

Clay
Shaw
Thomas

CREATING A MODEL WORKPLACE

Since moving its team of specialist consultants to Bocam Park two years ago, flourishing accountancy practice Clay Shaw Thomas has gone from strength to strength.

In this period fee income has gone up by 41 per cent – a success level brought about by Clay Shaw Thomas' commitment to meeting individual clients' needs.

"We provide a broad range of high-quality services, but we always ensure that these are tailored so that they fulfil each individual's precise requirements," explained director, Gwyn Williams.

"Our services encompass tax planning and corporate finance, along with business advice that's aimed at helping companies improve their profitability," he added.

Clay Shaw Thomas has built up a formidable

FAR FROM ABUSING THE FREEDOM, MOST STAFF FEEL MOTIVATED AS A CONSEQUENCE

reputation as a dynamic, forward-thinking company, and as a consequence continues to attract excellent staff.

"Our workforce is among the best in the business," said Mr Williams. "We attract bright, articulate trainees, along with experienced

specialists, many of whom have worked for the 'Big Four' leading accountancy practices in the UK."

Clay Shaw Thomas places great emphasis on nurturing staff – and has gained Investors in People accreditation – and is strongly committed to training and development.

The practice also offers attractive pay and benefits packages and the working conditions are particularly good. "The directors have young children and appreciate the demands this places on colleagues; as a consequence we are committed to ensuring that our staff maintain a decent work-life balance," confirmed Mr Williams.

The company's forward-thinking

ethos fits in with Chwarae Teg's view on how companies need to develop a more innovative approach to working hours. In its Better Balance Better Business report, Chwarae Teg – an agency dedicated to furthering the economic development of women in Wales – claims that companies that fail to embrace flexible working practices will lose competitive edge.

The report goes on to say that if businesses fail to take a more innovative approach to workforce development, they will end up with staff who lack motivation, skills, productivity, and diversity.

However, those who embrace the concept of a work-life balance and flexible working hours, will create an agile and diverse workforce fit for a 21st-century economy – and are more likely to reap wide economic benefits as a consequence.

Sarah Curzon, 32, is a lead tax consultant with Clay Shaw Thomas, heading up the tax department with director, Karen Best.

Sarah has a four-year-old daughter, Mollie, and feels that the flexible work options offered by Clay Shaw Thomas help make full-time work a pleasure.

"Mollie goes to nursery, and I can drop her off and collect her," explained Sarah. "I don't have to worry about being in at 9am on the dot. And if my daughter is ill, I can go and collect her without



Clay Shaw Thomas is renowned for its modern, forward-thinking approach. Here the new recruits let off steam at Merlin's Castle in Pontyclun

worrying about disapproval from my employers." "If I leave the office early, I can work from home," she added.

"This level of flexibility removes a great deal of pressure, and helps create a work-life balance which is so important. I work closely with Karen Best, one of the directors, and as she has young children herself, she understands the reality of combining a professional career with being a parent."

Sarah says that she is well-equipped to carry on her work – to the highest level – outside a conventional office environment.

"My clients always have access to me via the mobile, and I have a laptop so I can access my emails when I work from home," she said.

"The laptop is also connected to the work computer – therefore I can work equally well at home as I do in the office. And, so long as I exceed client expectations, it's up to me how I allocate my time."

Sarah feels that many other workplaces lack the flexibility of Clay Shaw Thomas.

"This kind of flexibility, even now, is pretty

uncommon. I feel that it should be a general practice. Far from abusing the added freedom, most staff feel motivated as a consequence. And it works for the employer too, as a business won't lose good people because they cannot reconcile work and home life."

Sara Lathwood, assistant tax consultant with the firm, feels that Clay Shaw Thomas has provided a supportive environment in which to develop her career.

She recently won a national award for outstanding performance in the Association of Tax Technicians examinations.

She was awarded the President's Medal, a discretionary prize awarded to outstanding candidates, as well as passing her examinations with flying colours; of the 689 candidates sitting the exam, only 36 achieved a pass at her level.

"One of the best things about being a trainee with Clay Shaw Thomas is the variety and depth of work you are involved in," she said. "Not only does it make things more interesting, but it's extremely useful when it comes to exams."

For Oxford graduate and audit trainee, Nic

Ward, the experience of working with Clay Shaw Thomas proved to be far more fulfilling and far-reaching than his period with a key industry player from the 'Big 4'.

"My first year as a trainee with a 'Big 4' company was not as satisfactory as I had hoped, and in particular I found that the practical experience gained did not marry up with the rigours of the ACA syllabus.

"By contrast, in just two short months, Clay Shaw Thomas has provided a comprehensive and rewarding practical experience that has given me confidence as I approach my remaining exams."

Fellow trainee Robert Davies, agrees.

"My experiences with a 'Big 4' company in London left much to be desired, and I seriously considered a career change," he said. "I have now been here a year, and my faith and enthusiasm for my career have been completely restored." ■

For further information call 01656 867167, email tellmemore@clayshawthomas.com or visit www.clayshawthomas.com



Sarah Curzon and daughter Mollie, four, enjoy a work-life balance event at Merlin's Castle



Hattie Thomas, Clay Shaw Thomas' new marketing manager, enjoys the company's contemporary working style