



Annual Review

2011/2012



2011/2012 proved yet another challenging and eventful year for Wenta. In an ever changing industry despite tough economic conditions the Agency has gone from strength to strength. With two new incubators, new advisory and training programmes, continuous improvements to our business centre facilities and new team members Wenta are expertly equipped to support more clients than ever before. As we approach our 30th year the future is bright for Wenta and we look forward with optimism to continued growth in the coming year.

Contents

- 1 | Introduction
- 2 | Chairman's Report
- 3 | Chief Executive's Report
- 4 | Advisory
- 6 | My Incubator
- 8 | Education & Training
- 10 | Business Centre Management
- 12 | Financial Statement
- 13 | Partners & Supporters
- 14 | Members, Directors & Advisory Boards





Simon Arbon
Wenta Chairman



Chairman's Report

It's difficult to comprehend how quickly the time has passed and that I'm now writing about my second year as Chairman of Wenta. It seems like only yesterday I was writing about my first year.

However before I talk about the company's outstanding achievements, I'd firstly like to pay tribute to my colleague Karen England, who stood down during the year after 7 year's service as a Wenta Director. Karen's links to Wenta began in the mid 90's when she came for advice to start her own marketing and communications company Keymarcoms. Karen later returned to offer her support by delivering marketing workshops on our start-up programme, and she also acted as a mentor to our fledgling marketing department. Karen was the first lady to join the Wenta Board in 2005 and we're all delighted she will remain as a Wenta Member.

The one thing that never seems to change is the challenging climate that we continue to operate in, and so of course I'm absolutely delighted to be reporting on such an outstanding year of achievement for Wenta. These successes could not possibly have been achieved without the contributions from the whole Wenta team, who I know have worked tirelessly throughout the year.

The challenges ahead were set out by Chris and his team at the Board's annual strategic review, and having come through the difficulties of 2011, it would have been easy for the team to focus on the more immediate issues. However the Wenta Board took on the longer term objective of sustainable growth and the team have since set about putting these plans into place.

The first challenge was to create new Advisory Boards for each of the operating Divisions, bringing in outside expertise to advise on strategic activity in the market place. We recognised we needed to create forums where new ideas could be challenged and strategies developed to take each Division forward. I'm delighted to see all the Advisory Boards now actively supporting the future strategic planning, and my thanks to all the new volunteer Advisory Board members.

Whilst all this was taking place we still had a social enterprise business to run, and this we did with great success. Our accounts show a further increase in turnover to **£2,245,700** and a surplus of **£194,919**, the second most successful financial year in our 29 year history, I believe.

However it's not just about financial success, because we measure our success by what we can achieve with the resources at our disposal and this is where the real achievements of Wenta lie. Just look at the numbers of start-up clients supported, new businesses started, the new business survival rates achieved through My Incubator, client numbers attending training and skills workshops, students attending the Beacon programmes, graduates being placed into projects and employment, and local companies accessing our business centre properties. We cannot under estimate the economic importance to the local communities of all these enterprising activities.

These are the real achievements of the Wenta team, and the Wenta Board are proud to be a part of it. Thank you to all the many supporters, sponsors and partners, because without your contributions, Wenta's achievements across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire would be diminished.

Chief Executive's Report



Chris Pichon
Chief Executive



In last year's report I spoke about the challenges we faced, particularly within the Advisory and Education/Training Divisions. Old contracts were disappearing fast but these were being replaced with new ones. It was a case of 'out with the old and in with the new' but as we all know, new contracts bring with them new challenges

It was one thing to secure the immediate future for these activities but another to fully comprehend what was now required. I mention this because we ventured into the realms of European funding through successfully securing a European Regional Development Fund for a 'Low Carbon' themed start-up project across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Not to be misunderstood, we were extremely grateful to secure this 3 year funding project, but anyone who has ever delivered such will know, European funded programmes come with a health warning... bureaucracy, paperwork and audits. Enough said.

