

57. WEST LONDON INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS

A unique and comparatively modest project which, over 5 years, will attempt an innovative approach to raising the competitiveness of SMEs through the application of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in an area which is at the heart of the industry. A Centre of Excellence will be housed in West London TEC and has the full support of the private sector. The scheme will fill a gap in the facilities available to SMEs.

Key outputs: 3,600 Jobs preserved/created, 45 Jobs obtained by people from disadvantaged groups, 250 New business start ups, 2,200 Businesses advised

Costs: CF Y1: £372k CF Total: £1.8m Scheme Total: £7.9m

Bid No.: 96/139/WLTEC
Bidder: West London TEC
Title: West London Information & Communications

No consultation

Purpose of Bid:

To promote Information and Communications Technology as a way of increasing the competitiveness of firms and thus enhancing firms' growth, job retention and job creation potential.

To establish a state-of-the-art ICT facility in which firms can explore the potential ICT offers their business; plan and evaluate appropriate ICT strategies, hardware and software; engage in ICT based commerce; acquire the relevant management skills for effective implementation and utilisation of ICT investment; and gain access to complementary support services to assist in bringing together business competitiveness requirements, technological competence and organisational competence.

SRB Funding Sought:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
372,000	337,000	365,000	0
Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
0	0	0	1,762,000

SRB Contact: Phil Blackburn
Sovereign Court
15-21 Station Road
Hounslow, Middx

Lloyd Sewell
BL Sewell and Associates
80 Lynhurst Road
Hillingdon
Middlesex
UB10 9EE

06 March 1996

Dear Lloyd

Re: Financial Assistance with Training and Development Costs

John Murray has passed over your invoices to me and asked whether 'Enterprise Link', West London TECs New Business Support scheme, can assist with your personal development costs. As I am sure you are aware we are always interested in supporting businesses with growth potential, and new business owners who can see the business benefits of investing in their own training and development needs.

Releasing your businesses potential has many outlets, and 'Enterprise Link' reflects this by encouraging training and using the many experienced and independent sources of advice available, as well as providing direct funding. In fact these elements are inevitably linked. In other words, Lloyd, I am happy to contribute £1000 towards your training costs, but to release this funding I would like you to join 'Enterprise Link'. By doing so you will also be assigned your own Business Mentor. This could be Gareth, who you will already know from the Entrepreneur Development Programme you began with TDA Consultants, or you may prefer to stay with John, who is happy to be your mentor.

If you feel this offer will add value to your business and personal development, please give me a ring and we can arrange for you to complete the necessary paperwork. One note of caution, I can only guarantee the financial offer until the 20 March 1996, the TECs financial year end, so if you wish to become an 'Enterprise Link' member please contact me before this date.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With regards



Jeff Taylor
Enterprise Link Manager

Direct Telephone Line: 0181 814 3241

Mr B.L Sewell
80, Lyndhurst Road
Hillingdon
Middlesex
UB10 9EE

September 10th 1996

Dear Mr Sewell,

Further to your letter raising concerns about the standards of service you have received from West London TEC, I am writing to confirm the outcome of my enquiries.

Firstly, I would like to apologise for our inability to supply you with copies of the paperwork that you request. I understand that the forms were sent to you some time ago, and unfortunately you did not receive them. An administrative error here resulted in no copy being taken for our records. Jeff has advised you of this, and I'm afraid that there is nothing we can do to secure the originals for you.

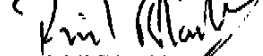
Apart from this, however, I can find no evidence that would suggest you received anything but the highest level of customer service from Jeff Taylor and John Murray.

I am concerned that you twice make references to sums of money you claim you were promised over and above the £1500 standard start-up grant that was offered to you to use as felt most useful and appropriate. I would point out that the application form you completed for this funding has the maximum amount of £1500 clearly stated on it, and not an increased amount as you claimed to have seen. With reference to the money you say you were promised for the NVQ level 4, the ISO 9000 training, the D32/33, we have no records of this. In order to proceed any further with this allegation, I need written evidence from you that can confirm your claim.

