

RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

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How the McJob flipped its image

John Willman explains how workers and employers benefit from the Big Ticks

McDonald's knew it had an image problem as an employer when "McJob" made it into the Oxford English dictionary in 2001, to describe "an unstimulating, low-paid job with few prospects".

The fast-food chain employs 67,000 people in the UK, many in their first job, and it has always provided training in transferable skills for their future careers.

But the gap between public perception and reality affected the confidence of its employees and deterred potential recruits.

The company responded with further improvements in the opportunities offered to staff, with extended flexible working practices, courses for English and maths qualifications and newly accredited management training.

Staff turnover has now fallen to an all-time low, the number of new starters leaving within 90 days is down by a third, confidence levels are up 10 cent and three-quarters of staff say they are proud to work for the restaurant chain.

More important, McDon-

ald's has been able to challenge its detractors, by advertising the benefits of working for it with the slogan "Not bad for a McJob". As a result, it has been recognised with a "big tick" in the 2008 Business in the Community (BITC) awards for excellence, where this year's theme is best practice in finding and nurturing the talents essential for every organisation.

McDonald's is one of four organisations with big ticks in the new BT Total Talent award category for their strategic approach to recognising talent and developing it.

The others are BAA's Heathrow operation, investment bank Merrill Lynch and the Scottish arm of PwC, the accountancy firm.

"The talent challenge is the next big thing," says Stephen Howard, BITC chief executive.

"The central issue for business is the struggle to find good people. The awards this year will focus on how we can unlock the country's talent. So much of it is about getting the best people and holding on to them."

Another category on the same theme is the Skills for Life award, sponsored by Norfolk County Services. Among the four organisations awarded a big tick this year for helping employees gain essential literacy, numeracy and language skills is Ford Motor Company, for its "Skills for Life"



a helping hand: the company improved opportunities offered to staff, with extended flexible working practices, courses for English and maths, and management training

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campaign to develop a skilled workforce at its Dagenham engine plant that can continuously improve the business.

Ford releases employees from the production line for short periods of one-to-one coaching until they are confident about sitting a national test. The tests are taken in quiet areas of the shop floor, invigilated by trained colleagues, and the results are given the same day. The coaches also work with management to improve communications and implement business improvement techniques.

Among the benefits have been a 92 per cent fall in severe accidents, production volumes up by a third, reduced energy consumption and improvements in staff morale. These improvements have helped safeguard 680 jobs, and added 450 new

employees to support the £170m investment in a new production facility at Dagenham.

"We have 2,500 people with the knowledge and power to develop our business," says Wallace Yearwood, manufacturing manager.

"All they need is the confidence and basic skills to help them facilitate change and growth."

Roy Harrison, an employee who has benefited and now hopes to become a group leader, explains why it has been so successful: "The one-to-one sessions (no feeling thick at the back of a classroom); works well with shifts and family life etc; not having to be tested in an intimidating environment; flexible, personalised and friendly. Who would have thought it could be this simple!"

The other companies awarded big ticks this year in the Skills for Life category Boots, npower Operations Customer Services and Wiltan, which makes magnetic components in South Wales.

'The talent challenge is the next big thing. The central issue for business is the struggle to find good people'

The talent theme is reflected in several categories, including the Towers Perrin Healthy Workplace award where the six companies with big ticks range

from Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education to Ernst & Young, the accountancy firm. The three companies with big ticks in the Wates Employability award category for community programmes helping disadvantaged people into work include two builders Mansell and St George.

Last year's awards majored on climate change, where continued business interest is reflected in several categories this year. Big ticks in Man Group's International Climate Change award category have gone to retailers such as Marks and Spencer, J Sainsbury, Tesco and Co-operative Group. Nine companies are recognised in the Lafarge Cement UK Eco-Efficiency category, with big ticks for - among others - Adnams, the Southwold brewer, and law firm Wragge & Co.

The most popular category remains the Education award sponsored by Merrill Lynch, with 17 big ticks altogether, for organisations ranging from FTSE 100 companies and City investment banks, to relative tiddlers such as National Physical Laboratory and Rangers Football Club. Another 25 organisations have been re-accredited in this category. The BUPA Healthy Communities award produces the next highest group of big ticks, with eight for the likes of Network Rail, Pfizer and Eon.

Overall this year, there have been 268 new entries taking 106 big ticks, with another 107 re-accredited entries from 91 organisations. This is slightly down on last year when there were 283 new entries and 125 big ticks - a higher entry and a higher success rate. But

BITC says the latter reflects the higher standards the peer assessors now expect in terms of impact and achievement.

Mr Howard detects no impact yet from the darkening skies over the business community, as the credit crunch pushes the economy into a slowdown that may distract businesses from their commitment to corporate social responsibility. But he believes this year's focus on talent emphasises the importance of keeping a management eye on long-term issues even when the going gets tough.

"It is inevitable that companies will be much more cautious about how they spend their money. I hope they will realise that in a downturn, how they relate to their employees and communities will be more important than ever."

