or to prohibit the creation of a repeat copy. PDF encoding provides for more security during scanning.

# Protect and survive

By Ian Sumbler, Morris Owen

Data security, business continuity and disaster recovery, topics that strike fear into the heart of the IT manager but rarely cross the mind of the small businessman. But should they? Well the simple answer is yes, but in reality what does this mean, after all why do you need to plan for a disaster scenario, surely it won't happen.

## Data security

At the heart of the matter is the Data Protection Act 1998, which places statutory obligations on all organisations who hold personal information. In addition, the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS), with the prevalent use of electronic commerce in all its various forms, the onus is very much on the modern business to place Data Security and the centre of its thinking. The financial penalties of not doing so are now extensive, with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) now able to levy a fine of up to £500,000 and impose enforcement notices to rectify security lapses. We are not talking complex systems here, the loss of a memory stick, the theft of a laptop from a car, have caught the attention of the ICO. The key to securing personal information lies with encryption, with the latest guidance issued for portable and mobile devices used to store and transmit personal information, to be protected using approved encryption software.

The second point to make here, and one which is very often overlooked, is staff awareness. All staff who have access to personal information within an organisation should receive appropriate training on what is and isn't acceptable in their handling of that data.

## The future

The European Commission is proposing a comprehensive reform of its Data protection rules to strengthen individual's privacy rights, overdue in the light of how technology has changed the way data is collected, accessed and used.

## Business Continuity (and Disaster Recovery)

For many people, the daily backup of data is the extent of their protection should something go wrong, but there is a little more to it than that. If you were just to spend a few minutes thinking about the wider ramifications most of the answers become an exercise in common sense. The exercise becomes one of risk management



Ian Sumbler

- Reducing or eliminating the effect of an adverse event
- Protecting company assets
- Avoiding penalties from failure of delivery
- Avoiding adverse publicity
- Reducing stress

## Some very simple questions to ask

## If you are left with no IT or Telecoms Equipment

- Where are replacements coming from?
- What is the time delay?
- Support Maintenance contract cover
- Do you have one?
- Does it cover network reconstruction?
- Is the Service Level Agreement adequate?
- Where are the Software Licence Details?

## Consideration to your supply chain, your customers and just importantly your staff

- Are they affected, how are they affected?
  - How does that impact on you?
  - How are you communicating with them?
  - Directly
  - Indirectly
  - Is consumer confidence important?
  - Speed of recovery?
  - Seasonal variations?
- Lastly – write it all down!

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## Local display specialist short-listed for award

Swindon-based exhibition specialist Access Displays has been shortlisted in the Best Supplier to Exhibitors category in the sixth annual Exhibition News industry awards.

The awards recognise outstanding business performance across the exhibition community and Access Displays' chief executive Peter Bowen is delighted by the announcement.

"We are very proud of being shortlisted, given the incredibly fierce competition in this category," he said.

"I think our submission highlighted the key reasons why our clients keep choosing Access Displays; our specific knowledge of the industry, our expertise and

understanding of our customers needs and our high level of service and personal attention – here's hoping we win."

This announcement continues the company's excellent start to 2012, coming on the back of several major contract gains.

The awards are held at Olympia's new look West Hall on March 29.

Access Displays is a global supplier of exhibition panels and display equipment with more than 3,000 items for both the trade and end users, including shop fitting, signage and retail displays.

It can project manage exhibition stands from design to installation anywhere in the world.

## How to create the difference intelligently with Jazzbones

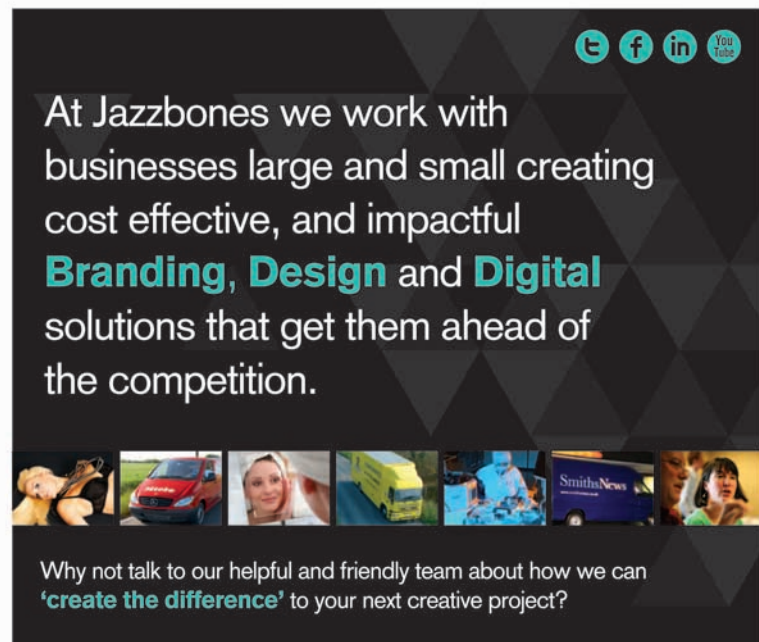
Jazzbones Creative, the Swindon-based branding agency, has been growing its client list by finding intelligent ways to 'create the difference' for businesses of all sizes.

