

# SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

01793 615393

Monthly in print, daily on the web - [www.swindon-business.net](http://www.swindon-business.net)

**TM Group move  
gives office  
market a boost**

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## A manufacturing powerhouse

**Our special report on how Swindon is  
making its mark in this key sector**

Pages 8&amp;9

**Coming soon ...  
Celebrating 30 years  
of Swindon Business  
News**

## News Brief

### SEO seminar for business owners

Swindon-based web designers Digital Trading Creative is staging a seminar to help business owners create, implement and manage their own search engine optimisation (SEO) in-house. The event, at Swindon's Jury's Inn on May 17 between 8.30am and 10.30am, will show how an effective SEO campaign can help businesses be found by their target audiences when they search online, leading to increased traffic to their website.

### Roll out the barrels ...

Swindon brewery Arkell's is to take delivery of hundreds of new stainless steel barrels worth more than £200,000 over the next five years. Each barrel costs £70, holds 72 pints of beer and has 'Arkell's Brewery' embossed around the collar. The family-owned brewery has been using metal kegs since the 1960s when they replaced the traditional wooden ones.

### Top speaker for conference

Former British Chambers of Commerce director-general David Frost will be keynote speaker at the 2012 conference of the Swindon Mindful Employer Network in October. Mr Frost, now chairman of the National Network of Local Enterprise Partnerships, will speak about the recent review of sickness absence and give some personal reflections on the importance of positive attitudes to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

The event takes place at the Swindon Marriott on October 15.

### Next month ...

June's Swindon Business News will look at logistics, warehousing and distribution, gauging latest trends in this key sector for Swindon and profiling some of the major players. We will also analyse the area's creative industry, including its branding and design specialists, give advice for first-time exporters and focus on the buoyant towns of Chippenham, Corsham and Calne, exporting. Innovation will come to the fore in July when Swindon Business News showcases the area's pioneering companies.

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## Hope for Swindon manufacturers as sector shows signs of recovery in export markets

**M**anufacturers are becoming more optimistic as they glimpse early signs of recovery, especially in export markets.

The positive outlook emerges from two new surveys and coincides with efforts to promote Swindon as one of the country's best locations for manufacturing.

The town is home to the South West region's strongest manufacturing sector, with 11 per cent of the workforce in the sector – nearly twice the national average – a fact that Forward Swindon, the company responsible for the town's economic growth, is highlighting in its latest inward investment campaign. With the Government promoting manufacturing, it believes Swindon's

engineering heritage and skilled workforce put it in an excellent position to attract much-needed jobs and investment.

It points to positive moves among the town's major manufacturers, including Honda where 500 new workers recruited to produce the next generation Civic car have recently started. The new recruits take the total number of employees to 3,500.

Car production at the plant is now forecast to double to 180,000 this year as mass production of the new European CR-V and the introduction of a new small diesel engine start alongside the new Civic and the successful Jazz.

The town's other car manufacturer

BMW is investing in its MINI body panel plant, which employs around 1,200 people, as part of a £500m upgrade programme for its UK factories.

The two firms combined are also responsible for thousands of jobs in the local supply chain.

The CBI says business sentiment among the UK's small and medium-sized manufacturers rose for the first time since mid-2011, and orders and production are expected to grow solidly over the next quarter. New orders over the past three months rose by eight per cent but is expected to achieve 27 per cent over the next three months, driven by upturns in both domestic and export order growth. Meanwhile in a separate

survey by the EEF, the manufacturers' organisation and RBS, shows manufacturers are stepping up their investment plans to capitalise on surging demand from emerging economies and provide a long-term growth presence in overseas markets.

The survey illustrates how exports are increasingly the lifeblood of manufacturers, with nine in ten companies exporting and exports accounting for more than half the turnover of two fifths of companies. It also shows that 65 per cent of companies saw their exports grow in 2011, with a fifth of companies seeing growth of more than 20 per cent. This year 70 per cent of firms expect exports to increase. **See pages 8 & 9**



Richard  
Clark

## Lawyer hangs around to raise funds for charity

Richard Clark, partner at Swindon law firm Clark Holt, has completed a 100-metre (320-ft) abseil to raise money towards the creation of a specially-designed rehabilitation garden at the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury.

Richard's nerve-wracking feat down the UK's tallest public viewing tower, the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth, has netted more than £7,000 for the project.

He said: "This garden will encourage the rehabilitation and well-being of patients with spinal cord injuries during their treatment for this most devastating of injuries – in a split second a person can go from being actively mobile to being paralysed and dependent – and the opportunity to spend time in a specially-designed area such as this can be a real boost to their adjustment and rehabilitation." To donate, go to: [www.bmycharity.com/richardclark](http://www.bmycharity.com/richardclark) or send a cheque payable to Southern Spinal Injuries Trust to Richard at Clark Holt, Hardwick House, Prospect Place, SN1 3LJ.

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# SWINDON BUSINESS NEWS

26 Wood Street, Swindon  
Wiltshire SN1 4AB

**Telephone:** 01793 615393

**Fax:** 01793 610553

**Email:** info@swindon-business.net

**Web:** www.swindon-business.net

**Editor**  
**Robert Buckland**



**Production Editor**  
**Owen Fishwick**



**Business Development  
Manager**  
**Anita Jaynes**



**Office Manager**  
**Jackie Hall**



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## People

• Vectura, the Chippenham-based specialist drugs group, has appointed its chief operations officer **Dr Trevor Phillips** to its board with effect from June 1. Dr Phillips became COO in July last year having joined Vectura in January 2010 as president of its US operations. Prior to joining Vectura he gained extensive international experience in organisational leadership, management and pharmaceutical drug development in a number of senior roles, including positions as CEO and president of the US publicly-held company Critical Therapeutics. Between 1986 and 2002 Dr Phillips held a number of management positions including at Sepracor, Accenture and GlaxoWellcome.

• Wanbrough-based Venues Event Management has appointed **Victoria Seddon** as client development manager.

Victoria, who has a great knowledge of the industry after working in hotels and events for many years joins from Venues Event Management's parent company Expotel. She worked at Expotel from 1994, first as conference consultant then conference manager. In 2001 she moved into the events team where she took on the role of events manager. Venues Event Management has also appointed **Suzi Johnson** as marketing manager. Suzi joins from inSwindon BID, the management company for Swindon town centre, where she worked for four years, starting as marketing assistant and developing her marketing skills to create the role of marketing and events officer. One of Suzi's major achievements was to work alongside the special events team of Walt Disney to produce a Disney Christmas in Swindon, all part of the official twinning of Walt Disney World and Swindon. With two big screens and a live link the event was successful in bringing 20,000 people into the town centre. Joining Venues Event Management will allow Suzi to use her knowledge in event management to help drive the company forward with forthcoming marketing initiatives. Her main role will be to develop



*Victoria Seddon*

the marketing strategy through PR and social media and to assist the sales team in developing new business.

• Former president of the West of England Society of Chartered Accountants, **Tim Lerwill**, has joined accountants and financial planners Old Mill as director of corporate business services. A maths graduate who qualified as a chartered accountant in 1999, Tim, 38, started his career at HW Fisher in London, and also worked at KPMG in Bristol before joining Richardson Groves - which merged with Baker Tilly in 2011 - eight years ago, where he made partner. Tim specialises in helping and assisting small and medium-sized businesses, particularly in the creative and technology industries, along with charity and professional practices.

• Bowood Hotel, Spa and Golf Resort has appointed **Frances Charman** as its new business development manager. With a background in direct sales Frances has extensive experience of dealing with people. Frances' role at the hotel, based between Chippenham and Calne, involves all aspects of corporate hospitality from corporate room rates in the 43 bedroom hotel, to organising meetings and conferences for up to 240 people, corporate golf days and corporate team building activities and family fun days on the 2,000-acre estate.

• RSM Tenon has appointed **Zoe Hidden** as senior tax manager in its Swindon office. Zoe, who is a chartered tax adviser, recently passed the STEP Foundation Certificate in Trusts and Estates and has tax consultancy experience in advising a wide range of clients on company reconstructions, share buy backs, earn outs and takeovers particularly within the Lloyds Insurance Market, as well as domestic and international private client planning.

In her new role she will be working closely with the private client team and also the International Assignment Services team dealing with UK and overseas compliance,



*Zoe Hidden*

and managing the personal and corporate tax implications of cross border moves. Zoe said: "I am delighted to be part of such a respected organisation and am looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead in delivering a valued service to a wide range of clients." Sharon Omer-Kaye, RSM Tenon's Southern region head of private client services, said: "We are delighted to have Zoe on board. She brings with her a wide range of specialist skills and expertise that will greatly benefit our clients and further develop our tax team in the South."



*Chris Mooge and Michael Jones*

• **Chris Mooge** and **Michael Jones** have joined Etherlive, a leading provider of technology services for the events industry, to support its activities for the London Media Centre during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Chris and Michael will be based at its Brinkworth head office before transferring to media centre where Etherlive will manage the IT infrastructure at the main One Great George Street venue and a number of associated locations. Chris joins after seven years at the VT Group and Babcock International. He brings significant engineering experience and troubleshooting capabilities to complement the existing team. Michael has been appointed as a client support engineer having worked with high-profile brands Fujitsu and Specsavers. Etherlive will provide state-of-the-art infrastructure at the media centre, enabling high-speed internet, IPTV and VoIP telephony for hundreds of workstations and edit suites catering for thousands of journalists. This service will be responsible for transmitting hundreds of thousands of hours of video content, voice calls, and inter/intranet connections.

