



Business Information Point

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BIP NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE!

- Looking ahead to a successful 2008

Set and keep new years resolutions for your business by making the most of the support on offer.

- Workshops at a fraction of the cost helping you to work ON your business- not IN it.

- 'More than one way to skin a cat'
 A local business owner shares his experiences and views on running a small business.

RURAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IS A SUCCESS!

Businesses in East and Mid Devon were only too happy to say why.....

Having launched the programme with a series of workshops in September 2007 (that run until March 2009), **The Business Information Point** were delighted to receive so much positive feedback from those who had attended courses, or opted for some one-to-one practical business support. Here is just a 'snapshot' of what some local businesses thought of the service:

"My advisor from the Business Information Point, Honiton has been a superb support to me and my cooking business, 'Wild Thyme'. I have greatly valued her advice on marketing and business strategy. The professional and friendly service provided has been invaluable in boosting confidence and success. Regular meetings and creative discussions with a professional business advisor to assess progress are all part of the service I have experienced with **The Business Information Point**.



In addition to the personal service provided, I have greatly benefited from the highly relevant workshops on marketing, website optimisation and how to enhance the profitability in my business; all have been extremely useful and worthwhile. The combination of personal service and workshops given by professionals in the business world is a wonderful opportunity and I am most grateful to The Business Information

Point- this comprehensive service has been invaluable in running my business." **Tamsin Lear from Wild Thyme.**

"I now have very clear goals for my business, and need to make sure that I am marketing my service with an appropriate branding and image to a specific market sector. The advisor at **The Business Information Point** took me through the stages of a marketing plan in bite sized chunks so that I could position myself in the market appropriately. The discipline, knowledge and focus have helped my business tremendously". **Robert Wykes from Summit Contract Cleaners.**

Val Baker of the Blackdown Hills Business Association commented on the recent Rural Tourism Workshop held in October: "This was an excellent workshop, packed with facts on visitor trends, tips on how to turn threats into business opportunities and tips on how to improve the visitor experience to the area. The workshop was very interactive, so businesses had plenty of opportunity to ask questions and respond to the presentation by Annette Cole of South West Tourism. I believe that most if not all the workshop attendees were astonished at some of the findings of a recent survey of visitors to the South West! We also found it particularly interesting to hear about how some businesses, that had been struggling, had managed to turn their businesses around and were now reaping the rewards. We came away with plenty of food for thought. We are looking forward to more training opportunities in 2008." **We too would like to extend our sincere thanks to Val for her pro-active approach in helping to advertise the Rural Enterprise Development project to businesses who could benefit from the scheme.**

If you would like to find out more, just contact the team on free phone 0800 592782.

WORKSHOPS

These workshops are designed to be very interactive to allow you to be able to relate the topic to your specific business, and your specific queries.

There is a nominal charge of £10 per candidate as a project contribution.

~SELF EMPLOYED? YOUR GUIDE TO SELF ASSESSMENT~

The 31st January draws near- are you on top of YOUR self assessment return?

It's your responsibility to return the correct details of income and expenditure. It's easy to do this as long as you are keeping accurate and up-to-date records- which is simple when you know how! Jane Holden has worked for Her Majesties Revenue and Customs (HM R&C), and is able to couple this experience with a very practical and human approach to a subject few relish!! Allow Jane to give you not only valuable hints and tips, but also clarity of your legal obligations by coming along.

Thursday 17th January Fishponds Hotel, Registration 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

N.B This course is provided free of charge by HM R&C

Selling on the Internet Using Google and e-BAY

Deborah Turner has been running successful and popular workshops across the South West on Website optimisation and attendees have been able to experience immediate results. As a result of feedback from our workshop candidates, Deborah has now developed a course that looks at the practical steps involved in ensuring your e-commerce activities are as effective as possible. There is opportunity for you to try out some exercises during the workshop so that you can gain a full understanding of the principles involved.

Tuesday 22nd January at East Devon Business Centre. Registration 9.30 am -12.30 pm

Organisational Growing Pains

Terry Dowrick is a highly experienced Business Mentor who has successfully worked on a practical basis with many businesses across the South West. Although his background is in international finance and banking, Terry can really relate to the small business culture. Making the transition from owner manager to "professionally managed" business, identifying and surviving growth stages, recognising need for change, management strategies, tools and systems and leadership issues are all explored in this two-part workshop. This is one that you really can't afford to miss if you are looking at setting objectives for 2008, to ensure that you work on your business, not in it.

