

Border Biscuits: What we learned in 2020

“What we think stands Border apart from the crowd? How did we respond to Covid-19 as well as we did? What is central to unlocking the next chapter of our growth? There is one answer – our people”

Paul Parkins

Managing Director



When it comes to the crunch, businesses need to think about their people and their ability to adapt how they work. Both will take you through the challenges of the next few years.

We are an award-winning, independently-owned sweet biscuit manufacturer, based in Lanark. Founded in 1984, our premium biscuits are enjoyed by people across the UK and internationally, both within the retail and foodservice sectors. Like every other business, 2020 made us think a lot about resilience: how we achieve it, what we got right, and what we learned.

Changing Ways of Working

Making Border Biscuits a great place to work has always been an important aim for the business because employee wellbeing and engagement are core to what we do. Before 2020, we had already implemented a number of initiatives to move towards that goal – for example, in 2018 we introduced a **profit share scheme** for our staff.

In 2020, we thought more than ever about employees' physical health and general wellbeing.

How people work: Businesses have to listen to employees and understand what matters to them. During Covid 19, we spoke with all staff about how their roles could be performed, then looked at how workspace could be repurposed, and roles adapted. For example:

- **Working from home (WFH)** has advantages in terms of flexibility and commuting, but doesn't suit everyone – perhaps it doesn't fit with their family life or perhaps they miss the cohesion and buzz of the office. One size doesn't fit all.
- Based on that understanding, we therefore looked at **rotating functions on site**, so people have the option to work (safely) on site for some of the time or for some functions. We have kitted our offices out to enable this, and have purchased some portacabins to enable people to collaborate at a safe distance.



Case Study

**SCOTLAND
FOOD & DRINK
PARTNERSHIP**

When they work: In the Scottish winter, it can be very easy to miss seeing any daylight at all. We made our winter working hours more flexible, blocked out any meetings from 12:00 to 2:00, and encouraged staff to take a break.

Why they work: Work should be challenging but also **fun**. We've looked at how we can build cohesion for both our home working and site-based teams, for example by hosting Zoom team building events such as quizzes and murder mystery evenings.

The need for agility

In our sector, change is constant. Consumer attitudes and shopping habits are always in flux, and it can be difficult to anticipate which trends will be temporary or long-term. You have to be ready to adapt.

Like many businesses, Covid hit us hard. Our out of home business declined by 90%, and we had to adapt at pace.

What worked in Covid 19 will work for these too:

- We backed our instincts
- We looked beyond the short term
- We had a clear and simple plan
- We communicated well
- We acted at pace to new opportunities

But most importantly, it was our people that turned it around, and our people who will continue to do so. If Covid taught us anything, it is that last 12 months has demonstrated the strength and fabric of the business and its people.

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