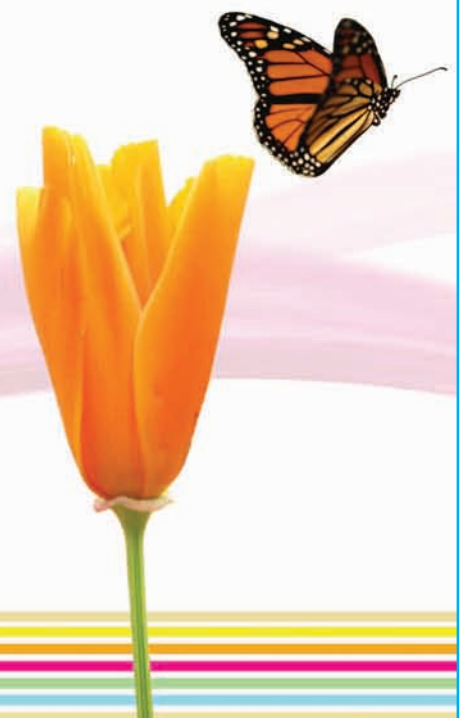
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## £12m care home to be built

London-based Angel Care is to build an 83-bed care home in Swindon after securing £12m funding from Bank of Ireland.

The money will be used to develop the site, which will specialise dementia care and will also include 14 self-contained care flats, along with refurbishments at the firm's four existing care homes.

Angel Care director Sandip Ruparelia said: "We approached Bank of Ireland UK because their healthcare team is well known in the healthcare community and is highly regarded for its in-depth sector knowledge and relationship approach."

## Family support service launched

Former Swindon Borough Council parent support adviser Colleen Smith has launched her own business after being made redundant.

Colleen Smith Family Support is offering services directly to schools and colleges as well as privately to parents and carers. Colleen set up the business after noticing a lack of support in Swindon for families.

Colleen worked in schools in West Swindon for three years, during which she supported hundreds of families in many ways including behaviour strategies, ill health management, access to education, support with bullying, claiming benefits, and assistance with housing or debt. "Very often, parents and families feel confused and out of their depth, especially when they are in need of help. Having a parent support advisor (PSA) means that school staff have someone they can direct these families to. It means that parents can get the support they need from a friendly, non-judgmental and understanding person. Having a PSA provides a more 'joined up' approach to safeguarding children and families. Colleen can be contacted on 07859 414 376 [www.colleensmithfamilysupport.co.uk](http://www.colleensmithfamilysupport.co.uk) or email: [info@colleensmithfamilysupport.co.uk](mailto:info@colleensmithfamilysupport.co.uk).

## New branding for design firm

Spiral Sites, the Swindon-based firm web design and internet services company, has launched a new website and branding of its own to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

The firm provides a comprehensive range of web-based services including the bespoke design of 'boutique' style sites through to large e-commerce stores, mobile websites, PC support, bespoke programming and estate agent and lettings software.

Director Jon Eastwood said: "We believe in offering quality services at an affordable price. We take pride in our work and believe in looking after our customers and this has been the key factor in our success. Over the years we have grown our range of services to meet the demands of our customers. As we look to the future, we continue to expand our portfolio of services as technology advances and the needs of our clients change. This last year has seen growth in mobile web sites, SMS text services, search engine optimisation, e-commerce sites and the demand for bespoke systems where 'off-the-shelf' packages fail to meet the demands of our clients."

Bath-based Course Academy has worked with Spiral Sites for seven years and director Chris Onslow said: "During that time we have always found them to be very professional, highly skilled and customer focused. This is exactly what we need in order to meet the demands of our web business." How old is your web site? What does your web site look like on a mobile device? If you are thinking it's time for a change – call Spiral Sites on 0845 050 4878.



Liz Ledger

## The Total Guide to Swindon launches with glittering party

Total Guide to Swindon (TGtS), the innovative information site for Swindon, has been officially launched at a glittering party attended by more than 150 guests, including clients, suppliers, colleagues, friends and family.

TGtS hired the top two floors of The Old Bank in Old Town for the event and guests were greeted with complimentary bubbly, canapés, live music from Boy Meets Girl, a short presentation on the site from founder, Swindon businesswoman Liz Ledger and a DJ until the early hours.

Liz said: "We couldn't have wished for a more successful launch party. We wanted it to be a celebration on what we've achieved so far and to explain what's to come and, most importantly, thank all the many people that have been involved and making it happen."

The site has already secured high profile advertisers including Swindon Council, Suju nightclub and the Brunel Shopping Centre.

For a gallery of photos from the TGtS launch party go to [www.swindon-business.net](http://www.swindon-business.net)

## Events company selected to manage inaugural Commercial Motor Live show

Venues Event Management has been selected to manage Road Transport Media's inaugural Commercial Motor Live event.

The event is aimed at keeping road transport industry professionals informed of the critical issues facing the sector and offering the opportunity to experience the latest products.

At least 500 delegates made up of fleet managers, businesses owners and operations managers are expected on each of the two days.

Wanborough-based Venues Event Management, part of the Exptel Group, won a two-way pitch to manage the event. The contract includes venue finding, a registration website, onsite event management and logistics, and event

identity and branding. Among the sponsors and exhibitors are Mercedes, Volvo, Isuzu and Scania. Road Transport Media managing director Andy Salter said: "Venues Event Management's proposal stood out because it communicated such a creative solution. They had some great ideas for branding the event and their artist's impressions brought everything to life, so we could actually see what everything was going to look like."

"The plan is to make this an annual event, and I have every confidence that Venues Event Management will deliver something special that delegates will want to return to year on year." Commercial Motor Live is on October 3 and 4 at Millbrook Proving Ground, near Bedford.

## Avon's profits rise with new foreign orders

Wiltshire manufacturer Avon Rubber has reported a six per cent rise in first-half profits and its largest ever single non-US Department of Defence order, worth £14.7m.

Pre-tax profits at the Melksham group, a world leader in respiratory protection equipment, rose from £4.4m to £4.6m on revenue up £1m at £49.6m in the half year to March 31.

Operational highlights included continued growth in non-US Department of Defence (DoD) orders, including the £14.7m order for respiratory protection products from an unnamed Middle East customer for delivery in 2013 and 2014.

Avon chief executive Peter Slabbert said: "The receipt of this order clearly demonstrates the confidence our customers have in our world-leading respiratory protection products and gives us momentum for 2013."

Avon designs, tests and manufacture advanced chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) as well as liners and tubing used by farmers in automated milking.

Mr Slabbert added that Avon's protection and defence business would continue to benefit from the security of a long-term contract with the US DoD and increased market share in the US homeland security and foreign military markets.

In the short term, however, visibility and timing of filter orders from the DoD and foreign military orders remained limited.



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# total guide to Swindon

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# Swindon Speedway - hospitality's hidden gem



Swindon businesses looking for a staff or client night out with some high-octane thrills should take a new look at what speedway has to offer, according to one local businessman.

Dom Threlfall, owner of Pebley Beach Suzuki and Hyundai dealership, says an evening at a Swindon Speedway meeting gives real entertainment value against an informal but exciting backdrop.

"Speedway is one of the town's hidden gems," says Dom, who has been a fan of the Robins since he was a youngster.

"There's nothing quite like the roar of the bikes, the electric atmosphere among the crowd, and the camaraderie between the fans for breaking down barriers between people and getting them chatting and enjoying themselves.

"We're using the venue for staff nights out more and more, but our corporate offer, which includes a pit walk to meet the riders, and food and a pay bar in the lounge, is also taking off. People who have never been to a speedway meeting are telling us it's a revelation to them – and a fraction of the cost of football."

For the uninitiated, speedway involves four motorcycle riders competing over four anti-clockwise laps of the oval, loosely packed shale circuit at Blunsdon Stadium. But these aren't just any motorcycles – they are specially adapted to use just one gear, and they have no brakes. The riders travel up to 70mph, before using their skill, judgment and sheer

bravery to slide their machines into the bends to reduce speed before they hit the fence – or each other.

Riders come from all over the world and Sky Sports covers some of the home games in Swindon.

Dom says he believes it's the real-life noise, dirt and smell of a fast, adrenaline-filled sport that is attracting people of all ages and backgrounds.

"We all love computer-based role playing games, but getting out into the stadium and being next to the rough and tumble of the races with your colleagues or customers is great, too," he said "It's brilliant for bonding, and the corporate deals for staff and client entertaining are very flexible. Suddenly, the spit and sawdust of speedway is cool, and we have a generation of people who may never have heard of the sport before trying it, and loving it."

Tailor-made packages include 10 guests in the lounge, a Man-of-the-Match presentation or sponsorship of the meeting for between £500 to £700, depending on the meeting. On televised Sky Sports nights there are further opportunities for sponsorship including the chance to achieve national on-screen coverage.

But an evening at speedway need not be client-driven, says Dom. Managers and staff can simply get together and arrange and go along for £10 per person, including entrance and a burger and soft drink.

For more information ring Dom Threlfall on 01793 816800.

## IT consultancy sponsors football team

Malmesbury-based IT consultancy Leading Resolutions has achieved another success – this time away from the business world. The firm stepped in to help the Luton Town Belles under-12s girls' football team when its previous sponsor withdrew and it badly needed financial support. Leading Resolutions chief executive Jeff Motto, who comes from Luton and whose niece plays for the team, arranged for the firm to provide the team with a new kit, including tracksuits and bags.

## Visitor centre for Wootton Bassett

A Community Interest Company (CIC) has been formed to establish a visitor centre in Royal Wootton Bassett. Wootton Bassett resident Sheridan Parsons aims to raise around £100,000 through donations and fund-raising events to buy the freehold of the site. To make a donation or volunteer to help with fund-raising efforts go to [www.spacehive.com/royalwoottonbassett](http://www.spacehive.com/royalwoottonbassett). Sheridan would also welcome contact from architects and garden designers who may be keen to get involved.

## Get fit to be more productive at work

It is known that there is a clear, positive link between exercise and productivity at work. But many businesses are unsure how best to help their employees become more active. Ian Locke, owner of Thrive Personal Training, believes the solution has to include:

- Education. How to exercise effectively and eat healthily
- Motivation. Gaining employees' commitment to exercise and eat well.
- Facilitation. Providing the right time and space for exercise.

"Most people need a nudge in the right direction when it comes to adopting a healthier lifestyle," said Ian. "At Thrive, we design bespoke training programmes and nutritional reports tailored to the individual's needs and goals." For more information contact Ian on 07900 692014 or [ian@thrivepersonaltraining.co.uk](mailto:ian@thrivepersonaltraining.co.uk).

