

Case study: Friendly Soap

Friendly Soap is a small but perfectly formed manufacturing company based on West Yorkshire. Founded in 2008, they specialise in producing natural, affordable, vegan cosmetic and household products in plastic-free packaging. Friendly Soap have worked hard to build their ethics into their company's structure from the start, holding a firm belief that business can be conducted in a way that creates a positive impact for people and the environment.

Friendly Soap began production in 2008. Working out of an old mill, the company's two directors hand-made, packed and posted every single order. As an SME they now employ 19 full- and part-time members of staff.

Fairly compensating people for their time has been one of Friendly Soap's guiding principles since they took on their first member of staff in 2018, paying in excess of the Living Wage from the very beginning. They gained official accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation in August 2019.



The process

The decision to become a Living Wage Employer was made early on, when the company was still very small. The decision to become certified was reached by both directors within the first 12 months of the company having taken on employees. Because the company has grown around the Living Wage, Friendly Soap have avoided many of the complications that come with certification. They haven't had to create costings or redirect finances. They didn't have to convince board members, because at this point the two directors made up the sum total of the board. They didn't have to consider how to bring in subcontractors because there were no subcontractors. They simply started by paying their staff a Living Wage.



The benefits

1

Staff security - guaranteed standard of living for staff members and their families.

2

Staff feel cared for, valued and are proud to work for the company. The quality of their work is high and they take personal pride in their output.

3

Higher staff retention rates.

4

Vacancies attract a high number of quality applicants.

5

Higher disposable incomes feed into the local economy (95% of staff live locally), supporting local businesses and reducing carbon footprints.

6

A guaranteed Living Wage assisted in their gaining Ethical Consumer Best Buy status.

7

Certification badge is recognisable to consumers and effectively communicates the company's ethics.

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There are so many benefits to becoming a Living Wage employer. Our staff are proud to work for a company who practice what they preach. They feel secure and valued; qualities that should not be underestimated in today's gig-centered economy. Consequently, our staff are highly-motivated and retention rates are high.

Robin Costello, Director

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Lessons learned and advice for other employers

For Friendly Soap, the accreditation process was simple. As an SME with a clearly defined set of values, the decision to certify was reached quickly, and because the company were already paying over the Living Wage, they did not have to make any changes before applying.

Friendly Soap's advice therefore is, to any SME considering becoming a Living Wage Employer, go for it! The sooner the better. It's so simple, and creates so many positive effects.



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I really love working for an employer that pays the living wage. I feel I am able to support local independent businesses and contribute to our local economy. It makes me incredibly proud to be a part of an ethical company that values its members of staff.

Eve Robertson, Trade Picking Coordinator

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