



Partners in Construction

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Training accolade for Beard

Beard, the Swindon and Oxford-based construction company employing 160 people, has won the Training and Development Award in the Wiltshire Business Awards.

The awards are an annual competition organised by newspaper publishers Newsquest, and this year attracted entries from 200 organisations.

The panel judging entries for the Training and Development Award said they felt inspired by Beard's sincere and passionate belief in helping all employees at all levels to achieve their career potential.

Lucy Bean, Business Development Manager of recruitment consultancy Definitive Consulting, who sponsored the award, said: "Beard supplied evidence of their commitment to training and development at every level for all of their people. They use the full spectrum of training and development tools at their disposal, all of the time.

"When the judges visited Beard, the employees spoke passionately about the company's total commitment to helping people develop, not only professionally but personally as well. We were impressed by the fact that there were personal development programmes in place for all of the staff. This is an achievement worth acknowledging in today's fast moving commercial world, where sometimes business pressures take precedence over the welfare of our employees.

"The one thing that sets Beard apart is the huge emphasis they place on improving their people, and they find lots of different and innovative ways to achieve this, including mentoring, the use of business champions and distance learning."

Beard's Managing Director, Mark Beard, said: "Beard invests significant time, effort and resources in ongoing and relevant training for its staff, operatives and subcontractors. We are delighted to have won the Wiltshire Business Training and Development Award. It underlines our commitment to developing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce that takes pride in providing the friendly, efficient and committed service that our customers value."

Beard employees have personal development programmes and take part in appraisals and frequent reviews of their training needs and personal and career development. All employees have access to the company's training schedule via an HR page on the company's Intranet and regular meetings with operatives on site.

Training is delivered in many different ways so that all staff at all levels, whether they are office-based, site-based or roving employees, can train in the ways that most suit them and meet their training needs. Individuals with specific areas of expertise or knowledge are trained to train their colleagues through internal workshops and mentoring. The company uses external training providers whenever appropriate; for example, all Health and Safety training is delivered by NEBOSH professionals. Beard teams and subcontractors receive relevant and topical ongoing training by attending compulsory 'toolbox talks', which are delivered by trained site managers.

Courses are tailor-made to meet the company's training objectives and range from short, sharp workshops to programmes lasting several days that may be spread over a number of weeks. Training venues range from the company's own offices and construction sites to local hotels and the company yard. Recent training programmes have covered customer service, site management and people management.

Senior managers attend 'away days' to discuss and design new strategies and all employees attend the annual staff briefing day.

The company supports employees in their career development and is often able to fill key posts by promoting existing employees.

Beard has a formal training partnership with the Chartered Institute of Building and also supports employees through the continuing professional development programmes of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

Recently the company adopted the Government's Home Computer Initiative and offered a free PC and basic IT course to operatives who would not otherwise have access to computer technology. The company hopes that this will enable operatives to gain a life skill that will benefit their family life and equip them for the changing workplace.

Beard (www.beard-construction.co.uk) operates throughout central southern England and undertakes construction projects worth up to £6m. Established in 1892, the company has offices in Swindon and Oxford and employs 160 people. Beard's Managing Director, Mark Beard, was Oxfordshire Businessman of the Year in 2004.

Beard company facts and figures

- Established 1892
- £33m turnover in 2005 (up from £22m in 2004)
- 160 employees
- Engaged in the Construction Best Practice Programme
- Quality assured to BS EN ISO 9001:2000
- SAFE Contractor
- Member of the Considerate Contractor Scheme
- Investor in People
- Chartered Institute of Building training partner
- Mark Beard awarded Oxfordshire Businessman of the Year 2004
- Beacon Company

Picture caption:

Lucy Bean, Business Development Manager, Definitive Consulting, presents the Wiltshire Business Training and Development Award to Mark Beard, Managing Director of Swindon and Oxford-based construction company Beard. Photograph supplied by the Swindon Evening Advertiser.

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