See [www.thrivepersonaltraining.co.uk/offers](http://www.thrivepersonaltraining.co.uk/offers) for details of Thrive's corporate package.

## Banks relocates to new larger offices to make room for new staff appointments

Swindon chartered accountancy firm Banks has relocated to give it the space it needs to double in size and increase staff from 22 to more than 40.

The firm, which had been based in Devizes Road, Old Town, since it set up in 1996, has moved to Vicarage Court, Ermin Street, Stratton.

At 4,800 sq ft, the new offices at are double the size of Banks' former premise and have facilities for running seminars and networking events, as well as boardroom space.

There is also ample free parking for clients and staff, and the ground floor is accessible for disabled people.

Banks director Richard Mathews

said: "We're delighted with our new location, which has gone down very well with clients and staff.

"We have more space here, which we need to grow our business, and we certainly have the demand."

As well as creating more jobs, Banks plans to run regular free events, utilising the new facilities; there will



Richard Mathews

be a mixture of networking events, seminars and presentations. Richard added: "We can increase the size of our departments and offer more to our clients in terms of both services and free events. These are really exciting times for Banks Chartered Accountants."

Richard and co-director Neil Elsdon have not ruled out taking on more board members. They are also seeking a manager for the taxation department.

The offices were completely refurbished before Banks moved in. Included in the refit is a lounge, kitchen and TV area for staff.

## Sustainable printing from Orchard Press

However much businesses try to switch their marketing and communications to electronic formats, rather than paper, there are times when only paper will do.

Many people still want to hold a brochure in their hands and pass it round to colleagues or friends. And as the staggering increase in junk email includes many electronic marketing campaigns, people appreciate being able to open a personalised or requested paper document, and treat it more seriously and hold onto it for longer.

So does that mean we should feel guilty about cutting down even more trees to make that paper?

On the contrary, says Paul Rowley, of Swindon-based Orchard Press.

"One of the best things you can do, in my opinion, is always to use a print



company that has FSC certification. FSC is short for Forest Stewardship Council, and if you see the FSC label you are guaranteed several things. That the trees that are harvested are replaced, or allowed to regenerate naturally. That parts of the forest are protected entirely, to protect rare animals and plants. That all wood sourced from the forest is

tracked – from the forest to the print company itself. And that the wood is endorsed by major environmental charities, including WWF, Greenpeace and The Woodland Trust." While the carbon footprint of emails may seem invisible, they still exist. The ICT (information and communications technology) sector is estimated to be responsible for two per cent of carbon emissions in Europe, and the industry average for high power usage effectiveness (PUE) is two, which means for every watt used by IT machinery, two watts are used in cooling it.

For more information about ordering FSC-certified print call 01793 420 642 or email:

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## Ten years of success at Complete Business Gifts

Chippenham-based Complete Business Gifts is celebrating a decade of reinforcing its clients' advertising campaigns with its wide range of promotional items.

While many new and innovative promotional gifts have come on to the market over the past 10 years, old favourites such as pens and mugs are still highly favoured. At the moment branded USBs are top of the list for the most useful promotional gift.

Complete Business Gifts managing director Catherine Walker said: "The key is to ensure the gift is useful to the recipient. This enables your brand to be exposed to them at every opportunity."

Research for the BPMA (British Promotional Merchandise Association) into how promotional gifts affect feelings, perceptions and buying activity shows:

- 66% of recipients said they could remember the brand on a promotional product received during the last year.

- 79% said they were more likely to do business with a company following receiving a promotional gift
- 84% said that a branded promotional gift increases brand awareness
- 87% kept a promotional gift for more than a year, 30% between three and four years
- 56% felt more favourable towards the brand/company after receiving a promotional gift

"With an ever-competitive marketplace, it is vital now more than ever to stand out from your competitors," added Catherine.

"If there are limited opportunities to ensure your company is the first your clients think of, you will need to remain memorable. A promotional gift could provide that constant reminder."

Complete Business Gifts will be exhibiting at The Business Growth Show in Swindon on May 22 at the Menzies Hotel and looks forward to meeting delegates.

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# Withy King launches new branding

One of Swindon's longest-established law firms, Withy King, has launched a new brand identity which puts its clients at the very heart of the practice.

The rebranding follows 18 months of research into what people want from their lawyers and includes a new logo in warm red and orange tones with distinctive curves - a departure from the blue colour schemes favoured by 60 per cent of law firms.

It is also a radical change from Withy King's previous identity which has been associated with the firm for several decades. The new branding is being brought to life with photographs of clients and commentary.

But Withy King managing partner Graham Street says the rebrand is about far more than a smart new image.

"The launch of our new brand is just the beginning. We are very aware that strong brands aren't built on colourful logos but on reliability, transparency, integrity, approachability, service and other values. Our brand is our soul. Changing our appearance doesn't change who we are but it



does allow us to alter the way we are perceived. It also enables us to interrogate our values and ensure they continue to meet the needs of our clients.

"We recognise that a good brand is one that delivers on its promises. We are totally committed to our clients and ensuring that Withy King lives up to their expectations, now and in the future."

*Swindon Business News looks at how design is vital to powerful brands in a special feature in June's issue.*

*For more information contact Anita Jaynes on 01793 615393 or email [anita@swindon-business.net](mailto:anita@swindon-business.net)*

## Design Forum rebrands to create Design South West

The South West Design Forum has re-launched itself as Design South West with a new identity, website and the mission of 'Design, Better Connected'. The organisation, which is run by the industry for the industry, continues in its role as the regional body bringing together seven locally-based design forums.

A community interest company (CIC), Design South West will promote and assist these local groups, initiate projects that benefit designers across the region and work with regional and national organisations to ensure the South West builds on its reputation as a great place for design and creativity to flourish in.

Design South West brings together some of the most passionate supporters of design from the networks of the Wiltshire Design Network, West of England Design Forum, Gloucestershire Design Network, Somerset Design Enterprise Network, Cornwall Design Forum, Designed in Devon and Dorset-based MeetDraw.

The new website - [www.designsw.org](http://www.designsw.org) - will be used to:

- Showcase leading designers and agencies in the region.
- Profile success stories that demonstrate the power of design.
- Promote great events and initiatives within and outside the region.

## Civil liberties ethos retained as law firms merge

Civil liberties and human rights law firm Pierce Glynn, which has an outreach centre in Swindon, has merged with London lawyers Deighton Guedalla.

Deighton Pierce Glynn - as the new firm is called - will retain the ethos of both firms, using the law to enforce the rights of the disadvantaged, hold the state to account for its actions, challenge discrimination and fight human rights and environmental abuses.

Pierce Glynn's Swindon centre and its Bristol office have had a number of notable victories including successful challenges to the tendering of voluntary sector services for the disabled in Swindon and a funding cut to Gloucester Race Equality Council.

The office is part of the Environmental Justice Partnership, a collaboration between UWE Bristol, Bristol Green Capital Partnership, the Environmental Law Foundation and the ADR Group, Bristol. Deighton Guedalla founding partner Jane Deighton, who becomes a director of the merged firm, said: "We are merging because we admire each other's work. The new firm will provide an inspired and broader service to our clients."

Deighton Guedalla specialises in challenging discrimination and abuses of power by the police and public authorities. Jane is well known for her work acting for Duwayne Brooks, the friend of Stephen Lawrence who was with him



when he was murdered. Pierce Glynn has a national reputation for innovative public law and social welfare litigation, from challenging public service cuts for NGOs, to acting for torture and trafficking survivors.

Polly Glynn, a founding partner of Pierce Glynn who also becomes a director of the new firm, welcomed the collaboration.

She said: "Although practicing in different areas, our high-quality lawyers have a strong shared set of values which is at the heart of all the work we do."

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Brendan Powell, Trainer - Lambourn

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# Get the courage to have that difficult chat at work, says Conflict Masters

In the first of a series of articles by Conflict Masters, the Wiltshire consultancy helping organisations where conflict is hitting productivity and damaging working relationships, the focus is on the benefits of Courageous Conversations at work.

Most workplace conflict arises from a misunderstanding or a lack of communication. Whether the message is about performance, explaining why changes are being made, or simply refusing an employee's request, we often fail to deliver it in an unambiguous way. For an organisation, this can rapidly lead to staff disengagement or even complaints of bullying and grievances.

So why do so many of us find it difficult to have those 'courageous' conversations? It is the fear associated with such conversations which often leads us to procrastinate and avoid the discussion, or causes us to deliver our message in an autocratic and uncaring way.

Undoubtedly, it takes courage to deliver a message which you anticipate will be unwelcome. But our courage often fails us because we misunderstand the three key components in the conversation. Firstly, we assume that we know how the other person is going to react and fail to take time to listen and find this out. Secondly, we avoid any discussion or acknowledgement of the emotion felt by those involved. And lastly, we mistakenly believe that delivering an unwelcome message will result in us becoming a manager who is disliked or not respected.

But if an organisation equips its managers with the skills to have courageous conversations as part of its culture; integrity and trust will swiftly follow leading to a more

proactive and productive business with staff who feel valued.

Conflict Masters is finding significant interest in its Courageous Conversations workshops. Director Sarah Crayford Brown explains:

"We use trained actors to demonstrate the power of getting these conversations right and what happens when we get them wrong. Delegates come away with the skills and confidence to immediately address an issue which they have rehearsed in the workshop and we provide follow on support to ensure that the learning leads to longer lasting change."

Sarah and Conflict Master co-founder Alison Bennett are staging a free awareness session entitled Leadership and Wellbeing at Work: Courageous Conversations - Resolving Conflict, under the Swindon Mindful Employer Network banner on May 23 at UK College of Personal Development, Wood Street, Old Town, Swindon from 9.30am-12.30pm.

For more information go to [www.conflictmasters.co.uk](http://www.conflictmasters.co.uk) or phone Sarah on 01249 859417.



