

the blakemore

February 2013

Management
Conference Special

The Newspaper for Employees of A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd.

way

Blakemore Wholesale Celebrates 50th Birthday Success

The way we attain excellence in everything we do.

The way we give great service to all our customers.

Blakemore Wholesale celebrated 50 years of cash & carry trading with record sales as a result of its Golden Anniversary promotional activity.

Throughout November and December each depot laid on a wide range of promotional activities to mark the anniversary of the opening of the first Blakemore Cash & Carry in Williamson Street, Wolverhampton in 1962.

Central to the celebrations were Blakemore Wholesale's '50 Deals for 50 Days' promotions, during which the company promoted market leading brands at knockout prices. The Gold activity was heavily supported by a comprehensive online and in-store marketing plan, fun days and customer competitions.

For the first time all staff also received training on active selling, which has now been permanently embedded across all depots.

Achievement

Blakemore Wholesale's Commercial Director, Russell Grant, said:

"What a fantastic event our 50th anniversary has been. We have had great support from our suppliers, our colleagues and most importantly our customers."

"We should all be proud of what has been achieved. We now need to capitalise on this to take the business further forward during 2013."

The overall award for the best performing depot throughout the Gold promotions was Middlesbrough Cash & Carry. The depot achieved a very strong and consistent performance, finishing first on 14 of the 50 days of promotions, and coming in the top three on 78% of the days.

Russell added:

"This is a brilliant end to a great year for Middlesbrough, following their FWD Depot of

the Year award. They have also had a great year for sales and income. Congratulations to the entire Middlesbrough team."

Each member of staff from the cash & carry was awarded a £50 voucher to spend in the depot.

Birmingham Cash & Carry finished a close second whilst Gateshead finished third.

Heritage

Commenting on A.F. Blakemore's cash & carry heritage, A.F. Blakemore Managing Director Peter Blakemore said:

"My father's idea to open one of the first cash & carry depots in the country has proven to be one of the most important decisions in this company's history.

"I am immensely proud of the history and heritage of A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd and our success has been built upon the partnerships that have been built amongst our staff,

loyal customer base and key suppliers."

Following on from the success of the Golden Anniversary promotions Blakemore Wholesale will now be moving on to special 'Deal of the Week' offers.

Turn over for a brief history of Blakemore Wholesale and find more out about some of the company's many successes during its golden year.



ABOVE
Blakemore Wholesale customer Mr Asif Hussain collects £1,000 worth of stock from Middlesbrough Cash & Carry after winning the 50/50 Gold customer draw

BELOW
Staff at Blakemore Wholesale's Middlesbrough depot celebrate after being awarded the top performing depot prize as part of the '50 Deals for 50 Days' promotion



Billion Pound Sales Announced at Management Conference

A.F. Blakemore's achievement of a billion pound turnover for the 2011/12 financial year was one of the key messages announced at this year's management conference.



Group Managing Director Peter Blakemore revealed the company's record financial performance and future growth strategy at the annual management conference on November 20th at the Hilton Metropole in Birmingham.

In five years, sales for the A.F. Blakemore group have nearly doubled, increasing from £643 million in 2006/07 to £1.148 billion in 2011/12. Much of this growth has taken place over the last 12 months, during which period sales increased by 26%.

In his key note address to delegates Peter said:

"We have endured five years of very difficult trading times and great change within the business, but despite this the company has still achieved a brilliant financial performance.

"Now that the Capper integration is nearly complete, the focus is very much on looking ahead to the future. The company is now in a strong position to grow sales, profitability and market share further."

At the conference Peter Blakemore also shared his 2020 vision for A.F. Blakemore, which highlighted his ambition for the group to increase its sales to £2-3 billion by 2020.

The 300-strong delegation also heard from divisional managing directors, who provided an overview of how each area of the business is performing and their strategic goals for the years ahead.

The afternoon session outlined the future vision for the company's Human Resources and Corporate Affairs functions and culminated with an inspirational talk from Darren Rudkin, who has been instrumental in the Leading the Blakemore Way leadership development programme.

Peter Blakemore left the stage by thanking his management team for their hard work during a challenging year and concluded with the message that the company's strong family values will continue to provide a competitive edge in the marketplace and form an important part of A.F. Blakemore's business strategy and 2020 vision.

Turn to the centre pages for a full round up of this year's Management Conference



FWD Crowns Middlesbrough Cash & Carry "Depot of the Year"

Blakemore Wholesale's Middlesbrough Cash & Carry picked up the title of "Gold Medal Cash & Carry Depot" at the Federation of Wholesale Distributors national awards.

Middlesbrough Cash & Carry beat off competition from wholesale depots across the UK to be recognised as the best in the country.

Depot Manager Tim Cronin collected the award on behalf of the depot at the FWD's Gold Medal Presentations, which took place at Old Billingsgate in London on November 29th.

A spokesperson from the FWD awards panel said:

"Tim Cronin and his team have made customer service their number one mission and strive to make the shopping experience both a pleasant and profitable one. It's certainly working with profits up a remarkable 63%.

"The team has also caught the eye of product suppliers, with one saying it is the most proactive depot he has ever dealt with."

