

# Out of the blue



Blue Apple caters for a royal visit by HRH Prince Andrew. Find out where and why inside this edition of *Out of the Blue*

## Making the recession work for you

Times are tough for many companies at the moment but Blue Apple has been working hard with its clients to come up with ways to reduce budgets while

minimising the impact on the quality and standards they have come to expect.

For food service companies the effect of the economic downturn has been a double edged knife with food price inflation on the one side and the requirement for clients to make budget savings on

the other. "Blue Apple has been able to absorb rising food costs to a certain extent by some keen negotiating with suppliers," explained Ruston Toms, Director. "This has meant we have protected our clients from the full impact of the rises."

A positive recessionary effect has been the increased footfall in staff restaurant facilities. "Whereas people might have eaten in the restaurant once or twice a week we

*Continued on page 2...*

(issue 6) (summer 2009)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## Contents



### Blue Apple brand evolution

The Blue Apple brand gets an exciting, fresh new look



### Blue Apple opens its first Centre of Excellence

The Fujitsu outlet leads the way in innovation and service



### Team celebrates Big Apple Award at Suppliers' Fair

Ida Jeng wins the Big Apple Award



nies have also experienced food price inflation of about 14.5 per cent over the last 18 months. However, careful purchasing on our part has enabled us to mitigate the effects of these

## Editor's bite

There is no doubt that the current recession is having an effect on our clients with redundancies, pay freezes and cost cutting becoming the norm. The result has been that we have lost a couple of clients who have decided that they can no longer justify the cost of operating a staff restaurant. The double whammy is that food service compa-

increases to our clients and we have been working extremely hard with them to reduce costs. However by no means is it all doom and gloom; the recession has provided opportunities as well as threats and this has resulted in three new contract gains – Raymarine's fantastic new landmark building in Portsmouth, Anite in Fleet

*Continued on page 2...*

...continued from page 1

have seen a change in eating patterns and an increase in the visits to our Restaurants. Being subsidised our facilities are seen as the best value choice at lunchtime when compared to the high street," said Ruston.

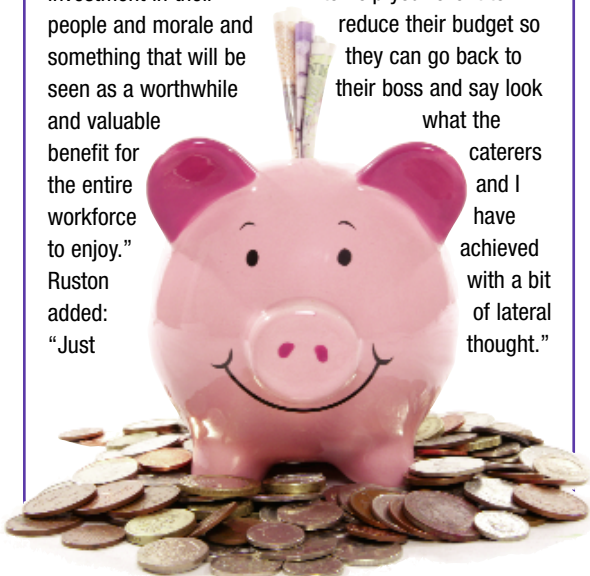
The level of subsidy has always been a sticking point with clients and is now more than ever with the pressure to reduce overheads. Ruston went on to explain: "Our clients with overseas head offices tend to be the ones who find they have to justify the costs associated with staff dining more than any. There is a culture gap between countries; with the UK worker probably the most sensitive to pricing and company benefits which some corporate HQ's don't fully recognise. In a climate where our clients are being forced to introduce pay freezes, pay cuts (in some cases) and redundancies, there is a lot of doom and gloom amongst the workforce. Our strategy has been to encourage our clients to see the staff catering as an investment in their people and morale and something that will be seen as a worthwhile and valuable benefit for the entire workforce to enjoy." Ruston added: "Just

increasing the tariff isn't the answer as the staff will then vote with their feet."

The team at Blue Apple has been coming up with a number of solutions to reduce client budgets. Sometimes fairly minor changes can have huge financial benefits. For example companies that provide free vended tea and coffee can start to charge 10p per cup, or even just changing the type of vending machine can reduce ingredient costs by half.

"In an average sized office a small charge per cup can save anywhere between £20,000 and £40,000 per annum," said Ruston. And where this has been introduced we've noticed a reduction in consumption because people aren't just taking drinks and then letting them go cold on their desks."