The claims you make of John Murray "feathering his nest" at TDA are highly dangerous, particularly as TDA or John Murray has neither received nor sought fees for the mentoring role that John offered to you on leaving the TEC. This offer in itself I consider to be extremely generous.

It is unfortunate that this situation has arisen, and I am happy to continue to look into this matter, only if you can provide me with evidence that indicates that my staff have made offers of money to you that they have then deliberately failed to deliver.

Yours sincerely,


Dr Phil Blackburn
Chief Executive

Mr Lloyd Sewell
B L Sewell & Associates
80 Lynhurst Road
Hillingdon
Middlesex
UB10 9EE

5 June 1996

Dear Lloyd

Thank you for your telephone call on 4th June. This is just to confirm that West London Enterprise Link will contribute £125 or 50% of the total cost (which ever is the lower) towards your professional fees.

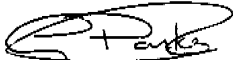
This will be released when we have received a satisfactorily completed Business Plan with an accompanying receipt for the cost of the work undertaken.

On a separate note, I would be interested to here more about the computer hardware/software company you met with today.

If you could give them my number and get them to give me a call, I would appreciate it.

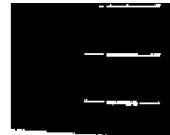
Kind regards.

Yours sincerely



PP
Jeff Taylor
EnterPrise Link Manager

My accountancy bill is £450,
I have written to Jeff Taylor, I
have not had a reply.
B.L. Sewell



IT SKILLS FORUM

4 Bulvinos House
171-175 Uxbridge Road
London
W13 9AA
Tel: 0181-840 5285
Fax: 0181-840 1591

Dr Phil Blackburn
Chief Executive
West London Training and Enterprise Council
15-21 Staines Road
Hounslow
Middlesex TW3 JHA

20th September 1996

Dear *PLJ*

Re: Confirmation of Support for Executive Skills Studio/ICT Centre

I am writing to confirm our support for the above initiative. Our support is equivalent to £1.675M during the first five years of the project. This is made up of staff time in development, pilots, QA, R&D, and use of proprietary material which we would be delighted to share with the participants in the Skills studio.

As a national action body, whose aim is to develop practical tools to enhance performance by capitalising on information, people and technology assets, we believe the development of the above initiative is particularly relevant in helping us achieve this goal.

Research carried out by the IT Skills Forum has shown that those organisations who are exploiting the full potential of information and communications technologies have derived significant business benefits through improved use of ICT, for example one organisation reduced customer response time from two weeks to five minutes, and another increased its competitiveness by 30% and rose to number one in its industry.

We believe the Executive Skills Studio gives us the opportunity to cascade this message and lessons from best practice to raise competitiveness for many more organisations.

In addition I am pleased to confirm that further support equivalent to £1.482M over the first five years has been offered by our members including Barclays Bank, City University Business School, Dell Computer Corporation, Grand Metropolitan, IBM, ICI, Post Office, Thames Valley University and some of our SME clients. Letters of support and fax back forms from these members are attached. Please note that there are a number of other organisations who are currently seeking internal authorisation to join us as partners during the life cycle of this project.

Please feel free to call me direct should you require any further information. In the meantime I look forward to hearing the outcome of the bid.

Yours sincerely

Meenu Vora
Managing Director



Our ref.: 96090004/JAK/sjl
2nd September 1996

Mr. Shan Shanthakumar,
Director Information Systems,
West London TEC,
Sovereign Court,
15-21 Staines Road,
Hounslow,
TW3 3HA

Dear Shan,

Both Mike and I very much enjoyed meeting with you last Friday - the more we discuss the project the more exciting it becomes!

As promised we are writing to outline some initial thoughts on the best way to proceed.

