

Minutes
BCS Teesside and District AGM 9 May 2007-08-16
held at the Parkmore Hotel, Yarm Rd, Stockton.

1. PRESENT: 25 members and 6 committee.
2. Apologies for absence received from Phil Brooke, Alyson Cole, Adrian Beckham, and Alan Hunter.
3. Previous minutes of 26 May 2006 accepted as accurate.
Matters arising: none.

4. Reports:

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported on the year passed, with theme 'Innovation'. He outlined the events we had promoted to support this theme.

Outside of events, the Chairman commented on a key successes, the outreach from Teesside BCS to schools and colleges. We have contact with Prior Pursglove in Guisborough, Woosingham in Bishop Auckland, County Durham and Bishopsgarth Maths and Computing College in Stockton. Additionally, a new member of the local BCS committee is the e-learning manager at Stockton FE College. He hoped that by this time next year he could report confidently on current plans being made to start new outreach activities and encourage more young people to join our profession.

The state of branch finances was quite healthy; the committee tried very hard to return to members the subscriptions they had paid to the Society.

He announced that Ms. Alyson Cole was retiring from the PR role, though she still wished to be closely associated with the committee and the Society. Also, Mr. Adrian Beckham was retiring from the role of events coordinator.

He looked back at our successes over the last three years and thanked the membership and the committee for their support. Recalling that the poll of members three years ago set the style of the Teesside BCS then, the Chairman asked if it was time now to introduce new ideas and methods.

We, the Teesside branch of the BCS, will be 50 years old in 2007-8; we were constituted only one year after the national Society. The theme we will follow next year will be Globalisation, Mobility and Convergence. Members were encouraged to offer ideas to support the theme.

4.2 Secretary's Report:

The secretary commented on the year past. To support Innovation, events included Blogs – What they are and how to Write them, Technology on the Move, Managing a Hospital at Night, the Intelligent House, WiFi-connectability of medical devices, and Electronic Teaching Methods.

Numbers attending events averaged high-teens. Our target set 3 years ago was mid-20s. Post, email and email reminders used together in concert seemed to produce higher numbers at events.

Newsletters are more reader-friendly but cost a lot of postage. Emails are more immediate but cost very little. We use .bcs email addresses – any committee member can be contacted this way because it's a forwarding service He asked members to let any member of committee know if they were not receiving emails or Newsletters and wished to correct this.

4.3 Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer reported the Branch's budget of £2700, plus £426pa for 3 years from the special projects fund for prizes to graduating students at Teesside University.

The so-called 'Gold' account, being accumulated funds of the branch, no longer exists so all spend now needs to be planned and given approval since we no longer have any 'own' money.

Expenditure has been £1580. The underspend arises from low cost of meeting rooms at the University, speakers who do not ask for fees (one BCS speaker even paid his and the committee's dinner bill on his own Credit Card!)

The unspent funds are now reclaimed by BCS HQ at Swindon.

Next year's allocation is £2500. The committee welcomes suggestions from members about events and visits, the better to return to members all the monies allocated for the operation of this branch.

4.4 Other Officers' Reports

Alan Shaw, Branches Congress representative, described the Congress event and commended the ability to network with the 'top team'. The Congress is held in Spring and Autumn and offers good organisation and a positive face towards branches.

On behalf of PR rep, it was reported that we had resources 3 prizes for students, judging their project reports on the criterion 'Community Contribution'. One prize was for a website developed by a computer science student for 14-16 careers' sponsors in Richmond, one for a cost model developed by a Business School student for the Wilton power generation station to maximize their sales potential (and retain jobs and careers here), and the third to a postgraduate computing student for developing a 'tactile' website for handicapped learners in Newcastle.

Dave Binns, the branch's Webmaster, reminded members of the branch's web address <http://teeside.bcs.org> and indicated ideas for further development were welcome. He described that the Middlesbrough Evening Gazette business section could be used for more publicity, and observed that Alyson Cole, as PR representative, circulated several press releases but very few were actually taken up by newspapers. He also commented on the plans for school liaison, since he was closely involved in developing the prototype; initial links had been developed but he hoped it would expand more widely. Students would be offered monitoring and support, and he welcomed the three or four volunteers who had joined the committee because of the possibility to contribute to this initiative.

