

Company is building on its success



BRIGHT FUTURE: The directors of Baxall Construction in Kent

Baxall, the Paddock Wood-based construction company, has been in business for some 42 years, but in all that time has kept its core aims unchanged – to build and maintain a solid company with sustained growth, using traditional values and methods and a personal approach to doing business.

Originally a family business, the current Directors took over the running of the company 12 years ago, with a determination to retain its excellent reputation for reliability and performance across its work in the industrial and commercial sectors, refurbishment and design-and-build projects, through a commitment to continuous improvement across the business.

In its pursuit of that commitment Baxall has been involved closely with Business Link for some time. Director Malcolm Clarke was aware of the Construction Best Practice programme as part of his work as National Chairman of the National Federation of Builders (NFB).

Positive

At a local level he was also active in the Kent Construction Best Practice Club (now Constructing Excellence in Kent), run by Business Link Facilitator Mick Lynn, and saw Business Link as a potential source of assistance in moving the company forward.

Using Mick Lynn's construction sector knowledge Baxall addressed some very important aspects of the business including continuous improvement, strategic development, supply chain management and defining the company's goals.

Malcolm Clarke describes the relationship with Mick as "very positive" – it continues to bear fruit in the company's pursuit of the ISO 9001 quality standard. Benchmarking was another process of which Malcolm was aware through the NFB and was something he was keen to pursue with Baxall.

"Mick advised us to go through the benchmarking process via Business Link," he says. "The service was available free of charge and, through it, we now have an on-going relationship with Business Link Adviser Richard Tripp.

"Richard undertakes a benchmarking exercise with us each year, which provides a very useful tool to help focus our business strategy. In business, regardless of your size or sector, you always face the question – how do we

"It was good to see that, in many areas, we were out performing much larger companies in our sector, but benchmarking did highlight areas where we were not meeting our own expectations."

Malcolm Clarke,
Director, Baxall Construction

measure our performance? There has to be a start point – and benchmarking gave us just that, as well as bringing to our attention a few home truths. Benchmarking is always an interesting exercise to go through.

"It was good to see that, in many areas, we were out performing much larger companies in our sector, but benchmarking did highlight areas where we were not meeting our own expectations.

"That helped bring focus to our business strategy – the worst thing we could possibly do is to allow ourselves to become complacent. We want to keep the business active, developing, changing – and for that, continuous improvement is the key.

"We have also looked to Richard to act as a 'signpost' to outsourced expertise in specific areas. For example we needed a human resources specialist to

help create a company handbook and as a point of contact for direct advice on matters such as discrimination law. With Richard's help we now have that expertise in place, on a part time basis."

Business Link's Richard Tripp adds: "Business Link has worked closely with Baxall on key elements of the company's operation such as their supply chain and also in identifying the company's core strengths – for example specialising in overall project management.

"Benchmarking is treated as an ongoing process at Baxall and it has been a pleasure to see just how excellent the company's management team is at sharing information.

Improvement

Through an independent comparison against other companies of a similar size in their sector, the management team at Baxall now knows how the company is performing against potential competitors, can judge how good they have been at improving their operation and what areas they may need to address next in order to sustain their continuous improvement.

"In addition Business Link has been able to provide help signposting the company towards approved consultants – which is one of our main business support roles.

"The good news for Kent businesses is that the Department for Trade and Industry has now introduced a 'micro benchmarking' programme for smaller companies which would previously have been unable to take advantage of this extremely useful tool."

But hasn't it been a challenge bringing in outside expertise to the business? Not at Baxall, according to Malcolm Clarke.

"Bringing in an objective, outside view creates a certain balance in the management team's discussions about where we are taking the business," he says.

"Looking to the future we need to develop and improve our profitability and

Fact File

COMPANY: Baxall Construction

Location: Paddock Wood, Kent

No. of Staff: 42

Business: Industrial and Commercial Construction, Refurbishment, Specialist House Building and Design and Build projects in London and the South East.

Website:

www.baxallconstruction.co.uk

Contact Details: 01892 833344

or email:

info@baxallconstruction.co.uk

the strength of our business, geared around customer satisfaction and our core values of honesty and teamwork.

"Our involvement with Business Link has been entirely positive.

"The organisation adds value to what we are trying to achieve here and we will certainly be looking to continue to benefit from our connections with Business Link."

Benchmarking is a free service for Kent companies with one to 249 employees. To find out more visit

www.businesslinkkent.co.uk/

benchmarking

email:

info@businesslinkkent.co.uk

or telephone

0845 600 9 006.