There have been many positives to report and Simon in his Chairman's Report gives mention to the establishment of the new Advisory Boards. Wenta's activities and businesses are becoming increasingly more complex as the demands for our limited resources grow. With the demise of Business Link, Wenta is now the leading business support organisation across both Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, and the expectations on us grow ever more so. To cope with these demands and to get us better prepared for the future challenges, the Advisory Boards bring fresh ideas to the table and challenge old ways of thinking.

It would have been easy to sit back and focus on just contract delivery, but time passes so quickly that if you don't keep thinking ahead, before you know it, you're lost. If Wenta is to continue to be capable of delivering its core services, whilst remaining true to its social enterprise principles of 'community economic benefit', then it must always be moving forward.

At the same time, not too far forward so as to become detached from the realities of today. We have a quite remarkable team of people working at Wenta who make sure that we do deliver. Just read the divisional reports to see what a difference our activities make to our local communities. In my view they are truly remarkable achievements from a truly remarkable team.

I struggle to put a value on the work that we do within these communities, but it's immense, for sure.

The future is bright. We are about to expand our property portfolio. Our networks of My Incubators are delivering excellent start-up numbers and survival rates are way ahead of national averages. Our Education & Training team is preparing for the challenges ahead with the raising of the participation age in education. Our Innovation team is working on the development of a new virtual platform. All this is being achieved with a true spirit of enterprise.

We have strengthened our partnerships, particularly with Local Authorities, the Education sectors, and with the Herts LEP.

Finally, I too would like to express my thanks to Karen England, who in the early days saved me from the embarrassments of delivering marketing workshops, supported Wenta's own marketing activities, and became our first female Board Director. A true spirit of community enterprise.



Peter Cabon
Director of Advisory Services

Over **75%**
of these businesses
are still trading
1 year on

97% of clients
rated the business
advice they received
as satisfactory or better

Over **100**
new clients a month
sought 1:1 start-up advice
from our advisory team

66%
of those clients go on
to start their business,
of which 45% of those
clients are female

Advisory

2011/2012 proved to be a year of opportunity for the Advisory team as the provision of business support settled down following the demise of Business Link.

Our delivery of the DWP funded New Enterprise Allowance programme (NEA) started in September 2011 with a target of 39 new clients joining the programme each month. The current recruitment to NEA is now three times that and the number of successful business starts now exceeds four hundred, proving the success of the scheme so far.

Alongside NEA, we now have a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded business start-up programme that puts the low carbon agenda at its heart. Clients are encouraged to consider environmental issues at every stage of the business planning process so embedding low carbon business practice into every new business start. Similar to NEA, this programme is attracting over one hundred new clients each month.

We also now offer additional support to those new businesses requiring start-up finance. Our Regional Growth Fund (RGF) funded 'Access to Finance' programme helps clients tailor their business plan and become investment ready.

The British Bankers' Association (BBA) led Mentoring programme continues to provide mentors for existing businesses with growth in mind and currently thirty five are supported across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Add to this an increasing number of service level agreements with many Local Authorities and you have business support tailored and relevant to the areas in which we operate.

With six centres, 'outreach' surgeries in many other locations and more advisors than ever before, we have never been better placed to create sustainable new businesses and employment so improving local economies and communities.



CASE STUDY

The Pony Zone

Debbie is currently in negotiations with a well-known park where she hopes to be operating from during all holiday periods in the near future.

Debbie Hogg launched **The Pony Zone**, a unique entertainment business, with the support of Wenta's advisory service in December 2011 having been referred onto the NEA programme by JobCentre Plus. Debbie had always had a passion for horses and was aware of their therapeutic effect on children and adults. With this knowledge and passion, Debbie decided to set up her own business by using her two Welsh Section A ponies to delight children at events.

Throughout the start-up process Debbie found Wenta's Advisory service to be invaluable. Commenting on her experience she said, ***"I first met the Business Advisors at Wenta when I was looking for help in respect of protecting my trademark. This then led to attendance at informative business workshops and one-to-one advice sessions which helped me to write my business plan and launch the business. I was also given advice around raising finance and, with Wenta's help, was able to secure a grant from Stevenage Borough Council."***

Since those early days, business expansion for The Pony Zone has been rapid with its service offering now including children's parties, school fetes, corporate events, charity events, pony rides and one-to-one specialist therapy sessions.

