

Underpin News

Making Good Communication

Issue 3—Spring 2012

U&M GROUP
EXPERIENCE & EXPERTISE



Welcome

Dear Clients, Customers and Colleagues,

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter which is intended to promote your understanding of what happens within the group. We were flattered by the positive response to previous issues but would still like to encourage any colleague to contribute to future issues with newsworthy or interesting stories (inside or outside of work!) or articles/photographs that you consider others might like to see. Please send your articles to our Head Office.

A Word from the MD

Firstly, my sincere apologies as what was intended to be a regular newsletter has turned into a less than annual affair, although our focus at Head Office has more recently been elsewhere. Let me explain?

Speaking frankly, 2010 was our 'annus horribilus' in that our previously stated plans to grow the business into other sectors backfired, largely due to the ever increasing competition in those selected market places and the decreasing amount of work emanating from the national (nee international) economic downturn. Market forces decreased the supply of work, which increased the demand causing prices to spiral downwards, whilst at the same time suffering increased costs from suppliers (oil, cement, aggregates - in fact most heavyside materials and fuel) with no institution willing to lend or financially support caused us to seriously rethink our goals.

This in turn also allowed us to consider our financial structure as we were heavily geared with a large banking facility, which was expensive to maintain. As all costs in the Group came under scrutiny, it was decided to refocus our activities on the more traditional markets that grew the Company in the first instance, stop trying to compete for general building work with the 'white van man', significantly reduce our overhead costs by reducing unnecessary staff (a natural process) and reduce our borrowing and therefore banking costs.

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Special points of interest:

- Don't forget your PPE!
- Staff Update
- Cycle Scheme
- New Vans!
- H&S—A word or warning!



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A Word From the MD continued....

The plan therefore was to control a contraction within our sales and concentrate our efforts on the insurance funded subsidence works (underpinning, mini piling, structural repairs, Helifix etc) as well as growing our scaffolding business, which meant selling our most significant asset and searching for smaller cheaper premises. This in turn, given the lack of availability of a suitable site, caused us to 'split' the businesses into separate units with a remote yard facility from our new Head Office.

Nothing happens overnight with such a significant structural change, but our plans came to fruition in November 2011 when we sold Millmarsh Lane and moved into our new Head Office premises in Crown Road and took possession of our new yard at South Mimms. Such an upheaval is never without problems, however with the help of all of our very able staff and colleagues, we managed the whole process very efficiently and I would like to thank every one of you for your invaluable assistance and forbearance during this period. There are of course one or two people that went beyond the bounds of their role and worked extra hard to ensure that this relocation went as smoothly as possible, they know who they are, so I won't name names! Similarly, I won't name and shame the statutory authority organisations that work so inefficiently, with one hand seemingly not knowing what the other hand is doing, causing problems and delays with the installation of our phone lines and broadband services!



I have had very good feedback from colleagues about the new office and adjoining warehouse, if you haven't visited, please do so at some point, the kettle is always on!

The long and the short of the relocation is a significant cut in our overhead cost as well as a complete financial restructure, removing the overdraft facility using the proceeds of the sale of the old office which again reduces any banking and financing charges, making us a much leaner organisation. This, as you may appreciate, now aligns our sales with our cost making the business model profitable with the added ability to withstand fluctuations in workloads.

The economy remains in a sorry state, talks of a double dip recession don't help consumer confidence and until lending institutions do their job I don't believe we will see a recovery for a couple of years. In summary, times are still challenging and although our micro economic sector remains relatively busy, the traditional routes of tendering and winning work are changing forcing us to look at all of our markets to accommodate these challenges, although the lower cost base from the aforementioned restructure will greatly assist us through these difficult times.

I sincerely hope that you find the content of our newsletters of some interest and that you might consider getting involved and contributing to future issues. On this note, I would welcome any feedback critical or otherwise and can be contacted at your convenience.

Finally, on a much more personal note, you may be aware that my mother sadly passed away last summer and both I and my family would like to thank you all for the tremendous words of sympathy and support that you gave us during this very difficult time. My mother's last days were spent in the North London Hospice, a specialist cancer unit in Finchley, and I have decided to dust off my pushbike and cycle to Paris in a fundraising event for this hospice. Their dedication, care and support made my Mum's passing as comfortable as possible, for both her and our family and I for one cannot praise and thank their organisation enough. They are largely made of volunteers and are currently trying to raise funds to build a second facility here in Enfield (N21), so if anyone, appreciating that these are very difficult times, fancies sponsoring me, this would be greatly appreciated, knowing that everything raised will go directly to a fabulously worthwhile cause (www.doitforcharity.com/davidgakhar).