Sarah Crayford Brown

## Benefit employees where it matters - in their pocket

Employers are often looking for ways to reward employees. There are generally tax and National Insurance issues, but some come with incentives. Peter Crozier, a tax consultant with Morris Owen looks at some options.

Take pension contributions. Employees normally pay these from their after tax income. However by changing to an employer contribution using salary sacrifice, the cost to both won't change, but the employee could have significant extra cash put into his pension. This type of arrangement is not a taxable benefit in kind and could also help the employee limit the effect of child benefit changes in January 2013.

A mobile phone provided by business owners to employees is not a taxable benefit in kind. However this does not apply to payments for employee owned mobiles. Employers should take care as this can have unwanted tax bills.

Payment of employees personal



Peter Crozier

bills for goods or services provided will be taxable. However National Insurance savings for both can be made if the contract is made between the employer and the provider.

Payments for employees parking at or near the place of work is not a taxable benefit in kind. If the employer doesn't want to pay all of the parking cost, they could arrange

a salary sacrifice for the parking costs with the employee. This can result in savings for both and also result in increased net pay for the employee.

Childcare vouchers of up to £55 per week are currently exempt from tax and NIC, which produces a saving of £17 per week for employees and employers will also save NIC.

An employer providing a company car with CO2 emissions below 110 g/km will mean the employee has a taxable benefit in kind of between 5 per cent and 15 per cent of the list price. The employer would be able to set 100 per cent of the cost against profits and there over 600 cars to choose from.

The above are a number of options than can benefit both the employee and employer where it matters - in their pocket.

For further information please contact Peter Crozier on 01793 603900 or email him at [peter.crozier@morrisowen.com](mailto:peter.crozier@morrisowen.com)

# Keep employees healthy to boost productivity

By Callum Jones

A company with healthy employees will be more successful than one with less-active staff, a conference in Swindon heard this month.

The Active@Work event, run by Swindon's Mindful Employer Network and held at the town's Jurys Inn, heard four speakers from various organisations talk about the business benefits of a healthy workforce.

Jane Abraham, from Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry, said: "A healthy and engaged workforce creates a high-performing environment and a resilient workforce."

If an employee leads an active life style, taking least 30 minutes of exercise five days a week, then they will be more focused and more committed to achieving success, she said.

A recent study from the European Centre of Human Health predicts that by 2025, some 40 per cent of adults in the UK will be obese. To counteract this depressing statistic, employees need to live healthier working lives.

Ms Abraham referred to comments by Health Secretary Andrew Lansley, who said employers needed to take more responsibility for the health of their staff.

They should invest time in creating a healthy workforce as it will reduce costs through fewer sickness absences, lower staff turnover and less need for training. It would also increase the productivity and performance of their employees.

Tracey Scarr of Arval UK Group, the Swindon-based fleet car company and an Active@Work employer, believes firms should provide free resources to help their workforce keep active and to hold

'bike and walk to work' weeks throughout the year.

She is a strong believer in the success of a company being measured on how active its workforce is.

Tracey organised a 54-strong cycle team from Arval to ride from its Birmingham office to its Swindon headquarters to raise money for charity and raise awareness of the importance of leading an active working lifestyle.

Dr Dinesh Sirisena, registrar in sports and exercise medicine, pointed out that 66% of men and 75% of women are inactive. He said: "This shows the importance of trying to make people live healthy lifestyles. It will help to counteract the growing obesity rate in the UK. If you can get people to be healthy at work then it goes a long way to help stop obesity in the UK."

He also said four in five people in Swindon are inactive and suggested a link between this and the area's high premature death rate. Workplaces need to aid the workforce in leading healthy lifestyles, he said.

Claire Fleming, travel awareness officer at Swindon Council, said: "There is a huge link between employees walking or cycling to work and a more productive workforce."

She spoke about the Global Corporate Challenge in which teams of seven around the world can compete by uploading their pedometer steps to the Challenge website - 10,000 steps a day is a good target, she said.

Delegates at the conference could enjoy a free smoothie a free health check during the break.

For more information visit [www.ecehh.org](http://www.ecehh.org) or contact [david.latham@richmondfellowship.org.uk](mailto:david.latham@richmondfellowship.org.uk).

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## Ask Peter B

Small Business advice from Peter Bromiley ACA  
Technical Director at AMS Accountancy Ltd.

**Q: My business has grown and I need help from an extra person. Do I have to make them an employee?**

**A:** Tax Law meets Employment Law here. If you take someone on as an employee, you will have to consider a number of things such as; Employer's National Insurance, Employer's Liability Insurance, statutory holidays, Maternity / Paternity pay etc...

It could be beneficial to take on a self-employed worker rather than an employee. However, this can potentially lead to other problems, typically HMRC demanding National Insurance on what they consider to be "wages" or, the worker claiming employment rights. (I would strongly recommend that you take advice on this):

**For:** If the person you take on is working as a self-employed person (where they control how they work, or have the right to turn down work that you offer them), then you can pay them on receipt of an invoice.

**Against:** If the person you want to take on will merely supply their labour and you are the one who will decide how they must work and they must also follow your instructions, you should probably take them on as an employee.

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## GREEN NEWS

## Jobs soar in green energy sector as it powers ahead

The number of people employed in the South West's renewable energy sector soared by 40 per cent to 7,000 last year, a new report shows.

And with the right support that number could climb to 30,000 jobs by 2020, says Renewable Energy: Made in Britain, by the Renewable Energy Association.

The report shows that nationally the renewable energy sector employed more than 110,000 people in 2010/11. The figure for 7,000 in the South West compares with regional renewable energy group Regen's figure of 5,000 in 2009/10.

The UK has a target of 15% energy from renewable energy sources by 2020 – and achieving that could create jobs for 400,000 people nationally and 30,000 in the south west.

Regen chief executive Merlin Hyman said: "Renewable energy jobs have continued to boom in the teeth of the recession and even

these figures are an underestimate as they don't include the strong performance of the sector in the last year.

"Over the next decade clean energy is the biggest economic opportunity we have. Backing ambitious projects like the South West Marine Energy Park, Atlantic Array offshore wind farm, Communities for Renewables and work to lead the way on the Green Deal is vital if we are to seize this opportunity."

Among the South West companies leading the way in renewable energy is Chippenham-based renewable energy supplier and developer Good Energy, which has grown from 55 staff in 2009 to 82 by the end of 2011.

Renewable energy will be one of the sectors analysed in Swindon Business News' special Green issue this August. For more information contact Anita Jaynes on 01793 615393 or email: [anita@swindon-business.net](mailto:anita@swindon-business.net)

## Profits 50% up in best ever year for Good Energy

Strong growth in its feed-in tariff business helped renewable energy group Good Energy achieve a 50 per cent leap in pre-tax profits in 2011, making it its best ever year.

Generator numbers soared from 1,000 to 12,000 by the end of 2011, and reached 35,000 at the end of March, equivalent to around 14% of micro-generators in the UK, as people took advantage of Government incentives to install solar panels.

There was also growth in its core retail supply business with a 15% year-on-year increase in the numbers of customers switching to the Chippenham-based firm – taking the total to 45,000 – and its Delabole wind farm exceeded first year expectations while new wind farm development projects are on target.

Chief executive Juliet Davenport said: "Good Energy Group has had its best year so far. At the year end we had over 45,000 customer accounts and at March 2012 we had more than doubled the number of customer accounts since the beginning of 2011 to over 70,000. This is thanks not only to the Feed-in Tariff, which played to our strengths, but also

our ability to deliver stable prices to our electricity customers, coupled with an award-winning service."

Chairman Rick Squires added: "Good Energy continues to empower individuals and businesses to play an active role in the UK energy market. We have made further investments in our supply portfolio, and these together with increasing customer demand will underpin our future growth, against a background of concern about rising fossil fuel prices and international political uncertainty."

"The need for the UK to develop greater energy independence, and for energy retailers to have more transparent tariffs for customers, has never been more apparent. The board remains confident that Good Energy will continue to make the best of the opportunities the future offers." At the end of 2011, the firm had 28,000 electricity customers, 5,000 gas customers, 12,000 Feed-in Tariff customers (FIT) and was sourcing 20% of its electricity from its Delabole wind farm in Cornwall. It has since applied for planning permission for a wind farm in Scotland.

## Manufacturing

## Swindon to benefit from government focus on manufacturing growth

The Government has made much of its intention to boost the UK's manufacturing sector. As home to the South West's strongest manufacturing sector, Swindon should benefit from the policy – and for those promoting the town, it is a vital weapon in their armoury to bring in much-needed investment and jobs.

But manufacturing comes in many forms – from the clean-room assembly of hi-tech components to more traditional engineering based on machining and assembling metal parts. The Government, in its efforts to show Britain to the world as a modern manufacturing nation, has launched initiatives such as the Make it in Great Britain campaign which aims to transform outdated opinions of modern manufacturing and dispel the myth that Britain 'doesn't make anything anymore'.

It culminates in an exhibition of cutting-edge British manufacturing at the Science Museum to coincide with the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

But what would a Make it in Swindon campaign look like? For Ian Piper, chief executive of Forward Swindon, the council's economic development company, Swindon's ability to reinvent itself and attract new industries continues to give it a leading edge over other towns and cities.

Equally, its traditionally flexible workforce means it has a flexible economy – and so can generate what used to be called blue-collar jobs as well as technical or managerial employment.

"There's a view that the manufacturing jobs that really matter now are the ones where highly-qualified technicians work in clean rooms," he said.

"While these are very important – and Swindon has attracted many jobs like that in the micro-electronics and pharmaceutical sectors – there is still a need for more traditional manufacturing jobs where people make things. Swindon's strength is that it can offer both these."

Mr Piper also points out that, while Swindon has a world-class automotive sector with leading vehicle manufacturers such as Honda and BMW and innovators like Johnson Matthey Fuel Cells, it also has a broader manufacturing base spanning engineering, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, bio-tech and machine tools.

Andrew Phillips, manufacturing advisor at the sector advice body MAS, believes Swindon has powerful advantages.

