

Thanet & East Kent Insider

12th March 2009

1. Heaven on Earth

One of the joys of working with so many forward-looking companies is that this Chamber can celebrate success on a regular basis. With the major recruitment companies all in membership, we enjoy a warm relationship with the interviewers, CV advisors, HR specialists and careers consultants who work there. Last month, we congratulated Chamber member Adecco for winning the contract for the London 2012 Olympics. This month we pay homage to Office Angels of Ashford, tel: 01233 611780. Out of the 997 companies surveyed in the Sunday Times list of Best Companies To Work For 2009, Office Angels has been ranked 7th. Managing Director David Clubb sends a weekly e-mail to everyone who works in the company and awards a bottle of Champagne for the best performance. The company scores the best marks in the country for its family atmosphere and positive teamwork. The benefits of good leadership are evident in the belief of all staff that the Managing Director inspires his workforce (82%) and lives the values of the company (84%). Perhaps this is not quite heaven on earth, but a godsend to hard-pressed companies wishing to replace key members of staff. If you wish to avoid the problems and time-consuming procedures involved in advertising for workers, contact one of our Chamber members who will be pleased to help you. Choose from Adecco tel: 01843 609292; Big Fish Recruitment tel: 08450 602999; Curzon Place Recruitment tel: 01843 233425; HRGO tel: 01843 591798; Morgan Jones 01843 604890 and Office Angels tel: 01233 611780.

2. SEEDA

Jim Braithwaite, SEEDA Chairman, followed in the footsteps of the Minister for the South East, Jonathan Shaw, in visiting the Thanet & East Kent Chamber and enjoying a question & answer session with members as well as visits to Chamber members on-site. SEEDA is the largest Regional Development Agency in the UK. Jim is responsible for an area that stretches in an arc around London and includes Oxford, the Isle of Wight and Thanet. Although much of the South East is officially designated as “advanced, high cost, high income, broadly based and service oriented”, Jim acknowledged that the East Kent coastal business community posed a special challenge in attracting inward investment. A regular visitor to East Kent outside office hours, Jim admits to a special affection for the area. After a splendid buffet lunch sponsored by Thanet College and in the company of the Kent & Medway area director, Dr Susan Priest, Jim visited the new College site in Broadstairs and offered some valuable guidance on how to negotiate the final hurdle before construction begins. The party then moved to K Laundry in Northwood Road, established in 1927, where SEEDA’s senior decision-makers saw a successful company that could be more successful with a measure of government support. The next ports of call were businesses in Manston Road. Jim was left in no doubt about the importance of green-collar workers to the local economy and the disastrous consequences of the Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007. In a crowded itinerary, there was just sufficient time to visit Ramsgate sea front where the plans for restoring the Royal Pavilion were warmly welcomed. All the points raised by members during the Q & A session, in emails to the Chamber and during the tour will be addressed in a follow up meeting before the end of this month. All Chamber members wishing to add their comments on the work of SEEDA are invited to contact the Chamber by email to admin@tekco.uk before 21 March 2009.

3. Finance & Grants Workshop Update

This is a reminder of the Chamber Finance & Grants Forum and serves to notify readers of a change of date. Following advice from many sources, the workshop will now take place before Easter on Friday 3 April 2009 at the Kent Innovation Centre in Broadstairs. Delegates already registered will be contacted individually. The event is open to all companies in Kent. If you would like to find out if you qualify for a large grant to support your business or if you require access to private finance, you are advised to attend this workshop. For details, email admin@tekco.uk with the subject line “Chamber Finance & Grants Workshop”.

4. Thanet College

The Annual General Meeting of Thanet College last week was introduced by the Chair of Governors, Paul Trimble, and featured presentations from the Principal, Sue Buss, the Director of Relocation, Rob Thrower and the heads of the main departments of the College. The previous year had produced double digit improvements in quality, a new emphasis on business engagement and sound management of finances and the curriculum. The audience was denied any entertainment from vociferous objectors since, after such a successful year, there was nothing about which to complain. There was some curiosity about the new Thanet College due to open on a site in Millennium Way, Broadstairs in September 2011. The latest design for the College provides a physical representation of “The Learning Curve” and will include sports facilities, a “future-proofed learning environment” and community access to some of the facilities. The first phase of construction could start as early as August this year. An expanded range of courses and more opportunities for needs-based training will be warmly welcomed by the business community. Readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider will be kept fully informed of developments.

5. ACE Up Your Sleeve

It pays to have an advantage over the opposition. This is certainly the promise for members of the Academy of Chief Executives (ACE). This Chamber welcomes ACE to East Kent and views its activities as complementary, providing specialist support for business leaders who can experience a lonely life at the top. This Chamber was invited to a recent meeting and enjoyed privileged access to the supportive

boardroom atmosphere of a typical session. Absolute confidentiality is a founding principle which gives members of the group the encouragement to comment freely on each others businesses and enjoy the benefits of receiving impartial advice from seasoned professionals. For details of your local group, [email jo.gideon@chiefexecutive.com](mailto:email.jo.gideon@chiefexecutive.com) or telephone 07957 151787.

6. Leadership And The Life of Brian

The late, great football manager, Brian Clough, had his own view on team building and the qualities required to succeed. Were he still alive today, it is possible that the terrible succession of pub closures would be less severe. He shared with Jimmy Greaves, George Best and some other noted footballers of that era a delight in contributing to the profits of landlords and the breweries. His prescription for triumph on the football field required a special brand of management. As he put it, "We talk about it for 20 minutes and then decide I was right." Direct, usually correct and never the diplomat, this native of Middlesbrough had a style that produced success on the football pitch but ensured that he would never manage the national team. 'Horses for courses' is an approach that many small business owners adopt. Not every worker responds to direct criticism and not every worker reacts to a friendly word. One notable writer on leadership, Warren Bennis, tells us that managers focus on systems but leaders focus on people. He also maintains that managers rely on control, but leaders inspire trust. Perhaps his wisest prescription for the current climate states that managers accept the status-quo but leaders challenge it. Keeping one eye on the bottom line and one eye on the horizon is not easy, but thinking of original ideas and bringing new products to the market place may be a route to salvation for many small companies facing declining returns in their traditional markets. This Chamber is there to help and we welcome your problems and celebrate your successes. For a confidential discussion of your business, in the first instance email admin@tekc.co.uk and a senior member of the Chamber team will get back to you promptly. Perhaps we should leave the last word on this to Brian Clough. "Walk on water? I know most people out there will be saying that instead of walking on it, I should have taken more of it in my drinks. They are absolutely right".

7. Crumbs of Comfort

Seeking respite from the gloomy headlines in the financial pages this week, I turned to the BBC website which has won numerous awards for its design, content and style. The mother of all national broadcasting networks, the BBC is the port of call for millions of us every day for an authoritative account of British life and the issues that are important to us, despite recent difficulties with some output. True to its mission to 'inform, educate and entertain', the BBC is a reliable source of balanced news. Foreigners to these shores with little knowledge of our current affairs would nevertheless have been completely baffled by last week's BBC headlines, "Arrest in Mandelson Custard Probe". Discussing this with other Chamber members produced some other gems from newspapers including "Chef Throws His Heart Into Helping The Needy" and "Miners Refuse To Work After Death". But, as is often the case in these pages, we turn to the United States for a headline that takes the biscuit; "Include Your Children When Baking Cookies". Additional chocolate chips are optional.

8. Sponsors

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It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekc.co.uk