In a challenging market, it is essential that businesses stand out from the crowd without simply spending more, says creative director Nathan Sandhu. "To deliver genuine results you need insightful thinking, impactful branding and fantastic imagery," he

said. "You need to be bold, but also savvy, spotting opportunities to get maximum return on your investment."

Jazzbones has developed a creative and digital strategy for SEQOL – a new Swindon enterprise that offers innovative health and social care across the region.

It's an exciting development that enables local communities to gain easy access to SEQOL's wide range of health and support services online.



At Jazzbones we work with businesses large and small creating cost effective, and impactful **Branding, Design and Digital** solutions that get them ahead of the competition.

Why not talk to our helpful and friendly team about how we can 'create the difference' to your next creative project?

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# In Profile: Nicky Alberry

By Jo Smyth

Sending a young, talented bank manager on a year's secondment to a business development organisation in Swindon probably seemed a good move to HSBC. The idea was she'd return a more developed and better qualified employee, full of new ideas to bring to the business.

Sadly, the decision backfired and at the end of the year she resigned from HSBC to take up a full-time post at her secondment place.

Bad news for HSBC, but great news for Swindon, because more than 20 years on Nicky Alberry is still at the helm of GWE Business West, helping businesses both new and established to develop, grow and bring prosperity to the town.

"HSBC weren't very pleased with me at the time," admits Nicky. "I came to work as a business advisor at GWE just for a year. I'd been used to sitting one side of the desk as a bank manager saying 'no, you can't borrow money' and now it was my opportunity to work with people who wanted to start a business. It was a big step for me, but a big opportunity and after about 18 months I became GWE director."

Swindon and Wiltshire are a true home to Nicky. She loves the town, the county and the people in it. It's just lacking a view of the sea, something she misses – not surprisingly, as she was born and brought up in Torquay.

"I got good A'levels and could have gone to university, but I didn't and for many years I regretted that," she says.

Instead, Nicky went to work at

HSBC (then Midland Bank) because her grandmother knew the bank manager in the local Torquay branch.

"I was really lucky, because he was someone who really encouraged me to continue to study, so over a five year period I took my banking exams. This was 1979, and in those days it was more usual for women in banking to either be a cashier, or move into training or HR

*"I'd been used to sitting one side of the desk as a bank manager saying 'no, you can't borrow money' and now it was my opportunity to work with people who wanted to start a business"*

and I didn't want to do any of those things."

Business was Nicky's true passion, and banking enabled her to work with businesses. "Business is in my family. My stepfather ran his own marine engineering company and one of my earliest memories as a child was on Sunday afternoons seeing my mother writing the bills out."

Once qualified as an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers Nicky's career really took off. She had already worked in several HSBC branches in Devon before transferring

to a Cornwall branch as their first female manager, to be part of the corporate recovery team.

Her next move was to Gloucestershire, to sort out a problem left in the wake of an over-generous bank manager who had, as she puts it, "lent money to anybody who had walked through the door – it was my role to try to get some of this money back".

Nicky stayed for a year, during which time she made herself somewhat unpopular with those whose debts she called in, and was then moved to manage a large Cheltenham branch.

It was during her time there that she took up the offer of secondment to GWE, the organisation which had emerged from the demise of Swindon's railway works. Funded by BR, its aim was to get the 3,000 people made redundant back into employment.

Under Nicky's guidance, GWE expanded its brief and began helping existing businesses, as well as start-ups. It also shed its BR origins by investing the BR funding on buildings, which it turned into managed office space and workshops.

