

A Garden of Delights

The tenants at Skipton have done a beautiful job on the garden, we love the flowers and the decorations! The fence looks wonderful thanks to the efforts of the staff at Skipton as well! It looks perfect for a lazy summer evening spent outdoors!

Phillippa Bevin



Voyaging

As we approach the end of May I'm eagerly awaiting the handover of our new Voyage Care Supported Living Units. We have now had the opportunity to inspect all our new properties and they are, without exception, assets to our Portfolio.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff involved especially the Housing Officers who have been putting in some long hours and longer distances to make sure this transition works smoothly. I would also like to ask for everyone's patience as we work through the takeover, as with projects this large there will be bumps in the road but working together we can make this partnership mutually beneficial and the start of a long and prosperous working relationship. The properties are spread throughout England with the main cluster in the South, this will grow over the coming months including some exciting opportunities in South Wales.

Andrew Bowler

6 months into "Blue Sky: the bigger picture" and we've already answered some big questions and although the research for such a large concept will take time, we already have some really great news and some quick wins!

Our objective is: "To identify opportunities both internal and external which will enhance the 'BeST' service offer to our clients whilst maximising revenue through commercial income streams and reduced costs."

Here are the updates so far:

- Funding has been agreed for the BeST Hub, this could be anywhere between a £3M to £15M. Research is ongoing to see where it will be best placed, how we deliver the service and when. This could include access to leisure and wellbeing initiatives with a view to aid provision of employment, welfare and educational support in the chosen area. We can also support other charitable functions from this Community Hub delivering services to our current and future customers.
- Funding has been agreed for BeST office space, this could be a £1M to £3M, in addition to the Community Hub. This will be an asset of the Charity and will be utilised as our Head office base.
- Meetings have been held in relation to the provision of Disability Aids/Living Facilities have taken place, this is a huge area of need and we have found that although this

The Apprentice,
You're Hired!

Lewis



My name is Lewis Wright and I am an accounts apprentice at BeST. I started here at the end of May 2016 and I have loved every minute since. I have been fortunate enough to learn on the job as well as in the classroom as I go to college half a day every week to study. Doing this is very helpful for myself as my knowledge in the accountancy world is growing every day and I hope it continues in the future.

I do many jobs here including processing invoices from suppliers, allocating Housing Benefits payments, updating the banks as well as many other month end tasks such as Aged Debtors Analysis, Accruals, Pre Payments, Bank Reconciliations as well as helping with other tasks such as Actuals.

I love the people I work with as they are all very kind and helpful so if I ever have a problem or are struggling with something I know that they are there to help me out.

The end goal is to become a Chartered Accountant, which if I keep doing my exams I should get there sooner rather than later thanks to BeST. I would recommend highly doing an apprenticeship as the experience is a huge step on the job ladder and is great step for your own future.

Lewis Wright

Blue Sky Update

need is already being catered for in some local areas, we are targeting and discussing logistics for potential National Provision.

Our research will continue and various meetings have already taken place with key staff members to identify possible solutions and improvements to our operational processes and systems currently utilised to deliver our services.

This project is a huge piece of work and progress will seem to be slow in the early stages as we just simply can't afford to get this wrong. We can all have a vision and believe we know how to have a positive impact on the world but without the evidence to prove the demand is truly there it's a risk too large to take.

I will update you periodically when there is something new to reveal but in the meantime let's carry on doing what do now create awesome places to live for our vulnerable tenant groups.

Have a great summer

Kevin



From the CEO



Halfway through 2017 we are positively progressing on lots of fronts, a bullet point update below;

- The external "Annual Audit" being completed, accounts have been filed and available for all to peruse on our website, we need to congratulate Marlene and our Accountancy Team for their hard work on this and I am sure I can thank all on their behalf for the support from relevant team members who have assisted in this necessary and quite arduous task through to completion.
- NROSH+ statement filed and we await their guidance and decision on the reporting mechanism against numbers owned and numbers managed. Many thanks to all involved for getting over the line.
- Confirmation on some numbers, we are all now part of a circa £32 million asset based charity with a circa £9 million turnover that houses 835 people/vulnerable adults.
- Our business strategy of housing one person a day every day, from plan inception 372 days, 496 people housed, we are more than still on track!
- Obviously I expect us to have welcomed all our new faces to the team being Liam Shotton, Dennis Ryan, Andrew Dean and Loveitia Hamilton.
- We released our exciting plans in relation to the Big Picture re Blue Sky in early Jan and updates to such will be released separately, we have strong initial momentum from all stakeholders to support this initiative.
- I hope all received the annual financial bonus well through pro rata entitlement, if we all do well we all benefit to the same.
- New phone line system in place (not without its headaches I believe!) well done for all involved.
- AGM for June planned and advertised on our website, departmental representation always welcome.
- New schemes planned for 2018 and beyond are still under discussion however meetings with all stakeholders are positive.
- Staff conference day planned for the future

Kevin Appleby

Snippets

Edition 6

Ramp it up!



