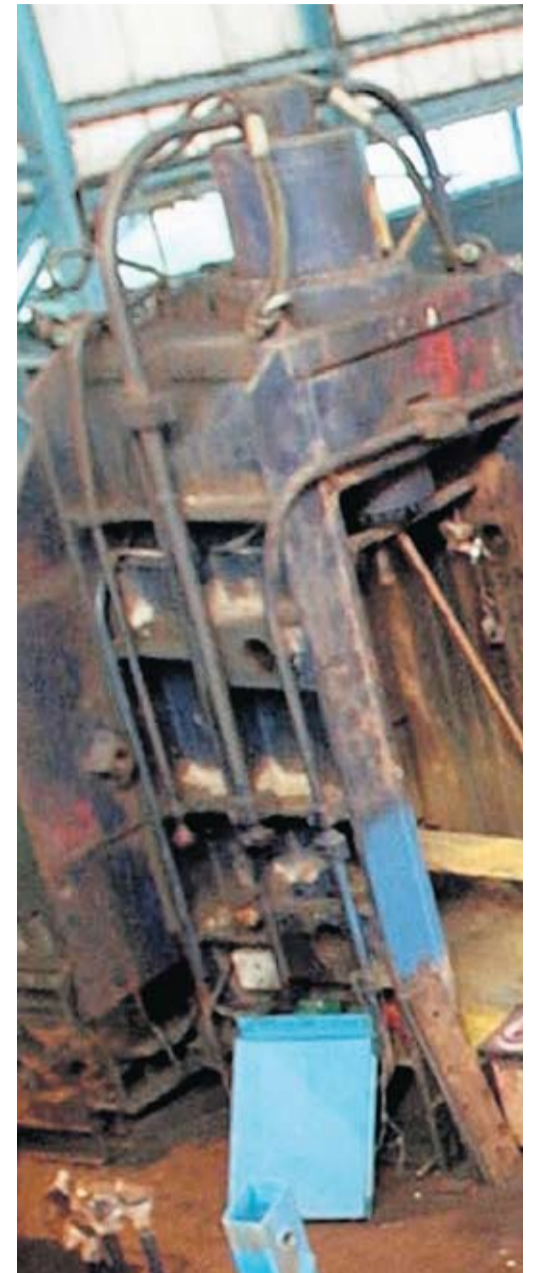


Clay
Shaw
Thomas

f Fields Group
Digital Intelligence

Engineering
Services
Bridgend Ltd.



THE WEB WISE SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

COMPANIES THAT EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY WITH A HIGH-QUALITY WEBSITE ENHANCE THEIR GLOBAL PROFILE, ACCORDING TO LEADING ACCOUNTANCY PRACTICE CLAY SHAW THOMAS

Thanks to the internet, a company's profile is now readily accessible to businesses throughout the world. However, for a business to simply have a presence isn't enough.

As well as recently redesigning its own website, Clay Shaw Thomas, a leading independent firm of accountants, business and tax consultants, has several clients who

have wholly embraced this technology to enhance their global profile.

Four years ago, with support from Clay Shaw Thomas, Bridgend-based Engineering Services, carried out a management buy-out (MBO). It is now the UK's largest business specialising in the sale, service and repair of recycling machinery.

Engineering Services supplies its expertise

to the UK's two largest recycling companies, and also trades globally, with about £2m of a £7m turnover coming from international sales. The company is developing a global reputation because of its high levels of expertise and staff skills.

"Recycling in the UK's second fastest-growing industry, with a similar growth rate taking place worldwide," said Kevin Francis, Engineering Services MD.

"We have sold machinery to Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Israel and Cameroon. The world is becoming smaller in trade terms, thanks to the internet. Now, rather than having to call people, which is inconvenient because of time differences, communication can take place by email, with only the occasional need for a phone call.

"As a consequence our global markets have expanded substantially. In four years our staffing levels have increased by 38 per cent, and we have four apprentices, which is pretty much unheard of for a small business in the current economic climate.

"However, if you are to keep your competitive edge in the global marketplace, you have to ensure that you can offer services and quality that others cannot. In this company we place great emphasis on skill and expertise, the standard of which cannot be readily accessed elsewhere.