By 1995, Nicky was Chief Executive of GWE, by then one of the fastest-growing companies in the South West, employing around 200 people. Yet it was still a social enterprise, ploughing any profits back into new services rather than distributing them among shareholders.

In 2008, GWE merged with Business West in Bristol to create GWE Business West, covering Swindon, Bristol and Gloucestershire and Nicky became Chairman of the new company.

## 'Festival of Business Excellence' proposal put forward for Swindon

Swindon could be the venue for an innovative Festival of Business Excellence with presentations, seminars, workshops and other events themed around the topic of improving business.

The idea comes from local video production expert Paul Dunn who believes such an event could make Swindon a by-word for exceptional business in the way literary and music festivals have become closely identified with towns and cities such as Bath and Cheltenham.

Paul, a former director of BizView.tv, is now looking for others individuals and organisations to work alongside him in turning the concept into reality.

Subjects covered could include innovation, continuous improvement, quality management, people management and public responsibility with additional events focusing on personal motivation and excellence in sales, marketing and social media.

Paul said: "Rather than focusing on economic doom and gloom, this is a chance to concentrate on finding positive ways to do things better in business and, as a result, make a contribution to our economic future."

"By highlighting excellence and encouraging people in a business, organisation, town, region and even the country to drive improvement within their business processes, we could generate a cumulative effect which would have a very beneficial influence on the economy as a whole."

Planning is at an early stage, with Paul talking to a number of businesses about the idea and gauging the level of interest and support.

He wants to hear from anyone interested in getting

involved in any way, including offers of venues, speakers, ideas for events, and sponsorship.

The festival would take place over a few days, possibly in September.

Paul added: "If other businesses get involved we can work towards developing and building upon the idea, and organise an event which could attract visitors from around the country."

"With £300,000 of public money currently being spent on a campaign to enhance the perception of Swindon, this is an exciting opportunity for our town to become associated with everything that is great about business."

Businesses and individuals can find out more and express an interest on the new website [www.sfobe.co.uk](http://www.sfobe.co.uk).



Paul Dunn

## PDS triumphs in Excellence Awards

Marlborough-based PDS Group, which specialises in developing apprenticeship programmes for large employers, has won the award for Best Overall Company at the UK Business Excellence Awards 2012.

The awards honour the 'best of the best' in small and medium-sized businesses from around the world and showcase exceptional results for

business owners, entrepreneurs, their teams and their companies.

For PDS, which works with large employers such as Visa Europe, Vodafone and Telefónica to develop apprenticeship programmes, the award follows hot on the heels of it achieving the title regional Business of the Year from leading international business consulting firm

ActionCOACH. Directors Jenny Harman and David Willett were quick to thank ActionCOACH's Sally Rainbow-Ockwell, who has worked with PDS for two years, during which the business has transformed the way it does things. As a result PDS has grown by 75% in the past year, increased staff from five to nine and won major contracts.





Nicky Alberry

One of Nicky's proudest achievements was her work in shaping Business Link, whose services have been greatly curtailed now by the Coalition. When asked how she feels about the loss of Business Link, Nicky sums it up in one word: "devastated".

"It was a very poor decision that this Government made for political reasons. Business Link provided face-to-face services to tens of thousands of businesses. You can join a forum online, you can look at a website, but you do need someone to talk to especially in these challenging times."

But GWE Business West, even without Business Link, still has a huge role to play in the region. It provides a

voice for business; it's a networking facilitator; it offers a wide range of services such as training, export documentation and workspace. It still employs more than 150 people.

And despite the Business Link blow, Nicky is as passionate now about business as she was 20 years ago. And she still loves Swindon.

"It's a wonderful town to work in. The business community are marvellous, even though these are quite difficult times for them, economically. But the opportunities are really good and I think we have a real role to play. I am really embedded in the community, not only in my work, but in the other things that I do."

The list of "other things" is extensive. Nicky has just been appointed to the board of Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, an organisation which aims to create 10,000 jobs and safeguard 8,000 by 2015.

She has a close family, and she spends time visiting her grown-up stepdaughters, as well as her brother and mother who are still in Devon. She also loves exercising her and her husband Pete's two border collies, Poppy and Rosie. Gardening is a big passion – "I've no nice fingernails" – and Nicky is a Deputy Lieutenant for Wiltshire, representing the Queen on occasions such as Royal visits and citizenship ceremonies. She's even been to a couple

of Royal garden parties, where they do, indeed, serve cucumber sandwiches.