Customers and suppliers praised the Middlesbrough cash & carry for the commitment and enthusiasm of its staff and the welcoming atmosphere of the depot. Well-executed promotions, tidy isles and excellent stock availability also distinguished the site from its competitors.

Service

General Manager Tim Cronin said of his depot:

"Here at Middlesbrough we make customer service our number one mission. In this challenging marketplace first class customer service is a real point of difference.

"Our suppliers play a very important role in our business too, so having a good relationship with them is vital. Our aim is to be easy to deal with and try to develop business plans for mutual growth. We fully support suppliers that work with us for the benefit of the business and our customers."

Congratulating the depot, Blakemore Wholesale Managing Director, Sam Wilcox, said:

"This is a fantastic achievement, and recognises the tremendous work done by Tim and his team.

"To win this award, against every other depot in the country, is nothing short of brilliant, and I am very proud of everyone in Middlesbrough."



FWD Chairman Guy Farrant, Middlesbrough Depot Manager Tim Cronin, Steve Brooks from awards sponsor AG Barr, and FWD Chief Executive James Bielby

Here's what two of Middlesbrough Cash & Carry's suppliers and customers had to say:

"All the staff at Middlesbrough have fully supported our national and local promotions in the depot.

"Danielle Russell (Operations Manager) has always supported Kelloggs 110% and is always excited to hear about new lines and how we can drive sales for the depot and the brands.

"The whole management team is always supportive and welcoming and provides exceptional support to Kelloggs.

"The atmosphere at Middlesbrough Cash & Carry is always friendly and it is a pleasure visiting the depot."

Account Development Executive Rebecca Ford-O'Connor, Kelloggs UK

"When I visit Middlesbrough depot the shelves are always well stocked and tidy and the isles are always clear.

"Your staff and managers are always very friendly and helpful and willing to listen.

"The cash & carry has helped me greatly in raising my own profile, which I am very grateful for.

"I receive support from all levels in your depot; from the receptionist, to floor staff, to management - it is first class."

Bay Bashir, Belle Vue Convenience Lifestyle Express, Middlesbrough



Blakemore Wholesale History – In Brief

- In 1962, Frank Blakemore opened the company's first cash & carry, in Williamson Street, Wolverhampton. Frank was inspired to open this groundbreaking depot following a study tour of Germany in 1961 and was convinced that the concept could work to support independent retailers in the UK.



Gwendoline Blakemore, who is the current Chairman of the A.F. Blakemore Board of Directors, and mother of Managing Director, Peter Blakemore, photographed in the early 1960s at the Blakemore Cash & Carry in Williamson Street, Wolverhampton

- The investment proved a success and was shortly followed by new depots opening in Walsall and Wolverhampton over the next decade.

- A.F. Blakemore became a member of the Landmark group in 1985, following a merger with the Consort Cash & Carry Group, before acquiring new depots in Birmingham, Grimsby, Barnsley and Lye in the 1980s and early 1990s.



A.F. Blakemore's former cash & carry and delivered warehouse, located at Leamore Lane, Walsall

- This period of exponential growth resulted in the company becoming divisionalised, with a special cash & carry arm created along with divisions specialising in food service and fresh meat wholesaling.

- Acquisitions of depots in Newport, in 2001 and Bangor, in 2002, were followed by the launch of a £5-million depot and head office at Wolverhampton Science Park in 2003, and a new trading name for the division - Blakemore Wholesale.



The Blakemore Cash & Carry, which was located in Great Bricklin Street, Wolverhampton, from 1971 to 2004

- The purchase of Tyne-Tees Cash & Carry, in 2008, led to two new depots, based in Middlesbrough and Gateshead, joining the group and Blakemore Wholesale becoming the largest member of Landmark.

- A national wholesale distribution centre, located at Great Bridge, Sandwell, was launched in 2009 to support the company's ever-growing delivered customer base.

- Blakemore Wholesale now employs more than 735 colleagues and boasts a turnover in excess of £370 million.

Look out for the next edition of the A.F. Blakemore staff magazine, which will include a special section on the Blakemore heritage. Thanks to all those who have already sent through information, cuttings and photos. Please contact Paul Cowley at Access 10 (Tel: 0121 568 2908) or email pcowley@afblakemore.com if you would like to submit anything for this forthcoming edition.

Buyer of the Year Award for Louise

A member of the Walsall Cash & Carry team has become the inaugural winner of the Blakemore Wholesale Depot Buyer of the Year competition.

Louise Hill was awarded the top prize in January after coming out on top across a range of criteria including core range compliance, effective merchandising, best innovation, best standards, wastage control and sales growth.

Blakemore Wholesale Trading Controller, Cheryl Norman, who organised the competition said:

"Louise gives more than 110% to everything she does and goes beyond expectations to deliver excellent results.

"She proactively challenges suppliers for additional investment, is always the first to try new products and ideas and actively sells them to her customers.

"Her department is always faultless with clean and tidy merchandising and she has

top class standards which can be witnessed by the first customer in the morning to the last one in the evening.

"Louise's all round performance is well worthy of this award and I would personally like to thank her for all her hard work."

