

Best News

October 2001

Feedback Leads to Changes

It is unbelievable that another year seems to be nearly over. A number of new things have been implemented this year. A new course was developed specifically for driving consultants, additional parts of our in house "staff plus" system have been introduced, new offices have opened and many new people have joined the company.

Whilst visiting a number of branches and speaking to my fellow directors I have received feedback on all the above changes. But, by far the most interesting comments I have received are those regarding the new monthly publication, entitled – "Average Weekly Margin Rankings". Different people have viewed the listing in different ways.

During my travels and discussions with people in The Best Connection, many people expressed a wish to know how they were "doing" with respect to other branches and plans in the company. A solution to this was to circulate a list of plans and the margin achieved by each of them. Whilst accepting that ranking the margins, in effect, produces a "league table", it must be remembered that no two branches or plans are alike, and that most are at different stages of their development.



What can be gleaned from the listings is that where branches are established, and The Best Connection procedures applied consistently, new plans can be formed, growth can continue, and consolidation of business levels, on long established plans, can be achieved. The systems work!

I am sure that you all look forward to each new listing as confirmation of your contribution to the success of The Best Connection. Each month you can see exactly how you are doing compared with all the other plans and keep your eye on those who are "hot on your tail!"

Andy Sweeney
Chief Executive Officer

Legislation 'rest' called for by Employers

A recent survey revealed that almost 90 per cent of employers would like the government to introduce a 'rest period' in order to stop any new legislation from being introduced for a whole year.

The survey, which was conducted by employment law specialists, Peninsula, researched 1,320 employers and found that 86.4 per cent of businesses were in favour of the rest period.

Most respondents felt that too many workplace laws and changes had been introduced by the government over the past four years – a view which is widely felt throughout the recruitment industry following more than 50 changes in workplace laws since Labour came into power in 1997 – with still more changes expected.

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Update on Driving Consultants' Courses

Ruth Boulton recently conducted two, one and a half day Driving Consultants' Courses which were designed to equip consultants with the basic knowledge and facts to operate as a driving consultant.

The content of the courses included:

- **DRIVING LICENCES** – How to check, types required for different vehicles, endorsements and foreign licences
- **HOURS AND TACHOGRAPHS** – regulations, how to read and administer
- **VEHICLES** – types, special equipment and loads (Hiabs, ADR, gear boxes, etc)

- **INSURANCES** – Driver's negligence, fidelity bonding – when and how to use and claims procedures
- **ACCIDENTS** – What and whom to inform
- **RECRUITING DRIVERS** – Pre-screening, testing, completing applicant cards and driver send out
- **TAKING BOOKINGS** – questions to ask
- **DRIVER SENDOUT** – Driving licence/certificates. How to dress – collar and tie, safety boots, high visibility vest. Details of booking including start time, whom to report to, length of booking, destination area (if known), issues driver may face, paperwork, etc. Details of vehicle – type, special equipment, vehicle checks – oil/water/lights/electrics and load

In all, 32 consultants attended. Here is how some of the delegates viewed their course:

Lesley Brough, Warrington:

"I think the course has been long-awaited and personally feel that the course has been designed to cover the most important areas in a very specialist discipline, highlighting the need to be vigilant regarding licence information and the general knowledge needed to supply drivers, ensuring safety for both clients and temps at all times."

Andy Wilson, Walsall:

"As someone who has now been with The Best Connection for four and a half years, but who only joined as a trainee with no transport knowledge, I feel that the course offers something for everyone, no matter how experienced or inexperienced that person is. I only wish that this course had been in place when I started as I think it would have helped me to understand transport laws, jargon and vehicle types, etc., an awful lot quicker!"

Scott Meredith, Coventry:

"Coming from a Driving Division, it was nice to be involved in a course dedicated to what we do. It doesn't matter how long you have been in the Industry, there will always be something you are not too sure of or something you didn't know. This course will help all who attend from a new trainee to an experienced manager."

Matthew Burford, Tyseley:

"Our problem was that although we are recruitment consultants, we also needed a better understanding of the transport industry, but without going too deeply into it. The course covered the relevant points and I think the balance was just right. Even the more experienced amongst us learned something!"



