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FUTURE PERFECT!

A down-to-earth, plain speaking Yorkshireman, whose success is down to 'sheer hard graft and determination,' is the face of the future for leading cleaning and hygiene specialist, Chemex International. For John Heslop, former mining engineer and a Chemex franchisee for six years, personifies the vision of the company's new management team for Chemex, and has been shortlisted for the finals of the prestigious BFA Franchisee of The Year title.

Not content simply to be a 'man and a van' operator, John has built his business into a highly profitable multi-van operation and has aspirations to move to bigger premises, take on more staff and double the size of his business over the next five years.

"Most people in John's position would now be firmly in the 'comfort zone', but John continues to pester us with questions about how he can grow his business further, tells us where we've got it wrong and what we ought to be doing about it. He is a general nuisance – and we need more just like him!" quips Chemex CEO, Sean Derrig.

He adds, "On a more serious note, John is a real franchising success story and represents all that is great about Chemex – he understands that he has bought a business opportunity, not a job, and through hard work and tenacity has built a truly successful and robust business. In short, our vision is to create an entire network of forward-looking businessmen - just like John."

John joined Chemex having decided that the mining industry was headed in an irretrievable downward spiral. "I worked hard to achieve a good position with British Coal, but the problem was that I had a bright future in an industry that by then was going nowhere," he explains. "I knew I needed to do something else and was keen to run my own business, but I didn't have a particular trade or a new idea that would make my fortune, so I started to take a look at various franchising opportunities."

By 2000, John had narrowed the field down to Chemex, but before proceeding was keen to talk to existing franchisees to hear at first hand exactly what operating a franchise would be like. "I was surprised at how open everyone was," he recalls. "I could pick any franchisee to speak to and when I spent time with them, everyone clearly believed in the products and the system – best of all, their customers seemed genuinely pleased to see them."

He finally took the plunge later that year, working a virgin area, with products he knew little about in an industry that was entirely new to him and doing the one thing he'd never done before – selling!

“I learned the hard way that it is all about planning, persistence and knocking doors,” he says. “The rewards are certainly there, both financially and in terms of real satisfaction in seeing your business grow by your own efforts, but people coming into franchising need to understand that it isn't an easy ride.”

John also learned early on that the success of his business lay not in selling his products – excellent though they are – but in selling peace of mind to customers. As the marketplace is beset by increasingly complex legislation relating to Health & Safety, accordingly customers in key sectors such as the food industry are looking to suppliers like Chemex for support in achieving compliance and the reassurance that their standards of hygiene are beyond reproach.

Similarly, as MRSA and other health scare stories hit the headlines, Chemex hits the jackpot, with customers only too keen to take advantage of a comprehensive Hygiene Control Programme and market leading products proven to kill dangerous bacteria safely and effectively.

“The beauty of operating in the cleaning and hygiene marketplace is that just about everyone needs our products,” John confirms. “But when you can provide a solution to customers' problems – whether it's health & safety, cost-control or addressing environmental issues – then you secure a long-term relationship and become viewed rather as a business partner than just another supplier.”

John is one of a new breed of franchisee set to shape the future for Chemex and he will be the perfect ambassador for the company at the forthcoming Franchisee of The Year competition, says Sean Derrig.

“Chemex is a long established, well respected franchise organisation with a superb reputation in both the franchising industry and the specialist sectors within which it operates,” he concludes. “We plan to build on that track record, developing the franchise into an even stronger, more profitable franchise opportunity for ambitious business people, like John and others in the network, who are focussed on long term success.”