

Think Positive - Nurturing Staff is a Valuable Asset

GM Procure is keen to work with contractors that go the extra mile with their employees and sub-contractors. Which is why it was especially pleasing to see contractors Jackson, Jackson & Sons win the award for Positive Change Management at the GMEC awards this year. But, in layman's terms, what does Positive Change Management mean?

The right person to ask is Bev Sexton, who is their health, safety, environment and quality manager.

She said: "Positive change means adopting a productive attitude in your relationships with your employees and your sub-contractors. We not only ensure we do a good job for our clients, we're also responsible for our employees in these difficult times. For instance, a roofer employee of ours suffered a multiple leg fracture in a traffic accident outside work time. Unfortunately the injuries were quite severe and while we were concerned for his physical recovery we were also keen for him to return to work as he had valuable skills that could easily have gone to waste. It would have been easier to replace him at the first opportunity, which many firms would have done, but we were determined to see him back on site. Eventually he returned to the job part time on light duties, then he progressed to working on bungalows and now, although he is left with a permanent limp, he is back working on the same roofing jobs he tackled before his accident.

That's an example of how we view our employees as our most valuable asset. We do everything we can to train and harness their skills to benefit both the individual and the company. We not only care about our employees, we want to be seen to care about them."

And that's not an idle boast. In 2008 Jackson, Jackson & Sons spent a significant amount of money on training - this year that investment will increase yet again. That's a bold reminder of the commitment to their staff despite the tight economic times.

The Rochdale-based company also take time to nurture their sub-contractors:

"Two women who started a small business as kitchen fitters had no formal qualifications but we could see they were keen. We offered them some work on our sites to get a foothold in construction but we also gave them help to achieve their NVQ Level 2 and their CSCS (Construction, Skills Certified Scheme) qualifications. When you're starting a business, it's good to get a little help from people who have done it before.

We have also helped some of our small sub-contractors with their health and safety responsibilities. I am a chartered health and safety professional and so I put a simple system in place for them to follow which also fulfils their legal obligations."

With almost 100 employees and "an army of sub-contractors" the company does all its hiring through J21, a recruitment initiative which helps place the long term unemployed and difficult to place young people in construction work. They not only get a job, they also get trained.

Bev said: "Our goal is to have every employee attain at least an NVQ. We have training plans for everybody – even general labourers. People who in the past might have felt unskilled are now expected to go for NVQ training."

The company, which has worked on contracts for Harvest, Stockport Homes and Rochdale Boroughwide Housing as well as schools and large NHS projects, continues to work with GM Procure on several social housing projects throughout Manchester.