

# Savile Group Plc

## Talent management group Savile suits 'change junkie'

RICHARD RIVLIN, The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON), June 8, 2008 Sunday

JONATHAN COHEN, executive chairman of Savile Group, is a change junkie. His business delivers talent management and outplacement services to a range of executives and clients who are wrestling with the challenge of change. The fees are good, but can Cohen build a sustainable business off the back of it?

Savile has three brands: Fairplace has an 18-year track record in outplacement services; Cedar delivers talent management programmes, and IDDAS delivers coaching and career advisory services to leading public and private company executives.

Cohen says: "Our strategy is a collection of federal brands rather than one-stop-shop uniformity." In the year to June 2007, the business lost pounds 517,000 on sales of pounds 5.29m.

There is no research in the market on the business and Cohen - a previous chief executive of County NatWest and vice-chairman of Charterhouse - refuses to give any guidance.

All he will commit to is under-promising and overdelivering. That means a return to profit in the current year at the very least. He says: "Some people believe this type of business should not be listed. But shares give us currency. Come the day we find suitable acquisitions, we can use them."

Fighting talk and, unusually for penny stocks on the Aim market, this is one that seems to be attracting attention. Shares have risen from 9.5p in March to 24p today, giving the group a valuation of pounds 3.51m.

This is great news for the board, which accounts for 29.23 per cent of the stock, and for the 350 individual shareholders who have stock with the company. To date it has not been a company followed by the institutions but all that could be about to change.

The vision of management is to develop Savile into a profitable niche human resources services business with a number of different trading units. The majority of the company's business continues to be in providing transition services.

A classic example of this will be a three-month programme provided to a middle-ranking executive who is no longer needed. The programme the individual will receive includes a combination of one-to-one coaching, access to research services and assistance with CV-building.

Meanwhile, 40 per cent of what the company does is focused on giving talent management services to those who are still wanted by organisations.

And Savile has access to some exceptional people who can add significant value to clients. For instance, Martin Smith, a seasoned financier with a CV that encompasses McKinsey, Citibank and the Royal Academy of Music, is one of the group's IDDAS coaches.

We live in an era when senior executives will consider mentoring services from those who have been there and done that, but Savile Group needs to ensure it can be more than a Rolodex of former City grandees.

Jo Bond, group marketing director at Savile, says: "We want our people - and there are well over 150 of them, including associates - to be Savile. The issue is to ensure we listen to the clients and solve their problems. The acid test is whether clients buy more than one service from us."

Both she and Cohen argue that the 58 FTSE 100 clients that the business has demonstrate that it is providing a high-quality service that appeals and adds value.

Cohen is now spending the majority of his time hunting for new deals to bolt on to the business.

He says: "We feel the key is to have strong financial management at the centre, allied to great freedom for the revenue drivers of individual businesses to operate in a way which works for them, without a heavy central bureaucracy."

Savile's surging share price means that Cohen is probably well positioned to take advantage of smaller company's that are finding the current economic climate tough to trade through.

Richard Rivlin is managing director of Bladonmore, [www.bladonmore.com](http://www.bladonmore.com)

## **About Savile Group Plc**

Savile Group has three centres of excellence: CEDAR TM, Fairplace and IDDAS providing coaching, mentoring, career transition and talent management to leading companies, professional services firms and the public sector.

CEDAR Talent Management offers extensive expertise in coaching, leadership assessment and development.

Fairplace has an enviable reputation for high quality career transition and career management.

IDDAS provides a range of board level career and business mentoring, coaching and talent management services, including leadership development.

For more information please contact Marta Matajz, [marta.matajz@savile.com](mailto:marta.matajz@savile.com)