

CEDA TECHNICAL UPDATE

John Scott, Development manager of First Choice Catering Spares Ltd

Over the last two years I have spoken in detail about the technical function at First Choice, how it has grown, how we train people and importantly why the technical team exist to support our customers. So, what is different now, another year on? First Choice has grown significantly over the last two years-

- Turnover has increased year on year, which is always good news!
- Our business has grown, but more importantly, our business has been "right sized" to deal with the demand that exists today.

So what does "right-sizing" the business mean and how does it contribute to supporting our customers? In 2009 whilst the owners were successfully driving the business towards its 10th anniversary, they were also planning for the next 10 years. A key part of that plan was continued growth, and to accommodate this, larger premises and more staff were required. In 2008 we had 50 staff and resided in 18,000sqft of office space. Today, we have 70 staff, and following the move into our new offices reside in 40,000sqft.

And we are not stopping there. Our new offices and warehousing facility, combined with the original offices and warehouse adjacent, give us the opportunity to continue our growth.

The new warehouse facility will have 'state of the art' fully automated storage and retrieval 'lean lifts' which offer increased storage, by a



factor of 9 for the same footprint of conventional racking systems. They also allow the part pick speed to be increased by a factor of 5. This year the investment has exceeded £1m

Growth continues in 2011 but increases in staff levels to over 100 people can be accommodated in the new buildings and a second bank of 6 lean lift units are planned for future expansion.

The development of a multi-functional training centre is scheduled for 2011. This will be an engineering facility for our customers to conduct training for their own engineers or receive training from manufacturers. In addition manufacturers can use it demonstrate new and existing product to their current and future customers. But most importantly, first class customer service is our number one goal and this is where 'right sizing' the business really matters. If more sales calls come into the office we need more internal sales staff to transact the calls and we ship more parcels. So for the guys and girls in the sales & warehouse to perform, we need to ensure we continue to fully support them.



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OUR NEW PREMISES

September was an important month for us at First Choice because we finally moved into our new offices. To minimise disruption to our customers the move was carried out over the weekend, operating from the old offices until late Friday afternoon and fully operational in our new facilities Monday morning. In fact all orders placed by 4.00pm on the Friday were dispatched that day.

A speedy move was helped by the proximity of the new building. In fact we have moved next door, from our old offices in the building at the extreme left of the photo overleaf into offices housed in the building on the extreme right of the photo.

Technically our address has changed from Unit 2 to Unit 1, but telephone, fax and email details remain the same

With our largest expansion to date we have created new and improved office facilities for all of our staff. A single open plan office accommodates all of our staff in sales, accounts and purchasing.

We have also opened a Trade Counter where engineers can call in to collect urgently needed parts.



In addition to adding more internal sales and administrative staff, we have strengthened our team with a number of key appointments:

Barry Witter joined us last Christmas from Electrolux and has strengthened our knowledge and support to the industry of this major brand.

Steve Priest has teamed up with James Rostron in IT to enable us to continue to develop longer term projects without this having a negative impact on day to day activities.

Steve Robbins joins us as financial controller to oversee the growth of our accounts function.

Supporting Our Staff

- Ongoing and improved staff training
- Up to date computer systems & IT
- Extensive and continually updated spares & technical data base
- Automated warehouse storage and retrieval systems
- New, comfortable and spacious offices and warehousing facility complete with large rest and dining facilities including TV and PC for personal use.



ONE STOP SHOP FOR CATERING EQUIPMENT SPARES

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