



Awards 2014 Case Study

Award Winner

SME of the Year 51-250

Lloyd and Gravell Limited

Corporate social responsibility is not merely a fashionable term bandied around by management at Lloyd and Gravell Ltd, but a serious and long-term ethical commitment they have made to the community in which they live and work.



The company motto 'Building for the Future' sums up their attitude: naturally, they pride themselves that their build quality will last long into the future. But beyond that, for the past two decades, business partners Kevin Gravell and Paul Lloyd have been building a business that is bringing employment, training and greater prosperity to their Carmarthenshire base.

Established as a family business in 1991, with an initial workforce of five, it has steadily grown to its current size of 60 permanent staff, which includes 13 trainees and apprentices, all of whom are encouraged to pursue collaborative working methods. A turning point for the business was being included on Carmarthenshire County Council's Framework in 2002, which gave the company the stability to grow and diversify, adding a waste management and a plumbing and heating division to its core construction activities.

Then, in 2010, the company joined Constructing Carmarthenshire Together (CCT), where "Leaving a Legacy" was the focus and the Next Steps project was developed. This is a competition based programme giving people of all ages the chance to win a two-year apprenticeship with Lloyd and Gravell. From the outset, the existing workforce has been involved in mentoring candidates, selecting community benefit projects on which they will work for a period of six weeks and ultimately choosing

a winner to become their future colleague. In addition ALL finalists were provided with a path into the industry's training programme through the Pathways to Apprenticeship and Shared Apprenticeships routes.

Beyond that, Kevin is a board member of CCTAL (Carmarthenshire Construction Training Association Ltd), whose members have the common goal of embracing sustainability and improvements in the county's construction industry through training. Lloyd and Gravell provide placements for apprentices through CCTAL's Shared Apprenticeship scheme who, happily, include those who have taken part in the Next Steps project. All this is in addition to the business directly employing its own apprentices and providing placements for apprentices employed by the council, enabling them to complete modules of their training. The statistics are impressive: since 2010 the company has consistently provided an average of 5,000 annual Shared Apprentice training hours equating to in excess of 2 full time apprentice placements each year. This is in addition to the apprentices directly employed by the company.

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Kevin Gravell

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"It's been part of our ethos from the start," said Kevin Gravell. "We feel, as a company, we have a duty to society. In the last four years we have had 18 apprentices coming through traditional routes into the company, 2 trainees undertaking quantity surveying to degree level and the shared apprentices. We feel very proud of their achievements."

"In today's society and market, you have to be more than just an employer to many of the individuals: they need more nurturing than ever before. We see it as an investment in the future – offering opportunities for future generations within the industry – and it is something that we hold dear within the company."

The fact that it is a family run business – with several members of both the Lloyd and Gravell families actively involved – is a big plus, as far as Kevin is concerned. It means they are thoroughly embedded in the community they serve and personally know many of the local people

they employ who, in turn, 'buy into what we are trying to achieve'. All staff are given the chance to have their say in the development of the company, via an elected site rep who is regularly invited to business meetings to put forward their views. Individual training plans are put in place for all staff members, reviewed annually and updated to meet the changing needs of both members of staff and the company. As a result, a number of mature staff members, who had not been able to take the apprenticeship route, were encouraged to achieve Construction Trade and Operative NVQs to realise their potential and develop new roles within the company at a later stage in life.

Lloyd and Gravell's nomination for the CEW award came from Carmarthenshire County Council who praised the way in which collaborative working is embedded in the company's philosophy and has been paramount to successful service delivery, improved quality, customer satisfaction and supply chain engagement and training. Its proven track record and on-going commitment to supporting local regeneration and reinvestment in the local community were also highlighted.

When the news they were winners of the SME 51-250 category was relayed to him and his wife who were on holiday, an 'ecstatic' Kevin said he would not have been surprised if their shouts of joy could be heard from Spain.

"Being part of the framework has been a major part of all this. Without that in place, we couldn't have done the strategic planning and grown the business. And we wanted to make sure there was a positive outcome from this for the community, not just for ourselves," he said.

Despite this success, Kevin believes it is a tough time for SMEs to get the chance to be considered for bigger scale contracts within framework agreements and that the way forward will be through consortia. His wish is for clients to judge contractors less on turnover and more on quality of work and sustainable local training and employment opportunities in order to give the smaller players a bigger chance. "I know the client is worried about the risk factor, but from our point of view, it would be better if they would let us demonstrate that we can do the job through the quality of previous builds, ability to finish on time and with the knowledge we are providing training for the next generation."