Debbie is currently in negotiations with a well-known park where she hopes to be operating from during all holiday periods in the near future. She is also attending a foundation group to develop a social enterprise that will concentrate on offering equine-facilitated learning.

"I have already carried out some work with a few children and one adult who have benefited greatly from the additional support I have given them through my ponies. My methods are proving to be particularly successful amongst those who suffer due to autism, ADHD and many other issues. It is most certainly exciting stuff and something to look out for in the future."

To find out more about The Pony Zone visit www.pony-zone.co.uk.



Greg Thomas
Innovation Manager

96%
of MI clients are still
trading after 12 months

6
incubators across
Herts & Beds

70
entrepreneurs
currently accessing
the network

240+
entrepreneurs accessed
the network since 2010

My Incubator

The My Incubator brand has grown from strength to strength over the past year with the opening of 2 further incubators in Ware and Bedford, taking the total to 6 incubators across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Wenta's partners involved with My Incubator Bedford are the Bedford i-lab and Bedford Borough Council. My Incubator Ware is of a particular significance as it is the first incubator to be located onsite of a further education college. This incubator, situated on the campus of Hertford Regional College, is the result of a partnership between Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Broxbourne Borough Council, East Herts District Council and Hertford Regional College.

Within our Stevenage incubator, we have seen the capacity grow to such a point, that we made the decision to move to a much larger unit, adding in a 'grow on space' for new businesses to move across to. This new incubator now has double the number of desks and includes meeting rooms for clients to utilise.

We have now seen and supported over **240 entrepreneurs**, helping to achieve more successful business start-ups. At any one time there are close on 100 clients accessing the intensive support provided by My Incubator. Of those receiving support, **96%** are still trading after 12 months of starting their business. We have seen a steady stream of businesses that have been created, grown and then moved on to occupy our serviced offices within our centres and we continue to support them with on-going business advice. My Incubator provides the physical environment for all of our advisory and training support services and is engaging with over **2,500 clients** per year.

Alongside this unique working environment we have increased our number of partnerships and are now running a number of free specialist surgeries, strengthening our relationships with specialist partners such as Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst and working with Universities such as Cranfield where we are now running programmes with our incubator clients.

The Future of My Incubator

The next step for My Incubator is the creation of a virtual platform that will allow us to offer an online advisory service to a broader audience with no geographical constraints. This will not replace existing services, rather will complement our current offering and offer our clients greater choice of how they may access our services. The virtual incubator will also connect the physical incubators and enable clients to support one another across the network. All My Incubator clients will have automatic access to virtual support when the portal launches in Spring 2013.



The next step for My Incubator is the creation of a virtual platform that will us to offer an online advisory service to a broader audience with no geographical constraints.

CASE STUDY



Evevo

In 2011, online marketing agency Evevo joined My Incubator Stevenage at the business and technology centre (**btc**) to develop their business. Having used the workspace, business advice and networking opportunities, Evevo now has a wide product portfolio of clients, with a worldwide team of freelancers working on various projects.

Robert Hughes, Managing Director of Evevo, has spent much of his time in the incubator developing new services, specialising in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Website Design, with on-site support and advice from the team of advisors at My Incubator Stevenage.

As well as receiving business advice, working at the **btc** has led to many working relationships being made with local clients, some of whom are now amongst Evevo's existing client base.

Working in the incubator has also enabled Evevo to build and grow a successful company from the ground up. Robert said, *"Working in the incubator has given us the opportunity to build a brand and successfully increase our client base. Without such a strong foundation, our growth as a company would have been very difficult. In part, due to the help from My Incubator, we are now taking a very big step to grow our company 'in-house' and take on several full-time employees. We have a lot to owe to everyone at the My Incubator team!"*

More recently, Robert has won the training contract for delivering Wenta's 'Social Media' and 'Web Development' courses at the **btc** and also now runs monthly seminars and presentations for local businesses, showing them how to use online marketing to grow their businesses.

