

our history

1992

From a small business launched in Newport in 1992, Acorn is today a £40million+ organisation that fills thousands of job vacancies every year, and provides training and people-development programmes that are delivered UK-wide.

The business is today still owned by its founder and Managing Director Matt Southall, who leads a Board comprising three additional Directors and two non-executive Directors.

1992 -1998

Acorn builds a specialist network of branches throughout South Wales, opening additional premises in Cardiff, Swansea, Pontypridd and Bridgend.

The company is professionally accredited by becoming a full member of REC, the Recruitment & Employment Confederation.

Acorn adds a specialist Nursing & Healthcare Division to its portfolio by acquisition of a nursing agency in Swansea.

1999

In **March**, Acorn is formally recognised as an 'Investors in People' company.

2000

In 2001, 'contactUs' Acorn's specialist contact centre division is launched. Although primarily based in Manchester, the Division attracts work for contact centres UK wide.

2001

For an unparalleled fourth year in succession, Acorn features in the 2002 'Wales Fast Growth 50' listing of Wales' fastest growing companies.

2002

This sustained growth is recognised when it wins the first 'Excellence in Growth Award' announced at the Welsh Business Awards Dinner in **May** 2002.

In this same year, Acorn's position as a major UK recruitment agency is also acknowledged when it wins two national awards; 'Best UK Regional Recruitment Firm', and the overall 'UK Gold Award', representing the 'best of the best' of all categories at the 2002 Professional Recruiter Awards.

In **December** 2002, Acorn completes the development of its own 19,000 sq ft purpose-built headquarters and training centre at Celtic Springs in Newport. The new building is officially opened by Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister for Wales.

Acorn also completes the acquisition of a specialist mechanical and electrical recruitment firm called G-Force based just outside Cardiff.

Turnover for 2002 is £23.9m.

2003

In **January** 2003, Acorn acquires Treforest-based senior executive recruitment provider Pegge Thomas.

February sees Acorn's expansion into Bristol through the acquisition of JL, a long-established recruitment and IT training company in Thornbury, North Bristol

Acorn expands its network into Scotland in **April** 2003, opening premises in Edinburgh.

During **May**, Acorn's Education Services Division is launched.

In **August**, Acorn's training division merges with Lexicon, a major UK provider of vocational training. The move enhances Acorn's training portfolio to cover all areas of IT training, vocational learning, and management and leadership development programmes.

During 2003, Acorn's specialist European Division expands; affirming its position as one of the UK's forerunners in the positive use of European labour. It attracts skilled workers via its recruitment office in Portugal and a number of strategic partnerships across Europe.

In **December** 2003, Acorn achieves full ISO 9001:2000 recognition for quality of customer service and high levels of customer satisfaction.

Turnover for 2003 is £29.9m.

Acorn becomes a Patron Member of the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce and of Business West (Bristol, Bath & South Glos Chambers of Commerce).

Acorn becomes Wales' first Corporate Partner of the Institute of Directors (IoD).

Acorn signs strategic partnerships with UWIC and UWCN; universities in Cardiff and Newport respectively.

Turnover for 2004 is £33.4m.

2004

2005

In **January** 2005, Acorn becomes the first business in Wales to become a Corporate Patron of the NSPCC, pledging to raise £100,000 to help children and encouraging other businesses to support the charity in this way.

In **February**, Acorn expands its branch network, opening a new branch in Blackwood.

In **June**, Acorn opens a new branch for North Wales located in Wrexham, which is officially opened by Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Economic Development & Transport.

In **September**, Acorn is publicly listed as the UK's 79th largest recruitment agency out of 14,000 agencies UK-wide, and as the leading agency in Wales. Acorn is recognised as one of the UK's 'top ten' recruitment providers to the public sector and one of the top 35 'independent' recruitment companies in the UK by Recruitment International.

In **October**, Acorn launches its new Rail & Civil Division.

Also in **October**, Acorn opens a new branch in Runcorn.

'contactUs' is merged into the Acorn brand.

Acorn is officially identified by the Welsh Assembly Government as one of their top 50 companies with the best prospects for growth, in its flagship 'Knowledge Bank 4 Business' programme.