Part One - Wednesday 23rd January, Fishponds Hotel, Registration 4.30 pm - 7.00 pm

Part Two - Wednesday 30th January, Fishponds Hotel 5.00- 7.00 pm

E-Mail Newsletters- Free Easy to Use Template

Deborah Turner has helped many businesses to 'hit the mark' with their newsletter campaigns, and strengthen their relationships with their existing client base- whilst also of course piquing the interest of potential new customers. Attending this workshop will allow you to take away a free template and guide to supplement the very practical content of the course.

Tuesday 19th February, East Devon Business Centre, Registration 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

Using Price As A Marketing Tool

Catherine Broomfield, Marketing Consultant returns to deliver this fundamental topic. Pricing is so often the last thing a small business will think about, but the first thing to make that all important difference between profit and loss. If you want to make your small business profitable, you have to understand that price is not a function of cost, it is a tool to be used in marketing and adding value. This workshop will look in detail at pricing, how to develop a successful pricing policy, and how to use price to drive your marketing strategy.

Wednesday 20th February. Fishponds House Hotel. Registration 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

LEVEL 2 FOOD SAFETY IN CATERING (CIEH Food Hygiene)

Designed for any of you working in Catering, manufacturing or a retail setting where food is prepared cooked and handled. This was previously known as the Foundation Food Hygiene Course, and tutor Jeff Coombes will guide you through the very common sense theory to the multiple choice test at the end of the session.

Tuesday 26th February, Fishponds House Hotel, Registration from 8.30 am, Course commences 9.00 am and completes at 5.30 pm (N.B. although refreshments will be provided throughout the day lunch is not included in this workshop)

Strategic Marketing For Small Businesses

Experienced Business Mentor Terry Dowrick delivers this two part programme that develops the 'Marketing for Small Businesses' delivered in the last run of workshops onto the next level. A 'must' for any business that is looking to significantly evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing plan and strategy. The workshop includes developing a business strategy, guidance on competing in fragmented industries, how to grow your customer base by looking at key fundamentals such as how to Price, Promote and Sell; and all importantly, how to evaluate your marketing efforts.

Part One- Thursday 21st February Fishponds House Hotel, Registration 4.30 pm – 7.00 pm

Part Two – Thursday 28th February Fishponds House Hotel. 5.00 pm - 7.00 pm

Financial Planning For Your Business And Future

With 20 years experience in the financial world, and Director of a successful Limited Company, Gerard O'Boyle B.A. (Hons) Dip.Ed. Cert PFS of Anstey Financial Planning Ltd. knows a thing or two about how to manage your financial affairs to cope with both planned and un-planned circumstances. This fully interactive workshop covers all aspects from insurances to inheritance tax, and pro's and con's of investment.

Wednesday 27th February, Fishponds House Hotel, Registration from 9.30 am -12.30 pm

MAINTAIN THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR COMPUTER

Complete simple tasks to ensure the optimum performance and efficiency of your computer; learn how to free up disk space, detect errors, and how to protect your computer from viruses- all in this very practical and interactive environment.

Tuesday 4th March East Devon Business Centre, Registration at 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

How to Go From Breakeven to Profitability without Increasing Workloads or Costs

Have you stopped to think how you could work 'smarter'? Graham Sindle, Chartered Accountant with Thomas Westcott has been helping small businesses to do just that in East Devon for years. His very practical approach will allow you to look at the tools and techniques you can use to really optimise your profits.

Wednesday 5th March, Fishponds Hotel, Registration 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

CIEH Level 2 Award in Health and Safety In The Workplace

Are you and your staff up to speed on your responsibilities? Jeff Coombes delivers this new and completely revised qualification to ensure that you are. Particularly useful for those working in care or hospitality.

Thursday 6th March, Fishponds Hotel, Registration 8.30 am, course commencing 9.00 am – 5.30 pm. (N.B. although refreshments will be provided throughout the day lunch is not included in this workshop).

