

Business daily



Edited
by George
Hamilton

Shoosmiths lawyers aching to get back in the race

ELEVEN lawyers from the Thames Valley office of Shoosmiths will pound the streets in the Reading Half Marathon on Sunday.

The group, including Dean Drew, partner and head of the Thames Valley office in Crown Street, Central Reading, and Andrew Tubbs, who chairs the national law firm, will be raising funds for Royal Berkshire Hospital, setting themselves a staggering target of £9,000 to buy specialist scanning equipment.

Mr Drew said: "I can't believe a year has passed and we are back training hard for this year's race."

"We will be joined by colleagues from Shoosmiths' offices across the region on the day, all of whom have brilliantly pledged their support in our quest to raise cash for Royal Berkshire Hospital."

"Many of the runners who took part last year are looking to break their personal best times – whilst some will just be pleased to finish!"

"No doubt there will be some aches, pains and strains along the way but with the dedication of this bunch we will no doubt do it all again next year."



ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE – From the left, Emily Peters, Dean Drew, Jen Argent, Caroline Motzer and Rachael Doodson, all from Shoosmiths Thames Valley office, take time out from training to run the Reading Half Marathon

'Information gap costing us billions'

MILLIONS of pounds are wasted by British business every day because of out-of-date or wrong information, according to the findings of a new survey published today.

And wrong decisions are made largely because business managers do not have access to the right information fast enough, the report says, claiming that these shortcomings cost British business billions of pounds a year.

ICS, a software house specialising in business intelligence, surveyed 1,050 people at mainland railways stations in the UK during the month of March. Almost all of them had decision-making responsibilities.

The survey was codenamed Information Black Hole.

Christian Smyth, managing director of ICS, said: "British managers are being starved of the information they need to do their jobs better. This is forcing them to make daily decisions blind, with expensive and far-reaching consequences."

"It is time to give all managers at the coalface the information they need when they need it rather than retaining it within an elite of business analysts."

The research showed that millions of pounds are wasted by British business every day because of out-of-date or wrong information.

Managers, it says, felt they were being forced to make decisions blindfold, with 85 per cent of them regularly making wrong decisions as a result.

This was costing the 1,000 companies under survey alone over £22 million a month, which is more than £250 million a year. UK-wide, this means that billions of pounds are wasted annually.

Some 71 per cent blamed the lack of up-to-date information for this situation and 77 per cent said they were forced to make decisions blind because of insufficient and late business information.

And the majority of those questioned blamed this "information logjam" on a lack of technical/IT resources.

HAVE FAITH: being made redundant does not have to be a bad thing

Top 10 ways to change career successfully

BY GEORGE HAMILTON

FEEL like a change? If so you may want to look at the following list.

Career coach Helen Slingsby, of Reading-based Career Breakthrough, has compiled a list of tips for readers who are thinking of switching jobs.

"We spend the bulk of our lives working, but surprisingly little time reviewing where we want to be in the future," she said.

"With improved health and falling pension values, many of us will be working well into our 60s,

but unlike our parents, a job is no longer for life.

"Remaining employable is vital. "If this sounds daunting, remember it is no longer a stigma to change career or to go plural."

"However, it is important to manage our career well, as employers are increasingly leaving it up to us."

Ms Slingsby's top 10 tips are:

■ Review goals and ambitions regularly to avoid getting stale and inward looking.

■ Be realistic. Will your new goal sustain you and your family? What changes can you make to make it work?

■ Be positive. The flip side is we only have one life, will you regret not making a move in the future?

■ Take a long hard look at yourself. Write down your strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills and values. Does your current job satisfy you? Think laterally about the next move.

■ Do your research on the options out there before leaping.

■ Keep well informed about the job market to keep ahead of the competition.

■ Keep fresh. Learn a new skill, and keep interested and active.

■ Network. Keep in touch with friends, colleagues, relatives and at

the school gates.

Most people made redundant, who find jobs quickly, are able to call on a well-honed network of contacts.

■ Have a go. Use every opportunity to gain work experience in an area that interests you, even if you are still in your current job.

■ Be confident. Especially women. Research shows that women will not apply for a job unless they meet eight out of 10 requirements in the job ad, while men will apply if they meet two. Have faith.

For more career advice, you can contact Ms Slingsby on (0118) 984 4962 or email Helen@careerbreakthrough.co.uk.

Equal pay claims threat to councils

COUNCILS are facing a financial "crisis" because of the cost of compensating women workers in equal pay cases.

Local authorities in the North East have already paid out more than £100 million to women workers suffering from pay inequality, while councils in Scotland could be left with bills amounting to £560 million, said Incomes Data Services.

Sally Brett, of IDS, said: "Councils across Britain, many with larger

workforces and therefore larger equal pay liabilities than the Scottish and North East councils, have the same legacy issues to deal with.

"Women working as school caterers or home helps are doing jobs of equal value to men, working in refuse collection or maintenance, and have been on the same pay grade as them for many years, but have been denied access to the regular bonus payments, which in some councils add as much as 80 per cent to basic pay."

Unlawful penalties hit cardholders

CONSUMERS are being charged more than £300 million a year in unlawful penalties on credit cards, the competition watchdog said yesterday.

The Office of Fair Trading said the default charges had been set at a "significantly higher" level than was legally fair and called on all card issuers to recalculate their penalties.

It said it would consider any penalty charge of more than £12 as being unfair, and it was

likely to challenge those above this level unless there were exceptional business reasons for them.

Default charges are levied by card providers if people are late with minimum repayments, exceed their credit limit or make repayments by cheque or direct debits which are not honoured.

Moneysupermarket.com found the average charge was £22.68, with some as high as £25.

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