Transport Industry Suffers Skills Shortage

The transport industry will require an estimated half a million new recruits over the next decade, according to a recent report entitled 'An Assessment of Skills Needs in Transport', published by the National Training Organisations (NTOs).

Vacancies – 'Hard to Fill'

The report, which was sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), highlights the significant skills gaps in the current workforce, leading to a continuing and substantial need for a training provision within the sector. Of the 50 per cent of vacancies in the report described as 'hard to fill', 20 per cent were due to skills shortages, with driving vacancies in the road transport sector identified as those most difficult to fill.

Along with other concerns such as the rising cost of fuel and taxation, employers are now faced with the problem of finding and retaining people with the required skills to respond to a changing industrial climate.

Changing Roles

The report identified that employers are now expecting their workforce to be more flexible and to demonstrate a number of complementary skills. Van drivers, for example, will be required to demonstrate greater social and customer care skills due to different delivery environments and greater contact with the general public, as in the case of supermarket home deliveries. The absence of these competencies may result in a negative effect on a business and in future, it will be desirable for drivers to display customer-care and management skills, along with the ability to make the best use of

technology in order to carry out their work more efficiently and effectively.

Investing in Training

The report accepts that there exists 'best practice' in those transport companies that invest wisely in their workforce by continually re-skilling and providing long-term career paths and recruitment strategies that help to build more content and loyal employees. However, other employers will not invest in skills training for fear of losing people to competitors. The report sees this as counter productive and recommends that companies in the transport sector invest more in staff to ensure survival.

+++ PREMISES FOUND FOR NEW OFFICE IN LIVERPOOL +++

Personality Profile: **Lesley Brough**

Warrington branch manager, Lesley Brough, was originally branch manager designate when she joined the company in October 1997.



As well as being responsible for office sales activity and recruitment procedures, Lesley's daily responsibilities include overseeing the Liverpool and Warrington Industrial Plans, the Warrington Driving Plan and the upcoming Liverpool Driving Plan.

Nine members make up Lesley's team. These are:

- **Shaun Chilton**, senior industrial consultant – Industrial 2/Liverpool
- **Steve Gardner**, industrial consultant – Industrial 2/Liverpool
- **Steve White**, senior HGV consultant – Warrington/HGV 1
- **Phil Vandervele**, HGV consultant – Warrington HGV 1
- **Robbie Danson**, HGV consultant – Warrington HGV 1 (soon to be moving to Liverpool)
- **Paul Stacey**, industrial consultant – Warrington Industrial 1
- **James Mallick**, industrial consultant – Warrington Industrial 1
- **Lisa Lawler**, Warrington Payroll (HGV) senior administrator
- **Claire Booker**, Warrington Industrial Payroll/administrator.

On commenting about her role, Lesley said: "It is always challenging to keep up with the ever-changing legislation within the recruitment industry," – a view that is shared by many throughout the company.



Lesley went on: "I get great satisfaction in both the development of the divisions and the staff. Warrington has a great team spirit with dedicated staff and the competitive atmosphere throughout the divisions makes it an enjoyable place to work. This competition will increase as the Liverpool office gets going and so should prove very interesting!"

When not at work, Lesley, who lives in the village of Glazebury on the outskirts of Warrington, enjoys socialising, visits to the gym and DIY.

"I am eagerly looking forward to the Liverpool office opening and the new challenges that this will bring. The consultants have worked hard to get to this point and I know it will be a success," Lesley continued.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Warrington industrial consultant, James Mallick, and wish him every success."

+++ APRIL 22ND – DATE SET FOR 2002 PARTY +++

Personality Profile: **Martin Thompson**

Martin joined The Best Connection in September 1998 as divisional manager and today he is branch manager of the Preston Branch.

Along with ensuring the smooth running of the branch, Martin's day-to-day responsibilities include monitoring the development of all branch staff and making sure that the branch maximises any margin-making opportunities.