1) **Market Conditions**

There are a number of factors which make the creation of an open learning centre within West London TEC potentially a very successful project:-

- a) Technology is moving very rapidly and there is an increasing skills gap particularly within SME's.
- b) Typically SME's neither have the time or resource to establish their own such centres and become excessively reliant upon at best extensive instructor led training and at worst learning on the job.
- c) SME's can ill afford to release critical staff to attend long external training courses. In the ideal environment they would like to release them for 2-3 hour time slots for them to acquire specific skills on a just-in-time, as needed basis.
- d) The same argument can equally be applied to soft skills such as Time Management, Customer Care, Telephone Techniques, Quality, Finance for Non Financial Managers. The reality is the SME's have precisely the same

Thames Link House, 1 Church Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2QR
Tel: 0181 332 0700 Fax: 0181 332 0275

Reg Office 78 Hatton Garden, London EC1N 8JA, England
Vat Reg No 629 6868 79 Company Reg No 2874301

skills development needs as the large corporations but are typically lacking resources and/or knowledge of products that are necessary to satisfy these requirements.

2) **WLTC Objective**

To create an open learning resource centre with a portfolio of training products that it is capable of meeting a high proportion of the needs of the 8,000+ SME's in West London.

3) **Proposed Solution**

a) **Product Portfolio**

There are a number of critical product areas which need to be provided within the centre to support the SME's. They fall essentially into 2 categories:

- **Information Technology - Professional and End User**

- Keyboard/Data entry proficiency
- PC Literacy
- MS Office/Lotus SmartSuite
- PC Service and Support
- Networking and Communications
- Certification programmes (CNE/MCSE/MCSD)
- Lotus Notes
- Internet Literacy

- **Personal Development/Soft skills**

- Time Management
- Communication Skills
- Management and Leadership
- Finance for Non Financial Managers
- Customer Care
- Business Skills
- Quality/ISO 9000
- Language training - (French and German)

The objective will be to acquire the "best of the best" multi media based products to support these areas. Wave itself is prepared to donate £20,000+ of products within the IT Professional and End User areas.

3) **Learning Centre Support Infrastructure**

- a) A critical element within the Learning Centre is the provision of course facilitators that have subject matter expertise and are accessible to the students as and when required. This service could be provided by WLTC IT staff and through Distance Learning Centre support on the Internet. Wave, for example, has this capability and could make it available to all certification candidates.
- b) In specific areas it may be appropriate to produce an assessment service where SME's could send employees for assessments before determining their precise training needs. This could be particularly relevant to MS Office and certification training.
- c) Experience shows that critical to the success of any learning centre is a strong marketing capability. The centre must be supported by aggressive mailings to SME's announcing new courses, success stories and special promotions.
- d) The centre needs to become quickly integrated into the business community and to this end regular seminars addressing key business issues need to be offered and actively promoted.
- e) An approach that has had a high degree of commercial acceptance is offering SME's annual training subscriptions at discounted rates. These can be promoted through open days.

4) **Learning Centre Sponsors**

- a) Initially 13+ multi media work stations will be required (WLTC to explore relationship with Dell).
- b) Product sponsors will be approached with a view to them providing courseware at no charge other than royalties from the revenues generated by their products.
- c) The centre will also require a PC based booking and administrative system. This will be a fundamental tool for the administrator who will be required to support the centre.
- d) Microsoft could become a major supporter of the centre provided a commitment is made to promote their Microsoft On-line Institute (MOLI). With this commitment it is very likely they would supply a significant amount of software.

5) **On-going Funding**

The centre needs to be run as a commercial revenue generating concern. SME's would be able to book time slots on workstations. Rates will vary depending upon courses being offered but will be in the range of £20-50 per half day. Preferential terms would be provided to organisation with subscriptions.

6) **Staffing Requirements**

In addition to the Courseware Facilitators and the Learning Centre Administrator a Business Manager needs to be appointed for the centre.

7) **Project Management**

Wave Technologies will be very interested in working directly with the WLTC acting as project manager for establishing and running the centre. This would involve responsibilities such as courseware selection/vendor negotiation, provision of key staff i.e. Learning Centre Administrator and Business Manager, creation of distance learning centre/Internet support, marketing and promotion, Learning Centre management software, provision of live training to complement self study, defining seminar topics/resourcing speakers.

Shan, in conclusion whilst the opportunity is very exciting, the implementation should not be underestimated. There are too many examples of corporate learning centres that have failed through flawed implementation. We would very much like to work closely with you in ensuring your success.

Yours sincerely,



JOHN KIRKHAM
Managing Director