Food Safety Refresher Course and Introduction to HACCP

An ideal workshop for those who have completed their Food Safety Level 2 (previously known as the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate) and are looking to up-date their knowledge and review the principles. The afternoon session is a 3 hour course introducing employees involved in the food industry to the Safe Food Management System most frequently used in food preparation.

**Tuesday 11th March Fishponds Hotel, 'Refresher Course' commences 9.00 am - 1.00 pm
Introduction to HACCP Commences 2.00 pm - 5.30 pm.**

Understanding Your Accounts

A fantastic opportunity to benefit from the practical and down to earth approach of Chartered Accountant, Graham Sindle. This workshop first unveils the mystery of what your accounts are actually telling you, and which key factors effect your business most fundamentally. The second half allows for open discussion on how this applies to the businesses around the table.

Wednesday 12th March, Fishponds Hotel, Registration 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

And finally.....

“More Than One Way to Skin a Cat”

We asked Martin Farrant of Acorn Stained Glass to share his experiences as a ‘small business’ owner.

“First of all please let me thank **The Business Information Point** for allowing me to share a small part of my story so far. I think I will start off by asking some questions and then answering them as honestly as I can. These answers may be surprising to someone who has not yet, but wants to start their own business. Is it easy? - **No!**, will I make lots of money quickly? - **No!**, work less hours? - **No!** less responsibility not being answerable to anyone? - **Wrong.**

Before you start thinking what's the point then? let me assure you that for me, these very negative answers motivate me more than I would have even dreamt possible. I think that the reason for this is that at the end of the day, my business is my "baby" and I will not give up, and the further down the road I get about it not being easy, etc, etc means that the more of my effort so far would have been wasted, and I will always be wondering "what if?". I am far from realising my goals, even the first one, but I know the "training" I receive now will make the taste of success all the sweeter when it comes. My adjustment to having to think outside the box now, not to worry about eating humble pie, or being to proud to ask (and listen) to role models will put me in good stead, develop my character for the good, build up confidence, and in my case, have the privilege to help someone in the future who may be where I am now.

When I mentioned ‘ask and listen to role models’ - I mean people who are in the position to either want to help, or have the experience to do so - and if they something negative to say, can do it constructively. Apart from that, don't be put off by people who never have, and never will take risks.

"Sweet taste of success" to me means a comfortable income, save for the future, job satisfaction, a certain amount of independence, and although sounds corny - to make a difference for the good in someone's life, and being creative (I make stained glass items). You have to be very clear exactly what it is you are setting out to achieve- not only financially, but also ‘quality of life’ objectives.

"Outside the box-" thinking helps when things go wrong. Another way of putting that would be "more than one way to skin a cat". For example, when I was aware that I could no longer afford the travelling costs and rent for the unit I was in, but needed that "presence" within the large indoor market to keep a profile, I asked my neighbours at the market if they would take items of mine on commission, and keep an eye out for any potential customers who may be looking for me. They agreed to give out my contact details in return for a share of the profit of any resulting sale.

I turned my unit from a sales stall to a "point of contact" where people could contact me using the cards and flyers left on counter, and a sign explaining that due to growing commission work I needed to spend more time in my studio at Honiton. This freed me up to explore other avenues (one of which was to call a sheltered housing place and set up a shop on their bingo night - after bingo!!!! I took more in one hour than I had all week at the market!) This also gave me the space to work out a plan of action - even if this meant taking a step back to take two forward.

There is a lot more I could put in, and in some ways this doesn't go anywhere near to explaining the adversity I have had to, and still am dealing with. That is not as important to the reader as my reaction to it, which has been a real learning experience to me. I also take comfort from knowing that the majority of "successful business people" have experienced the same, if not more than I, in the early stages of their business. They can look back and say they are where they are because they deserve to be there. I also strive to build good relationships on the journey, or at least not tread on people on the way up the ladder so that should I fall, I don't meet the same people on the way down. I hope and believe that with the grace of God this will be me in the future and with the continuing fantastic help, support and empathy given to me by my advisor and **Business Information Point** I feel it won't be too long.



DISCLAIMER

Every effort has been taken to ensure the information contained in these notes is correct, however, West Devon Business Information Point will not be liable for any loss arising from the use of these notes or any omissions or errors contained within.

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