The list goes on: Nicky was the first woman president of her Rotary Club. She helped set up Swindon Cares, which brings business and communities together to raise funds for local charities and has raised more than £165,000. She is Chairman of "Influence" Swindon's business voice and is a steering board member of Companies House. Last year she hit 50 and marked the occasion by

taking part in Race for Life ("I wanted to run a race, so I did").

So does she still regret going straight into banking and missing out on university?

"Not any more. I do so much now that you don't need to go to university to learn how to do. And while I might miss the sea I wouldn't go back to Devon."

"I love Wiltshire, I love the people. I love the community."

## In profile - fact file

Married to Pete with two step daughters

**Age:** 50

**Drives:** Mercedes SLK

**Hobbies:** gardening and dog walking

**Currently reading:** Warhorse by Michael Morpurgo

**Favourite film:** Four Weddings and a Funeral

**Favourite restaurant:** in Swindon the Old Bank, and La Flambe in Sutton Benger

**Role model:** Frank – my stepfather

**Secret to success:** treat people as you would like to be treated.

## Rabbit has businesses hopping for success at 2012 event

The speaker line-up for the highly anticipated Rabbit 2012 business show has been announced, proving the exhibition's commitment to business growth in the South West.

The exhibition, which is free to delegates, has already caught the attention of hundreds of businesses in the region.

Rabbit has secured six leading business figures from across the South of England with a variety of backgrounds to speak at the event in Bristol on March 20.

Each speaker will share valuable advice to help businesses move forward in 2012 – and each would usually cost thousands of pounds to hear at similar events.

Steve Driver, managing director of international manufacturing company Spirit Circuits will speak on growing a business through two recessions.

Nicky Rudd, managing director of Padua Communications will deliver a seminar entitled Targeted messaging and creative communications – illustrating the importance of reaching an audience with an engaging message.

Dan Maudhub, managing director of Wonderful Creative Agency, will speak on the power of social media, including Twitter; LinkedIn and YouTube, and countering the view of many companies that just having an account is enough.

Dan's interactive presentation

### Dynamic business event set to help businesses grow and develop in 2012

will show how companies can use all forms of social media and online public relations to increase sales inquiries and grow brands.

Evolve Pro Health managing director Justin Dodd will provide a different take on business growth, based on improving the health, fitness and wellbeing of staff, ensuring they are super-productive and more efficient.

Steve Fuller, creative director of Bath agency The House will speak on how to transform a business and boost its bottom line through the power of your brand, while Martin Wright, of Martin Wright Associates and founder of the Bath and Bristol Marketing Network, will deliver a practical seminar on effective email marketing campaigns.

Rabbit will also be offering a series of workshops provided by exhibitors that can offer one-to-one, company-specific business growth advice.

Glenn Robinson at Rabbit said: "Rabbit is a unique opportunity for businesses to talk to and learn from some of the most forward-thinking companies in the South West."

"It is a chance to multiply contacts and build lasting relationships that will encourage growth."

"Delegates and exhibitors will be shown how to make the best

use of technology, often freely available to them, that will add value to their marketing strategies and drive sales, at the same time being given every opportunity to network and do business with each other.

"Rabbit is a fresh, new and exciting twist on traditional B2B exhibitions and is already shaping up to be a fantastic event."

Delegates can register for free at [www.rabbitevents.co](http://www.rabbitevents.co) with exhibition space starting at £280 plus VAT.

Swindon Business News readers are entitled to an exclusive 20% off all exhibitor space, including workshops, by quoting reference SBN20.

Readers are also entitled to an extension of the Rabbit free exhibitor advertising package, including airtime on Rabbit TV both on the website and at the exhibition, website banner and Rabbit app advertising and a full advert in the show programme, altogether worth £750.

Only three companies of each business type will be allowed to exhibit, so space is limited.

Rabbit 2012 takes place at Brunel's Old Station, Temple Meads, Bristol.

For more information about the possibilities at Rabbit2012 visit [www.rabbitevents.co](http://www.rabbitevents.co) or call the Rabbit team on 01622 685 078.

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# Market Monitor predicts mixed bag this year

Swindon's commercial property scene this year is likely to be a mixed bag again – with the industrial sector again experiencing healthy demand while the office market struggling to emerge from the doldrums.

The view comes from property agent Alder King's South West Market Monitor 2012, it's annual health check of the region's commercial property market.