To find out more about Evevo visit www.evevo.co.uk





Sharon Gaffney
Head of Education and Training



Education & Training

Beacon programmes

Our Beacon Portfolio has expanded in 2011/2012 with the introduction of an additional programme, Beacon Interviews. This additional programme has brought the portfolio to 6 programmes – **Beacon Business, Beacon Life, Beacon Green, Beacon Enterprise Clubs, Beacon Specialist Events** and now, **Beacon Interviews**.

Our programmes are adaptable and can be delivered across all age groups, from children to adults. These Beacon programmes are designed to give the participants invaluable life, enterprise and employability skills that can be used in the working world.

In 2011/2012 the Education Team delivered **72** Beacon programmes and events to **2860** participants at **34** local schools and further education colleges across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

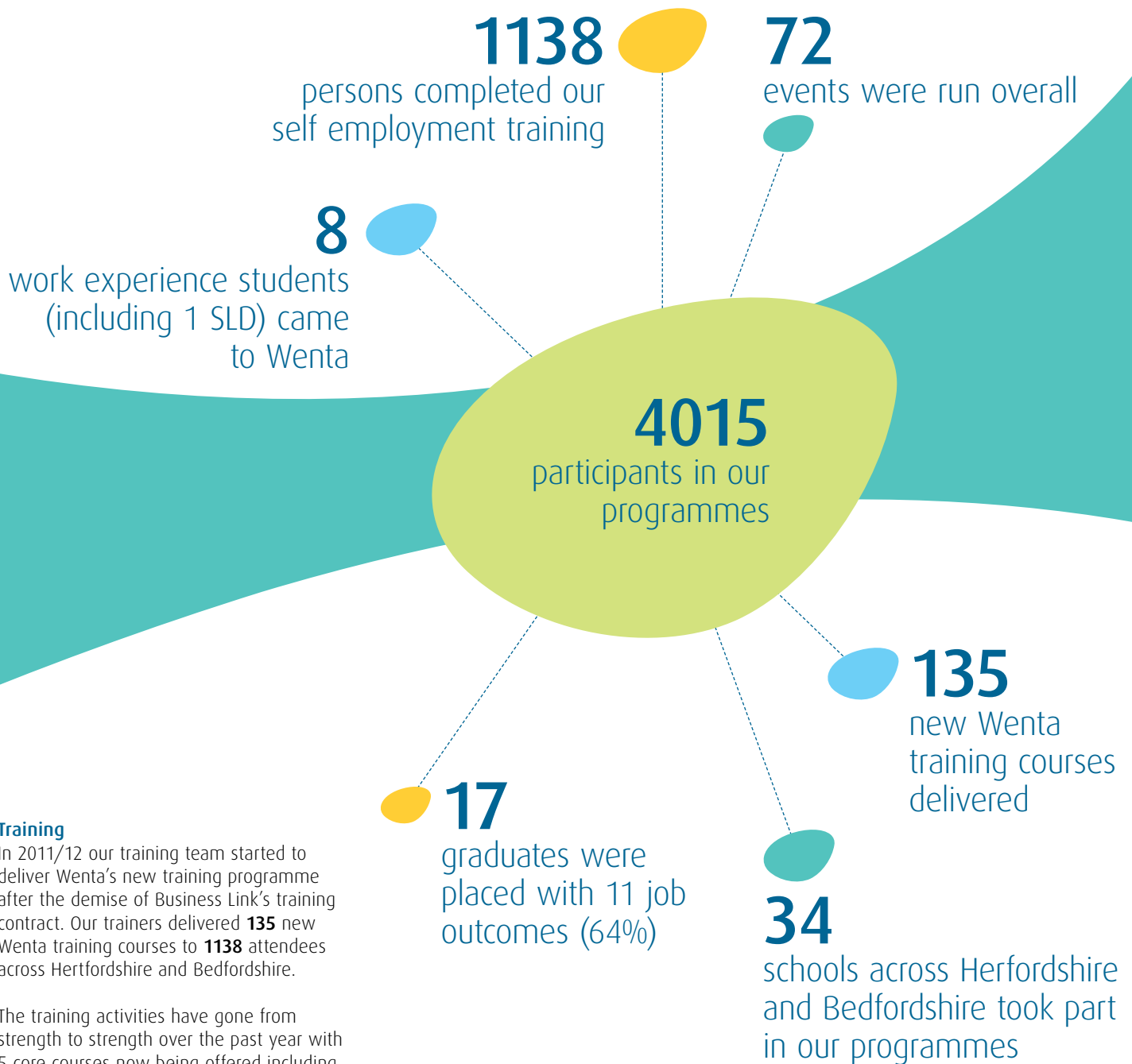
All 72 programmes and events were exciting and engaging however one will remain in the Education team's minds as particularly special.