"Swindon has a strong manufacturing base with companies trading both

Manufacturing comes in many forms – from the clean-room assembly of hi-tech components to more traditional engineering based on machining and assembling metal parts.



Andrew Phillips

locally and internationally, and its location and geography mean it is well suited to the supply chain requirements of hi-tech businesses.

"The town also has around 30 industrial estates, offering premises ideal for all types of businesses from start-up companies through to SMEs and larger established and growing firms."

"MAS has worked with around 240 manufacturing companies in the Swindon and Wiltshire area across sectors including electrical and communication, metal fabrication, printers and machinery and food and drink."

Its location also gives manufacturers based in the town excellent access to UK markets and easy connections to airports and sea ports so they can play their part in boosting UK exports – another area the Government is encouraging.

This could be key for Swindon as the latest survey from the EEF, the manufacturers' organisation and RBS, shows UK manufacturers stepping up their investment plans to capitalise on surging demand from emerging economies and provide a long-term growth presence in overseas markets. Meanwhile in another survey – this time from the CBI – business sentiment among the UK's small and medium-

sized manufacturers rose for the first time since mid-2011 and orders and production are expected to grow solidly over the next quarter.

However, the pressures on the manufacturing sector are still immense – the latest figure for administration appointments in the sector from accountants KPMG show a 34 per cent quarter-on-quarter increase to 102 nationwide in the first three months of 2012.

Barclays' corporate director in Swindon, Chris Elias, said: "Although UK manufacturing sector growth has softened, there is still strength in the sector despite the recent news of a return to recession. It seems that the contraction in economic growth has not had a lasting impact on manufacturers' confidence, with signs of optimism across the industry and various sub sectors performing well."

Swindon can point to renew confidence at Honda where the 500 new workers recruited to produce the next generation Civic car have recently started work.

The new recruits take the total number of employees at Honda of the UK Manufacturing (HUM) – the Japanese group's Swindon-based car and engine production business – to 3,500.

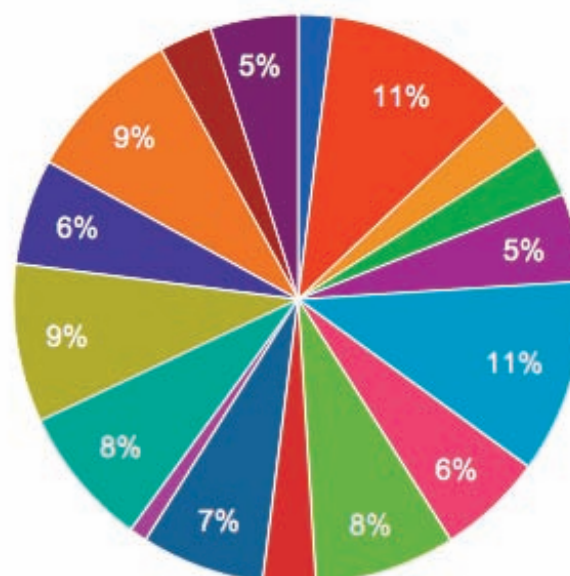
Car production is now forecast to double to 180,000 units this year as mass production of the new European CR-V and the introduction of a new small diesel engine start commence alongside the new Civic and the successful Jazz.

Speaking last December, Honda Motor Europe president Manabu Nishimae said Honda remained totally committed to building cars and engines in Europe with Swindon at the heart of Honda's European manufacturing activities.

Swindon can also attract major manufacturers such as BD, a leading global medical technology company that develops, manufactures and sells medical devices, instrument systems and reagents.

Its Dorcan plant employs around 200 people and specialises in developing and manufacturing plastic purpose-designed drug delivery systems which are supplied to the pharmaceutical industry for filling and distribution to end users worldwide.

% Total employment by broad industry group, October 2011



- Mining, Quarrying & Utilities
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Motor Trades
- Wholesale
- Retail
- Transport & Storage (inc P...
- Accommodation & Food Se..
- Information & Communicati..
- Finance & Insurance
- Property

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# Swindon’s top manufacturing/advanced engineering companies:

Honda  
BMW  
TS Tech  
Dynamatic  
Tyco Electronics  
Torin  
Zarlink Semiconductors  
Alcatel Lucent  
Fairchild Semiconductors  
Dialog Semiconductors  
Westcode Semiconductors

## Case study: Metalite

Swindon’s heritage in precision engineering is being maintained by Metalite. The firm, which employs 40 skilled staff at its base on the Techno Trading Estate, has developed specific expertise in injection mould tooling and has the capability to manufacture tools for a wide range of applications.

With a reputation going back more than 30 years, the firm works in sectors spanning medical, optical, aerospace, automotive, packaging (thin wall), horticultural and technical mould tools.

In aerospace, it works with several of the top names in the industry, producing jigs and fixtures that enable production and inspection of major components.

A spokesman said: “Our whole approach centres on quality and precession.  
“Our designers can develop designs from an idea or an existing component.”

## Case study: Itel Electronics

Established 21 years ago, Itel Electronics supplies wire and cable harnesses to the aerospace, defence and commercial markets, including military aircraft, land vehicles and naval ships, from its base in Dorcan.

Continuous growth and the need for specialisation led to the creation of two companies in 1997.

Itel Electronics supplies cost-driven interconnections and harnessing for commercial applications, while Itel Electronics specialises in the aerospace and defence sectors, supplying design-driven, high-specification cable harnesses and cable harness assemblies for a range of applications.

It says the wealth of experience and knowledge is key to the success of both businesses, providing customers with the complete solution to their requirements.

“We provide bespoke designs, high-quality products, technical and design expertise backed up with competitive pricing and on-time delivery,” said a spokesman.

## Case study: Kemdent

Established in 1922 and situated at its present site in Purton since 1941, Kemdent is world-renown in the dental industry for its famous modelling waxes.

With such a long heritage it would be easy for Kemdent to rest on its laurels. But innovation, spurred on by investment in research and development, are still very much at the forefront for the firm, which supplies modelling wax, base plates, silicones, acrylics, filling materials to dental laboratories and surgeries.

The manufacturing method and formulation of its modelling waxes are unique and the brands are recognised by dental technicians throughout the world as the finest available.

Kemdent constantly increases the range of products it manufactures as dental procedures develop and has added 20 new products over recent years, including InstrumentSafe, a concentrate for the cleaning and disinfection of dental instruments; PracticeSafe disinfectant wipes and spray for the fast cleaning and disinfection of hard surfaces and small objects; and ChairSafe, an aerosol and alcohol free foam for the disinfection of alcohol-sensitive surfaces and especially suitable for dental chairs.

It is also addressing its environmental impact and as part of the manufacturing process involves melting of wax - which can result in a large amount of wasted heat expelled into the air – it has installed heat pump technology to capture previously wasted heat, recycling it to produce a supply of hot water for the factory.

# Getting the Business Edge: IT simply applied

Ray Smyth of Swindon’s The IPstore says: “To gain any of the economic benefits offered by cloud computing, it is necessary to increase IT planning, control and management. Care must be taken...”

This month I am looking at the economics of the cloud. A lot is claimed, especially about the savings on offer. In order to evaluate putative savings, a new cloud service needs to be compared with either an existing or planned in-house service. Accordingly, the savings will vary as the specifics of each situation unfold. However, there is one area that is likely to be universally true: in-house provisioning of an IT service will consist of capital expenditure (CapEx) and possibly recurrent costs (OpEx), whereas a cloud-based service is likely to be primarily, if not exclusively OpEx.

This alone could be an exciting prospect for a business considering a new IT investment; it must never be the main driver. Neither should the cloud be considered as an all-or-nothing option; in fact, a new project is likely to prove a good place to start, providing it co-exists with existing services.

Cloud services are generally charged on a pay-as-you-use basis using virtual computing (virtualisation). In essence, a physical server when virtualised can provide a large number of virtual servers; because the virtual servers are defined by software, any business can provision and vary services in quite literally

minutes, making it easy and effective to handle exceptional or peak workloads, temporary staff, and projects. Cloud computing will offer some benefit to all organisations and for the majority, a hybrid (premises and cloud) deployment will be best.

Any headline savings can quickly turn very bad when the cloud service is not properly planned and provisioned. A significant concern – an unfolding situation – is data. The chance of irretrievably losing your data is substantially reduced when using cloud-based storage.

This is because data centres should have a mirrored facility, possibly on another continent. But this can also be the problem because locations outside of the UK might give rise to a breach of industry regulation or data protection legislation.

You need to know where your data resides and in how many instances – don’t forget back-ups. You also need to be legally certain that your data remains your data. There have been cases where standard terms and conditions, ticked on-line by an IT Manager have unwittingly conferred data ownership rights on the provider.

Experts seem to agree that the law needs reform in many areas concerning the internet and its environs, so care is needed because the economics of error are very harsh, possibly deadly. Don’t just grab the savings on offer and use the cloud as a tool to deliver IT services once you know it makes sense for your business.

# Fear is the key, but don’t let it lock in bad attitudes

Swindon-based consultant and coach Peter Mayes and Swindon Business News have teamed up to identify some of the key obstacles to effectiveness and look at some of the major stumbling blocks to running a successful and productive team.

In the third of his articles Peter looks at how to cut through the doom and gloom.

It’s been a tough year. Companies have had to fight hard to stay buoyant or in some cases stay in business. Bosses have had their backs to the wall for sure but in some cases they have been their own worst enemy.

By adopting a victim mentality they have become paralysed – like a rabbit caught in headlights.

Some of the biggest mistakes I have witnessed in the past 12 months have been managers’ readiness to believe everything they have heard on the news. Certainly it’s hard out there but does all the doom and gloom really apply to them? Probably not, but by soaking up the negative messages and allowing them to take hold, companies have become too afraid to do what comes naturally and resorted to clinging on for dear life.

They have just ploughed on doing what they have always done and not focused on the real issues facing them. It is much easier to

concentrate on side issues because that is less challenging but what they should be doing in tough times is get a real understanding of what they do well and concentrate on that.