Nestled away in a small cul-de-sac you'll find our quaint little property on Lincroft Drive. A property that when mentioned in the office, always brings a smile to anyone who has been fortunate to visit and meet our wonderful tenants there.

Lincroft is home to three tenants with varied complex and individual needs. Since its inception in December 2013 both BeST and Eden Futures have worked hard to make this property a massive success for the three tenants who reside there by giving them the bespoke home they want and need.

Recently we have been able to celebrate another positive change to this lovely property that will give all our tenants living there more freedom and independence. Due to our tenants' needs we identified some time ago that access to the back garden had become very difficult, but due to the landscape of the garden we struggled to identify an affordable cost to resolve the issue.

However, after lots of work from Eden and BeST we were able to put in place a solution which allowed our tenants to finally access their garden again. Thanks to the efforts of Thomas Murray in our compliance team who managed to organise all of the work and have it completed in record time, a new bespoke ramp was built from the decking in the garden across over to the lawn, which was previously inaccessible for some of the tenants.

Now our three tenants are able to sit in their garden enjoying the delights of some rare British sunshine and enjoy a picnic or two in the comfort of their own home. Another fantastic and bespoke success story!

Matthew Fay and Tim Bray



Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Process for Bestha

At SJR Web Designs, we are working on Search Engine Optimisation Visibility for Bestha. Before beginning a search engine optimization (SEO) project, it is important to understand the process involved in an effective SEO campaign. We have broken down the process into steps shown below and describe the activities involved in each of these steps. SEO does not start and finish with these steps and the initial work that we do. In order to have ongoing success, it is important to monitor results and build meaningful content on a continual basis. The following is the process of what we are doing.

1. Research
2. Reporting & Goal Setting
3. Content Building
4. Page Optimization
5. Link Building
6. Follow Up Reporting & Analysis



Research

Keyword Research – Keyword phrase research involves identifying a group of keyword phrases that has been used in optimization. This step is critical and requires a considerable amount of time to find a good set of phrases that offer a balanced combination of two important factors: high usage by searchers and relatively low competition within the search engines. Online tools has allowed us to enter particular keywords which will return all the ways in which that word(s) is used by searchers in the last month and in what volume. A more effective approach has been to use phrases that are heavily used by searchers but somewhat less competitive in terms of the total number of search results.

Competitive Research – Once we had these keyword phrases, we did a thorough competitive analysis of the subject site against its 7 – 10 biggest competitors (using both offline and online competitors). We use a series of SEO metrics, including indexed content, Alexa rating, inbound links & domain age following among others. Through this process, we have been able to gauge the client site's starting position against its competition and identify areas requiring priority in the subsequent work.

Reporting & Goal Setting – After establishing the targeted keyword phrases and starting position relative to the site's competitive set, it was important to understand what the subject site's starting position is within the search engines. Doing so ensures that we knew the specific areas that needed work and provided a baseline against which to gauge the campaign's success. Access to site traffic information is very important. These statistics show how searchers are finding and interacting with the site, e.g., which search engines, what keyword phrases are being used, bounce rates, most popular content, etc. Understanding the site's traffic level and the source of its referrals can also be a critical tool in making other

online marketing decisions. In the ongoing progress of reporting and follow up, progress towards the plan's goals are analyzed and reported. Adjustments to the SEO plan have been made according to the findings of these progress reports.

Content Building

Search engines love text; high volume, high-quality content related to a business. A site loaded with high-quality content of interest to site users will give them a reason to stay and a reason to come back. With quality content, search engines will have more information to store about your business and products; that information will translate directly into the ranking they give your site for related keyword phrases.

Page Optimization

Following the addition of new, high quality content, we tackled on-page optimization.

Page Titles – Making sure that your site's page titles say something other than just your company name or "welcome." Ideally, they needed to lead off with your targeted phrase for that page and then follow with your company name.