In addition, Martin is currently undertaking the groundwork (i.e., seeking premises and qualified staff) for a new office in Lancaster, some 30 miles to the north. The planned new branch

shows every indication of being a similar margin-generator to Preston.

Martin's team of five, which has almost 30 years' experience in Industrial recruitment, comprises Daniel Crossley, senior HGV consultant, Matt Crossley, HGV consultant, Marc Crumley, senior industrial consultant, Mike Kearney, trainee industrial consultant, together with branch administrator, Lee Wiggan.

"The present team at Preston is the best collection of staff I have ever had the pleasure to work with," said Martin. "There is always a great atmosphere in the branch which helps me no end since it is much easier to manage and motivate an upbeat and positive team.

"This is our third year of trading and as usual, we are starting to reap the rewards of our previous efforts. The plans have gone a long way to realising their ambitions of achieving a £10,000 week on HGV1 and a £6,000 week on Industrial 1."

Martin lives in a small town just outside Liverpool, called Formby. He is married to Cathy and has two sons, Jamie aged eight and Josh aged four.

Away from work, some of Martin's favourite past-times are boxing and rugby.



DTI Snub to Industry

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has again snubbed the recruitment industry by cancelling a crucial meeting that was planned between senior Industry figures under the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) banner and the DTI.

The meeting was planned to discuss the final details of the Employment Agencies Act (EAA) with Alan Johnson, DTI minister and it was expected to be the final meeting between the

two parties before the EAA final proposals are placed before Parliament.

More details of the government's plans regarding Limited Company Contractor's inclusion in the regulations and its decision regarding temp-to-temp and temp-to-third-party fees were among those details due to be made available to the REC.

The meeting was cancelled because of other commitments and is now expected to take place in October.

Further details will appear in Best News when available.

dti

+ + + STOCKPORT OPENING SOON + + +

Plans to Eliminate Discrimination of Agency Workers

Over the past 12 months, negotiations have been taking place between UNICE (The Union of Industrial and Employers Confederations of Europe) and ETUC (European Trades Union Congress) to produce an agreement designed to eliminate discrimination against temporary workers across Europe.

The ETUC argues that temporary agency workers should be treated equally to those employees in the user company with regard to basic working conditions such as pay, working time and health and safety. However, UNICE believes that workers should be compared equally with all of those working conditions except for pay.

The negotiations have reached an impasse with the agreement no further forward and both parties polarised in their view. The deadlock will inevitably result in the European Commission taking the upper hand and imposing a directive on member states. Whatever directive is imposed, there will still be disagreements about who temporary agency staff should be com-

pared with and which conditions should be compared.

Fixed Term Contracts for UK Temps

Meanwhile, in the UK, the TUC is pushing for temporary agency workers to be included in the EU's Fixed Term Contracts Directive to ensure they receive equal employment rights. They are currently excluded from the Directive with which the government has to comply by July 2002.

In May this year, the government announced that the temporary employee's employment relationship is with the agency and not the employer. This is because the government fears that employers may be deterred from taking on contract staff if they are included in the EU's Directive.

Agency staff now makes up 16 per cent of all temporary employees compared to just seven per cent in 1993, and a recent survey showed that 50 per cent of temporary workers are on different pay rates, 70 per cent do not have the same access to occupational pension schemes, and 25 per cent do not receive contractual sick leave.



Recruitment Initiatives

Several Open Days and initiatives have taken place recently in an effort to address candidate shortages. Each of the branches below developed their own ideas and organised and managed the events.

BRADFORD

In Bradford, as well as wanting to increase the level of awareness of the branch, James Brown also wanted to increase the number of drivers on their books. To tackle this, James decided to hold a 'Driving Open Morning' on a Saturday – complete with full buffet breakfast.

As James said: "It is often difficult for drivers to be available to register during the week as they may be working. We therefore decided to hold our Open Morning on a Saturday and thought that the prospect of a full buffet breakfast would make coming down to the branch to register that bit more attractive!"

Norman Williams and Elizabeth Patrick joined James on the morning and the event was so successful that they registered 20 drivers, 12 of which have already been given work.

