

Global cosmetics firm “made up” to receive Beacon accreditation

Somerset and Devon-based international personal care company Swallowfield, has become the latest South West firm to receive Beacon accreditation.

With more than 600 employees and factories and research bases in Wellington, Somerset and Bideford, Devon, Swallowfield has attained Beacon status due to its impressive track record of responding to changes in its sector and adapting its strategy to enter new markets and exploit new opportunities. Clients now include some of the world's most renowned brands and high street retailers such as PZ Cussons, Avon, M&S and Boots.

The 134-year-old company started as a small animal husbandry company with one small shop in Wellington, Somerset. Over the intervening decades, it has moved into and concentrated on personal care contract manufacturing, becoming a renowned international specialist in filling aerosols, cosmetic pencils and an array of other beauty and home products. Swallowfield has one of the widest beauty product portfolio of any own label manufacturer in Europe.

Along the way to its recent rejuvenation, Swallowfield has faced many challenges, and has always been able to respond to the changing market. After a successful period in the 1980s and 90s, the company faced financial difficulties at the turn of this century, partly related to the uncompetitive nature of the Pound. Recent changes in the management structure have given fresh impetus to the business and with a sound financial footing, allowed it to expand and focus on its key strengths

The firm has also re-focused its strategy away from being solely a contract manufacturer, and now offers a portfolio of services, covering trend analysis, product design, testing, packaging and supply chain support. This allowed Swallowfield to offer its customers a tailored service commensurate with their commercial requirements, and

allows the flexibility to deal with small start-up company's right through to multi-national giants.

As part of its strategic focus, Swallowfield has looked to widen its international presence, and to this end opened a sourcing office in Shanghai, shortly followed by a strategic alliance with Chinese and Japanese investors. Alongside this, Swallowfield also opened a new manufacturing facility in the Czech Republic giving it a wider European reach.

As well as enhancing its manufacturing capabilities, Swallowfield has also looked to strengthen its selling channels and to this end, increased its Paris office team and is in the process of opening an office in New York to support its North American clients.

While building its presence abroad, Swallowfield is committed to maintaining a strong UK presence which also supports some of the premium brands where 'Made in UK' is a value-added feature. It is interesting to note that the "Made in UK" tag is also a strong selling point for new International markets and is seen as a mark of quality.

It is this innovative and flexible approach which has reaped financial rewards for Swallowfield, and these traits have earned the company its Beacon accreditation.

Beacon status is awarded to those companies in the region displaying innovation, entrepreneurship, with a culture of best practice.

Sue Baker, Beacon South West project director, said: "Swallowfield is a unique company – it has shown that it can weather the storms of 134 years of commercial challenges and as it heads into its fourteenth decade in business, it is as fresh and ambitious as ever. Beacon will benefit enormously from the company's experience, particularly over the last few years where it has gone through many changes and also trail-blazed internationally."

Supported by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), Beacon South West brings together more than 230 of the region's most pioneering and rapidly expanding organisations, providing an environment for exploring new ideas and strategies with other successful companies.

Jamie Bachelor, international operations director for Swallowfield added: "For a company that was established in 1876, we are proud of the resilience and responsiveness we have shown, and subsequently our willingness to change our core offering depending on shifting markets. We are looking forward to bringing our experience to directly engage with Beacon firms in the region at the Boardrooms, and hope we will also learn from the vast pool of talent within this forum in the South West."

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Note to editors:

Beacon South West brings together some of the South West's most forward thinking and ambitious companies to promote success and spearhead the growth of the region. A key business initiative of the South West of England Regional Development Agency, Beacon South West is an award given to those companies who can demonstrate outstanding achievement across a range of criteria, including significant improvements in productivity and performance, profitability, work culture and innovation. Beacon South West members play an important role in cultivating enterprise excellence in the region. <http://www.beaconsw.org>