Companies also tend to cut back on staff development and training when things are tight NO! You need motivated, skilled and willing staff more than ever when times are hard.

The next 12 months are not going to be easy either so I would urge companies and organisations to:

Be true leaders by self leading and being self learners who desire to know more and decide more

Increase their own self awareness so they can be more attuned to their employees and their customers

Engage employees so that they willingly invest their ‘discretionary effort’

Strive to become an employer of choice

Create a real code of values and behaviours important to the organisation’s future success (eg ‘teamwork’, ‘fairness’ or ‘respect’)

Learn what employees want out of their time at work?

Help all employees identify their talents, strengths and gifts and use them to the full?

Find out more about Peter at [www.petermayes.co.uk](http://www.petermayes.co.uk)



## MEDIA PARTNERSHIP

### Swindon Business News and Chamber of Commerce join forces to support growth

Swindon Chamber of Commerce and Swindon Business News are pleased to announce a media partnership with the objective of supporting business growth and development in the town.

As part of the partnership, Swindon Business News will have a presence at Chamber events, offer discounts for members and provide regular content in print and online.

Chamber head of corporate & political engagement Rosemary Wells said: "Swindon Chamber of Commerce has the goal of working with businesses to help them realise their full potential in a location that has an international reputation as a centre of innovation and excellent connectivity, in a dynamic, vibrant and welcoming town with true commitment, effective partnership working and a sustainable environment that encourages business and economic growth.

"These are aims we share with Swindon Business News and this is therefore a natural partnership."

The key Chamber aims are to be:

- A well-connected and representative business base
- The 'hub' of information and access to business support and critical issues
- The voice of members at local forums such as Influence Swindon
- The centre for lobbying and engagement on matters relating to the priority themes and ensuring that the Swindon business environment is dynamic, innovative, collaborative and welcoming
- The voice of members with the local media
- Recognised for bringing businesses together for valuable engagement and debates
- Recognised for raising business awareness of growth opportunities and solutions – including international trade and inward investment.

The Chamber has a strong international trade service. Working closely with UKTI South East, it is the UK's second-biggest export documentation issuing body, with more than 70,000 international trade documents processed each year. Contact the Chamber on 01753 870500 or visit: [www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk](http://www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk)

## Awards & Conferences

### South West PA of the Year Awards gains momentum with sponsors

Preparations are underway for the South West PA of the Year Awards – the first of their kind in the region – and for AM:PM PA Ltd, they are the ideal platform to showcase its services.

Swindon Business News and its partner websites Bristol Business News and Bath Business News have teamed up with the luxury Ston Easton Park Hotel, near Bath, to stage the prestigious awards.

PAs are often the unsung heroes of an organisation and the awards aim to celebrate those who go the extra mile in helping their employers reach their potential, who make a real difference to their managers and who play key roles in delivering excellence in the workplace.

Bath-based AM:PM PA is sponsoring the awards to highlight its personal executive assistants service which allows directors, managers and business owners to make more time for yourself.

AM:PM PA director Angela MacAusland said: "Whether it's going through their inbox,



prioritising their workload or organising an event, we take the burden away from managers, at a time convenient to them."

There are no membership fees and no hidden costs for the service. PAs can be hired for the day or half day and the service can be used on a regular basis or just as a one-off. There is a free one-hour business consultation for all new clients.

"We give managers the benefit of having your own PA without the hassle involved with actually employing someone," added Angela. "We work on an entirely freelance basis and clients only pay us for the work we do – recruitment costs,

holiday pay, sickness pay, benefits, pensions, are all a thing of the past."

PAs can work in clients' offices, their homes or AM:PM PA's office.

The PA of the Year Awards take place at Ston Easton Park on July 4 when the winners will receive their accolades following a champagne tea, sponsored by AM:PM PA on the hotel's beautiful terrace.

There are three categories:

#### PA of the Year

**Newcomer of the Year** (Open to those who have been employed in a PA role for less than two years as of June 17, 2012)

**Best event organised by a PA** (Entries valid for events between January 2011-June 2012)

Winners of each category will receive a range of prizes including luxury spa visits.

The closing date for the awards is June 17, 2012.

For more details on the awards, sponsorship opportunities and information on how to enter go to [www.swindon-business.net](http://www.swindon-business.net)

### Leisure club celebrates 25th anniversary

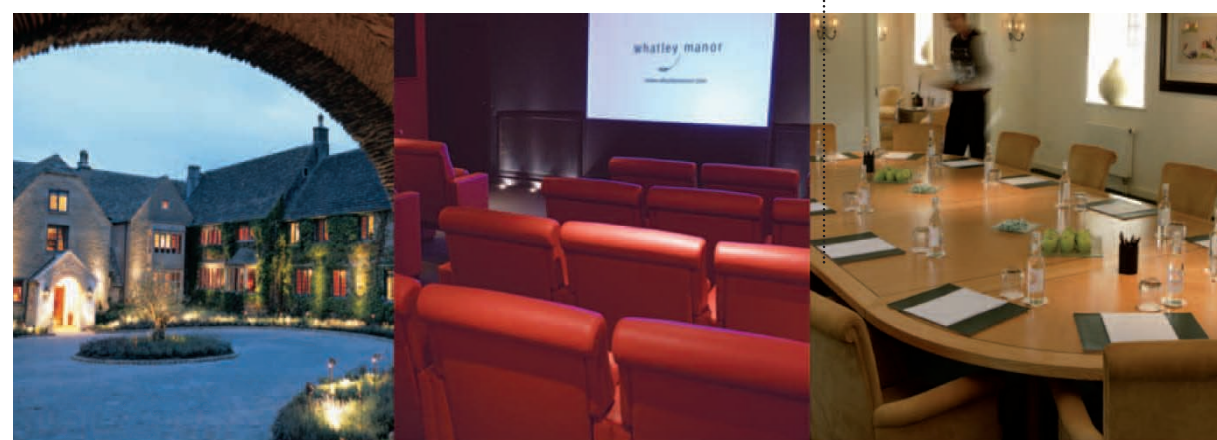
A group of 70-plus members of Blunsdon House Hotel's leisure club met to celebrate its 25th anniversary and witness the unveiling of its new logo.

Blunsdon House was one of the first hotels in Swindon to build extensive leisure facilities, including pool, gym, nine-hole par 3 golf course, two squash courts and a tennis

court. The new logo is designed from the tree carving of an owl created from a 100-ft tall, 150-year-old Wellingtonia tree that greets guests as they drive into the hotel.

The new logo was unveiled by leisure club founder member Dilys Ricketts, who also cut a special anniversary cake with club manager Julien Cini.

Whatley Manor Hotel & Spa offers conference facilities and accommodation in the pretty Wiltshire countryside. Located just outside Malmesbury in Easton Grey. Benefit from the competitive day delegate rate of £90 per delegate or the 24 hr rate of £325. The stylish forty seat private cinema may be hired for presentations. Exclusive use available. Call Events on 01666 834 026 or email [events@whatleymanor.com](mailto:events@whatleymanor.com)



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Terms and Conditions: To qualify for this promotional day delegate & 24 hour delegate rate, a meeting or event must be held between 23rd July 2012 - 31st August 2012 with a minimum of 10 delegates. Offer is valid on new bookings only and does not apply to previously contracted meetings or events. Offer is subject to availability at time of booking. Offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotion except Triple Rewarding Events promotion where applicable. All Marriott Rewards and Rewarding Events terms and conditions apply.



# Getting back to nature in the Austrian Alps

Want to be 'at one' with nature? Swindon Business News Travel Editor Anne Gorringer discovers what else there is to get up to in the mountains above St Anton once the ski season comes to a close...

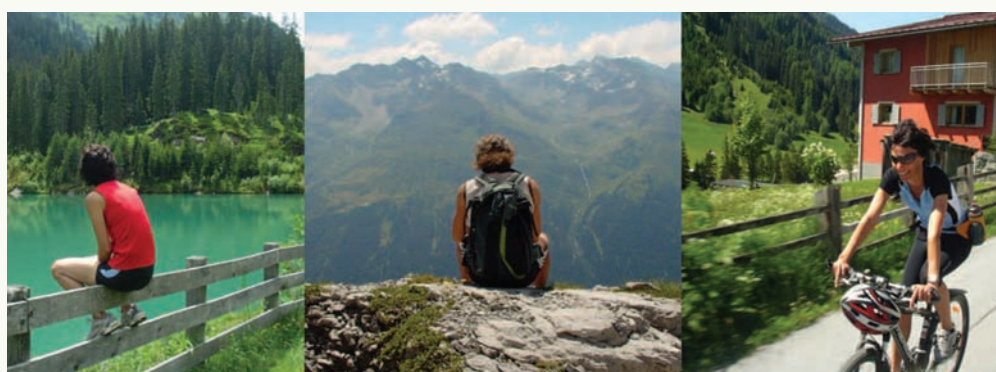
How can letting dozens of ants crawl up your arm keep a cold at bay? Gamely, I followed instructions, patting an anthill high on the slopes of St Anton as Alpine expert Ferdl Nobl looked on.

Well, it certainly makes for an interesting introduction to natural remedies... AND it made me forget my aching legs as I ambled down the 10 km-long mountain pass.

The theory is that pressing down on the top releases a natural, eucalyptus-type chemical that (so walking guide Ferdl swears) keeps sneezes at bay.

We were up on the mountains slopes above the village which, until May 1 each year, offer a playground for skiers. From June onwards, these same passes begin to bloom with wildflowers and, as I followed Ferdl's instructions, a woody sweet scent filled the air.

I was one of a group of hikers, walking a track which descended over 1,400 metres, passing Alpine meadows on the way. The bright yellow blooms, explained Ferdl, were



Arnica – best picked at mid-day ready to be distilled down in a bottle of Schnapps in the sunshine on his windowsill!

St Anton is still largely undiscovered as a summer destination but if you like beautiful countryside and love being active, there's plenty to do.