The Bradford branch will soon be moving to new premises and James is currently planning an Opening Party to promote the branch.

CRAWLEY

Crawley, which was the first branch to hold an Open Day, has organised a number of events throughout the year to both encourage temps to register and to generate awareness of the branch to attract new customers.

Earlier this year, an Open Day was held in Crawley's local Shopping Mall where members of staff distributed around 300 leaflets and invited people to register.

In addition, the branch has attended three career fairs/exhibitions – the first in May at Crawley Leisure Centre was attended by 120 companies and had 10,000 visitors over two days – the second was at Brighton in September – and the latest is The Third Skyport Job and Career Opportunities Exhibition at Crawley Leisure Centre on 10th and 11th October where the branch had staff on-site for both days.



Steve Wade, Sarah Ford and Peter Hemmings at Crawley Open Day

TYSELEY

Back in July, Matthew Burford and his team were able to secure a number of bookings for TNT Automotive Logistics' LandRover contract. After leaving the meeting they asked themselves, 'Where are we going to get 25 HGV1 drivers?'

TNT was launching a new model Range Rover and volumes for labour had increased dramatically. Matthew knew advertising in the normal way wouldn't have met their demand, so he designed a flyer and sent out approximately 200 to ex-drivers.

Helped by Tyseley's 10-year history, the team managed to find the drivers by ringing around and selling the benefits of working for a major logistical organisation through The Best Connection. They were given a two-month lead-time to find the drivers and by the skin of their teeth they found them!

Because they didn't advertise the vacancies in the paper none of their existing drivers working on other contracts knew about it. Matthew's main priority was to fill the bookings with drivers who weren't currently working for them. This enabled them to see significant growth in their driving division at very little expense. They proved that although it is difficult to find drivers into today's market place – with a lot of hard work and some forward thinking – anything is possible.

+ + + LEEDS OFFICE ON THE MOVE + + +

Our Football Heroes

Early in October, a dozen consultants from a few of our Midlands branches organised themselves into two, five-a-side football teams and set out to do battle with 18 other teams.

In this case however, our competitors really were our competitors as most of the teams who entered were from Midlands employment agencies, and the competition was the 'Recruitment Challenge', sponsored by Standard Life.

As you would expect, after showing all challengers a clean pair of heels, The Best Connection's 'A' team won the competition in style.

Pictured alongside is the triumphant team immediately before playing in the final.

WELL DONE THE LADS!

Competition winners TBC 'A' Team. Back row (l-r) Neil Robotham, Lee Hall, Richard Marsh, Paul Crocock, Mark Asson. Front row (l-r) Matthew Leech, Lee Mulvey



Where to find us

The Best Connection
EMPLOYMENT AGENCY 

Location	Tel Number	Fax Number
Ashford	01784 256555	01784 257111
Birmingham	0121 628 8000	0121 628 8004
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Bradford	01274 747500	01274 747555
Burton	01283 545333	01283 545075
Chesterfield	01246 209222	01246 206333
Coventry	024 76 228040	024 76 228042
Crawley	01293 515333	01293 516333
Dudley	01384 230003	01384 239691
Halesowen	0121 504 3000	0121 504 3009
Hull	01482 610 160	01482 610 686
Kidderminster	01562 66555	01562 825695
Leeds	0113 243 1033	0113 243 0951
Leicester	0116 251 2363	0116 251 2364
Manchester	0161 237 9333	0161 237 9444
Nottingham	0115 958 5880	0115 958 5884
Preston	01772 201777	01772 201888
Redditch	01527 591141	01527 591142
Scunthorpe	01724 876111	01724 876222
Stoke	01782 209666	01782 209777
Tamworth	01827 53333	01827 53090
Walsall	01922 639000	01922 636500
Warrington	01925 629666	01925 629777
West Bromwich	0121 553 7755	0121 553 7766
Wolverhampton	01902 773000	01902 773001
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STOP PRESS!

The next edition of Best News will feature:

- New Year – New Branches •
- Branch news – Nottingham and Stoke • Speed Limiters •
- Lorry Night Deliveries Up • More Personality Profiles •

Best News

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