The prognosis for Swindon in the town-by-town overview is that its condition is likely to remain stable – but with little chance of a dramatic improvement any time soon.

The report takes the pulse of the key elements of the commercial property market – offices, industrial, retail & leisure and investment – and in Swindon's case it is the office scene that is in dire need of a pick up.

Last year the town's office market suffered a significant reduction in take up compared to the previous year – this was due to the fact there were no large individual lettings.

The majority of transactions that did take place were out of town – again a repeat of previous years – with limited activity in the town centre.

One area where there was activity was in lease renewals where there were some significant deals, most notably BP's commitment to remain in 52,000 sq ft (4831 sq m) at

Wakefield House, Pipers Way.

However, as James Gregory, Alder King's Swindon office partner, explains: "The market continues to be weighted firmly in the occupier's favour."

According to James no significant high-quality office accommodation was brought to the market last year and there is a very limited amount of Grade A space immediately available.

As a result "there are a number of opportunities that offer new build, or comprehensive refurbishment potential for occupiers who are willing, and able to pre-commit", he said.

"The supply of second-hand and tertiary accommodation did not diminish, which provides occupiers with plentiful choice in many instances."

Reflecting the stagnant market, there was no growth on the previous year's town centre average rent of £15.75 per sq ft while out-of-town rents at Swindon's premier office location, Windmill Hill, actually went down – from £18.50 to £16 per sq ft.



James Gregory

"Empty property costs continue to cause significant pressure particularly for tenants with short leases remaining on space they no longer occupy," said James.

In marked contrast, there was a significant increase in industrial take up on 2010.

Swindon secured the South West's largest transaction with B&Q completing on its 796,000 sq ft distribution depot at Gazeley's G Park development.

In addition – and reflecting the town's buoyant industrial market – the 120,310 sq ft 10c South Marston was let to JB Global, the 106,000 sq ft Orient at Blagrove was bought by Neptune Classics, and the 89,729 sq ft Island, Dorcan, was let to Garden of Eden.

"There were also a number of transactions in the 20,000 sq ft to 50,000 sq ft range with the quantity of smaller unit lettings progressively reducing during the year," added James.

Overall industrial supply increased last year despite the large increase in take up.

"This was because the B&Q transaction was a pre-commitment, and not from standing stock," said James.

"The availability of buildings in excess of 100,000 sq ft eroded, and is now extremely limited."

The number of buildings up to 20,000 sq ft increased, with a lower level of demand over the year for this size range.

Despite the activity, there was no increase in the headline rent of £6.75 per sq ft achieved during 2011 and occupiers are still able to dictate favourable terms, said James.

There was also some activity in the retail & leisure market but the key theme is that Swindon is playing a waiting game.

Ashfield Land's long-awaited Regent Circus redevelopment on the former Swindon College site, which will include a cinema, restaurants and bars, is still on the cards to start very soon and will bring much needed life to the area, according to Alison Williams, of Alder King's Swindon office.

"Forward Swindon and Swindon Borough Council worked hard to improve the public realm to the town centre, which helped enhance the overall occupancy, with The Parade almost fully occupied," she said.

The out-of-town market was fairly strong. Bridgemoor Retail Park was

refurbished and is now fully occupied and discount retailers continued to seek new sites, with Aldi opening two operations on the former Skurveys Vauxhall site and at Thamesdown Drive at Groundwell North.

Costa Coffee opened its second drive-thru outlet in the UK at Lydiard Fields.

There was little activity in the leisure sector last year although several high-quality restaurant chains are known to be in active negotiations for space at Regent Circus.

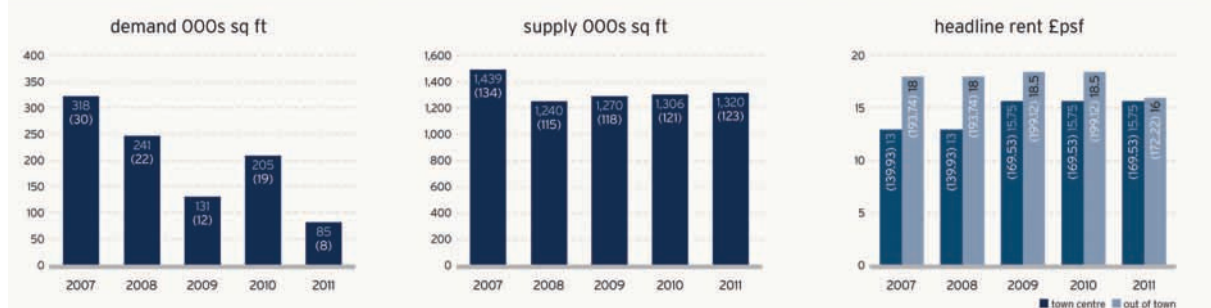
In contrast, the investment market was strong with the total value of deals in Swindon and Chippenham reaching £62.5m – a 64% increase on 2010's total of £38.2m.