The Business Beacon Enterprise programme was a huge success when it was delivered at Francis Combe Academy in July 2012. 220 Year 10 students spent part of their week competing for 6 paid work experience placements, 2 of which were at Wenta working within the Education Team. The aim of this particular Beacon event was to instill some invaluable life skills into the students of Francis Combe Academy which they could then utilise when applying for jobs in the future.

Two individuals were selected for the Wenta role and both made a very positive impact during their time with us. Lauren Dennis, one of the students chosen for the role described her experience: ***"I was one of the final six that was lucky enough to earn a placement. I think it is an amazing experience as you learn a lot of new things that you can take away from it. The skills I have learnt will really help me in the future"***.

Step

Wenta is continuing to support the fight against youth unemployment and in 2011/2012 Wenta successfully placed 17 graduates into paid work placements with small companies across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Almost two thirds of these went on to secure a permanent job within their host company. Step continues to be a high priority for our team. Wenta's strategy is to continue to support young people into the workplace and work has commenced to introduce a similar scheme aimed at the younger 16+ market.



Training

In 2011/12 our training team started to deliver Wenta's new training programme after the demise of Business Link's training contract. Our trainers delivered **135** new Wenta training courses to **1138** attendees across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

The training activities have gone from strength to strength over the past year with 5 core courses now being offered including **Business Planning, A Taste of Marketing, Finance and Bookkeeping, Social Media and Website Development**. Other courses on offer include Legal and IP, Selling and Green Business.

We have also delivered 60 Barclays 'Get Ready for Business' start-up courses under the Regional Growth Programme. They have also been adapted and delivered into specific individual organisations in order to train staff and improve management skills.

We are very proud as a team to have created, developed and delivered such a successful new training programme and look forward to its continued development in 2012/2013.

"I've found the Wenta courses I've been on have given me the key nitty gritty information that will enable me to develop my new business properly, and realise what it will take for it to thrive. If you're planning on setting up a new business and are not fully experienced in each aspect required to run a successful business, I urge you to attend them."

Ben Crossley
3D Visualisation & Design
www.ben-crossley.com



Spencer Tagg
Director of Property Services

£2.4 million
turnover for 4 centres

Wenta's Property Services
are responsible for
64%
of Wenta's revenue



350
businesses based
at our centres
(residential & virtual)



Nearly **£100** million
per annum combined
turnover of all clients
within Wenta managed
business centres

Business Centre Management

Our Property team manages a portfolio of:

- 4 business centres located in **Watford, Potters Bar & Stevenage** totally over **120,000 sq. ft** of lettable space
- Through its owned centres and management contracts, the team were responsible for over **£2.4 million turnover**
- Accommodating & supporting over **350 businesses** with offices, workshops and virtual office packages
- **62** businesses moved into our centres last year and **22** existing clients took additional space within the centres, as their businesses grew, proving Wenta can not only support the start-up businesses, but provide an environment which helps businesses grow
- **20** businesses chose one of our centres when relocating from outside of the area

Wenta's Property Services account for almost 65% of Wenta's revenue, not only making an important contribution to underpin the Agency's Advisory and Education activities, but also provides a cost effective environment for over 350 businesses to be located and expand.

Wenta's business centres also provide the physical environment to support three of the six My Incubators. Several of the My Incubator clients have benefitted from the grow on space provided and have gone on to move into a permanent office of their own within the centres.

The emphasis with all our activities is to provide high levels of customer service to our clients, through the provision of reception, telephony and internet services, together with realistically priced offices & workshops of varying sizes to suit a variety of different businesses. Occupancy rates have continuously exceeded 90% for Watford & Potters Bar, and in the case of the **btc** in Stevenage, where we started the management contract just over four years ago with the building only 25% occupied, this year saw us reach 80%.