"For example, since the company's formation, we have supported our clients by providing a team of fully mobile and highly skilled service engineers sited around the UK. This enables us to attend most breakdowns within 24 hours, as we fully understand the importance of maintaining production."

Also based at Bocam Park in Bridgend, Clay Shaw Thomas' client, Fields Group is a computer forensics enterprise that specialises in the recovery of the digital 'fingerprints' left by the routine use of computers.

Established in 1999, the company has earned an impressive reputation in the detection, analysis and presentation of computer evidence in the broadest range of criminal activities. These include fraud, extortion, data theft, child pornography and internet abuse.

Even erased files can be recovered and examined, providing essential evidence for criminal investigations.

Clients include legal firms, international banks, blue chip companies, law enforcement and military organisations.

Fields Group's global presence been made possible by the internet and it featured among the top 10 companies in Wales in last year's Fast Growth 50.

"Thanks to the ease of trading made possible by the internet we have virtual offices



Recycling services: now the second fastest growing sector in the UK



Kevin Francis, managing director, Engineering Services

in Italy, France and Spain, as well as having a physical office in Germany,” explained Richard Cable, company secretary and financial controller.

Demand for the company’s services is growing internationally, and there has been a 50 per cent increase in staffing levels in the last 12 months, bringing employee numbers to 56.

One of the most important elements of Fields’ business is the data recovery department.

“We use the same skills as in the computer forensics aspect of the business to recover data,” said Richard Cable.

“We provide a high-quality service at a reasonable price, so that our service is affordable for small businesses.”

Fields has also provided data recovery services to such prestige names as IBM, Jaguar, TDK, Reuters, American Express and Warner Brothers, as well as a number of police forces, local councils, health authorities and universities.

James Burnett, principal with Clay Shaw Thomas, explains the necessity of actively monitoring and updating a business website:

“We are well aware of the importance of the Clay Shaw Thomas website as a marketing tool. We know that most people will check out a company’s website before they go as far as to

pick the telephone and have a conversation.

“But in an age where technological advances shift along so quickly, simply having an adequate website isn’t enough. Far from it, that website has to work extremely hard to sell the company, outline its services clearly and effectively, and have aesthetic appeal, if it is to keep a potential client’s attention.

“Last but not least, the website has to work properly. It might sound obvious, but it’s surprising just how many sites seem to be more inclined to withhold information than



James Burnett, principal, Clay Shaw Thomas

give it to the customer!”

Jonathan James IT consultant with Clay Shaw Thomas, added: “If people fail to get what they need from a website within a couple of minutes they will go elsewhere – you only have a small window in which to capture peoples’ attention – therefore a positive first impression is crucial.

“Here at Clay Shaw Thomas we regularly review our website to ensure that it looks fresh and contemporary in terms of style and design, and also benefits from any technological advances in terms of function.

“We provide our customers with a free service by responding to national and international events with informative pieces that are posted onto our website very quickly. Such pieces help provide our customers with clarification, and also highlight the fact that we are responsive to global events.”

Jonathan believes that a dated website does a company more harm than good.

“People now expect companies to have state-of-the-art online material, therefore a poor, outmoded or dysfunctional website is potentially damaging to a business,” he said. “What’s more, company directors are getting younger, and many have grown up with the online culture, so have greater expectations of what a website should be delivering.”

Clay Shaw Thomas’ online facility is

monitored regularly, and the website has had hits from all over the world.

“An international profile is very important,” said James Burnett. “For example, if a company is considering relocating to Wales, then they will be keen to find out what services are available on the doorstep.

“Our website is readily accessible as we have ensured that a selection of key words keep our site at the forefront of leading search engines,” he continued. “Clay Shaw Thomas is very keen to keep its brand in the limelight, and a high-calibre website is an important tool in standing out from the crowd.

He continued: “Wales’ worldwide profile is being raised by the excellent work undertaken by International Business Wales and the Welsh Assembly by encouraging investment and business development in Wales. Their websites are key tools in providing potential business and entrepreneurs with information about Wales, assistance with relocating business to Wales, grant funding and outstanding business support.”

Clay Shaw Thomas advises on grant funding, financial aspects of international business trading and international tax planning. ■

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