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This salary benchmarking project has been a reminder of just how powerful that kind of inclusive approach can be. With their practical skills, Reality HR knew exactly how to harvest the information we needed and with their pragmatic nature and depth of HR expertise, they showed us how to communicate that knowledge to our people and utilise it for future growth.

Ann Chambers – HR Director



Meet ECOTONE and learn about **the challenge** they faced with their HR

Ecotone is a pioneer in natural and organic food, distributing household brands such as Clipper Teas, Kallo, Whole Earth, Almond Breeze and Mrs Crimbles. They define their mission as 'healthier food, healthier people, healthier planet' and vegetarian products account for 97% of their range.

In the UK, they employ c.150 people across two sites: their head office in Camberley and a tea factory in Beaminster, Dorset (the home of Clipper Teas).

Here is a company that strives to conduct their business in a way that is clear, fair and sustainable for all. They seek to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they operate. In alignment with this ethos, they want to ensure that the pay and benefits they offer their staff is level with that of other companies and roles in this industry and regionally.

Ecotone's HR Director was struggling without the resource and expertise required to manage a proper salary benchmarking exercise in-house, so the forward-thinking company reached out to Reality HR. The key objective was to conduct comprehensive pay benchmarking to inform Ecotone's appraisal process and facilitate salary reviews. HR Director, Ann Chambers, explains:

"We aim to create a working environment which is as healthy and fair as the products we supply because we know that inspired staff are motivated staff and this will help us achieve our goal of becoming 'European champions of healthy and sustainable food'. That's why we wanted this pay and benefits review so much. This area still needed a deeper dive for us to be credible when managing appraisals, pay rises and recruitment. We employ staff in many specialist roles and we're a portfolio business, so naturally, situations had arisen that revealed salary disparity which, left unmanaged, can create a fragmented workforce. It's imperative that we are equipped to take our staff through the appraisal process and pay review in a clear and informed manner. Not only must we be able to answer their questions in factual terms using solid industry benchmarks, we need to illustrate a clear career progression path and the potential rewards available to employees who continue to work with Ecotone.

The action taken by Reality HR

Reality HR carefully sense checks the data required for input into the salary survey tool. Payscale is the largest real-time salary survey in the world, using data collected 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year from visitors to their website. The Market Salary and Benefits Data Report is the output and Reality HR used this leading tool to:



We are extremely grateful for Reality HR's insight, responsiveness, thoroughness, and the quality of the data they've provided – which has become an indispensable tool in the operation of our business.

Ann Chambers HR Director

- Take the salaries of various roles at Wessanen UK through a rigorous benchmarking process
- Identify how consistent their salaries were in this market and relevant areas of the country
- Provide reporting, analysis and recommendations; categorised to aid day-to-day use e.g. salary benchmarked by skill level, by experience, by number of employees supervised
- Supply reports for all Wessanen UK employees, as well as senior managers, to read and discuss

The outcome

With this salary benchmarking exercise complete, Wessanen UK has evolved as a business, experiencing the following benefits:

- Managers have greater confidence and credibility when explaining matters relating to pay
- The culture of trust: employees feel their questions are answered in a clear, factual manner using robust evidence
- Pay disputes are minimised, conserving HR resource
- Appraisals encompass career progression routes in terms of remuneration as well as skills and experience
- Healthier staff retention because people feel valued by being included in the process e.g. receiving a report related to their job area
- Higher morale and understanding between team members due to fair and open pay structure
- New candidates are attracted by competitive salaries and honest values and standards