Over the last year businesses based within the Wenta facilities generated almost £100 million of turnover, often employing local people and engaging with local suppliers, so each business centre is a significant contributor to the local economy.

With this wealth of experience of managing four centres over the last 30 years, Wenta's Property Services remain committed to develop the property portfolio to increase the number of business centres we operate, either through management contracts or purchasing additional facilities. The growth of new centres, will not only allow us to continuously support Wenta's activities, but also provide a supportive location for many more businesses across the region.

Lisa has developed a one-to-one tuition programme, enabling clients to maximise their learning through bespoke lessons on any aspect of garment construction from pattern cutting to finishing.



CASE STUDY

Nelson Bespoke

Lisa Nelson, a medical herbalist, anatomy specialist and – most relevant – an experienced seamstress and clothing/costume designer, was referred to Wenta in summer 2011 by Watford Job Centre Plus, following redundancy.

Having spent time on her business plan with support from Wenta, Lisa started trading as a specialist seamstress offering bespoke, couture clothing. In response to customer demand, she introduced sewing classes tailored to the needs of her clients. Not only can Lisa create beautifully designed and constructed garments but she can also teach skills needed to produce professional standard clothing.

In addition to her design, manufacturing and teaching skills, she is an excellent and committed networker and from her base in My Incubator Watford, developed a vast array of key contacts and clients. She attended several of Wenta's training courses and was a regular at their Enterprise Club – support and networking group. She has now moved on into her own unit at The Wenta Business Centre in Watford and has established some great connections.

“Flexible working space, monthly licences, seven days a week access and meeting room hire are obvious benefits of being on the Wenta site. However, it is the more personal aspect to their service that has had the biggest impact on the success of my business. The reception staff suggested other onsite businesses that I might be interested in talking to. I gained my first client through such a suggestion”.

Lisa has collaborated with a fellow client of The Wenta Business Centre, Steve from Sewfine, to offer his customers sewing lessons and technical assistance. Having developed a mutual working relationship, Lisa is aware that he is always there if she needs anything for her machines quickly.

The regular networking events organised by Wenta have enabled Lisa to get to know owners of businesses that she would not normally have approached in her line of business. In turn, she has been able to recommend them to others and vice versa.

“On a more personal level it has been great to move onto offices at the same time as others that started in the incubator with me, and watch their businesses grow: Clive at CJ Events and Media; Renee of Watford Therapy and Keith at Continuity Governance Ltd.”

Lisa has recently designed and created a number of garments for high profile clients. She has also developed a one-to-one tuition programme, enabling clients to maximise their learning through bespoke lessons on any aspect of garment construction from pattern cutting to finishing. She is also now mutually co-mentoring with corsetiere Bethan Billingsley (orchidcorsetry.co.uk) and is working with a growing customer base of female clients who require basic wardrobe staples.

To find out more about Nelson Bespoke please call **07785 304006**.

Financial Statement

As the individual department reports suggest 2011/2012 has been a very promising year for Wenta. This is further highlighted by the excellent financial results.

Consolidated Wenta Group Results

	12 Months to 31/07/2012	12 Months to 31/07/2011
Turnover	£2,245,700	£2,098,453
Administrative Expenses	(£1,991,294)	(£1,810,913)
Interest/Other Charges	(£59,489)	(£68,947)
Surplus on Ordinary Activities	£194,919	£218,593
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	£5,134,631	£5,077,284
Long Term Liabilities	(£1,403,723)	(£1,541,293)
Total Net Assets	£3,730,908	£3,535,991

Donations

During the year Wenta have also supported a number of charities. Donations have been made to the following organisations:

- Cancer Research
- Keech Hospice
- North Bushey Royal British Legion
- Peace Hospice
- Prostate Cancer UK
- Royal Marsden
- The Shoe Box
- Tracks Autism
- Willow Foundation
- Young Enterprise



Partners and Supporters

We would like to thank all of our partners and supporters over 2011/2012 and look forward to continuing to work with them.