Other cost cutting initiatives include a reduction in menu choice, shorter opening times and tighter control over hospitality buffets. "It's all about getting a balance; you don't want to make the changes so draconian that you lose lunchtime custom but you also need to help your client to reduce their budget so they can go back to their boss and say look what the caterers and I have achieved with a bit of lateral thought."



# Blue Apple brand evolution

The Blue Apple brand is well established and its current look and feel have been in existence for several years. Brian Allanson and Ruston Toms, Directors of Blue Apple, were aware that the logo, signage, menus and stationery were in need of a revamp, so they asked Blue Apple's Marketing Manager, Liz Balmford to explore the options.

healthy-looking food photography, emotive adjectives and lots of white space, the new design brings the Blue Apple brand bang up to date. "We've installed the new look signage at our 'Centre of Excellence' at Fujitsu and we're delighted with how it looks," said Brian. "The rebranding will be used in all new facilities and we'll revamp existing restaurants



"We wanted the logo to look new and fresh, but not be so different from the existing design that it would be unrecognisable – we were looking for evolution, not revolution," explained Liz.

And here is the final choice. Coupled with fresh,

as and when appropriate."

Ruston added: "We believe our fresh, new look brings the ambience of our restaurants even more into line with modern eateries. This is just another example of our commitment to bringing 'high-street café culture' to the workplace."



## Editor's bite

...continued from page 1

and Acision in Theale. So it really is a double edged sword at the moment and we need to make sure we stay close to our clients and understand the commercial pressures

they are facing to ensure we react in a positive manner. One of the other ways we can help our clients is to create better value by increasing our marketing and promotions. This we have achieved with monthly activity at all our locations. The creation

## Team Royal

When the Blue Apple team at Stiefel Laboratories was given only a week to prepare for a Royal visit to open the company's new headquarters building in Maidenhead, it was business as usual for the manager and his staff. Glen Coldwell, Chef Manager, said: "Prince Andrew officially opened the building on 12 June.

With freshness always at the forefront of its operations, Blue Apple has revamped its website.

"We are a fresh, innovative food company and we wanted that to be reflected in our corporate identity and also keep up with the latest technology with our new website and interactive control systems," said Brian Allanson, Director. "Our website is designed to give the customer a glimpse of what we do in order to

of a centre of excellence at Fujitsu Computers has included a complete marketing makeover with some stylish new signage. We are also about to re-launch a new look web site complete with a short video clip. We are focusing on developmental staff training. Some of you will have experienced this recently with the very

# caters for al opening

The tight security surrounding the Royal engagement meant that we only had a week to plan and prepare for the catering following the ceremony, while maintaining our normal service."

Once Prince Andrew had toured the building, the company's 170 staff gathered to celebrate the occasion with a cold buffet and cake plus a glass or two of bubbly.

"The party took place on the second floor and not in the restaurant, which we closed for the day," explained Glen. "This meant that everything we had cooked and prepared on site had to be transported upstairs in lifts. It was well worth the effort in the end as everyone had a great time and we received lots of lovely compliments for the buffet we laid on."

Fujitsu's office in Bracknell has been chosen by Blue Apple as its first Centre of Excellence – a shining example of innovation and service for both staff and customers alike.

Brian Allanson, Director of Blue Apple, explained: "As a company we pride ourselves on always

# Centre of Excellence leads the way

searching to move forward in everything we do. Training is hugely important to us as a service business and by putting the spotlight on our operation at Fujitsu it will serve to inspire and train our staff to the highest standards. It will also provide a practical demonstration of the breadth and professionalism of our business to current and potential customers."

The Bracknell-based outlet has an impressive range to its operation including a bespoke Starbucks offer and full cashless system that provides welcomed salary sacrifice benefits to Fujitsu staff. Its Centre of Excellence status means

that it will be used as a test site for new food concepts such as the recent Make & Shake salad bowl and Noodle Bar, both offering a fresh twist on delivery by putting the theatre back into service.

And, the on-site training facilities mean that Blue Apple staff can learn both the theory and practical lessons all under one roof. New managers to the company will spend part of their induction week on-site at Fujitsu, working with the highly trained catering team, led by Mark Callaghan, to ensure they receive best practice skills and understand the importance of delivering service the 'Blue Apple way'.

# Keeping IT Fresh

whet their appetite enough to want to find out more about us. A new feature is inclusion of video footage of our contracts in action so customers can see for themselves what a Blue Apple facility is all about."

Connected to both the website and Blue Apple's innovative on line control system, Core Business, is a brand new hospitality order

service for clients. The order system is much like a web shopping page, accessed by a user name and password. Once the menu has been chosen and ordered, the information is sent to the manager on site and pops up in the extranet window.