Louise won £100 worth of high street vouchers plus a trophy to keep in the depot in recognition of her efforts.

Walsall depot's General Manager, Andy Dennis and Blakemore Wholesale's Managing Director, Sam Wilcox congratulate Louise Hill on her Buyer of the Year success



The way we give great service to all our customers.

Active Selling Star Performers

Blakemore Wholesale's 50 year celebrations would not have been such a success without the hard work and dedication of shop floor colleagues who embraced the concept of active selling.

Congratulations and thank you to the Star Performers from across the estate whose enthusiasm for their depot helped provide great customer service and grow sales in the process:

Bangor:

Avril Roberts

Barnsley:

Debbie Walters

Tom Clough

Gateshead:

Vicky Simpson

Paul Singh

Ali Kabish

Grimsby:

Sue Shearsmith

Adam Corry

Middlesbrough:

Daniel Lisle

Christine Cronin

Jean Blair

Newport:

Jayne Grey

Jon-Paul Howells

Saltley:

Tariq Aziz

Miraj Islam

Anthony Coley

Richard Marsh

Wolverhampton:

Brian Dennis

Adrian Crowther

Robert Hawley

Samantha Adams

Zulfiqar Ali

Mohammed Wajid

Tanvar Salim

Walsall:

Chris Gibbs

Angela Evans

Louise Hill

Clare Johnson

Alison Hayes

Mike Peck

A.F. Blakemore Welcomes Two New Finance Directors

A.F. Blakemore has strengthened the senior finance department for 2013 by welcoming two new finance directors into the team.

Simon Loveland has been appointed Chief Financial Officer and will oversee aspects of the day-to-day group finance operation including the financial reporting and accountancy processes across the company.

Julie Bevan has taken on the position of Wholesale Finance Director and will sit on the Wholesale, Foodservice, Fresh Foods and Heart

Distribution boards. Julie will support the Wholesale divisions in all financial matters with focus upon key areas such as the commercial evaluation of contracts and analysis of the operational cost base.

Group Finance Director Scott Munro-Morris said: "I am delighted to welcome Simon and Julie into these two critical roles and have every confidence that they will play a

major part in helping drive the future success of the company."

While both new appointments will report to Scott, Simon will be based within the Finance Department at Willenhall and Julie will be based at the Science Park.

We asked Simon and Julie to tell us more about themselves and their initial thoughts on A.F. Blakemore:



Simon Loveland:

Simon is a chartered accountant, who has gained a wealth of experience across a number of organisations over the past 20 years, including KPMG, Rolls Royce and the ROM Group.

Simon has the PRINCE2 Project Management qualification, has twice been involved in successful turnaround management projects and has also been heavily involved in key activity related to the acquisition and merger of his previous company.

The new CFO said: "The last company I worked for was acquired and I played a key role in tackling associated system issues and supporting the process of developing and bringing different divisions together.

"Hopefully this experience will come in useful during the ongoing integration of A.F. Blakemore and Capper & Co.

"A.F. Blakemore is a fascinating and extremely welcoming company and my ambition will be to help make it more profitable through ongoing improvements in developing clear financial systems and processes."

Personal Profile:

Background: Lives in Lichfield but originally from Lancashire.

Age: 42

Family: Married to Karen with two sons, Dom (aged 11) and Andrew (aged 7).

Hobbies: I love hiking, especially in the Lake District and I can regularly be seen jogging through Lichfield. My ambition is to complete the Lichfield half marathon for as many years as possible. I also play squash about twice a month.

Books: I didn't used to be a regular reader until I discovered Killing Floor by Lee Child about three years ago and have now read all of his Jack Reacher series of books.

Film: The Bourne Series is a particular favourite but I also like James Bond films.

Music: The first album I bought was Bat out of Hell, by Meatloaf but I've got a wide range of music tastes. I'm now more likely to listen to Beyoncé or Leona Lewis.



Julie Bevan:

Julie is a chartered management accountant who has a wealth of commercial experience having spent 11 years at Poundland where she led a finance team of around 40 people.

After leaving Poundland, Julie spent six years as a self-employed financial consultant and headed up a number of high-level projects on behalf of the Midlands Co-op, Holland & Barrett, Marks & Spencer Jersey, Homeserve and the RAC.

On joining A.F. Blakemore Julie said: "What has immediately struck me is how passionate the people are here and that the company is going through a large amount of change, especially in relation to the amalgamation with Capper.

"I am looking forward to this new challenge. I believe that I can add value to the company and that my previous experiences can really help support A.F. Blakemore.

"My role will involve working with the wholesale divisions and providing a financial focus on key commercial activities and decisions.

"I also have an Import & Export Diploma and my experiences in this area can support areas such as Fresh Foods, which is becoming increasingly involved in this type of activity.

"It is clear that the wholesale divisions have great opportunity for future growth and I look forward to helping them achieve their ambitions."

Personal Profile:

Background: Lives in Fradley, near Lichfield, but originally from Walsall.

Age: 42

Family: Daughter Abby, aged 13, and partner Steve, who is a Business Bank Manager for Barclays.