Mountain-bikers have more than 200km of marked cycle trails in the area to choose from. I travelled with tour operator Inghams who offer free bike hire as part of their package as well as direct flights from Bristol.

If water sports are more your thing, you can opt for rafting in the Rosanna River or the

Kayak School Arlberg offers guided tours, expeditions and kayak hire for everyone from beginners upwards.

I opted for a 'tubing' trip instead – one of the latest sports to hit St Anton. This involves donning head-to-toe wetsuit gear to sit in a giant tyre (tube) and steering your way down a crystal-clear mountain stream. Following your instructor, you pass through beautiful countryside as you battle with the current past rocky outcrops. Great fun!

Summer attractions include the 'spa' breaks and treatments which began back to the 1800's when Victorians travelled to the area

for relaxation and the fabulous, fresh Alpine air.

The Brits have been keen visitors to the area ever since and today travel is made much easier by the efficient railway system which links the area to Innsbruck, the cultural capital of the Alps, and the nearest airport.

Just two hours down the track, Innsbruck makes a great day trip. The city is surprisingly compact and has a fascinating medieval Old Town filled with interesting museums and buildings.

If you love architecture, watch out for the Ski ramp in the centre of Innsbruck and the train station, both designed by Zaha Hadid. She's the architect behind London's Aquatics Centre in the Olympic Park, the venue for this year's Olympic Games.

Back in St Anton I decided it was time to relax and checked out the indoor pool, sauna and steam room in my hotel, the 4\* Hotel Alberg. Er... a word of caution here, the mountainside isn't the only place – where going into some saunas really CAN mean getting back to nature, as the true Austrian way is to go 'au naturel'. Sorry, but I'm British, and a stiff upper lip is the only thing I want to see in the sauna. When it comes to it, I'll be keeping my swimming costume on ...

## Where to stay:

Anne travelled with Inghams on an inclusive holiday, staying at the 4\* Hotel Alberg in St Anton (see [www.stantonamarlberg.com](http://www.stantonamarlberg.com)) for seven nights on a half board basis. Prices start at £629 per person and include free daily lunch packs, a free bottle of wine on arrival, free bike hire and return flights from Bristol from May to September plus resort transfers. For more information visit or [www.inghams.co.uk](http://www.inghams.co.uk) or contact 0208 780 4454. Inghams summer European Lakes

and Mountains schedule travels to 20 resorts in Austria and Italy. These include the mountain destinations of Kitzbuhel, Obergurgl and Seefeld in addition to St Anton. Resorts in the Italian Dolomites include the villages of La Villa and Corvara. Their current Bristol special offers include a 7 nights, half board stay at the 3.5\* Hotel Alpina in Seefeld from £379 per person, departing 9 June. Price includes free daily drinks with dinner, packed lunches and free afternoon tea and cakes. As above, For more information call 0208 780 4454.

## Activities:

Go tubing in St Anton from the Arl Rock centre in the town. Checkout details at [www.h2o-adventure.at](http://www.h2o-adventure.at)

## Getting around:-

St Anton  
Walkers Lift Pass – A pass for all cable cars and lifts in the St Anton area costs £29 (7 days) Guided walks – Join other Inghams guests on our exclusive guided walks led by

local, English speaking guides. Pay just £1 per walk to secure your place.

## Tourist information:

Tirol  
[www.visittirol.co.uk](http://www.visittirol.co.uk)

Innsbruck  
[www.innsbruck.info](http://www.innsbruck.info) or tel (00) 43 512 53560

St. Anton  
[www.stantonamarlberg.com](http://www.stantonamarlberg.com)



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# Fast Forward responds to the unique training needs of retailers

Fast Forward, the business services division of New College Swindon, is providing much needed retail and customer services training across the South West.

The retail industry is the largest private sector employer with around three million people employed across the UK. This dynamic industry has created more jobs than any other sector over the last five years with a huge variety of job roles and great career progression.

Despite all this 40 per cent of sales staff have formal qualifications below the standard of five good GCSEs and 13 per cent of the retail workforce have no qualifications at all according to Skillsmart Retail.

One of the key skill gaps identified in shop floor roles is customer handling. In response Fast Forward



has developed a number of short courses, focusing on frontline customer services.

These include: recognise and deal with customer queries, requests and problems; deliver reliable customer services; recognise diversity when

delivering customer service; live up to the customer service promise; deliver customer service to difficult customers and Follow organizational rules, legislation and external regulations when managing customer service.

Last year retail apprenticeships were among the top five most popular in the UK with over 41,000 starts in 2010/11. Fast Forward can deliver Apprenticeships in Retail at Levels 2 and 3, covering a host of businesses from market stalls and independent shops to national chains and large superstores.

Fast Forward also offers an NVQ in Retail Skills Level 2 and an NVQ in Retail Skills Management Level 3. These work-based qualifications are ideal for those currently working or who wish to work as sales assistants, product experts, supervisors or managers within the retail industry.

For further information please contact Jess at Fast Forward, on 01793 732308 or email: [jessica.powell@newcollege.ac.uk](mailto:jessica.powell@newcollege.ac.uk)

# Learning to juggle with Your Coaching

*"The world can not be governed without juggling" John Selden.*

Great leaders and entrepreneurs have to choose which balls to pick up and run with, which ones to put down when, and which ones to throw away. Yourcoaching supports business leaders to ensure they select the right balls at the right times, to:

•Gain clarity and prioritise to

maximise success

•Become more self aware

•Evaluate what is working well so it can be leveraged

•Find out what is not working well and how to fix it

•Become the best they can be.

We are here for leaders who are determined to create a great business and enjoy their journey to success.

# Five-day courses available for solar photovoltaic

Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Systems - Installer & Designer Course

Many electrical installation businesses are currently wondering how they can expand their business into the Solar PV marketplace.

Firstly, businesses need to be registered with the Micro-generation Certification Scheme (MCS) in order for their customers to gain access to government funding.

The government funding or Feed in Tariff (FiT) pays the homeowner for the next 25 years.

If an average three-to-four bedroom household, installed solar PV panels, the Feed-In Tariffs would provide the following benefits:

•The electricity generated would pay the homeowner about £480 a year, tax-free.

•Remaining electricity costs would be reduced by about £275 a year.

•The total benefit therefore would be around £755 per year. [This is based on

a 2.5 kWp installation generating 850kWh/kWp, an electricity price of 13p/kWh and the post 31 March 2012 tariff rates.]

Swindon College is offering a new PV course. The course covers Solar Photovoltaic installations for up to 5kWp output and will run over five days. Candidates should be already experienced in the design and installation of domestic single phase circuits and issuing the appropriate documentation. It is also essential that the candidate holds a qualification that demonstrates their knowledge and understanding of 17th Edition Wiring Regulations and has a sound knowledge and understanding of the Building Regulations.

For non electrical installation staff a designer course is available. It is not necessary to hold the electrical qualifications as required for the installer course, but some basic electrical knowledge is required.



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# Fast Forward Spring Training Offer!

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Swindon College, North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1DY



## Prestigious location for go-ahead businesses

Kembrey Park is one of Swindon's longest-established and prestigious business parks.

It provides an ideal working environment and occupiers are able to take advantage of unrivalled on-site facilities including a hotel, Next Generation health & fitness club, pub/restaurant, sandwich bar and conference suite.

There is 24-hour on-site security and CCTV controlled from the on-site management suite.

The park is home to a number of high profile occupiers including Nokia Siemens, Thames Water and Reader's Digest.

With Swindon experiencing a significant decline in the number of good quality vacant industrial buildings, Highcross, owners of Kembrey Park, have prepared plans for a new 35,000 sq ft facility, to be known as KP35.

In 2008 when the recession took hold Swindon's total vacancy rate increased to well in excess of 3m sq ft.

Since then this oversupply has reduced by half.

With no new speculative development taking place, companies seeking new premises are increasingly being frustrated by the limited amount of choice.

Coupled with a lack of land supply for new industrial development as well as ongoing funding issues for many developers, this trend is set to be exacerbated for some time to come.

Highcross has however recognised this need and set about designing the new high-quality detached KP35 building which will front onto Kembrey Street.

It will have curtain-glazed offices to the front, 70 parking spaces and three loading doors into the warehouse which will benefit from 7m eaves. The yard to the rear will be fully secured and gated. The joint marketing agents for the new property are Lovedays and Matthews and Goodman who can be contacted on 01793 423344 or 0207 747 8847. [www.KP35.co.uk](http://www.KP35.co.uk)



## Free professional advice from Bluefin Insurance, especially for neighbours

Everybody needs good neighbours and what could be better for a business than having an insurance expert just down the road?

That's the message from Bluefin, one of the UK's leading insurance brokers, has a dedicated team based on Swindon's Kembrey Park. Having local representation means the team knows the area well and can provide a truly personal service backed up by

the buying power of a national group.

The office provides free, professional advice so businesses can get the protection they need - whatever their insurance requirements.

"We will be happy to review your existing cover, explain any issues and make suggestions where appropriate," said a Bluefin spokesman.

"If you're a Kembrey Park

resident, we're offer at least 10 per cent off your current insurer's next renewal premium if you place their insurance through us.\*

To take advantage of this exclusive offer, or to find out more about Bluefin, call 01793 714444 or visit [bluefingroup.co.uk](http://bluefingroup.co.uk)

\*Cover will be on a like for like basis and subject to proof of your current insurer's renewal terms.

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**For a free no obligation quote call us on 01793 714 444**

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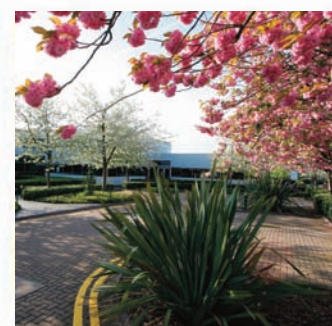
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Ash and Birch estates on Kembrey Park, Swindon, continue to thrive under the new ownership of Caisson Investment Management and are proving a real magnet for tenants, with a steady stream of new occupiers relocating there.