5. Election of Officers and Committee Members for 2007/8

Graham Evans – Chairman

Alan Jones – Secretary

Dave Fuller – Treasurer

Dave Binns – Web Master

Alan Shaw – Branches' Congress Rep

Derek Simpson –Education Rep
YPG Rep – open
PR Rep – open
Schools Liaison Reps – Simon Boardman, Craig Bates, Andrew Lumley, Clare Donlan.

6. AOB.

Education area for BCS Teesside to cultivate – HE is covered with our prize awards; the Schools outreach will concentrate on Secondary Schools. Members indicated we should give some attention to FE colleges.

Connexions events (careers for 14-16years) had been attended without much feedback or dialogue. Doubt was expressed about their value to the Branch.

DATE OF NEXT AGM: 2008 May 7.

The business meeting closed, and members were entertained by a talk from Alastair Waite, CEO Onyx Internet, about his career path through e-business.

Having started as a management accountant, an early job in the 1970s was the computerization of accounts and then sales processes at Safeway, Hayes, Middlesex. Alastair rose rapidly through the ranks and the pressures of studying out of work hours for his accountancy qualification took its toll. Alastair decided that he could either continue in his demanding role at Safeway or complete his studies, but not both. He took the brave step of resigning and relocated back to the North East to complete his qualifications.

Returning to the North East as Finance Director of ALTEC Engineering in the late 1980s, Alastair oversaw lots of change with the introduction of CNC tools, CAD/CAM technology and EDI with customers and suppliers. He now owns the company and has been instrumental in refocusing the business to deliver advanced engineering solutions for Aerospace and MOD clients.

No stranger to challenges Alastair also worked for BEDE plc who designed and manufactured X-ray characterization systems for the semiconductor industry. Whilst with Bede the company won many awards but of these the three Queens Awards for export and technology achievement count among the proudest moments for the Company and all staff. As Finance Director Alastair was instrumental in raising venture capital finance from 3i plc on three separate occasions to provide growth funds to accelerate development of unique systems and solutions.

Alastair prepared the company for sale in 1998 but due to a downturn in the semiconductor industry a buyer was not found. Having prepared the company for sale Alastair recognized that it would be a good time for him to move on and let another take up the reins. He took a brave decision and resigned in late 1998 without having another opportunity 'lined up' but wanted to take some time out to consider what to do next.

He was then approached by TradeZone International, to take over as general manager of one of their subsidiary companies, Onyx internet Limited, a local Internet Service Provider.

TradeZone was an innovative B2B e-commerce marketplace but suffered from specification creep and struggled to get a solution to market. Tradezone had been financed by venture capital from 3i PLC who had decided not to provide further funds to the company.

It was at this point that the decision to sell Onyx to fund Tradezone was made. In September 1999 Onyx was sold to Pacific Gateway Exchange, San Francisco, who at the time were

valued at \$650M and listed on NASDAQ. Alastair was heavily involved in the due diligence preparation and the sale process.

In 2000 the dot.com bubble had burst and it was the year of the dot.bomb! Many companies, including Pacific Gateway went out of business and on 15/12/2000 Pacific Gateway and all of its worldwide subsidiaries went into receivership.

Alastair lead a management buyout of Onyx over Christmas and New Year and the buyout was completed in January 2001. The dot-com bust of 2001/3 was tough but due to the sheer determination of the management team and staff Onyx survived. Since those days Onyx has grown from strength to strength.

In 2004 Onyx expanded and acquired a Tier 4 Data Hosting facility in Newcastle upon Tyne. In 2005 Onyx acquired a local e-security consultancy, Askaris. In May 2006, Alastair was involved in a second management buy-out to allow early shareholders an exit opportunity.

In the past 18 months Onyx has redefined the business and has transitioned from an Internet Service Provider to a Managed Solutions Provider that delivers core services in the areas of Network Infrastructure, Advanced Hosting, e-Security and IT Services.

Onyx has recently completed the acquisition of Business Continuity Centres to provide the regions only dedicated Workplace Recovery facility and last month acquired Jade Integration to develop Managed Services.

Onyx is a growing and profitable business and is proud to deliver services to almost 4,000 businesses in the region and beyond.

In summary, Alastair's campaign medal are five Venture Capital setups, two management buyouts and four children! He has recently stepped down as CEO of Onyx to concentrate on mergers and acquisitions to grow Onyx nationally.

The Chairman, Graham Evans, thanked Alastair Waite for a fascinating view into the modernization of the north east.