The largest retail warehouse deal of 2011 was the sale of the Hathaway Retail Park in Chippenham to Aberdeen Property for £23m while the largest industrial transaction was the purchase of the 216,735 sq ft Euroway Industrial Estate in Swindon by ING Real Estate for £11.25m.

The largest office transaction was the sale of Wakefield House to Delta Properties for £10m. The showpiece 220,000 sq ft property, built in 1972 for the then Burmah group, is multilevel to tenants, including BP and Nationwide.

## Offices

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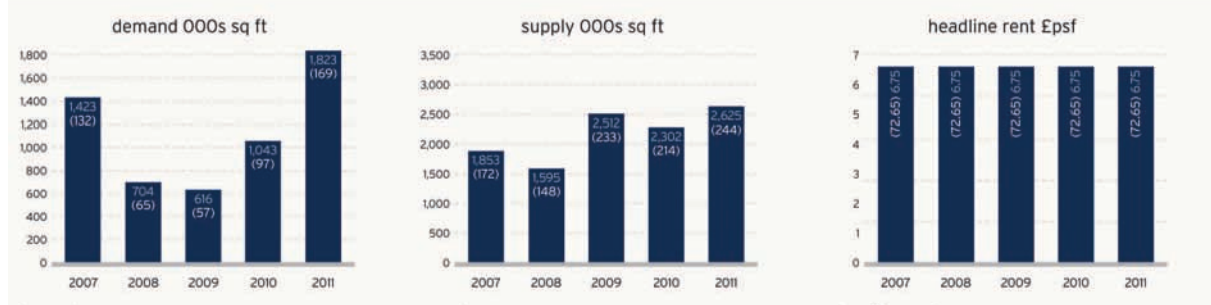
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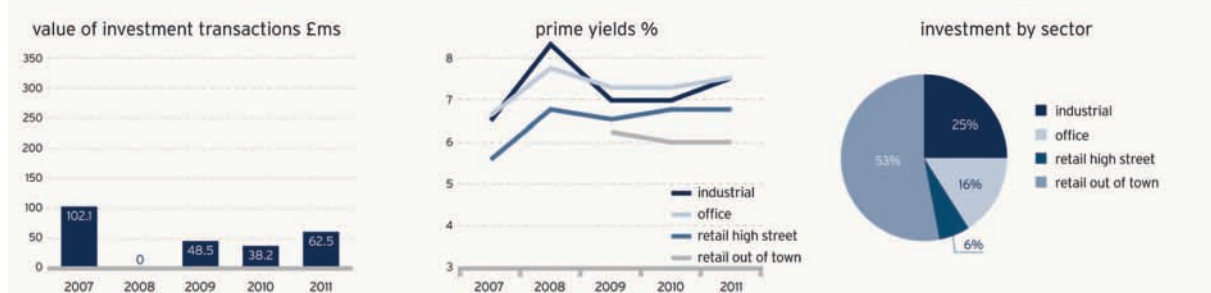
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# FSG boosted by American giant

Chippenham-based Fleet Support Group (FSG), one of the UK's largest fleet management companies, has been acquired by the American-based Automotive Resources International (ARI).

The deal will give ARI its first business in Europe. The company has operations in North America, Canada, Mexico, South Africa and Australia, with alliances in India and China. It has around 1.8m vehicles globally under fleet management. FSG will add a further 55,000.

There will be no change in FSG's management structure or staff positions as a result of the acquisition, which has been made for an undisclosed sum. FSG's Chippenham head office will become ARI's European head office.

FSG's award-winning RiskMaster programme will be adopted as ARI's global offering to fleets with the company investing further in the software at its 180-employee IT centre. ARI describes it as having "20 times the resource to deliver the services we do now".