Hobbies: I spend a lot of time with my daughter, who is a keen dancer but I also enjoy participating in gym classes such as Zumba and Spinning, swimming and jogging. I enjoy going to the theatre and have recently seen Billy Elliot and Ghost in London.

Books: The last book I read was 50 Shades of Grey, just to see what all the fuss was about! But generally speaking I prefer psychological thrillers such as The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo.

Film: My ultimate favourite is Pulp Fiction but I am also a big fan of the new Batman and Sherlock Holmes films.

Music: The 1980s is probably my favourite period of music, especially Madonna and Wham!

Groundbreaking Team Leader Programme Linked to Community Programme

A groundbreaking and nationally accredited team leader programme has been launched across A.F. Blakemore that uses the skills learnt from community activities to help develop future leaders.



Delegates get stuck into a classroom-based challenge



The results of the community project at Caldmore Community Gardens



The Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) Level 2 Certificate in Team Leadership was developed by the A.F. Blakemore Learning & Development team in 2011 and will be repeated on a much larger scale in 2013.

The course seeks to develop first line management capability across the company with a strong emphasis upon the company's values in addition to some of the techniques promoted through the Leading the Blakemore Way programme.

A key part of the training is to provide delegates with an opportunity to apply the skills that they have learnt in the classroom in a practical situation by team leading a community programme.

Community

Nine delegates from across A.F. Blakemore took part in the initial programme, with five team leading community projects as part of their development.

Blakemore Logistics delegates Jack Johnson, Rob Viridi and Dulvinder Randhawa were selected via a divisional specific leadership programme and worked together to lead separate stages of a large community garden project at Caldmore Housing, in Walsall.

Another member of the Blakemore Logistics team, Craig Barker, also opted to team lead a community garden project at the Darlaston Community Hub.

A.F. Blakemore Learning & Development Manager Mel Walker said:

"The ILM Level 2 Certificate in Team Leadership was established to help develop first line management capability and equip delegates with the tools to take that vital initial step in their career.

"I've always believed that the step up from the shop floor to junior management is one of the biggest challenges any future leader can take.

"While this programme is accredited through ILM, it has been developed in-house and is bespoke to the needs and values of A.F. Blakemore. In fact each module is built around a Blakemore Way value and this is where the community project comes in.

"We have strong evidence to show that the experience of team leading a community volunteering project provides an opportunity to practically apply leadership skills such as delegation, planning, communication and budgeting.

"We are therefore incorporating values linked to maximising staff potential and contributing to the community to great effect."

This programme has proved to be a great success and the results at both the Caldmore and Darlaston community gardens provide a perfect illustration of how any successful project is reliant upon strong leadership and management skills.

Mel added: "Blakemore Logistics also took a novel approach to the programme by advertising this opportunity across all of its sites. An assessment day was then set up and overseen by a senior selection panel that whittled down the 20 applicants to four.

"This time around Logistics received 30 applications and undertook a similar process to identify three potential future leaders, who will join a cohort of 36 delegates from across the company, participating in our new programme that kicked off in January.

"And all 36 of the new set of participants will have the opportunity to team lead a community project as part of their qualification."

Well done to Jack Johnson, Dulvinder Randhawa, Rob Viridi and Craig Barker, of Blakemore Logistics; Cassandra Stoker-Walby of Blakemore Trade Partners, Matt Clowes of Heart Distribution, Gareth Owen of Blakemore Foodservice and Michael Lea of Wholesale Distribution, who all successfully completed the course.

And good luck to the 36 delegates embarking on the challenge this time around!



Peter Outlines 2020 Strategy

Peter Blakemore provided delegates with an update on the current marketplace and an overview of the strategic direction to be taken by the company in order to achieve its 2020 vision.

Addressing the difficult trading climate, the A.F. Blakemore Managing Director said:

"It's been hard and trading conditions have certainly not got easier over the last 12 months, with many negative external factors sent to challenge us. As a country we have experienced the longest downturn in the modern era, a reduction in consumers' incomes, increased costs and taxes and plenty of competition from other retailers opening new outlets.

"As a company we have also experienced a year of great change and great distraction

as a result of integrating two businesses.

"However I'm very pleased with the overall performance of the business. Thank you and well done."

Following on from the significant period of growth, Peter announced his ambition for the group to further increase its sales to £2-3 billion by 2020.

At the heart of this 2020 strategy, Peter stressed, would be sustainable growth and the values of the Blakemore Way.

"Our strategy for the coming years is about generating

sustainable growth and long-term prosperity for the company, not just short-term success.

"The Blakemore Way will continue to underpin the way we do business."



Financial Update

Group Finance Director Scott Munro-Morris presented a positive overview of A.F. Blakemore's financial performance.

In 2011/12 the group achieved record sales of £1.148 billion, up 26% on 10/11 by £236m.

Group profits for the year were also steady, standing at £9.3m. Given the exceptional costs spent on the Capper integration this year this was a very solid result.

In the overview of divisional performance there were also some positive results, with Cash & Carry, Wholesale Distribution, Foodservice and Heart Distribution all seeing an increase in sales.

While the fixed costs associated with the acquisition of the new Apex II, Wakefield and Hilton Cross depots have had an impact upon profit, Scott explained that these investments are helping build the foundations for future growth.

