

# CASE STUDY



## ANTHONY A DAVIES LIMITED

*“Investors in People gave us the confidence to quadruple our workforce and helped new employees to adopt our ethos quickly. Our intentions were always positive towards issues such as staff communication and development, but we didn’t quite know how to get started. When we committed to The Standard it gave us the initiative to address these issues seriously.”*

**Dawn Davies, Director**



### BACKGROUND

- Size:** 84 people
- Sector:** Construction
- Location:** Abergavenny
- Status:** Recognised in 2000; reviewed in 2006 and sister companies Anthony A Davies Construction and Coed Derwen Joinery achieved recognition

### THE ORGANISATION

Anthony A Davies Limited and its sister companies Anthony A Davies Construction and Coed Derwen stemmed from a small joinery business set up by sole trader Anthony Davies in Abergavenny in 1980. The operation now has 84 people, making it one of the fastest growing businesses in Wales.

The original company - Anthony A Davies Ltd - specialises in joinery, carpentry, roofing, restoration and building works. In 2000, Anthony A Davies Construction Ltd followed, offering construction, design and management and restoration services. Finally, Coed Derwen opened for business in 2005 making environmentally-friendly windows and doors.

Throughout the growth of the business, Dawn Davies, Anthony's wife and a director of the business has helped to provide support on the managerial side of the company, starting off with administrative and secretarial assistance and later diversifying to human resources, health & safety, and systems and procedures.

- **High quality of new recruits and recruitment procedure**
- **Structured training to fit individuals needs**
- **Since being awarded The Standard, employee numbers have quadrupled.**

## THE CHALLENGE

By the late nineties, Dawn and Anthony Davies decided that their business was ready to grow considerably. They incorporated in 1997 at which time they employed 17 people. More interested in a long-term return than a 'quick buck', they were also willing to make a long-term investment in the development of their people. However they were aware that whilst they had the knowledge to do this, they didn't have the capacity or organisational skills available internally to prepare their people for such an important change.

Previous well-intentioned attempts at training had always lost momentum through lack of organisation and pressures of work. Therefore, the culture of the company gradually steered away from the need for training. As a result, the mindset of employees had fixed on the sense that training was unnecessary.

Ultimately lack of resource had prevented the business from formalising important processes such as induction, performance reviews and training. Consequently, there were hardly any procedures in place to manage functions vital to the smooth running of a growing business, including health and safety, systems and human resources. With a strong background in HR, the shortcomings had become obvious to Dawn and she decided that the key to expansion lay in addressing such weaknesses.

## THE STRATEGY

Aware of her lack of internal resources, Dawn decided that external support would be the best means of overcoming the challenges faced by the business. Dawn was convinced that Investors in People would give the company the confidence to achieve its ambitions, whilst also helping to strengthen its management and leadership skills. She therefore opted to use the Standard as a robust base from which to expand the business.

"We were able to work with our Advisers to make best use of our existing systems and our own in-depth knowledge of the business to create processes that really delivered," says Dawn.

"Equally we wanted to attract talented people to the company and ensure that existing employees and newcomers fully understood our ethos."

## THE RESULTS

Since achieving The Standard in 2000, the business has made continued improvements to its processes and the benefits have been manifold.

Standardised recruitment procedures have been implemented. Not only has this helped speed up the recruitment process, it has also been instrumental in improving the quality of new recruits. A company induction procedure is now firmly in place with both existing and new employees receiving a pack which includes comprehensive detail on the company. This has ensured that each employee has access to adequate information to help them to understand the company's procedures and culture from day one.

Training is no longer simply a good intention, it happens in a structured manner for both existing people and new hires. A programme for regular performance reviews is also in place to monitor progress and training needs. This, in combination with the other procedures, has helped ensure staff morale and retention rates remain high. The business also extends this ethos to its sub-contractors, providing them with training and development opportunities as they arise.

At the same time, these procedures have made the business less fearful of expansion. With robust processes in place, it has been possible to roll out effective procedures across Anthony A Davies's sister companies, Anthony A Davies Construction and Coed Derwen Joinery, which were both awarded Investors in People in 2006.

Dawn says, "We have come a long way since becoming an Investor in People. We've launched two new companies which have both been awarded the Standard and our numbers have more than quadrupled to 84. In the early days we only took on two or three apprentices each year, however in our last intake we employed 10. We have also just taken on our first degree-sponsored student. We've found that our processes have become integral to our business and have made our lives easier. What is more, we have been able to replicate processes between our businesses, making it possible for staff to move easily across companies, because the culture and systems are the same. Our staff stay longer with us as a result. I doubt that this level of growth would have been possible without the support that we have received from our Advisers and Investors in People."

Dawn, who is now also an Ambassador for Investors in People, mentoring other businesses through the same process, is confident that businesses of all sizes can benefit if they have a similar approach.