

CSCS – A SUCCESS STORY FROM BARNSELEY

WTo survive in business, a company needs not only a solid foundation, but also a total commitment to service," says Christine Simms of C. Simms Computing Services (CSCS).

Having spent the past six years building a successful company from scratch and taking the rough with the smooth, Simms is well placed to comment on business survival - in her case, in the com-

petitive world of data capture.

CSCS was established in 1984 by Simms, who was and still is the sole trader at the head of this private company. Six years ago she founded a company of ten, working on seven terminals linked to refurbished ROCC computer equipment (a Redifon R100); now she leads a company of 60 people using a ROCC 2835 WMS multiuser system with 22 workstations, and two PCs.

Three shifts are running daily, handling work for a great number of customers, of which many are household names. The customer list of CSCS is impressive. From an unassuming back street in Barnsley, work is processed for many prestigious clients: these include a leading pet food manufacturer; a well-known British retailing group; a leading London department store; a worldwide travel organisation; many financial services houses, building societies and many local authorities (none of which can be named for reasons of confidentiality).

In 1989 CSCS increased its turnover by over 20 per cent with similar prospects for 1990.

The key to the success of CSCS is that Simms has extended traditional data capture work to include many new areas of computing services such as keying in foreign language data. Ion reflection "detailed technical services" didn't seem sufficiently accurate, at the same time keeping in step with technological advances in the data capture area. The Simms philosophy is simple: "Find a gap in the market, fill it and make yourself indispensable." It works.

Simms is a lady who knows what she wants and from the start she has been committed to using ROCC systems. Already familiar with ROCC's expertise in data capture equipment from previous



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experience, for her, ROCC computers are simply the best for the data capture business. As she points out: "Although I've tried, I can't think of anything bad to say about ROCC - the systems are not the cheapest but they are ideally suited to the data capture environment and the service we receive from ROCC engineering and software departments is nothing short of excellent. When we upgraded the systems recently, I did consider installing competitive equipment - but not for long. I am committed to using ROCC computers."

No mean feat

For a young woman to successfully run a company single-handed is no mean feat. "I'm not denying it," says Simms, "at times it can be particularly hard to push aside feminine emotional and instinctive reactions to fully concentrate on matters of commercial logic."

Simms also differentiates carefully between being a successful woman in business and a successful businesswoman. "The difference is, I believe, that in times of intense commercial pressure, a successful businesswoman has to have enough strength of will to be able to concentrate her entire focus on business priorities. Balancing a family life and a business demands a great deal of

stamina and energy.

Asked whether she ever feels that now the company is well established and profitable she could relinquish some of the responsibility and maybe have more time for herself, she compares being in business to a roundabout. "Once you get on and it starts to gather momentum, it is difficult to know when to jump off - besides, I enjoy my work. I have a very competent team of a financial administrator, an operations manager and a personnel administrator reporting to me, without whom I couldn't manage. I find I can now dedicate more time to building and expanding the business."

The keyboard operators at CSCS keep the computers busy for 20 hours a day, five days a week, with weekend shifts when the workload is particularly heavy. As would be expected from the customer list, the work itself is varied and not restricted to straight data entry - for the work undertaken for the travel company, 1000 input formats are necessary. So operators might one week be logging airline reservations, the next entering details of the local fire brigade's payroll.

The company generates 12 million key depressions per week - the equivalent of 175,000 names and addresses - especially notable as the operators are encouraged to strive for accuracy rather than

speed. For keying-only jobs (ie not verified afterwards) the company boasts a minimal error rate.

Understandably, Simms is happy with the way things are looking and can rightly feel proud of her achievements. With her strong leadership and shrewd eye for new business, the future looks good. She remains however modest and generous in her respect for her employees. "I am constantly aware that a business is only as good as its people. I am very lucky in that I have a loyal and competent team - much of the company's success is due to this." It is obvious to the onlooker that CSCS is a team of people all pulling together.

Simms herself is a down-to-earth and an approachable person and, as far as she is concerned, her company's success is surely not that remarkable or particularly due to her skills. In reality however, many would admire her achievements.

True to her character when asked whether six years running her own company have changed her at all Simms is equally honest. "I am proud when I think of what I have achieved, but not complacent; to stay ahead the hard work has to continue. Basically though, I live each day as it comes and enjoy the challenge of whatever it brings." ■

ROCC's CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION CALENDAR 1990

September 12-13

Institute of Works and Highways Management
Spa Complex, Scarborough

September 21

ROCC Conference and RCUA AGM
Gatwick Penta Hotel, Horley, Surrey

October 9-11

Image Processing '90
Wembley Conference Centre
Wembley, Middx

October 10-12

Direct Marketing Fair,
Olympia, London

October 15-19

Institute of Maintenance and Building Management
Pembroke Hotel, Blackpool

December 5

ROCC Conference and Exhibition
Kempton Park Racecourse