David Gakhar



Health & Safety

We are delighted to confirm that we have no accidents since the last newsletter, a statistic we would dearly like to replicate very time we go to print. It is however our intention to provide details of accidents with the sole and very important intention of sharing the circumstances surrounding the causation with a view to proactively encouraging prevention.

Don't forget we are also required to report 'near misses'?

Health and Safety Committee.

We are still looking for volunteers to step up and be involved in this committee to make your working environment a better and safer place. Please contact Sharon Tindale if you are willing to be involved?

A word of warning, your MD was shown slides and photographs of operatives that had been electrocuted and was sickened and astounded to note the level of damage and injury caused. We don't want to provide nor show these photographs, they are simply too horrific, but let this be a salutary word of warning about the importance of checking for services before digging or drilling.



Health and Safety Executive

The HSE are introducing a new campaign called Fee for Intervention (FFI) whereby if they visit your site and discover a 'material breach' (which warrants either a warning letter, a prohibition, enforcement or improvement notice) they will charge those responsible for their time at a very heavy rate. You have been warned.....

Whilst it is vitally important to ensure sites are safe and fully conform to all legislation, the HSE have highlighted 6 areas in a non-exhaustive way which they will consider on each and every site visit.

- Working at height
- Management of Asbestos
- Welfare facilities
- Site tidiness
- Respiratory risk
- Personal Protective Equipment (used in accordance with the relevant method statement and risk assessment)

Moreover, in relation to underpinning, they will be looking for temporary works (earthwork support designed, installed and checked by a competent person) and edge protection to excavations.

We are designing a short presentation/course on this topic that we can run at Head Office - watch this space!



PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

It is pleasing to note that visits to site largely show that we are actively adhering to our zero tolerance policy towards PPE. Please remember that enforcement of this policy is for your own good, we want to make our sites as safe as practically possible, after assessing all risks and the use of PPE is paramount in reducing or eliminating any residual risk to you, your colleagues or any visitors to site. Please also remind any managers who visit site to wear their PPE if they have inadvertently not done so, as well as any visitors?

What do we (now) do?

As we have refocused our activities, we thought it might be beneficial to update this section so that all staff and employees are aware of our target markets!

Underpin and Makegood

www.underpin.com

Underpinning

Mini and restricted access piling

Brickwork repairs (Helefix etc)

Specialist masonry repairs

Structural repairs (Brick stitching, resin bonding, etc)

Small RC works

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Bush Hill Construction

General Contracting on a selective basis

Fire and Flood damage remedial works and restoration

Common part refurbishment

Cyclical Maintenance

M25 Scaffolding Ltd

www.m25scaffolding.com

General Access scaffolding

System scaffolding

Debris netting

Shoring

Temporary Roofs

U & M Basements

Retro fit RC basements

New Build Basements

M25 Contracting Ltd (now a partner company)

www.m25contracting.com

Diamond Drilling

Diamond sawing

Robotic demolition (Brokk)

Concrete Bursting

Wire sawing

Track sawing



The Peter Osgood Statue

Piled foundation system installed by Underpin & Makegood



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Training

It gives us great pleasure to confirm that we now have 11 underpinning foreman who have completed their NVQ level 2 in underpinning operations. They are:

Wesley McManus, Dean Tippett, Erikas Ramanauskas, Walter Harrison, Neil Stripling, Luke Shipwright, Mark McManus, Ossie Osman, Colin Hartigan, Jeff Sizer, and Nick Millings

Jason Dalton and Palvinder Matharu are currently being assessed for their NVQ's (level 2) in superstructure repairs and Paul Shipwright is taking his level 3 NVQ as an underpinning supervisor.

It is extremely pleasing to see the interest in this initiative; the Company actively supports up-skilling and have no doubt that those who have succeeded in attaining a nationally recognised qualification are as proud as punch with their success.

If you feel you have the need for any training or updates, please speak with your line manager.



Vehicles

You may have noticed that we have recently invested in a new fleet of vans, which now makes our fleet less than 3 years old. Our entire fleet are now correctly liveried and we would ask that these vehicles are maintained and kept in good condition and cleaned/checked regularly. Our managers will enforce our vehicle users policy to ensure this occurs.

It is also with some regret that we receive an increasing number of fines from Councils with regards to parking infringements and/or other driving infringements. As you may be aware these increase (more often than not double) if not paid within 14 days, so it has become incumbent on us to pay these immediately to protect the vehicle user from the higher penalty charge notice. Given that there is both a time and actual cost to us for providing this service, we may levy an increase of £10.00 per fine for persistent offenders to cover our costs, although we sincerely hope never having to invoke this.

Please remember that your company vehicle and the way in which it is operated is possibly the best advert for our company!