Meanwhile Blakemore Trade Partners increased profits by £0.2m to £7.5m and Blakemore Retail achieved profits of £3.7m.

The company has also made significant steps towards paying off its debts, with all covenants cleared and long term borrowings forecasted to fall.

Overall £12.3 million was invested in 2011/12, across capital expenditure and leasing, freehold property, new stores and refits, commercial vehicles and IT and central functions.

On the group's performance Scott summed up:

"Last year saw a steady, stable performance and profit. It was a good, solid year."

Sam Highlights Wholesale Sales Growth

Blakemore Wholesale Managing Director Sam Wilcox provided an update on the progress of the three wholesale divisions.

For Blakemore Foodservice 2012 was a fantastic year for sales growth, with sales increasing 10% and profits growing by £500,000. The division is well on its way to achieving an annual turnover of £120m per annum by the end of the 2012/13 financial year.

New business worth nearly £18m was won in the eight months leading up to the conference and the division is currently in talks with business worth £90m per annum.

The main emphasis for 2013 will be to grow sales at the Wakefield depot.

Meanwhile Fresh Foods has made huge progress as a result of significant investment in its trading team and entrance into the restaurant business. New business supplying Las Iguanas, Zaza Bizarre and Banana Tree is collectively

worth £1 million.

Sam announced that sales were up 21% year-to-date and are still growing. Period 6 saw sales 52% up on the same time last year.

In his overview of Blakemore Wholesale's cash & carry business Sam announced a 2% growth in overall sales and 150% increase in bulk sales, which could hit £15m this year. He stated that further investment would be made in the Lifestyle Express estate, with plans in place for the addition of 100 stores to the 320-store group.

Wholesale Distribution saw a 16% increase in vending sales and a 20% growth in non-vending sales. However, pressure on margins means that profits have not increased at the same rate. The division is now working more closely with Trade Partners to offer

joint tenders.

Sam stressed that, "key to the future of the business is

investment in staff and building lasting relationships with customers".



Geoff Tackles Challenges Ahead

Blakemore Retail Managing Director Geoff Hallam took to the stage to present his strategy to counteract the tough trading conditions.

Geoff highlighted the difficult circumstances facing the retail industry and stressed that reduced consumer spending was likely to be here for the long term.

As a result Blakemore Retail's sales and marketing strategy focuses on delivering key messages on value to customers and has already seen the launch of a groundbreaking television advertising campaign in Wales.

Significant investment in store image has also been made in an attempt to boost footfall. In the year leading up to the conference 33 stores received a refit.

Last year also saw the launch of the first promotions leaflet dedicated to Blakemore Retail, and SPAR UK's SPAR Differentiation project, which aims to differentiate stores from competition by drawing

attention to their commitment to responsible business practice and making a positive impact on local communities.

Geoff highlighted some of the main improvements made to the business's operational efficiency over the last year, with the introduction of phased promotions, improved labour scheduling processes and shop fitting solutions to maximise energy efficiency in stores.

Another key achievement for the year was Blakemore Retail being voted "Best Managed Convenience Chain" by shoppers at the Convenience Tracking Programme awards.

With more than 10 brand new stores already lined up for this year, 2013 is expected to be a year of expansion. Geoff pointed out the strength of the recently revised shop fitting and property management teams helping

Blakemore Retail to drive this forward.

"With Blakemore Design & Shopfitting now working even more closely with

Blakemore Property, in one shared office, we have a really good, solid team to back up the business."



Jerry Spots Future Opportunities

Blakemore Trade Partners Managing Director Jerry Marwood outlined expected growth in the convenience sector and the resulting opportunities arising for SPAR.

Jerry presented the findings of market research company IGD, who forecasted a £9.7 billion cash growth in the convenience sector between 2011/12 and 2016/17. He explained that the sector is becoming more complex, with clearer segmentation and new store formats changing the marketplace. As a result there is much sales growth to be gained by targeting new shopper groups.

Strong ranges and promotions are the foundations for growth, but a clear strategy on topics such as online and digital development or local community engagement will be critical to leveraging the convenience opportunity in the years ahead.

There are four big opportunities for Blakemore Trade Partners to focus on to secure future growth: expanding ranges to drive

bigger margins, driving new footfall, lowering costs and increasing basket size.

Jerry stressed that Blakemore Trade Partners was also placing increased emphasis on communicating the value message to customers, with price-marked packs, value campaigns and more than 300 lines of £1 products now in stores.

Much work has also begun to drive footfall, with new fascias and refits being implemented to brighten up store image.

Store recruitment is also a focus, with more than 60 new stores planned for this financial year.

Despite difficult trading conditions Jerry stressed the importance of making the most of opportunities:

"There's tough competition from the multiples but the future's there to be taken by us."



Making A.F. Blakemore an Employer of Choice

HR Director Ian Diment presented his department's strategy to make A.F. Blakemore an employer of choice.

Ian presented a staged plan that aims to get the company nationally recognised as one of the Sunday Times "Best Companies to Work For" within five years.

The goal of the process is to establish a high performance culture, which will be achieved through "effective leadership, a culture of performance feedback and the development of internal talent".

