

# BEYOND THE NUMBERS

inspire. challenge. support.



## A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY BUSINESS TAKES THE FLOOR...

**E**stablished in the 1930s, Gainsborough Flooring is very much a family business – in both history and approach. And when their mother, Sheila decided to step back more from running the company, sister and brother, Vicky and Eddy took over the reins. At SBCA, we have had a long business relationship with Gainsborough Flooring. Chris Bond's dad Stewart provided accountancy services for Sheila, and now Chris and his team provide them for Vicky and Eddy. We talked to Managing Director Vicky about how the company had achieved its longevity.

### It's in the family

The company supplies and fits floors for a wide range of commercial organisations and householders and prides itself on its high-quality service. Vicky said, "I think our success is definitely down to instilling family values. Our approach is completely customer focused and we ensure every customer

is treated with the time and respect they deserve, whether they're a large commercial organisation or an individual looking for flooring for their home."

They've run charity events including midnight walks and invited customers to things they've sponsored. "We say thank you," said Vicky. Their approach results in "huge amounts of repeat business and recommendations," she said. "We're even serving grandchildren of customers now."

She thinks it's important to be yourself and lead by example but be part of the team too. She's proud that most team members have been with them for 15+ years, while no-one's been there for less than 10 years. Vicky also believes it's important to be organised and stay focused on the goals you set. She said that timely accounts are key. "It's all about real time information."

In fact, it was in-depth data that helped them take a key decision in the business's success. The company started as a carpet wholesaler, with a small installation business added later. Around 20 years ago, drawing on her degree in accountancy and our information, Vicky had noticed that, because of the growing impact of issues such as the tight margins for next day delivery etc, the installation part had become the most profitable. They decided to focus on this. The decision paid off and the business grew further.

### Overcoming the challenges

We also asked her about challenges they had inevitably faced as such a long-established business. Vicky mentioned the financial crash of 2007-8, a time that was tough for many. She said, "That's where SBCA really helped. I looked at the fantastic records we had and overnight I could see where to go. Cost savings were made very quickly and we survived and moved forward."

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## Moving onwards and upwards

For 40 years, Gainsborough Flooring was based in a converted mill. And while the space had been excellent for the wholesale business, it didn't totally suit the installation side. So, Vicky spent 10 years looking for suitable premises - and eventually found just what she was looking for in 2013 in the heart of Preston.

They then had the challenge of attracting customers to the new shop. "Chris and I have had so many conversations about marketing and PR. I like bouncing ideas off him. He's inventive and he's good to talk to."

Vicky believes you have to be creative in how you promote your business - and that the marketing they did was key to the successful move. She told us, "I've got to say that Chris was pretty helpful on that."

At SBCA, we're delighted to work with this successful, customer-focused company. Family businesses usually have a dynamic of their own and Vicky told us that our experience as a family business is definitely an advantage in understanding theirs. "[You] understand the factors this brings, including succession planning and allowing for different points of view, and advise us accordingly."



**Vicky Keelan, Managing Director,  
Gainsborough Flooring**  
[www.gainsboroughflooring.co.uk](http://www.gainsboroughflooring.co.uk)



# ZEROING IN ON XERO

**A**s you'll know by now (we might have mentioned it once or twice!), there are big changes on the way when it comes to your VAT returns. From April 2019, you'll have to keep digital records and use digital software to submit your returns under 'Making Tax Digital'.

## So, what will your options be?

What we're suggesting is that

you look at moving to an online accounting system. The technology means we can do your returns even more cost effectively, and will also save you time, so you can get on with what's important to you.

There's one system in particular we're recommending - and that's the market leader, Xero ([www.xero.com/uk](http://www.xero.com/uk)).

### 5 key reasons for choosing Xero

- The main one is that we think it's easy to use and therefore minimises the work it takes to keep your accounts and your VAT returns up-to-date.
- The dashboard is easy to understand, even if you're not an accountant.
- It puts you in control - from seeing important numbers at a glance, to reconciling your bank accounts more easily.
- Xero is designed to use on the go. You can use the app to photograph your receipts and enter your purchases.
- It's easy to integrate with compatible apps that can make your life even easier. Because it's the market leader, there's a great range available.

### What about actually making the move to online accounting?

It will take a bit of time to get used to any new package - especially if you haven't used cloud accounting before. One of the reasons we recommend Xero is that we think it's straightforward to set up. Plus, we're here to help. As well as offering you day-to-day advice, we can also give you face-to-face or telephone training so you can get started on the right foot. There is a charge for this training, but we have a range of options available - just ask us for details.

**We're here to help: 01772 204 102.**

# WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU ASKED FOR A REFERRAL? THIS WEEK? THIS MONTH? NEVER?

Here at SBCA, asking for referrals is something we do as a matter of course as part of our lead generation efforts. Why not try it for your business and ask your happy customers? These are my top tips for where you could start, based on our experience.