Text-Based Navigation – Search engines cannot read images. As your site's navigation system is done with some images, you have needed a text-based navigation system that the search engines can follow to ensure that all the important service and product-related sub-pages of your site are indexed by the search engines.

Prominence of Targeted Keyword Phrases – It is not enough to have your keyword phrase(s) somewhere on the web page, the placement and prominence given to them also affects your search engine placement.

Site Map – Developing a site map that includes a well-organized list of links to all the important pages of your site and includes a text link to the site map on your home page is the ideal way to make sure that all the site's pages are indexed by the search engines when they visit the subject site.

ALT and META data – These are tags not seen by the site's users; they are embedded in the site's code. ALT tags refer to the text that describes an image - words that you see pop up as you mouse over some images. In optimizing your company's name, an ALT tag placed behind the image of your company's logo has been ideal. Meta tags are lines of code included in the uppermost section of your site's code. They communicate the page's subject matter and relevancy to the search engines. Further, the short description of your site included in some search results is pulled from the meta description tag of the home page and should, therefore, be used to the site's advantage.

Clean up the Code – Navigation rollover scripts, other JavaScript-based code, and all CSS scripts are taken out of the code of each page and put into external files to which each page of the site is referenced. Doing this has several advantages, but one of the most compelling is that your site's keywords and content all move up, up in the code, communicating their importance to the search engines and boosting your site's relevancy ratings. This can boost your search engine rankings by improving the code to text ratio of the page.

Building In-Bound Links

Each new, quality link to your site increases the likelihood of both the search engines' spiders running across your site as well as searchers looking for services or products like yours. Google views links to your site as votes for your site and rewards the site accordingly.

Follow Up Reporting and Analysis

The same reporting done in the initial phase of the campaign is done again at regular intervals, post-optimization. Rankings, site traffic levels, social signals and other key metrics can then be compared to pre-optimization levels, giving measurable results to the SEO campaign.

Simon Stoops

Funding Futures



It is really important that we are able to identify specific projects that can be the subject of applications for charitable support. By carefully constructing such applications, we are beginning to receive funds that will greatly enhance the facilities which we provide for our tenants. A good couple of weeks at the beginning of June takes our fundraising to a total, to date, of around £20,000. These recent results have arrived as we have been able to demonstrate, through photographs and tenants comments, what we have achieved to date.

Though some income has been generated through the generosity of a number of organisations, such as Rotary, Round Table and Probus Clubs, that I have gone along to meet and talk about our work, by far the greatest success has come from tailored applications to Charitable Trusts and Foundations. There are literally thousands of these Trusts which all have their specific charitable aims and objectives that, if fulfilled, will allow them to contribute funds to registered charities which BeST, of course, is. As you will appreciate this does require a lot of research and careful work to ensure the application fits exactly the sort of thing they are likely to fund. Even so, it is not always successful as many of these Trusts only have limited funds and do change their funding priorities on a regular basis.

It is interesting to note that it is particularly difficult to persuade potential funders to support housing associations. Though our aims are charitable in nature, sadly many of the general public do not see us as that. Hence my efforts in talking to as many groups as possible

Paws for Thought



Eric has been enjoying his time at school recently whilst the weather has been hot. He's been bathing in paddling pools and sharing melting ice in the playground!



His next school report is on 30th June. His school will be hosting "Wagadamy Awards" for all doggy parents to catch up on their favourite pooch's antics at school. Eric has leant many skills whilst at school including his favourite mere cat impression!

Eric is also seeking his first doggy passport to travel to Europe with his family and embark on further adventures.... Fun awaits!

Shelley Hobbs



and trying to change that mistaken view that we are a general housing association and purely commercial in all our work. This situation also makes it difficult to act utilising fundraising techniques that many other charities partake in.

Community Fundraising, as you will imagine is really important in charities such as Christies but with public perception of our work not high, it's tricky to do much of this sort of thing at the moment. This may change significantly in the future as we diversify in our charitable support services. All I can say to everyone is "spread the word" about the fantastic work we do whenever and wherever possible.

In order to illustrate how it all works. You will recall an article in a recent Snippets by Laura Jane where she described the sensory garden that was constructed at Stanley Road. This project was funded by £3K from Trust funding. By taking the photographs from this project and using some quotes from the tenants, I was able to support applications for similar projects which have led to the recent successes and to the next project at Weatherstones being completed with a further £3K. The charity account does now have a balance of £13K so we do need to identify further projects and for that, I need all your help!

David Poppitt

