

BEAVERBROOKS 'KINGS OF THE RING' ONCE AGAIN.

Having achieved 'Best Workplace' status both in the UK *and* Europe for the fifth year running, Beaverbrooks the Jewellers have now officially been crowned 'Laureates'. Given that their business is in the luxury end of the retail sector, currently weathering the worst financial storm in recent history, this achievement could almost be described as Herculean. Particularly when you consider that each year their ranking has been among the Top 10. This really does suggest that Beaverbrooks are rock solid when it comes to their people practices.

Yet once you consider that the core values of this family run business are making sure both staff and brand are nurtured in equal measure, it is easy to see how the company prospers with a profit of £7.2 million registered last year. For when it comes to the Beaverbrooks team it seems that at every level all that glitters *is* in fact gold. The happiness of Beaverbrook's 831 UK based staff (three quarters of which are women) is not simply generated by high salary. Indeed around 50% of the company's workers earn less than £15,000 a year with fewer than 7% of Beaverbrook's staff earning more than £35,000. There is however a very strong degree of trust and respect in the workplace, much of which is generated by Managing Director Mark Adlestone's inspirational leadership.

As the grandson of one of the three brothers who founded the business in Belfast some ninety years ago Mark's values are very clear.

'Our work ethic is as important to us as ever and we pride ourselves on making our working environment open positive and motivated.'

Beaverbrooks tick all the boxes when it comes to investing in each member of staff's development and even add a few boxes of their own. With a generous range of benefits, incentives and rewards including an opportunity to attain nationally recognised business related qualifications and a rewarded suggestion scheme, staff certainly feel valued but more importantly they are listened to, as Mark testifies.

'At Beaverbrooks we believe very much in a 'warts and all' approach. All of our Executive team spend time visiting the stores on a regular basis and sharing good two way conversations with the staff.

Every year we hold a series of focus groups for our people to attend. People are chosen at random and they are invited to groups with Directors and / or Executives to discuss some issues that we want their views on and some issues that they wish to bring to us.'

This claim is most definitely supported by the Beaverbrooks staff themselves, 88% of which agreed with the statement '**Management genuinely seeks and responds to suggestions and ideas**' from the Great Place to Work® Trust Index® survey.

Beaverbrooks currently give one fifth of their post tax profits to charity as well as matching any amount of money raised by staff through charity events. The decision to make this fraction so generous was made specifically with the aim of increasing staff engagement with the business. The need to 'give something back' seems to be of increasing importance to people in today's workplace.

Whilst many would see this merely as a publicity opportunity, Beaverbrooks seem to embrace it as part of their culture of 'Enriching lives' which is introduced to new starters in special inductions and continued in ongoing training programmes.

'Our purpose of enriching lives run through everything that we do and is the whole reason for the company existing. Our key values: "Integrity, Caring, and Passion" inform the decisions that we make both in business and how we behave.'

A culture of integrity generates one of trust which goes a long way to explain why all of the company's current management positions have been filled by people who have been developed from within.

Mark Adlestone's visible approach to his business and workers has proved to be a vanguard against any recession powered rumour mill. Fears have been acknowledged and communicated with his staff. By integrating a precious set of unwavering values into everything, the staff at Beaverbrooks know their own high value and are less likely to waver themselves.

It is possible then that lavish Businessman and Publisher Malcom S Forbes may have been onto something after all when he said 'Diamonds are nothing more than chunks of coal that stuck to their jobs'.