Staff

You may be aware that Pat Taylor, who headed up our accounts office, retired at the end of last year and naturally we wish her well for the future. Janet Goymer has been appointed into her role, after working for a similar business in the same role. She therefore brings a wealth of experience. Janet's role is part time, she works every morning and full days on Wednesdays and Monday's

In March Morgan Brazier left us to pursue an opportunity in Central London Emmalea has returned to the reception role and we welcome Athena to the team, who will take over from Emmalea in the accounts department.



Athena



Janet



Cycle Scheme

Underpin & Makegood have signed up to Cycle Scheme which is a method of purchasing bicycles through salary sacrifice thereby enabling a significant discount. To qualify for this the bike must be used for commuting purposes. This scheme is open to all employees. If you are interested in this scheme, please contact David or Sharon for more information.

Smoking

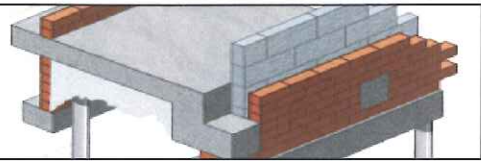
Thank you for all of your efforts in helping us enforce smoking legislation. To reiterate, smoking is prohibited in all buildings, all sites and all vehicles. If you need to smoke, please do so in designated 'public' areas and properly dispose of your spent cigarette butts.

On a brighter and connected note, Graham Scard, our underpinning ops Director who gave up smoking in 2009, has maintained this stance and hasn't been tempted back - fingers crossed that this is permanent. Very well done Graham!



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Our Guarantee

As members of ASUC plus, we offer and include at no cost to the customer a Defects Insurance Guarantee, known under the popular and relevant acronym as DIG! We include hereunder a little of the technical wording associated with this guarantee, just for your information and bedtime reading, but if you would like to know more, please ask?

A DIG guarantee applies to all works undertaken by us and guarantees the works for a period of 12 years. It is written in the form of a latent defects policy and is underwritten by a leading Lloyds Insurance Company. It is an indemnity policy, negating the necessity to prove negligence and covers defects in both workmanship and design. Up to 25% of the contract sum, which is index linked, is insured for consequential losses and this policy is available on both domestic and commercial premises.

It is the market's leading guarantee, many of our clients, including national insurers, Loss Adjusters and Consultants require this guarantee; it is a very effective and valuable document to be provided to the ultimate client.



Olympics / Paralympics

2012 has been on the nations mind for a few years, not least for the fact that London is hosting the Olympics and Paralympic Games. This will really put London 'on the map' as it becomes the focus of the world during the above games. The Olympic park and villages have literally sprung up over the last 12 or so months and have formed a hugely impressive venue, one with which we should all be proud. If you have any Olympic stories or know of participants, please let us know so that we can include them in future issues?

Olympic Key Dates: Olympics: 27 July-12 Aug 2012, Paralympics: 29 Aug-9 Sept 2012



It is going to be an exciting time to be in and around the Capital, let's hope that team GB do their very best so that we can all be proud of our Olympiads?

Email

On the basis that most of us are probably connected or able to receive emails, please could you send an email to info@underpin.com showing your preferred email address and your name so that we can compile a database of all of our staff and colleagues. This will prove very useful in providing future communications.

We are also considering a staff section on our website and giving log in details to all employees which will show notices / updates and even a forum. Any thoughts on this, please let us know?

Charity/Sponsorship/Community



We are delighted to confirm our continuing involvement with Southgate Cricket Club as their main sponsor. We have signboards at the ground, adverts within their directory and of course their first X1 wear 'whites' containing our liveried logos.

You will have noted our Managing Director's proposed cycle ride to Paris later this year, I f you are able to sponsor him for a very worthwhile cause, this would be very much appreciated.

If you are considering undertaking a sponsored event, please do contact us so we may include it in future editions to raise the profile of your event?

A bit of fun

Why? Why? Why? Why/ Why/

Why does a round pizza come in a square box?

Why do you have to put your 2 cents in.....but it's only a penny for your thoughts?

Why do we press harder on the remote control when we know the batteries are going dead?

Why do they use sterlised needles for death by lethal injection?

Why do banks charge a fee on 'insufficient funds' when they know there is not enough money?

Why do toasters always have a setting that burns toast to a horrible crisp, which no decent human being would eat?

Why do people pay to go up tall buildings and then put money in binoculars to look at things on the ground?

And finally a quote from Mahatma Gandhi.....

"A customer is the most important visitor on our premises; he is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work. He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider in our business. He is part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him. He is doing us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so."

The Underpin & Makegood Group

U&M Group
Units 1 & 2 Franklin House
Crown Road
Enfield
EN1 1FE

Phone: 0208 805 4000

Fax: 0208 805 4222

E-mail: info@underpin.com

Web: www.underpin.com