Ian also put forward plans to improve the employer brand and recruitment process to attract new talent, and made an ongoing commitment to training and building a sustainable business through leadership development.

He stressed that the company should use its values to create competitive advantage and differentiate the business.



Blakemore Logistics On Track to Achieve 2020 Goals

Blakemore Logistics Managing Director Barry Davies gave an overview of the latest developments in the Logistics division and his 2020 strategy.

Overall Blakemore Logistics enjoyed a solid and steady performance in 2011/12 despite poor summer weather and difficult trading conditions. With costs for 2011/12 2.6% favourable to budget and a steady number of stores, the division is on track to achieve its 2020 goals. Barry announced that over the course of the year significant investment had been made in improving service levels and operational efficiencies, with a new customer services system being implemented and further double deck vehicles added to the trailer fleet.

Progress has also been made towards unifying the warehousing and distribution operations of northern and

southern distribution depots, with centralised Paragon routing being introduced and uniform recycling processes rolled out to Hastings and Talbot Green.

Improvements will continue into the next year, with further investment in IT systems and ongoing work being carried out to enhance fuel efficiency and driver performance as well as reduce wastage further.

Central to the 2020 strategy, Barry stressed, will be investment in people.

Last year saw significant investment made in staff learning and development opportunities, with all Logistics frontline managers participating in the Leading the Blakemore Way

management development programme.

Declaring that the best is still to come, Barry left the stage challenging delegates to

"imagine what is possible if you have the right team focussed on the right outcomes."



Becoming a Recognised Leader in Responsible Business

Head of Corporate Affairs Paul Cowley outlined his aims to achieve external recognition for the company as a leader in responsible business.

Over the next five years the business will be working towards attaining the Gold standard in Business in the Community's Corporate Responsibility Index.

This five-year vision includes plans to create an internationally recognised community engagement programme with 50% employee participation levels and further develop a strong and consistent company brand in line with the Blakemore Way.

Paul also pointed to the Blakemore Foundation, which

has recently witnessed record levels of community and employee engagement. The number of donations has increased by more than 484% in five years, from 228 in 2006/7 to 1,333 in 2011/12.

Paul highlighted the ongoing role of corporate responsibility in engaging employees and local communities as well as promoting the Blakemore Way, and emphasised that the company is already well on track to achieving its goal of becoming a "nationally recognised leader in responsible business".



Caoire Heralds New Era for Local Products

Heart Distribution Commercial Manager Caoire Blakemore provided delegates with an update on the growth of the local food and drink marketplace.

The past year has seen a shift in consumer attitudes to locally produced food. Encouraged by the media, people have reconnected with food and cooking and are keen to support their local economies in the recession. As a result the local food and drink sector is expected to grow by a further 36% in the next 12 months.

The local scene has also undergone significant investment over the last five to 10 years, and retail outlets for local produce are more formal and developed than ever before.

Caoire stated that Heart had made significant progress over the course of the last year, with key achievements including improved targeted marketing and the launch of the company's own brochure and Twitter account.

Heart has also witnessed a momentous increase in the number of producers approaching the company to the extent that there is now a waiting list.

Turning to future opportunities, Caoire pointed to the huge potential growth that could arise from working with multiples and emerging niche markets. Heart will continue to expand its product range, drive sales and further cement its relationships with both customers and producers.

Caoire stressed the importance of the Heart operation to the A.F. Blakemore group in terms of demonstrating the Blakemore Way in action and giving the company a competitive edge in the wider marketplace. She concluded:

"Achieving sustainable growth together is what the Blakemore Way is all about. Heart is a real living example of this in action that we should all be really proud of."





Kerry Outlines New Vision for Retail Training

The whole of A.F. Blakemore's retail training function was subject to a review in late 2012 with the aim of developing an efficient, cost effective and sustainable training offer across the Meridian & Welsh Guild.

The way we maximise staff potential.

The way we add value to our trade partners.

The review led to the merger of the Blakemore Retail and Blakemore Trade Partners training departments, with Training & Development Manager, Kerry Hunt, taking over the combined team.

Kerry said that the new strategy will lead to some fundamental changes to the way that training is offered over both the short and medium term.

An annual schedule of key courses is to be developed, with the majority of these open to Blakemore Retail staff and those from the independent estate, to provide a more cost effective way of providing training across the Guild.

Another new initiative that will be developed further by the new team is an e-learning training programme.

Kerry said: "One of the biggest challenges faced by our independent retailers relates to releasing staff for training, while the paper based period training programme provided to Blakemore Retail staff is a little cumbersome.

"Therefore in response to these issues we are looking to develop an e-learning solution that will meet our basic training needs, while at the same time offer a practical solution that will be live, relevant and available 24/7."

Development opportunities for store managers and store owners have also been reviewed, and as a result there are two similar programmes currently under development.

The first will support new retailers during their first few months. This will be delivered in-store (approximately eight days over six months) and is designed to complement the existing retailer induction and account manager support. The second programme is a variation of the first but is focussed on helping existing retailers to begin developing a manager for the future.