## Car restoration firm drives to Lakeside

Drake House on Lakeside Business Park, South Cerney, has been let to classic car restoration firm Thornley Kelham (formerly The Vintage & Classic Paintshop Ltd) on a new five-year lease.

The firm started as a small team of experienced enthusiasts working solely on the restoration and preservation of classic and vintage, road and race cars. Originally in one unit on the estate, it has since expanded, re-launching as Thornley Kelham and occupying a number of units on the estate. It offers a complete in-house restoration service encompassing metalwork, body and paintwork, engineering and re-engineering, rewiring, and retrimming.

The business has now rationalised its operations into the 18,358 sq ft Drake House, which also gives it 18 parking spaces.

Simon Thornley of Thornley Kelham said: "This move marks the beginning of a new era for our company. Being able to stay on the same business park is a real plus. Lakeside is a great venue, well located and secure."

The business park is close to the A419, giving access to Swindon and the M4 to the south, and Gloucester, Cheltenham and the M5 to the north.

## IN BRIEF

- Expanding electrical distribution firm Medlock has opened a branch at Unit 2 Newcombe Drive, Hawksworth Industrial Estate, Swindon, after buying the building for £325,000.

The deal on the 4,522 sq ft building was secured by Alder King on behalf of international property investment group Valad. Medlock is the largest independent wholesale group in the UK and Ireland with more than 30 branches, and a leading member of ANEW, the largest electrical buying consortium in the UK. The firm provides electrical services, including industrial and commercial lighting, wiring accessories, fixings, consumer units, ventilation, heating, Cat5 structured cabling and cable management.

- Plant hire company Fork Rent has bought the former Hydrex Building at Hullavington, near Chippenham. The 4,550sq ft building has a workshop and stores with roller shutter doors and modern office accommodation. The 0.9130-acre site, a former railway station yard, has secure perimeter fencing and is less than 5 miles from junction 17 of the M4.

The building was sold by Alder King on behalf of private investors Armada Group.

# In Gear

## B-Class demo ready to drive



2012 Mercedes B-Class

Mercedes-Benz of Swindon is urging motorists who want to experience one of this year's most eagerly-awaited cars to make a 'B' line for its Drakes Way showroom.

The new B-Class isn't officially launched until March but the Retailer has secured a left-hand-drive example that is available to view and drive right now.

What's more, car buyers who place their order for the exciting new sports tourer before 29th February 2012, can upgrade from SE to Sport specification for only £650, which represents a saving of 50 per cent\*.

Those who try the new B-Class for size will certainly not be disappointed, the model building on the success of its predecessor and adding significant enhancements in style, efficiency and equipment.

Although boasting a class-leading drag coefficient of 0.26, the streamlined, dynamic new style of the B-Class does not encroach on interior space. In fact, the luxurious and well-appointed interior is larger than before and back seat passengers enjoy more legroom than even the S-Class.

The new B-Class offers a choice of two new 1.6-litre petrol engines and a pairing of 1.8-litre diesels, all of which feature the ECO start/stop function and turbocharging. Also making its debut in the B-Class is the radar-based COLLISION PREVENTION ASSIST system that lowers the risk of front-end collisions.

As David Harries, Mercedes-Benz of Swindon's general sales manager explains, the chance to be one of the first to experience the new B-Class is an opportunity that's too good to miss.

"The new B-Class is the first model to show the new direction of Mercedes-Benz compact cars and no model change in the manufacturer's history has seen so many new developments introduced in one fell swoop," said David.

"We can't wait to introduce customers to the B-Class and invite them to call us as soon as possible, especially if they want to enjoy our limited-time offer where they can upgrade from SE to Sport specification for only £650 and benefit from such additional equipment as 18" bi-colour alloy wheels, bi-xenon headlamps, privacy glass and a reversing camera."

Car buyers can contact Mercedes-Benz of Swindon on 01793 978860 for further information on the new B-Class and to book their pre-launch test drive.

\*Offer subject to availability. Offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other published Retailer offer. Sport upgrade offer can only be used in conjunction with factory fitted Sport package. Sport upgrade offer is available on B-Class models ordered from 1st November 2011 - 29th February 2012 and registered by 30th June 2012.

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## IT company clicks with children's charity



Swindon IT software services company InfoSys selected children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent last year, raising £1,000 in the process and, for finance director Dave Lobb, saying a big 'thank you' for its invaluable help.