Chris's top tips on asking for referrals

## 1. Have a system

It will probably be something like this:

- Work out how and where to ask for a referral (and from which of your contacts)
- Ask! (Not sure what to say? Keep reading)
- Follow up your request if necessary
- Respond quickly to any referrals received
- Remember to say thank you to the source of the referral
- Repeat

To be honest, we tend to find we get most referrals when we actually ask people in person – perhaps in a meeting. It's useful to warn people in advance if you're going to do this.

## 2. Make it part of your dialogue

You can introduce the idea of referrals by asking on feedback forms, email footers, invoices etc. If you do this, be specific where you can. That way, it's easier for people to think of someone.

So for example:

"Do you know anyone at the golf club who wants to grow their business?"

"Do any of your customers need an accountant with a fresh approach?"

## 3. Decide how often to ask

You don't want to make a nuisance of yourself or damage your relationship with your client so do think about this. Maybe asking at a meeting once or twice a year might be appropriate, backed up by gentle reminders in correspondence every so often.

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## 4. Be ready if someone suggests a referral to you

While you'll probably not want to take up more of your client's time than you have to, it's worth thinking if there any questions that might make the difference between a successful approach, or not. For example:

*"If you were me, what would be the best way to get in touch with xxx? Should I give them a call once you've spoken to them, or do we all go out for a coffee?"*

Regardless of how you think it's best to proceed, ask your contact to get permission to pass on data.

So, of course, I can't finish this article without asking: do you know a business owner – whether that's a client, supplier or networking contact, whom you think would benefit from our services? If so, I would be most grateful if you would let me know. If we get to meet the person you mention, we do like to send you a case of wine or a food hamper as a thank you.

Chris Bond  
cb@sbca.co.uk



Chris Bond



# MEET THE TEAM, WITH HERBIE

## Donna, our Client Coordinator

One of the best things about Donna is undoubtedly the treats she keeps in her drawer just for me. Only joking. I may be the manager of happiness but she's definitely a superstar when it comes to providing a warm welcome and a very organised service for clients.

In life beyond the office, she's a person after my own heart – she loves spending time in the great outdoors. I keep trying to muscle in on her family camping trips but no success yet. It's probably something like, 'there's no room in the car' or about me refusing to give up my phone for the holiday. Sigh.

Donna said about their trips, "It really is about us having quality time together. The technology goes away and the board games come out. We go with friends so it's a sociable break too, and nine times out of ten, we visit the Lake District – often camping in the middle of a field."

One hobby we don't have in common is reading – Donna loves curling up with a good book and she enjoys crime novels in particular. Mind you, she's also a great one for socialising. "If you try and get me on a Friday night, you won't be able to as I'll be spending time with my friends." I reassured her that I'd be far too busy snoozing on a Friday night to even think of disturbing her.

Meet the whole team at  
[sbca.co.uk/about/](http://sbca.co.uk/about/)



# EDITOR'S NOTE

## SYSTEMS: YOUR BUSINESS POWERHOUSE

To back up the importance of our team, we make great use of technology and systems here at SBCA. In this issue, check out some ideas on how you could use these too - there's the promised article on our cloud accounting recommendation, as well as the lowdown on the method we have for requesting referrals. If reading this inspires you to put your own system in place or bolster one you've got, please do let me know how you get on.

Sharing practical information is an important part of what we do, so I also want to take this

opportunity to highlight what we provide on our blog ([www.sbca.co.uk/blog/](http://www.sbca.co.uk/blog/)). It includes a post each month with a handy reminder of key tax dates for the month ahead. There are also articles on a whole range of other issues, from inspiring your team to interpreting your tax code. Please let me know if there's anything you'd like us to cover on the blog - or in this newsletter.

Chris  
[cb@sbca.co.uk](mailto:cb@sbca.co.uk)



## TEAM MEMBER OF THE MONTH

Every month, we ask our team members to nominate a fellow team member for their outstanding work. Here are the results for April, May and June.

April -  
Congratulations  
Faye!



*"Helped out with my workload when I had to focus on completing an urgent job for a client"*

*"Excellent POPP results"*

May -  
Congratulations  
Aaron!



*"Picked our systems up quickly"*

*"Settled in really quickly and doing jobs as if he's been doing them for ages"*

June -  
Congratulations  
Vicky!



*"For making time to help other team members on jobs and supporting them where required."*

*"For being very supportive"*

## SPREAD THE WORD

We love receiving referrals as it not only means we're doing a great job for you but also that you trust us to do the same for the people you have referred to us.

As a thank you you'll receive a free case of wine or food hamper just for introducing us to a business who becomes a client of sbca.

**GIVE US A CALL ON 01772 204102**



**T:** 01772 204102

**E:** [prosper@sbca.co.uk](mailto:prosper@sbca.co.uk)

**A:** 17 Moor Park Av.  
Preston, PR1 6AS

**W:** [www.sbca.co.uk](http://www.sbca.co.uk)

**sbca** chartered accountants