

## INVESTOR IN PEOPLE CASE STUDY:

### BOVEY CONSTRUCTION

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## INVESTING IN PEOPLE TO DELIVER QUALITY RECRUITMENT

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Size: 26 staff

Sector: construction

Locations: Caton, near Ashburton, Devon

Status: First recognised as an Investor in People,  
December 2000. Successfully reviewed in  
2002, 2004 and February 2007.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

### Overall impact

"Investors in People has always been extremely valuable to our company and continues to be so. The good practices such as training, development, communication and performance management are simply good business sense – and are very much part of our success."

*Neil Turner, Managing Director*

### The organisation

A plasterer by trade, Neil Turner began as a jobbing builder in 1988, working from near Bovey Tracey. Neil developed his business skills to lead the fledgling Bovey Builders into more lucrative contracts, progressing to high-spec refurbishments and re-builds. Incorporated under the name of Bovey Construction Ltd in November 1999, the company works in partnership with a range of "discriminating clients" from all over south Devon, with contracts running at an average value of £300,000.

"The owners of a £1 million property in Salcombe engaged us for £400,000 worth of refurbishment," Neil says.

"Another client owns a 1970s bungalow which we are gutting and developing into what is effectively a new house. It's fairly typical of the sort of stuff we do now."

### The challenge

The early rapid expansion of Neil Turner's business brought its own issues.

By 2002, Bovey Construction employed a staff of 30 - an increase of more than 50% in 18 months. Although the workforce continued to grow, the turnover of people was high. The firm found it difficult to recruit and retain craftspeople and site managers. Costs rose, while morale and confidence fell.

"The early expansion was not a success," Neil says.

"At one stage we had 40-odd staff. But all that happened was that profits fell and satisfaction with our product was diluted."

Bovey Construction also needed to reform its management structures.

Site managers felt ill at ease in their roles as line managers, while Neil Turner began to question his own function as Managing Director.

"One of the issues that emerged was that I was spending too much time working at an operational level and not enough time at strategic level, " Neil says.

"I was actually visiting sites up to 40 miles away on a daily basis."

Most critically, the company needed to employ people who could be trusted and trained to their highest potential.

"We realised that if you train people and pay them properly, they won't leave. In fact, the reverse applies. "

## **The strategy**

Working closely with an Investors in People adviser, Bovey Construction embarked on a radical overhaul of its management systems.

"We reduced our staff considerably but we decided that we would devote a substantial amount of time and effort to the staff that remained.

"We looked at our own staff needs and asked what were the things that they and the company needed most in order to generate profit and to deliver a product that would be admired by both ourselves and the client. We tailor-made a considerable amount of our own training with that in mind."

The company has focused particularly on its site managers, encouraging them to pursue NVQs in Site Management at Levels III, IV and V. Bovey Construction has also vigorously promoted training in Performance Management – a programme that won the company a National Training Award in 2006.

"It's hard in our industry to create teams," Neil Turner says.

"A site manager will have a team of guys. But because of the very nature of the job, that team will tend to rotate, so that same group of people will not be working together all of the time.

"So we took the view that we were one big team and trained accordingly – so that all site managers had a similar level of Performance Management Training. And because of the way we measure our profitability, we were able to gauge the cost benefits of the programme. We were able to demonstrate just over £10 of profit for every pound spent on training."

Recruitment is now skewed towards a mix of apprentices who have completed a foundation course and `improvers` - people who have decided to join the industry at a later stage of their lives.

"We have one lad at the moment, who had been a postman for the past five years, but he did originally work as a French polisher," says Neil.

"He had skills that we were able to convert and he will become a very good carpenter and joiner."

The company has forged closer links with South Devon College to become a "learning organisation" in every sense.

## **The results**

With turnover maintained at £1.5 million, Bovey Construction Ltd is established as a builder of considerable reputation in South Devon. Profitability has increased from 2.8% to 7.94%, while staff turnover has been drastically reduced. Bovey Construction is also a more efficient company, with a 90% success rate in meeting deadlines.

“With highly developed management skills, our five site managers lead their teams and handle architects and clients in a way that is unheard of in our industry” Neil Turner says.

“And now I only need to visit sites once a week.”