

Vantage Point Business Village

'We had to change the way that we did things'

SIMPLICITY itself is proving to be a name adaptable enough to take a back office outsourcing company in new directions. Not only is managing director David Thornhill contemplating adding new strings to the business's bow but an imminent move into larger office space reflects its growth. Simplicity began trading from its Aspen House base in 2004 and a 25 per cent hike in its growth in 2013 was an indicator of a turn in the tide of recession. Mr Thornhill has over a quarter of a century's experience in the recruitment payroll and back office sector. He knows it from the ground floor up, having been, in his early days in the industry, a payroll clerk. His experience enabled him to devise the business model through which Simplicity operates. The company saw growth in its early years although Mr Thornhill would have liked to have seen it grow more quickly. "We saw growth but we had to change the way we were doing things," he explained. "That involved exploring online avenues and making increasing use of

BY BUSINESS EDITOR
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social media. "We stuck to what we knew, especially in a recession time," he added. Two sectors remained consistent at that time – teaching and healthcare. Ironically, since economic recovery has begun, those sectors are being harder hit, while Simplicity is benefiting from improvements in the private sector. The business's turnover at the end of April, 2013 was £38million. During the following year – Simplicity's 10th anniversary one – turnover was up to £55million. "This year it's going to be over £80million" said Mr Thornhill. The company has a good track record in chasing debts, with an average of 44.4 days when the industry average is 55. Fifty-three people now work for Simplicity, having started with just two and there are plans to increase that to about 120 within the next five years. "We have got our business plan in place which is going to take us to about £300million turnover," said Mr Thornhill.

Simplicity operates nationwide, with the managing director explaining: "We run about 500 agencies and we're probably paying about 3,500 workers a week at the moment." In May, the company will move into the former offices of Two Rivers Housing Association in Aspen House, taking the whole floor, doubling its office space from 7,000 sq ft to 14,500 sq ft. Changing the name three years ago from Cash Simply to Simplicity was part of a strategy to have a brand that could be taken in other directions. Debt collection is an area that could provide the next opportunity for the expanding business.

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'We liked the idea of having real meaning behind beers'

BESPOKE Brewery's managing director Mike Bayliss admits the business started off, like many good ideas, with friends talking in a pub.

"We talked about it for some time but it never really got off the ground," he explained, "Then one day I said to everybody I fancied giving it a go on a small commercial scale."

Brewer Steve Williams responded to Mr Bayliss's newspaper ad and the business was launched.

In March, 2012 the brewery produced its first beer – Saved by the Bell.

"We liked the idea of having a meaning behind the beers," said Mr Bayliss.

Other brews were titled Money for Old Rope, Over a Barrel and Running the Gauntlet – all well-known phrases which Mr Bayliss can recount the origins of.

The products range from dark stout to light, hoppy beer.

"I didn't want to be just another micro brewer – I wanted to brew real quality products and use the best ingredients we could," Mr Bayliss explained.

That has paid off, with awards for his beers.

After beginning as a five-barrel brewery, Bespoke has doubled in size and is continuing its expansion by moving into a new



Mike Bayliss, left, owner of the Bespoke Brewing Company, with Steve Williams, brewer, Josh Clayton, brewer's assistant, and Steve Watson, factory manager, at their brewery

unit at Vantage Point.

The brewery's products have proved popular with celebrities, with T'Pau lead singer Carol Decker ordering its beer for the launch of an album and tour.

Sports products company Adidas also requested it for an event.

Bespoke lives up to its name by producing customised labels for events or occasions, which can include birthdays with a photo of

the person celebrating the landmark.

The brewery is a departure for Mr Bayliss, who has long-time experience in the construction industry and set up Bespoke Architectural Solutions Ltd, based at Vantage Point, in 2009.

Originally from Walsall in the West Midlands, he moved to the Forest of Dean 18 years ago.

During his construction career he

has supplied canopy for the new Wembley Stadium.

He is currently involved in projects to install photovoltaic (PV) panels in roofing and sells 10 to 15 steel-framed buildings in kit form throughout the UK.

He also runs Mike Bayliss Holdings, a property company buying low-value housing stock and converting them into lettable properties.

During its first three years Bespoke Brewery has seen growth, starting with a capacity of 36 casks a week – that is now 120 a week.

Bottle sales have also risen, with 75 per cent of sales now bottled products.

The number of employees is now five and the move into a new unit at Vantage Point will more than double the business' floor area from 2,500sq ft to 5,500sq ft.