23rd **December** - Acorn signs agreement with global French-based recruitment group 'Synergie' following an initial introduction via the WTI / WDA 'Business Partner Match' programme three years earlier. The deal sees Synergie acquire a 70% stake in the business. (www.synergie.fr)

Turnover for 2005 is £38.5m.

2006

Following his recent success as the first Grand Slam winning National Rugby Coach for Wales in nearly 30 years, Mike Ruddock joins Acorn as its new Commercial Development Manager in **April**.

In **May**, Acorn successfully achieves full registration with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, (reg no. ACOR0003).

In **June** Acorn successfully retains its 'Investors in People' (IIP) accreditation with the Assessor's report stating; "Acorn is quite clearly a successful organisation that recognises the importance of a skilled, motivated and effectively managed workforce. The level of positive responses to questions to staff about the organisation and its management was extremely high compared to most organisations."

In **July** Acorn purchases specialist nursing recruitment agency 'Link'.

Also in **July**, Acorn launches its new HR Development Services Division, offering a HR consultancy and advisory service.

In **September** Acorn expands its branch network, opening a new branch in Preston.

Turnover for 2006 is £41.7m

In **February**, Acorn opens its new branch in Gloucester.

In **March**, Acorn opens another branch in Axminster, Devon.

In **April**, Acorn's new Defence & Technology Division is launched, offering recruitment support to the UK's defence, aerospace, IT and engineering sectors.

Also in **April**, Acorn acquires Advance Personnel (www.advancepersonnel.co.uk), one of the leading recruitment firms in the North West of England with revenues of circa £18m. This also gives Acorn four new branches in Crewe, Stoke, Birkenhead and in Gdansk, Poland.

In **September**, a new office in Glasgow is opened, operating under the Advance brand.

In **November**, Acorn is a finalist in two categories at the Recruitment International Annual Awards adjudicated by an independent panel of industry experts and analysts.

In **December**, Acorn acquires Concept Staffing Ltd, the leading South West of England recruitment firm. Concept has 16 branches and adds circa £16.5m to Acorn's turnover - www.conceptstaffing.co.uk.

Turnover for 2007 is £63.5m

2007

2008

In **January**, Acorn signs a ground-breaking recruitment and training agreement with the world-renowned Wales Millennium Centre.

Also in **January**, Acorn launches its dedicated Architecture Division as well as a new branch in Bolton.

In **February**, Acorn's new I.T division is launched, offering recruitment solutions in both support and management roles.

In **April**, a new office in Doncaster is opened, operating under the Advance brand.

In **May**, Acorn's Architecture and Design division partner with Powell Dobson as their preferred supplier.

In **July**, Acorn extends its branch network, opening a new branch in Derby.

In **August** Acorn becomes the Cardiff Devils' first ever Community Foundation Partner.

In **September** Acorn's south-west subsidiary, Concept Staffing, opens a new branch in Torquay.

In **November** Arriva supported by Acorn's Learning & Development Division wins the 'employer' category at the National Training Awards.

In **December**, Concept Staffing celebrates 20 years in business.

Turnover for 2008 is £78m.

2009

In **January** Acorn's Learning and Development Division wins the Newport Construction Initiative's 2008 'Investment in Skills Award'

In **June** Acorn becomes the first education provider in Wales to be accredited by the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII).

The **Acorn** Group achieves the latest Investors in People (IIP) certification for the entire Group, which incorporates Concept Staffing, Advance Personnel, Acorn Recruitment and Acorn Learning Solutions.

In **August** Acorn acquires national technical recruiter Oracle Global Resourcing. With its head office based in London, the engineering specialist, which now trades under the name of Excell, continues to support clients in rail, construction & building, energy and facilities management UK-wide.

In **September** Acorn acquires part of Track Safe Telecom (TST), the telecoms, installation and infrastructure management business operating in the rail sector. TST's signalling and telecoms division, and RSS its specialist safety planning subsidiary are now part of Acorn.

Today, **Acorn** employs circa **270 staff** across **35 branches**. The company places up to **6,000 workers** into temporary assignments for up to **850 different companies** each day, as well as nearly **1,700 permanent placements** annually; and it delivers training to over **3,000 individuals** each year.