Dave knows all too well from personal experience that diagnosis of childhood cancer in a family is a massive shock. In 2003 CLIC gave Dave's family support with clinical, practical and emotional support, when they needed it most.

InfoSys managing director Kevin Metcalfe is passionate about charitable fundraising and has highlighted this as a key business objective for his company.

He said: "I believe employers have a responsibility to conduct business in an ethical way. In a tough economic climate charities are being challenged to help even more people in need of their expertise.

"There are so many worthy charities in the UK, but it was an easy decision for our team when we chose CLIC Sargent as the Infosys charity for 2011.

"Our teams have been very proud to be sponsors of CLIC Sargent and we were pleased to be able to present them with a cheque for £1,000 to help them continue their valuable work."

## Prestigious Business of the Year Awards 2012 launched

Swindon and North Wiltshire firms are being invited to enter this year's West of England Business of the Year Awards, the most prestigious business accolades in the region.

The awards, staged by accountants PwC, are now in their 24th year. Previous winners read like a who's who of the West's best business elite including major companies such as Dyson, MITIE and Renishaw.

Few business competitions across the UK can match the awards for longevity or status, with their reputation built firmly on the thoroughness of the judging panel, which is made up of respected business figures from across the region.

And this year for the first time Swindon Business News, and its sister titles Bristol Business News and Bath Business News, are media partners and supporters of the coveted awards. Full coverage of the awards, including regular updates, profiles of the finalists and comprehensive coverage of the awards dinner and winners will appear across all our titles.

The awards have two categories – one for smaller businesses with a turnover of less than £25m (or fewer than 100 employees), and one for larger businesses turning over more



than £25m (or employing 100 or more staff).

PwC regional chairman Rob Lewis said: "The awards are designed to acknowledge and celebrate businesses in the West for their success, achievements and contribution to the regional economy."

Nick Morgan, chair of the Judges for the for larger businesses category said: "In this economic climate, we believe it is more important than ever to profile the success of local businesses in the West and their contribution in the UK and overseas."

"We received a high number of impressive entrants for last year's Awards and I am highly optimistic that the 2012 entrants will once again raise the bar that little bit higher."

Smaller category chair of the Judges Tracey Bentham added: "The competition prides itself on its robust judging process and our independent panel of judges expect this year to be

more competitive than ever. We anticipate having to make some very tough decisions over the next six months."

"I am very much looking forward to meeting with this year's entrants and witnessing the levels of excellence that businesses in the West demonstrate."

Also supporting the awards are Beacon South West, which brings together companies and individuals with proven track records of commercial success, ITV West & Westcountry, and the Western Daily Press.

The closing date for applications is March 30 and the award ceremony will take place on June 20 at Bristol Marriott Hotel. For further information and to download an application pack contact the awards co-ordinator Jessica Poole at [jessica.a.poole@uk.pwc.com](mailto:jessica.a.poole@uk.pwc.com).

Coverage of the awards dinner will be featured on ITV West & Westcountry Tonight on June 20.

## BMW apprenticeship boost for MINI plant

Swindon's MINI car plant is set to benefit under plans by owner BMW to increase apprenticeships at its UK factories and showrooms.

Total apprenticeships at the car firm will increase to 200 this year, including 11 at its Swindon plant, which presses body panels for all MINIs.

Across its three manufacturing sites – Swindon, Oxford and Hams Hall, near Birmingham – apprentice intake will double this year to 70 places as the plants prepare for the next model generation.

In addition, BMW and MINI dealerships are looking to recruit around 130 young people across the UK.

## Confident outlook for stationery firm Accord

Swindon stationery business Accord plans to double turnover to £10m within three years and create further jobs by diversifying into new areas such as recycling, print management and office interiors.

Last year turnover topped £5m but managers of the Bridgemoor-based firm are confident of achieving £10m within three years through an increased focus on the regional small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) market.

The company, which employs 30 people and has a nationwide delivery service, has won new clients such as WPS, Glasses Direct and Marshalls, through increased marketing investment, online

ordering and next day delivery. Director Jason Thomas said: "Although we're focused on the SME sector, we're also picking up contracts with large blue-chip organisations seeking to streamline their office supplies ordering process."

"Our plans are ambitious but achievable. We're optimistic about this year and next. We've got a strong order book and a steady pipeline of new business opportunities. We expect to create jobs in Swindon off the back of this growth. Trading conditions are still tough but we think we're doing the right things to keep our clients happy."



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