Kerry added: "I believe that this package of measures will help deliver a much more strategic, cost-effective and customer focussed training programme that will help develop our retail staff and the retail businesses they support in the months and years ahead."

SPAR Store at Centre of New £2 Million Development

A new-look SPAR store has become the first phase of a brand new £2 million shopping complex to open.

SPAR Gainsborough, situated in Lincolnshire, was opened in November after an investment of more than £300,000.

The 2,600 sq ft store, owned and operated by Blakemore Retail, has already made itself a central part of its community by inviting children from local primary school White's Wood Lane Community Junior School to take part in a food

poster competition to promote its launch.

Chosen from more than 300 applicants, the store's 18 local staff are very enthusiastic. Store Manager Julie Sharpe, who has 23 years' retail experience with A.F. Blakemore, says everyone is "raring to go".

Store Area Manager Mark Paddison said: "We have had

absolutely fantastic feedback from customers. The store is a brand new build in an area that didn't previously have a shop and we are really hoping it is going to do well.

"We've started on the right foot by getting local children involved with the launch and have plans for a major local community project within the next six months."

The way we attain excellence in everything we do.

Beep Beep Road Safety Week

For the fourth year running colleagues from across Logistics, Trade Partners and the central function volunteered their time to educate schoolchildren on the rules of the road.

During National Road Safety Week in November employee volunteers and the Fire Service braved the rainy British weather to educate more than 500 pupils across the West Midlands on road safety.

The pupils were all given a safety tour of an A.F. Blakemore lorry and shown the dangers associated with playing around HGV vehicles.

The Fire Service completed a road traffic accident demonstration outside and gave the children the opportunity to ride in the driver seat of a fire engine.

Inside the classroom volunteers assisted the children with designing road safety awareness posters while the Fire Service educated the children on basic CPR.

At the end of the session the children were given goodie

bags containing healthy treats and reflective safety items kindly donated by Energiser.

Fibbersley Primary School teacher Beverly James said:

"The visit from the Blakemore staff was very useful to help support work being done in school during Road Safety Week. The children loved learning about the lorry and climbing into the driver's seat. They loved the goodie bags too."

Chilled Warehouse Operator Chris Yates commented:

"The whole event was a success and great fun for all concerned. Hopefully the children have learnt how to be safe and will use what they have acquired today in the future."



The way we make a positive contribution to the community.

Blakemore Foodservice Catering Awards

The way we give great service to all our customers.
the blakemore way

Blakemore Foodservice celebrated the best in the catering sector at their ninth Catering Awards.

More than 250 customers, suppliers and staff attended the awards evening at the Hilton Hotel in Coventry, which was opened by magician Pete Firman.

The 2012 Catering Awards saw an unprecedented amount of entries, totalling in excess of 300. Thirty finalists were invited to attend the awards evening, ranging from directors to pub managers, kitchen staff, restaurant chains and local authorities.

The awards were split into public and private sector categories, with five titles available in each: Best Menu, Community Interaction, Customer Service, Your Catering Team and the Peter Blakemore Award.

In all there were 10 winners, who each received £100. A further £1,000 was presented to the overall public sector winner, Wrexham County Borough Council, and the overall private sector winner, Moto Motorway Services, Woolley Edge.

A charity cheque for £500 was also handed over to the Chase Inn at Rugeley to pass on to Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The event was much enjoyed by all who attended and received plenty of positive feedback.

Catering Manager Lynda Wright from award-winning Wrexham County Borough Council commented:

"Thank you ever so much for allowing us the opportunity to join you all at the awards evening. It really was a fantastic evening and a real bonus winning two awards."

"I have never seen the girls looking so pleased, and the feeling of euphoria has not left us yet. Thank you again for your support and encouragement throughout the year."

Judging for Blakemore Foodservice's tenth event will begin in June.



Overall public sector winners – Wrexham County Borough Council



Overall private sector winners – Moto Motorway Services, Woolley Edge

SPAR Retailer Conrad Davies Crowned BBC Best Local Food Retailer

An entrepreneurial SPAR independent retailer and local food advocate has won a 2012 BBC Food and Farming award.

Conrad Davies, owner of three SPAR stores in north Wales, took the title of Best Local Food Retailer during the BBC Good Food Show on November 28th for his Dolgellau EUROSPAR.

Beating competition from other independent retailers in County Durham and Exeter, Conrad was victorious due to the extensive range of local products he offers in his stores.

Housing products from more than 70 different suppliers covering categories such as bread, meat, vegetables and dairy, EUROSPAR Dolgellau prides itself on being somewhere customers can go to do their weekly shop as well as to pick up special treats.

The store, which also houses its own in-store bakery and fresh fish counter, was described by the judges as the kind of store you can shop in no matter what background you are from.

Conrad said: "It is lovely to win such a brilliant award for doing something that I love."

"We won this award in 2008 for the Pwllheli store and that really boosted our confidence in what we do. It inspired us to carry on in the other two stores. We're playing a huge part in pushing local suppliers into a bigger supplier network and I think this is really important. People are really starting to care how many food miles a product has done and we create POS to highlight this clearly in-store."

