

Clay Shaw Thomas has made a number of appointments and internal promotions that include: back row from left, Sarah Curzon, Greg Davies, Clare Bevan, Rhidian Davies; middle row, Gretchen Betts, Gemma Jones; front row, James Burnett, Katie Burnett, Helen Downes



OPEN LEADERSHIP STYLE LETS STAFF FLOURISH

AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE EMPLOYEES ARE VALUED AND NURTURED REAPS REWARDS, ACCORDING TO FAST-GROWING ACCOUNTANCY PRACTICE **CLAY SHAW THOMAS**

Gwyn Williams is the business development director at Clay Shaw Thomas, a prominent, independent firm of accountants, business consultants and tax advisors.

In the three years leading to April 2008 the firm has seen substantial business growth – turnover has increased by 45 per cent, resulting in an annual pre-VAT figure of more than £2m.

Gwyn puts this success down to two key factors: that the Bridgend-based company is able to offer a wide range of services to a diverse client base, and the fact that the leadership style encourages staff to develop their careers and achieve their ambitions.

“We believe in creating a dynamic, forward-thinking, inclusive environment that brings out the best in staff,” Gwyn confirms. “Draconian leadership styles thwart individuals and crush their progress.”

He continued: “Our clients range from private individuals to international companies, therefore our staff members have to apply their skills to many different situations. In order to do this successfully,

they need to feel sufficiently confident and empowered to put ideas forward and make decisions.

“We encourage our employees to think outside the box, and to be autonomous; people don’t develop if they are micromanaged, and that will be reflected in the way they deal with clients. Clients have confidence in people who are secure in their own abilities,” he added.

Sarah Curzon, principal with Clay Shaw Thomas, has been with the firm for two years. Prior to joining she had been a manager with another firm for eight years.

“Clay Shaw Thomas gave me the opportunity to build a team of highly skilled professionals around me. We offer a bespoke service for clients, and that means that we have to be adaptable and tailor our approach to suit individual requirements.”

“Earlier this year I was promoted to principal, and a number of my team members were promoted to consultant and lead consultant. I find it really inspiring to see members of the team progressing and it motivates me to push my career forward.

“One of the lessons I have learnt is that you have to lead by example if you want your team to be successful. In order to be a good leader and manager you need the respect of your team, and to achieve that you have to be totally committed yourself and have a proven track record in your field. I don’t expect my team to do anything that I am not capable of doing myself. I also need to be able to provide management back-up and technical support whenever it’s needed.”

Sarah believes that good leadership starts at the top. “The directors at Clay Shaw Thomas have provided me with a massive amount of support both in terms of my own career development and that of my team. They have trusted me to make the right decisions for that team – and I value that trust enormously.”

Gretchen Betts was promoted to wealth planning lead consultant this year. She has been with Clay Shaw Thomas for five years.

“In that time my career has gone from strength to strength and I’m very proud of what I have achieved in a relatively short period of time,” she said.

“The ethos here is to give people

responsibility but to provide support and build confidence at the same time.

“I feel that this really pushes you but equally develops your knowledge faster and encourages you to think for yourself. Overall this makes your experience more rounded and enhances your ability to offer a better service to clients.

“The directors are keen to create a positive atmosphere within the company, and when new team members are recruited careful consideration is given to how they will fit in with the existing team. A huge investment is also made in training and development for both trainees and managers,” she said.

“Work-life balance is considered to be very important and the managers are encouraged to ensure that their staff balance their studies, work load and home life effectively. We all feel that taking the health and wellbeing of our colleagues into account is vital if we are to get the best from everybody and consequently give our very best to our clients.” ■

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