Under Caisson's guidance, the estates continue to provide the high-quality industrial accommodation in arguably the best-landscaped and best-equipped business park in Swindon.

Under Caisson's guidance, the estates continue to provide the high-quality industrial accommodation in arguably the best-landscaped and best-equipped business park in Swindon.

Further enhancements continue to be made and, in conjunction with Swindon Borough Council, a new cycle path will link the residential area to the north east of Ash and Birch to the nearby Bramble Road/Techno trading estates.

This move a direct result of liaising with tenants and listening to their concerns and this new amenity will meet their needs.

Caisson is making a portion of land at the eastern corner of Ash available and the council is providing an on-site bike shelter to further encourage workers to cycle to work - a good example of how the council and local landlords are working together to improve the local amenities at no extra cost to local businesses. Work on the cycle path should start in June.

Caisson letting manager Charlie Tattersall said: "The new flexibility and awareness to tenants' needs has proved a real advantage to us. The Deloro (now Kennametal) letting is a great example of this. Not only did they have a very specific fit out with extra offices, kitchens etc... we were able to structure the lease where we carried out all the work to an agreed specification and just agreed a date for them to move in. This way, they could concentrate on their core business with minimal disruption and no worry about the hassle and problems that normally come with business moves and fit outs."

Caisson Investment Management partner Mark Bowden added: "Since acquiring Ash and Birch estates just under two years ago, we have tried to re-establish them as the clear market leaders for quality space with the best value for tenants in terms of all-round leasing packages."

"We have tried to maintain their excellent environment as well as ensuring that the key services and amenities are retained and enhanced for our tenants' needs. Now, after welcoming 15 new tenants here, we feel we've succeeded with this and feel well placed to keep our existing customers here for as long as possible as well as continuing to attract new tenants going forward."

A high-quality industrial/warehouse unit at Lakeside Business Park, South Cerney, has been sold to a private investor.

Property agents Alder King and Whitmarsh Lockhart handled the sale of 1,428 sq ft Unit 2, Bittern House, on behalf of GB Contracts.

It is the latest in a series of deals at the development. Earlier this year 18,358 sq ft Drake House was let to Thornley Kelham (formerly the Vintage & Classic Paintshop) and there has been keen interest in a number of other units on the estate."

Alder King senior surveyor Alison Williams said “The units at South Cerney are proving to be very popular with local companies due to their location and configuration. Lakeside Business Park offers accommodation to suit all requirements, sizes and types of business.”

The 14,000 sq ft Beaver House is available for rent or sale.



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## New ownership attracts 13 new tenants...

**...leaving just 7 units still available**

Ash		
Unit 1	2,270ft <sup>2</sup>	211m <sup>2</sup>
Unit 13	2,270ft <sup>2</sup>	211m <sup>2</sup>
Unit 17	4,545ft <sup>2</sup>	422m <sup>2</sup>
Unit 19	2,270ft <sup>2</sup>	211m <sup>2</sup>



## Birch

Unit 14	3,764 ft <sup>2</sup>	350 m <sup>2</sup>
Units 8 & 9	14,125 ft <sup>2</sup>	1,312 m <sup>2</sup>
Unit 11	7,097 ft <sup>2</sup>	659 m <sup>2</sup>



For further information or to arrange a viewing  
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# TM Group in largest out-of-town office deal for two years

Fast-growing online conveyancing services firm TM Group is to move into the Delta 1200 building on Delta Business Park – the largest out-of-town deal in Swindon for two years and a possible sign that the office market is at last emerging from the doldrums, property agents believe.

TM, which began operations in 1999, had outgrown its base in a nearby building on Delta, West Swindon. The firm, which employs 76 people, is relocating to Delta 1200, taking over the whole of the 10,405 sq ft first floor.

The Swindon office of property agents Keningtons acted for fund managers CBRE Investors in the deal and partner Jeremy Sutton said: "There is no doubt the Swindon office market has been in the doldrums for the last couple of years.

"Delta 1200 is a modern two-storey office building and TM has taken a new, five-year lease on the entire first floor.

"This letting is the largest in the out-of-town office market since Motorola relocated to Kembrey Park during the first quarter of 2010."

He said take up figures for the Swindon office market so far this year show 48,650 sq ft has been disposed of - 57% of the take up for the whole of last year.

TM Group finance director Trevor Brown said: "We knew our lease was up for renewal later this year but were unable to expand where we were, so took the opportunity of relocating



Delta1200

while the market conditions are favourable for tenants.

"Having completed the lease we are now undertaking our own fit out and looking to move staff in during May. Managing director Paul Albane added "TM has many loyal staff from the local area who have helped form the exceptional TM proposition as it stands today.

"We are creating a number of vacancies as TM delivers on some of its expansion plans and it is encouraging to be able to offer staff a chance to progress in their careers while creating opportunities for others in the local area."

TM's roots are in a product development programme which began as an off shoot of a government initiative in 1999 to make the property market more electronic.

It has continued to develop cost-effective and efficient online

conveyancing services for everyone involved in buying and selling property.

One of its earliest achievements was to reduce the search ordering process from 45 minutes to just five and in 2004 it became the first to offer an online version of Ordnance Survey's digital mapping system, which enabled users to create sophisticated coloured plans online.

The firm, owned jointly by the three largest estate agency groups in England, is on target to grow by 20% this year and is looking to continue to expand over the next two years.

The 9,850 sq ft ground floor of Delta 1200 is still available as a whole or two individual suites of 4,925 sq ft.

TM Group was advised by Connells. Joint letting agents at Delta 1200 are Swindon agents Whitmarsh Lockhart and Hartnell Taylor Cook, based in Bristol.

Customer focused. Technology driven.

We've always been seen as **innovators**

" TM has many loyal staff from the local area who have helped form the exceptional TM proposition as it stands today.

We are currently creating a number of vacancies as TM delivers on some of its expansion plans and it is encouraging to be able to offer staff a chance to progress in their careers whilst creating opportunities for others in the local area."

**Paul Albane - Managing Director**

To find out more, email [careers@tmgroup.co.uk](mailto:careers@tmgroup.co.uk)  
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## Trio of firms named finalists for WoE Business of the Year Awards

Three Swindon firms have been named among the six finalists for accountants PwC's West of England Business of the Year Awards 2012 – the region's most prestigious business competition.

Since their launch 24 years ago the awards, which this year are staged in association with Swindon Business News, have gained a reputation built firmly on the thoroughness of the judging panel, which is made up of respected business figures from across the region.

Previous winners read like a who's who of the West's best business elite

Hoping to join them this year in the category for companies turning over more than £25m or with 100-plus employees, are family-run construction firm Beard, JB Global, the fast-growing oak furniture retailer, and FTSE-listed

newspaper, magazine and book wholesaler Smiths News. These three Swindon firms are competing against Bristol subsea cabling firm Offshore Marine Management, Cornish brewer St Austell Brewery Company and Swallowfield, the Somerset-based cosmetic, personal care and household goods manufacturer.

The awards also have a second category for businesses turning over less than £25m or employing fewer than 100 employees.

Shortlisted for this award are Valldata Group, the Melksham-based outsourcing partner for the charity sector, Cut4Cloth, the Cornish-based maker of Frugi organic kids' clothes, printed circuit boards maker Graphic, and piping systems manufacturer Pipex – both based in Devon.

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, PwC partner and chair of the judges for the larger business category said: "Our accomplished independent judging panel have undertaken the extremely difficult task of reviewing the entries and selecting the finalists from an impressive number of nominations and it is my honour to announce this year's finalists."

Tracey Bentham, PwC partner and chair of the judges for the smaller business category added: "This has been an extremely strong year for this category with a truly impressive array of applications and it is my pleasure to announce the four finalists."

The winners will be announced at a gala dinner on June 20 at the Bristol Marriott City

Centre Hotel which will be hosted by ITV West & Westcountry presenter Ian Axton.

This year the awards will be supporting the NSPCC and the charity's South West corporate manager Karen Drew said: "In 2012 the NSPCC will be working locally with those children and families who are most at risk by opening state-of-the-art service centres in Bristol, Plymouth and Swindon offering pioneering programmes at the cutting edge of child protection.

"We are thrilled that PwC has chosen to support the NSPCC and our new local services at such a well regarded event in the West region business calendar." Swindon Business News is supporting the Business of the Year Awards alongside its sister websites Bristol Business News and Bath Business News. Other supporters are Beacon South West, ITV West & Westcountry and the Western Daily Press.

## Guests toast decade of success for Thrings at party in its showpiece Swindon office

Law firm Thrings has marked 10 years in its Drakes Meadow, Swindon, office with a party for fellow professionals and business people from the town.

But, as managing partner Thomas Sheppard pointed out that to guests, the firm has been an integral part of the Swindon business scene for much longer.

It can trace its roots in the town to 1720 although most people remember the firm as Townsends, which launched in 1813 and merged with Thrings in 2000.

Swindon had changed beyond recognition since the early 19th century, said Mr Sheppard, changing from a sleepy hilltop market town to an international business centre with a strong automotive sector. Ironically, it was a partner at Townsends in the early days of the motorcar who invented the windscreen, he said.

Today Thrings has a number of specialist teams in Swindon, the largest of its four offices, including



From left: James Arkell and Thomas Sheppard  
Picture: Candid Pictures - 07715 770244

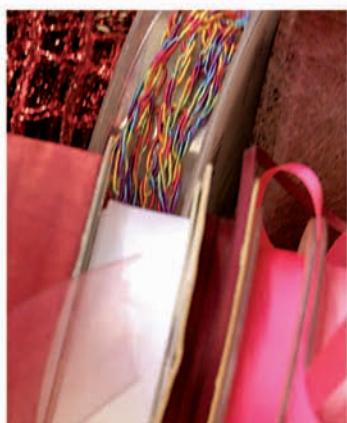
intellectual property and private client experts. Drinks for the party were supplied by another long-established Swindon firm, Arkell's Brewery.

For a gallery of photos from the 10th anniversary party go to [www.swindon-business.net](http://www.swindon-business.net)

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