"It's great that we are given a lot of freedom when working in partnership with SPAR and A.F. Blakemore. We can make our own choices and that allows me the freedom to

concentrate on my passion – sourcing and selling local products. And the more things we're allowed to try and do well at, the more they benefit too."



Chilled Allstars Make It Four On The Bounce

Chilled Foods' monopoly of the A.F. Blakemore five-a-side football competition continued with a fourth successive tournament victory last October.

The Chilled Allstars team secured the trophy following a closely fought 1-0 win against a spirited Birmingham Cash & Carry side, known as "Pick N Mix".

Eight teams from across the A.F. Blakemore estate participated in the event, with the Talbot Green depot providing two teams, the Welsh Dragons and Celtic Warriors, and a further team travelling from Hastings, the South East Dynamos.

Organiser Rob Clement, who also put in a sterling display in the Chilled Allstars goal, said:

"This was another action-packed five-a-side football competition with a number of close matches and spectacular goals."

"Thanks to everyone who came to play or watch and help raise £320 for charity in the process."

Here's how the competition was played out:

Teams	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Chilled Allstars	6	1	0	19	19
Apex Allstars	5	2	0	6	17
Pick N Mix	4	1	2	15	13
Access 10	3	1	3	-2	10
Rio Zaragocery	2	2	3	1	8
South East Dynamos	2	1	4	0	7
Celtic Warriors	2	0	5	-9	6
Welsh Dragons	0	0	7	-30	0

Semi-Finals:

- Chilled Allstars 2 V 1 Access 10
- Apex 2 Allstars 1 V 3 Pick N Mix

Final:

- Chilled Allstars 1 V 0 Pick N Mix



Action from the final



South East Dynamos, who travelled up from Hastings for the competition



The victorious Chilled Allstars team

Santa Stops at Blakemore's

More than 200 children from across the West Midlands and South Wales celebrated Christmas in style at A.F. Blakemore's annual Kids Christmas Party.

This Christmas witnessed the event expand outside the West Midlands, with simultaneous parties taking place at the Banks's Stadium in Walsall and the Pontyclun Athletics Stadium in South Wales.

The party included a disco, SPAR Idol competition, fancy dress, buffet and a visit from Santa Claus himself. Children of colleagues in South Wales had the additional treat of magical tricks and balloon modelling courtesy of Simon Sparkles.

Each child had the opportunity to have their photo taken with Santa and received a present.

System Support Technician Richard Holmes from Talbot Green's IT department commented:

"The Christmas do was absolutely brilliant and the kids thoroughly enjoyed it.

Thanks to everyone involved for making it a great day."

Fleet Admin Manager Judith Penko, who co-ordinated the event added:

"The party makes everyone feel good, seeing the little ones so in awe of that special man and enjoying themselves. It gets everyone in the Christmas feel good mood and is a lovely day."

A big thank you goes to Helen Macdonald, Tiffany Grant and Debbie Morris who helped organise the West Midlands event and Emma Berni, Rosemary Eggington, Mandy Taylor and Lisa Parry for arranging the event in South Wales.

And that's not forgetting Andy Hargreaves and Mike Harris for the special role that they played on the day.



It's Christmas party time in Walsall



Santa Claus comes to town

Seasonal fun in South Wales



Car Wash Raises £892 for Children in Need

Volunteers from Blakemore Logistics raised £892 by carrying out a charity car wash and winter check in aid of Children in Need.

In November Kev Bagnall, Warren Bird, Bob Clinton, Russell Jackson, Ian Nicholls, Mark Russell and Dave Bate all donated their time to washing the cars of A.F. Blakemore employees for charity.

The car wash, which was organised by Distribution General Manager Dave Higgs and Driver Trainer Pete James, took place over two days and was well supported by all departments and the directors.

The event raised £592 and was match funded with £300 from the Blakemore Foundation, bringing the grand charity total to £892.



Blakemore Logistics volunteers get to work cleaning cars, checking tyres and topping up screen wash



The way we make a positive contribution to the community.

Feedback

The Blakemore Way Newspaper and its sister publication It's Your News! rely upon your feedback and input for stories.

If you have any comments or story suggestions please contact:
Paul Cowley
(Corporate Affairs Manager)
pcowley@afblakemore.com

0121 568 2908
or
Rachel Adams
(Communications Officer)
radams@afblakemore.com
0121 568 2908

Also remember to check out the A.F. Blakemore website
www.afblakemore.com for all the latest news as it happens!

SPOT The Difference

Congratulations to Ann Swallow from the Hastings Wages department, who won the Spot the Difference competition featured in the Autumn 2012 edition of the A.F. Blakemore magazine.

Ann successfully spotted the five changes made to the photo taken of the SPAR Retail Conference and won £20 worth of M&S vouchers.



This time around we're asking you to spot five differences between the two photos below of Gateshead Cash & Carry's NSPCC Christmas toy donation. All correct entries will be entered into a draw, and the winner will receive £20 worth of gift vouchers for a store of their choice.



Photo One



Photo Two

Please circle the changes and return them along with your name and contact details to:

Rachel Adams
Unit 401, Access 10, Bentley Road South, Darlaston, WS10 8LQ

Name: Division:
Depot/Store/Office: Contact No.:

