



## Business Information Point

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### IN THIS BUMPER ISSUE

Practical advice on managing your business in a downturn: some of the measures you may wish to consider as a business owner.

Workshops, Seminars and Events, all to motivate and inspire! You may not have used opportunities in the past to attend our very 'down to earth and practical' events, **but there is no better time than the present!**

## BIP NEWSLETTER

### The Rural Development Project, and Local Action Group Award Of £2.4 Million for East Devon and The Blackdown Hills- Good News At Last For Local Businesses!

The timing could not be better, and the need never greater than now to offer businesses in East and Mid Devon all the support available to see them through the forecasted bleak months. We reported in the last Newsletter that 'Making it Local' was one of 15 successful bids to the Rural Development Programme for England for 'Local Action' in the South West. The money, which comes from Defra and the European Union, is managed through the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and is used to fund economic, creative and social activity in the area.

The aim of the **Local Action** is to enable rural communities to diversify and strengthen their economy through support to local businesses, and to improve the quality of life for people living in those communities.

**But what is this support likely to mean in practical terms?**

It is anticipated that in 2009 a grant scheme will be available, and assessors will be particularly interested in applications concerned with culture, tourism, recreation, using natural resources sustainably, network building and bringing people together.

The Core objectives of the **Local Action** on which eligibility for Grants will be based are:

- Addressing economic under performance
- Harnessing wider economic value from sustainable environmental quality
- Improving provision and access to services as a means of tackling disadvantage
- Developing local governance and delivery capacity in rural areas

To find out more visit [www.eastdevonaonb.ork.uk](http://www.eastdevonaonb.ork.uk) or call (01823) 680626

**So how can initiatives such as 'The Rural Enterprise Development' project, provided by 'The Business Information Point' provide hands on help to assist small businesses?** The answer is through delivering a bespoke service, based on what you, the business owner needs. This could range from help with business planning to make a grant application, or advice on raising finance in general and presenting the case to the lenders. We can also help with business development, such as practical marketing tips and advice- including website optimisation, as well as legal advice on all types of issues through our network of specialists. Don't forget that the one to one service is **free and completely confidential**, (although there are small charges for the workshops).

In this edition, you will also find featured a number of **seminars and workshops** to inspire and motivate you to work **on your business, not in it** – even in these challenging times. Just as importantly, we hope to remind you that you are not alone, and that down to earth, practical advice is on hand not only from ourselves and our highly successful speakers, but also the invaluable opportunity to network with other business owners like yourself.



# Workshops and Events

## FINDING AND SECURING NEW CUSTOMERS

### **Practical Steps to Increase Your Sales and Profits**

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2009.

Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield, Newton Abbot.

10.00 am – 4.00 pm

**Finding new customers** is essential to the survival of any business and this workshop focuses on new customer acquisition, strategies and techniques.

There are many ways to get more customers to buy from you for the first time. However it is important to remember that different businesses and industry sectors use a variety of methods to attract new customers. You need to be sure that you are using the right ones for your business.

Do you have a clear vision of where the best prospects are for your business and a specific profile of the type of customer that you want to attract? This workshop is about developing practical systems through which you:

- 1) **Find new customers-** knowing who and where is essential if you are going to be successful.
- 2) **Present Your Offer-** This needs to be specific to the way in which you have reached your market; there will be different strategies for retail food sales than say a holiday accommodation direct mail campaign.
- 3) **Close the deal-** Too many times all of the good work is undone because the 'sales conversion process' omits this vital element.

**Registration 9.30 am- bookings in advance on a first come, first served basis.**

**Cost per attendee £10.00 payable on the day**

## HOW TO GET YOUR WEBSITE TO THE TOP TEN OF GOOGLE

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009

Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield, Newton Abbot

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2009

East Devon Business Centre, Heathpark, Honiton

10.00 am – 4.00 pm

***In 2007, 57.7% of the UK adult population used home delivery and this is driven by the continued boom in internet shopping.***

**Are YOU exploiting new opportunities to boost sales?**

Enhancing your existing website will enable you to increase income and inform your customers of new products and services. Getting your product out there first or being the quickest to react to changing market trends can have a huge impact. Negotiations with web designers can be fraught with misunderstanding and jargon!

**Join our interactive workshop and make a success of internet marketing by learning how to:**

- **Create a successful e-marketing campaign.**
- **Use search engine optimisation.**
- **Research your market using keyword mining techniques.**
- **Investigate the competition and get ahead of the game.**

***A workshop you can't afford to miss out on!***

**Registration 9.30 am- bookings in advance on a first come, first served basis.**

**Cost per attendee £10.00 payable on the day**

***Are you a small food producer who wants to increase your sales and profits through working with the tourism industry?***

Research has shown that more and more visitors coming to Devon want to buy local produce when on holiday. However, many small food producers like yourselves miss out on these potential sales as visitors don't know where you are or what you sell. By working together with the tourism industry there is a great opportunity to increase sales and possibly, by developing local groups with other like minded local producers, to supply letting cottages and holiday parks etc. which can develop into on-going repeat sales.

**To help you get the tools in place we are running **free** practical workshops to show how you can get more sales with only a small amount effort. Practical advice and direction will be provided through presentations from:**

**Graeme Wallace of Wallace's Farm Shop** A local producer who has already developed his food business. Graeme is now running a farm shop, attending farmers markets and specialises in rare breeds.

**Catherine Broomfield of Blacklake Farm** is passionate about their Pedigree herds of Devon Red Cow, Dorset Down Lamb and Gloucester Old Spot Pigs, and is keen to share her unique take on marketing their products with you.

**Adrian Innocent from the Devon wide 'Helpful Holidays'** - a letting company who want to work more closely with local producers

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February, Wallace's Farm Shop, Hemyock / Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March, Lakeview Manor, Dunkeswell  
(previously known as The Fishponds House Hotel)**

**6.30 pm – 9.00 pm. As the event is FREE places will be allocated on a first come first served basis, so please ensure you book your place in advance. *There will be a buffet provided.***

**A Case Study For  
ON-LINE SELLING FOR ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS**

***"Recent research has found that 53% of visitors use the internet to make a first booking"  
(Visit Britain 2005)***

**You are invited to share in the secrets of successful on-line selling for accommodation providers, the case study will be presented by:-**

**Simon Tregoning of Classic Cottages** who has a portfolio of 707 properties, Managing Director and award winner for Best Website 2008 Simon reveals his top tips for success and selling accommodation on line.

**Jacqui Gulliford of Classic Cottages** describes the essentials of presenting your property, she says fastidious attention to detail and a warm welcome really pays dividends, and 87% of clients say the brochure description is excellent.

**Matt Bowkett of Eviivo** an expert web marketing specialist explains how you can get ahead of the game and expand your online activities to increase bookings and income.

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February - East Devon Business Centre, Honiton**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March - The Passage House Hotel, Kingsteignton**

**10.30 am – 1.00 pm**

**Registration 10.00 am- bookings in advance on a first come, first served basis.**

**Cost per attendee £10.00 payable on the day.**



**Blackdown Hills  
Business Association**

In Association with The Blackdown Hills Business Association

## **WOMEN IN BUSINESS- 'SMARKETING PARTS 1 & 2'**

Part 1: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009 9.30am – 12.00 pm

Part Two: Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009 9.30 am – 12.00 pm

Venue: Dunkeswell Eco Business Park, Marcus Road, Dunkeswell nr. Honiton

*"The Art of Smarketing"*

**Smartketing - Marketing with Brains!** Let's think smart about marketing strategies. Climb inside the heads of your target market. Understand your customers' trigger points for buying decisions and loyalty. Examine the key elements of an effective marketing strategy. This workshop will help you look at your business and marketing from the other end of the telescope. Out-smart your competitors. Creating your marketing strategy with 'Smart' built in- Catherine Broomfield will reveal all the tricks of the trade!

**Registration 9.30 am- bookings in advance on a first come, first served basis.**

**Cost per attendee £10.00 payable on the day**

*The Seminar EVERY Business Sector Would Benefit From!*

## **SUCCESSFUL ON-LINE RETAILING**

**Getting It Right and Making a Profit**

# integralvision

*Commentators report an 18% increase in on-line sales last year- David Townsend of multi-award winning Integral Vision explains how to get it right and make a profit.*

**You are invited to share in the secrets of successful on-line retailing - a case study will be presented by:**

**David Townsend**, Creative Director of Integralvision, the Multi-Award Winning website design company based in Exeter. Winner of both 'Best Tourism Website' and 'Best Corporate Website' in 2008. Over 10 years of experience of developing custom e-commerce solutions for clients such as Dartington Cider Press and Pennywell Farm. At this interactive seminar, David will detail expert advice for successful online retailing, including '**How design can impact on your on-line credibility**', '**Why usability of your website can gain customers**', and '**How to encourage repeat sales**'.

**Dartington Cider Press** – a case study in developing a successful off-line shopping outlet into an online business.

**Sam Money** of '**O'Connors Campers**' describes her experience in developing [www.Happy-Camping.co.uk](http://www.Happy-Camping.co.uk) The site was created by the girls at O'Connors Campers to find and sell the most gorgeous VW gifts, camping and outdoor gear out there.

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, The Passage House Hotel, Kingsteignton**

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March, East Devon Business Centre, Honiton**

**10.30 am – 1.00 pm**

**Registration 10.00 am- bookings in advance on a first come, first served basis.**

**Cost per attendee £10.00 payable on the day**

**Find Out How To Help YOUR Business Tap into £10,000,000 of Local Spend!**  
In Association with Exmouth Town Management Partnership



**EXMOUTH BUSINESS EVENT SPRING 2009**

**To be held at Devon Cliffs on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009 from 1.30 pm- 6.30 pm**

**This informal event is designed to bring businesses in Exmouth and the surrounding area together, and to see what we can do to help each other.**

There will be a broad spectrum of speakers, all with one purpose in mind - to share with you their practical suggestions as to how you can develop your business. Topics will include marketing for small businesses to managing your business through a recession. Paul Adkins from Devon Cliffs, the largest employer in Exmouth, will also be on hand to share with you ways in which you can tap into £10,000,000 of local tourism spend.

**The event will commence with a buffet lunch served at 1.30 pm, with speakers delivering their practical advice between 2.30 pm and 5.30 pm. The event will finish with a social hour from 5.30 pm – 6.30 pm.**

Entrance Fee is £2.50 pre-booked and £3.50 on the day.

**You will receive a FREE A4 sized advertising space for your business at the event**

**For further information and to buy tickets to this event, please contact:  
Suzanne Birkett, Assistant to the Town Manager,  
Exmouth Town Management- Tel: 01395 276167**



***Riding the Storm Conference.....20<sup>th</sup> March 2009***

You are invited to a presentation from speakers who will be able to up-date you on current trends and how to ride the economic storm.

You will come away with useful tips to better equip you and your business during the current economic downturn.

There will be speakers giving you advice on raising finance (including grants), speakers who will be able to advise you on how to raise the profile of your business as well as tips on human resources for both the individual and the business.

As well, there will be your local Business Advisor from The Business Information Point to offer practical, down to earth advice on any aspect of your business.

During the session there will be an opportunity to network with delegates, as well as short presentation spots from guest speakers (these will be limited).

***Venue: The Lakeview Manor, Dunkeswell (previously known as The Fishponds House Hotel) 2.00 pm- 8.00 pm (drop in) with light buffet at 6.00 pm***

£15.00 (members) £20.00 (non-members) - contact Val Baker on (01823) 681484 to reserve your place

## MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS IN A DOWNTURN

**Nick Smy, Partner with Thomas Westcott Chartered Accountants in Axminster, looks at some of the measures that business owners should be considering to ensure that their business weathers the coming difficulties.**

**Employees:** The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development advised in January 2009 that careful consideration should be given before choosing redundancy as a short term measure, as the long term cost of replacing personnel could be as much as £16k. Nick supports this by commenting:



*“Regrettably during a downturn redundancies are sometimes necessary. Businesses in the service industry, in particular, should always remember that the long term prosperity of their business depends on the quality of their people.”*

*Alternative and more flexible working and remuneration arrangements might present an alternative to pay increases and job losses. For example, offering staff more leave in lieu of pay or exploring whether other forms of valued benefits are less expensive than salary could be worthwhile”.*

**Profitability:** It goes without saying that maintaining profitability or at least limiting the loss of profitability is the key to business survival in a down turn. Very simplistically, profitability is a function of two factors; turnover and cost. Nick advises:

*“In a downturn the automatic response of many business owners is to cut prices in the hope of maintaining unit sales. Whilst this strategy will work in some cases, it should not be an automatic reaction. It is important to remember that there is a core demand for the products of many businesses that will remain throughout all but the most serious of recessions. This core demand is likely to survive even an increase in price levels and it should not be forgotten that even a modest price increase can compensate in profitability for a fall in unit demand.”*

*New business is, of course, usually very welcome. With new clients, however, businesses should take care to ensure the credit worthiness of the customer. Unfortunately, in difficult times it is sometimes the case that businesses will move from supplier to supplier to delay or avoid the payments of debts.*

*Turning to costs again the natural inclination to cut costs in a time of recession may not be appropriate across all categories of expenditure. For example, maintaining or even expanding marketing spend can support increased demand”.*

**Working Capital:** Another key to surviving a downturn is the efficient management of your working capital as in stocks, debtors, cash and liabilities. Nick expands on this principle:

*“Much closer control of stock levels will reduce the amount of working capital tied up in the business and assist, for example, in the control of overdraft costs. Businesses should also make every effort to bill earlier and more regularly. Quite apart from the cash flow effect, research suggests that for professional firms, for example, the value of work in progress drops by 2% for each month that it is left unbilled.”*

*Businesses should manage their debtors as carefully as possible in order to ensure that payment is received as quickly as possible but also to reduce the possibility of a customer themselves becoming insolvent with large amounts owing. Businesses should review or put in place policies for collecting debts (including specified payment periods, possibly discounts for early settlement and interest charges for late payment) and ensure these policies are publicised to customers and followed in practice.*

*Cash management is another important element of working capital efficiency. Businesses should ensure that credit balances and overdrafts are offset so as to minimise expensive overdraft interest charges and fees. The conversion of temporary, possibly expensive, overdraft facilities to longer term loans should be considered. In any event businesses should ensure that their banking arrangements are competitively priced”.*

Nick concludes by saying:

**“A downturn can be a significant, if unwelcome, stimulus to a thorough review of a business’ organisation, methods and practices. Businesses should act sooner rather than later to ensure that they are as well prepared as possible for any problems that emerge. There are a number of areas where action can be taken now that should provide a significant benefit in the future”.**

## Government Considers National Lending Scheme.

A multibillion-pound package of measures aimed at getting the banks to restart lending to business will be announced by Alistair Darling in January 2009.

If past loan schemes are followed, the Government would cover most of the risk on each loan, possibly up to 80 per cent, and the bank would bear the rest. The taxpayer could be faced with a big bill if companies defaulted, as some certainly would. The default rate of firms involved in government loan schemes since 1981 is 28 per cent.

Government insiders say that there will be key differences to the scheme proposed by the Conservatives in December 2008. Officials are urgently seeking ways to ensure that loans guaranteed under the scheme are for new lending and that the lenders do more than merely reschedule existing loans or already-planned loans in order to get them covered by the government guarantee.

The scheme will be far more ambitious than the £1 billion small firms' loan guarantee scheme extended in the Pre-Budget Report.

It comes after a warning from Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England, that the single most pressing challenge for domestic economic policy is to get the banking system lending normally again.

Mr Darling is keen to unveil the lending scheme this January because thousands of companies renew their loans in the early months of the year.

Richard Lambert, Director-General of the CBI, said yesterday that unless credit, on which companies rely for day-to-day business, began to flow again, other government initiatives would be "expensive failures".



### ***Women in Business.....04 March 2009***

If you are in business or thinking of starting a business, please drop in for an informal get together with business support providers **The Business Information Point**, and grant advisors.

You will have the opportunity to meet up with other women as well as discussing your business problems with your local **BIP** Business Advisor.

You can also come along and find out more about two workshops to help you with marketing your business (*see 'Smarketing' Workshops in our programme of events*).

**Speakers: Various**

**Venue: Dunkeswell Eco Business Park, Marcus Road, Dunkeswell nr. Honiton**

**Time: 10.00 am – 3.00 pm**

**Refreshments: Buffet**

**Cost: FREE**

**Contact Name: Val Baker, 01823 681484 or [info@bhba.org.uk](mailto:info@bhba.org.uk)**

## “RELOCATION, RELOCATION”

**You may well remember we reported in the last newsletter that Debra and Bridget of ‘Debra Raymond Military Figures and Gifts’ had taken the decision to relocate their business to Military House, opposite Mole Valley Farmers on the outskirts of Cullompton. As promised, we returned six months later to find out whether the decision had borne fruit.**

“The decision to move the business out of my home was not a difficult one. It had become a huge headache getting orders out and providing the level of customer service necessary to get and maintain a good reputation when everything was so spread out across the house” said Debbie. “Identifying the right premises was more of a challenge but I am extremely happy with the result.

Initially we looked at a very small shop in the main street in Cullompton. The rent was reasonable but it could only ever have provided a trading outlet. It was actually two rooms and so would probably have meant leaving the main shop unattended when packing internet orders and would definitely have meant leaving the production side at home – not very satisfactory but it did get us thinking more about whether we actually needed a shop front or not. We then looked at a very large first floor office. It wasn’t ideal in terms of access but it could have worked. The premises had been empty for a long time and the rent substantially reduced. We decided to go for it – only to find that it had been let the day before. We were quite disappointed at first, and even reconsidered the little shop, but then the agent told us about Military House (or East Culme Offices as it was then). He described it as a “quirky little place” – perfect for our business we thought.

Being at Military House has made it much easier to tell people what we do and to get involved with the community. In October we held our own Big Brew Up to raise money for and awareness of SSAFA Forces Help. With the support of the Cullompton Army Cadet Force, relatives and local people we were able to raise £422 for the forces charity. Mike Thompson, Mayor of Cullompton came in for a cuppa and to offer his much valued support. We invited a reporter from the local paper. Unfortunately he arrived within minutes of the event starting. We managed to pull enough people in for a great photo, but later on it was standing room only. The local papers have been very useful to us. We had to take out some advertising but they have also been very supportive with editorial.

In December we raffled a big teddy bear, selling tickets from Military House and our stand at the Westpoint Christmas Fayre. We were able to raise £229; part of a larger fund raising effort by ex members of the Devonshire & Dorset Regiment to buy home comes for members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Rifles who were in Afghanistan this Christmas. Again the local papers were very supportive. Every advert and editorial has brought at least one new customer to Military House and we have been able to create and develop valuable relationships which I am sure would not have been possible had we not moved to the premises. We have been letting previous customers know that the kettle is always on at Military House through our email newsletter. It is surprising how many have called in on their way up or down the motorway. The internet is fantastic but it is very nice to actually meet your customers too.

We always knew that moving the business out of the home would provide more space to work in and so make the working space more efficient. What we underestimated was the huge impact this would have on our creativity. We have been buzzing with great ideas over the past few months and whereas before the move we were struggling to see how to develop, now we are doing it.”

Debra freely admits that it will take some time for the relocation to really pay off, but in the meantime it would seem the improved quality of life is reaping valuable benefits of its own.

We thoroughly recommend you visit [www.militaryfigures.co.uk](http://www.militaryfigures.co.uk) and read the entertaining blog, or visit in person; Military House can be found down the lane opposite Mole Valley Farmers in Cullompton.



### 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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