Partners

- 14-19 Strategy Team
- Ascend
- Barclays Bank
- Basepoint
- Bedford Borough Council
- Bedford i-lab
- British Bakers Association
- Broxbourne Borough Council
- Business Finance Taskforce
- Central Bedfordshire Borough Council
- East Herts District Council
- Educational Business Partnership
- European Regional Development Fund
- European Social Fund
- Exemplas
- Freman College
- Hertford Regional College
- Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Hertsmere Borough Council
- Hertfordshire Training & Development Consortium
- JobCentre Plus
- Lloyds TSB Business
- Luton Borough Council
- National Enterprise Network
- North Hertfordshire College
- NWES
- Oaklands College
- Prime
- The Prince's Trust
- Regional Growth Fund
- Strategic Area Partnership Group
- Step
- Stevenage Borough Council
- University of Bedfordshire
- University of Hertfordshire
- Watford Borough Council
- West Herts College
- Wycombe District Council
- Young Enterprise

Supporters

- Anglia Ruskin University
- Astrium
- BioPark
- Brasier Freeth
- Brown and Lee
- Building Research Establishment
- The Carbon Trust
- Cranfield University
- CVS
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Foundation East
- Grant Thornton
- Loughborough University
- Matthew Arnold & Baldwin
- Myers Clark
- Peppercorn
- Plymouth University
- SA Law
- Scott & York
- Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst
- Taylor Walton Solicitors
- Turnbull Associates
- Watford & West Herts Chamber of Commerce

Members, Directors & Advisory Boards

Special thanks must also go to our Members, Directors and Advisory Boards for their valuable support.

Members

Simon Arbon Brasier Freeth
Tony Bond Consultant
Steve Coster Retired
Karen England Herts County Council
Chris Green Retired
Andrew Leno Retired
Chris Pichon Chief Executive, Wenta
Richard Rudman RBS (*Resigned Jan 2013*)

Board of Directors

Chairman, Simon Arbon Brasier Freeth
Tony Bond Consultant
Steve McAteer Deyton Bell
Douglas Hutton Aurum Consulting Ltd
Irene Anne McLaughlin Help My Company
Richard Phillips Matthew Arnold & Baldwin
Julie Gingell SA Law
Graham Galbraith University of Hertfordshire
Chris Pichon Chief Executive, Wenta
Peter Cabon Director of Advisory Services, Wenta
Spencer Tagg Director of Property Services, Wenta

Advisory Services Advisory Board

Peter Cabon Director of Advisory Services, Wenta
Jo Ransom Business Improvement and Development Services (BIDS)
Douglas Hutton Aurum Consulting Ltd
David Moule Exemplas
Dawn Whiteley National Enterprise Network
Graham Galbraith University of Hertfordshire
Thea Bloyce Wenta
Jeremy Green Wenta
John Allison Department for Business Innovation & Skills

Property Services Advisory Board

Spencer Tagg Director of Property Services, Wenta
Tony Bond Consultant
Ian Fielder Ian Fielder Ltd
Geoff Jankowski Consultant
Simon Arbon Brasier Freeth
John Ellis Freidman
Keith Palmer SilverFox Consultancy Ltd

Education & Training Services Advisory Board

Sharon Gaffney Head of Education & Training, Wenta
Steve McAteer Deyton Bell
Jo Ransom Business Improvement and Development Services (BIDS)
Irene Anne McLaughlin Help My Company
Carol Deslandes Inspire2Enterprise
Cyrus Cooper Maximum Performance
Mary Hurlestone Herts County Council
Ray Potter Lorica Insurance Brokers

Innovation Services Advisory Board

Greg Thomas Innovation Manager, Wenta
Irene Anne McLaughlin Help My Company
Walter Herriot Herriot Associates Ltd
Richard Phillips Matthew Arnold & Baldwin
Martino Picardo Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst



The Wenta Business Centre
Colne Way
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD24 7ND

T 0845 371 0891
W www.wenta.co.uk

[www.twitter.com/TheWentaGroup](https://twitter.com/TheWentaGroup)
www.facebook.com/TheWentaGroup