The latest upgrade to Core Business offers staff some exciting new features. As well as a comprehensive accounting package that communicates directly with Head Office, a weekly GP% calculator now enables each manager to control their finances in real time. The new notice board feature ensures a constant flow of communication by delivering important information directly to the desktop and staying there until it has been read. Clients can also



monitor the performance of the contract with their own login and password facility.

Brian said: "Visually the new website is very clean with lots of changing images so it looks fresh every time you log on. What remains the same, however, is the message that Blue Apple takes care of its people, clients and budget and guarantees to deliver."

[www.blue-apple.co.uk](http://www.blue-apple.co.uk)

# Quick thinking saves building

The quick thinking and fast reactions of Tristan, a chef at Satellite Information Services in London, saved the whole building going up in flames.

The Blue Apple team member was taking a staff break one evening when a general assistant alerted Tristan to a fire that had broken out in the kitchen. Immediately swinging into fire training action, the chef grabbed the fire blanket

and set about dowsing the flames.

Russell Snowdon, Operations Manager, said: "Tristan's prompt action saved the three-storey historical building just off Old Street and protected the safety of over 200 people that were there at the time."

The cause of the fire was pinpointed to a faulty element in the deep fat fryer.

# Team celebrates Big Apple Awards at Suppliers' Fair

A 'magic' evening of staff achievement and entertainment heralded the Blue Apple event of the year – the annual Suppliers' Fair and Big Apple Awards.

Held once again at Shendish Manor in Hertfordshire, the 2008 event proved bigger and better than ever before. Kicking off first with the Suppliers' Fair, staff were able to try out for themselves the latest food products and give valuable feedback to the representatives on supplier service and quality.

Dinner was an



Winner of the Big Apple Award, Ida Jeng, with Blue Apple Directors Ruston Toms (left) and Brian Allanson

entertaining affair with a 'close up' magician performing tricks at the tables while Operations Manager, Russell Snowdon, tempted people onto the dance floor by performing with his band, Repertoire Dogs. Prizes were also up for grabs with a 32" Flat Screen Plasma Television going to Kellie Lea of Ingram Micro Wymbush, the winner of the evening's raffle.

The much-awaited event of the night was, however, the awards



Many prizes were given out to the hard working staff of Blue Apple at the Suppliers' Fair

ceremony held to recognise the many achievements of staff throughout the year.

Commended for their continued and loyal support

## Employees of the Month Awards in 2008

Each Employee of the Month Award winner received a £50 M & S voucher and the chance to be the Big Apple Award Winner.

- January: Rabah Faci – SIS
- February: Agnieska Budzyn – Compuware
- March: Neil Austin – Wates
- April: Clare Farrant – Intervet
- May: Alison McKeown – Head Office
- June: Angela McMahon – Verifone  
John Greenwood – easyJet
- July: Nigel Saponia – Cardiff Pinnacle  
Ida Jeng – VeriFone
- August: Samantha Hurrell – Schering Plough
- September: Janet Rach – easyJet  
Michelle Thomas – Ingram Micro  
Carmen Woodbridge – Ingram Micro
- October: Joanne Birchall – CAE  
Katherine Mitchell – CAE
- November: Ian Woods – Head Office  
Jay Bailey – Torex
- December: Robert Millar – Head Office  
Russell Snowdon – Head Office

to the company, Jane Greenwood and Kellie Wilson, Operational Support Managers each received a bottle of Champagne. Bottles of bubbly were also presented to 14 members of staff who between them clocked up nearly 100 years worth of long service.

The big announcement

of the night was the Big Apple Award Winner – picked from the Employees of the Month from 2008 – which saw Ida Jeng, formerly of VeriFone and now at Aspect Communications, Stockley Park, win the coveted title and a trip to the 'Big Apple', New York.

## ACE Clean Kitchen Award 2008 goes to Blue Apple team



Last summer Blue Apple was the proud winner of the Association of Catering Excellence (ACE) Clean Kitchen Award 2008, presented to the team who ran one of the Motorola restaurants.

Jane Greenwood, Area Support Manager for Blue Apple, was working at the facility at the time covering for maternity leave. She said: "It was a fantastic achievement for the team. It was great for all of us to know that our hard work and due diligence in food hygiene and cleaning had been recognised externally – and

we beat some much larger organisations in winning this award."

Some top flight companies from the City of London entered the annual award and after the Association's initial visit the Blue Apple Team was shortlisted to the final five. The team of 10 was invited to the presentation ceremony on board HMS Belfast in London and was surprised and delighted to be awarded first prize, which included a plaque and £1,500 to be shared between the team members.