

# Business Improvement

We hear from FMB members who have improved their business in some way

## Investing in the workforce

TRAINING has proved to be a long-term investment for Davie Brothers Ltd, based in South Devon.

The Newton Abbot-based family business was set up 10 years ago by brothers Richard and Martin Davie and has since grown to employ 20 members of staff.

Training has been essential to the company's growth and reputation, as training and health and safety manager (and Richard's wife) Sue Davie explains: "We're very proud of how the business has developed since it was established. We've been employed by some major contractors on large-scale housebuilding projects and even developed an offshoot business, Davie Brothers Scaffolding Ltd, four years ago.

"Despite doing so well, we wanted to keep improving and prepare ourselves for changes that are happening in the industry. We've decided to get ahead of the game."

### CSCS cards

Davie Brothers has worked hard through both companies to make sure every member of staff has acquired, or is working towards, a CSCS card. These provide proof of employees' qualifications and Health and Safety awareness.

Additionally, advice and a grant from CITB-ConstructionSkills

have helped the company introduce a comprehensive computer-based training and development plan, which Sue says is a useful, easy way to keep track of training and identify areas that still need work.

Davie Brothers set up an apprenticeship scheme three years ago, with the aim of building up a home-grown workforce for the company. They currently have three apprentices, each at different stages of a three-year apprenticeship, which will lead to an NVQ Level 3 in bricklaying. Four more are attending the National Construction College on scaffolding courses. This involves a mixture of college courses and on the job learning.

Experienced staff are also able to achieve NVQs through On-Site Assessment and Training (OSAT). The company hopes to qualify its experienced workers and has informed staff that they will be supported through assessment and any additional training required.

"We consider training to be a long-term investment," explains Sue. "However, we are already seeing the benefits. Our employees have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They also feel more valued, as we have shown that we care about their future with the company and in the construction industry as a whole."

## Performing wonders

FMB company GRD Building Contractors Ltd, based in Pudsey, Leeds, achieved Investors in People recognition in less than six months.

The firm, which specialises in domestic extensions and single bespoke houses, took part in a programme called Performance + which was part funded by CITB-ConstructionSkills. They started regular workshops in September and had passed their IIP assessment by February of this year.

"It has focused everybody into what we need to do," said managing director Gavin Duffy. "We are only small and presumed that kind of thing was for big companies."

The training guided participants through issues such as goal setting, understanding legalities and getting the workforce involved, which has resulted in regular monthly meetings with all the staff.

"It has made a big impact on the lads at work," explained Gavin. "They have had quite a lot of input into how we should be doing things. Out of five targets we set ourselves two of them came out of these meetings. They feel really involved in the running of the business and feel part of it."

The team includes Gavin's wife Joanna, who is company secretary, Ben Joynson (26) who is an electrician, joiner Matthew Pettigrew (27) and groundworker John Knowles (49).

Danny Wilson is employed on a labour-only basis.

Gavin says that building a team that understands how their actions might reflect on the company has worked wonders for the business. "We get an awful lot of positive feedback from clients about them," he said. "The lads are bringing work in for us. Some of the comments are excellent."



From left: Matthew Pettigrew, Ben Joynson, John Knowles, Danny Wilson, Joanna and Gavin Duffy