Business In The Community Awards 2008: The Big Ticks



Norfolk County Services Skills for Life Award supported by Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills with Investors in People

Boots
Ford Motor Company
npower Operations Customer Services
Wiltan

Towers Perrin Healthy Workplaces Award supported by the Department of Health, in association with the Health and Safety Executive

Capital One Bank (Europe) plc
EDF Energy
Ernst & Young
Foyle Food Group
Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education
Scottish Widows

Merrill Lynch Education Award supported by the Department for Children Schools and Families

Anglian Water
Berrybridge Housing
BT
Compass Group UK & Ireland
The Co-operative Financial Services
Design Links
E.ON
Ernst & Young
Gentoo
John Lewis Glasgow
Lakehouse Contracts
National Physical Laboratory
Pinsent Mason LLP
Rangers Football Club

Siemens Industrial Turbomachinery Limited
Standard Life plc
UBS

Wates Employability Award
Axis
Mansell
St George

BUPA Healthy Communities Award supported by the Department of Health
BT
Coca-Cola Bottlers (Ulster)
E.ON
EDF Energy
Linc-cymru
Network Rail
Pfizer Ltd
The Co-operative Group

Northern Foods Rural Action Award supported by the Commission for Rural Communities

BHP Billiton Petroleum
Duke of Cambridge Organic Pub
Eshott Hall Estate
Foot Trails
Lincolnshire Co-operative
Sainsbury's
The Local Food Company

Power in Partnership Award supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
BT, Cisco & One World South Asia
Croydon Commitment
KPMG, Clifford Chance and Morgan Stanley
RWE npower and National Grid

Barclays Environmental Leadership Award in association with the CBI
EDF Energy
Sainsbury's
Tesco
Toyota Manufacturing UK
United Utilities

Man Group International Climate Change Award
Chime Communications plc.
Marks & Spencer
Sainsbury's
Tesco
The Co-operative Group
United Utilities
Yorkshire Water

Lafarge Cement UK Eco-efficiency Award
3M UK PLC Aycliffe Plant
Adnams
Diageo
GlaxoSmithKline
Nestlé UK
Sainsbury's
United Utilities
Wates
Wragge & Co LLP

TATA Consultancy Services Marketplace Innovation Award

Balca Timber
npower
United Utilities

HBOS Responsible Marketing Award in association with the Marketing Society
Camelot
EDF Energy

Procter & Gamble UK
Sainsbury's

John Lewis and Waitrose Supply Chain Award
Foodvest UK
Kraft Foods
Marshalls
Sainsbury's

wWest Midlands Worklife Balance Award
South Staffs Water

Lancaster University Management School North-West Award for Impact through Collaborative Leadership
Halliwells LLP
Liverpool Football Club and Athletic Grounds Ltd
Royal Mail Group

Re-accreditation
Accenture
Airbus UK
Allen & Overy LLP
Allstate Northern Ireland Limited
AstraZeneca
AstraZeneca R&D Charnwood B&Q
BAE Systems
Barclays
Bettys & Taylors of Harrogate
BHP Billiton Petroleum, North Wales Police, North Wales Fire & Rescue Service
Birmingham Business Action on Homelessness
Birmingham Construction Partnership

Blakemore Food Service
Boots
Bordeaux Quay
Bovis Lend Lease
Bradford & Bingley
British American Tobacco
British Transport Police - North Western Area
BT
BT Ireland
Cadbury Trebor Bassett
Camelot Group
Charlton Athletic Community Trust
Compass Group UK & Ireland
Compass Group UK & Ireland - ESS
Digital Inclusion Steering Board
E.ON
EOL IT Services Ltd.
Erimus Housing
Experian
FirstGroup plc, UK Bus Division
Food Brands Group
Fowler Welch Coolchain
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP
Futures Supplies & Support Services Ltd
Ginsters
GlaxoSmithKline
Growth International
HM Revenue & Customs
innocent
John Lewis Newcastle
John Lewis Partnership
Keepmoat
Kier Sheffield LLP
Kingdom Shopping Centre
KPMG
Kraft Foods
Leeds Ahead Ltd.
Lincolnshire Co-operative

Lloyds
Lloyds TSB Scotland
Manchester City Football Club
Marks & Spencer
Marshalls
Meadowhall Centre
Midcounties Co-operative
MITIE Group
Morgan Stanley
National Grid
Noble Foods
Norfolk County Services
Northern Rail
Nottinghamshire Cares for Kids
Oracle Corporation UK
Ordnance Survey
Preston Community Impact Group
PricewaterhouseCoopers
ProHelp Birmingham
Reed Elsevier
Regeneris
RWE npower
Sainsbury's
ScotAsh
ScottishPower
Seamless Relocation
Serco Integrated Services
Serco Leisure
Speedy Hire
Starbucks Coffee Company UK and Ireland
Styles&Wood
TATA Consultancy Services Ltd
Tees Valley Housing
The Bingo Association
The Midcounties Co-operative
The Source @ Meadowhall
Toyota Manufacturing UK
Tullow Oil
UBS, Deutsche Bank and Linklaters
United Utilities
Yorkshire Water



Business in the Community congratulates all the 2008 Big Tick companies and thanks our sponsors for making this year's Awards for Excellence possible.



A big thanks also to our supporters: Commission for Rural Communities; Department for Children, Schools and Families; Department of Health; and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. Our associates: Confederation of British Industry; Envirowise; Health and Safety Executive; Institute of Directors; Investors in People, Marketing Society and Tomorrow's Company. And our media partner the Financial Times.