



## Your Business Advantage Bulletin

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## LOCAL NEWS

### ROGUE TRADERS OPERATING IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES

Trading Standards Officers at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are warning householders in the Outer Hebrides to be aware of rogue doorstep traders who are currently operating in Lewis. Several enquiries have been received from concerned householders regarding unwanted callers offering to carry out roof and guttering repairs.

To report unwanted callers please call Trading Standards on 01851 709577, Consumer Direct on 08454 040506 or the Police on 01851 702222.

### FUSION (OUTER HEBRIDES)

If your organisation is ambitious for its future and recognises that innovation and entrepreneurship are essential to its growth and success, Fusion is for you. Whether you already consider yourself to be innovative and entrepreneurial, or whether you simply aspire to be so, you will find Fusion's activities and members helpful, inspiring, practical and down-to-earth.

The primary role of Fusion is to stimulate interest in innovation and entrepreneurship in the Highlands and Islands.

To find out more about Fusion and how to join press Ctrl and click on the following link:  
[www.fusionlinking.co.uk](http://www.fusionlinking.co.uk).

## HI-LINKS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The HI Links project, which is run by the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute, enables small and medium-sized enterprises within the fields of Science, Engineering and Technology in the Highlands and Islands to grow and succeed through greater links to the knowledge, expertise and technology available in Scotland's universities, colleges and research institutes.

The initiative allows greater access to research and development resources through collaborative projects which will also provide businesses with a competitive edge. The team provides free and confidential advice and will help with developing new products, reducing costs by improving efficiency and ultimately increasing your sales. Funding partnerships can be sourced to assist with costs of various training and development projects.

The main aim of HI Links is to *'help provide long-term prosperity and sustainability to Highlands and Islands businesses'*.

Please visit [www.hilinks.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.hilinks.uhi.ac.uk) for more information about this exciting opportunity.

## UPCOMING INDUSTRY AWARDS

### 2007 HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS BUSINESS AWARDS

The Highlands and Islands Business Awards are once again upon us celebrating the achievements of businesses throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. All businesses operating in the HIE Inne Gall (Outer Hebrides) area are eligible for entry, and includes both new and established businesses of all industries and sectors.

The Awards will be presented at a lunch ceremony in Inverness on 5th November 2007. The following are the deadlines for entry:

**Deadline for receipt of nomination forms is Friday 6th July 2007**  
**Deadline for receipt of entry forms is Friday 3rd August 2007**

There are a number of different award categories including the main Highlands and Islands Business of the Year Awards, Smaller Business Award, Most Promising Newcomer Award and Best Awards. The presentations will include a separately judged award from The Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust. The winners of the Highlands & Islands Business Awards 2007 will gain automatic entry to the Enterprising Scotland Awards in 2008.

In 2006 an Isle of Lewis newcomer, D MacRury Electrical, received a Merit Award at the ceremony in the Princes Scottish Youth Business Trust Awards Section showing success in his field and rewarding him for his commitment to enterprise.

For more information please visit the Highlands and Islands Business Awards website at [www.hibawards.com](http://www.hibawards.com). Business Advantage also hold a number of entry packs that are available for completion. If you would like to nominate a business why not complete a nomination form and forward it to the organisers who will then invite the business to enter the awards.

The contact address is: Highlands & Islands Business Awards, c/o Ernst & Young, Barony House, Stoneyfield Business Park, Inverness IV2 7PA

## **STARTUPS AWARDS 2007**

The Startups Awards are searching the length and breadth of the UK to find the best start-up business from any industry or sector.

Not only will the winners receive unrivalled benefits but so do the runners-up. The benefits include regional and national press coverage, increased customer and client loyalty, competitive edge, access to potential investors and the chance to increase your business growth.

Businesses have to be less than 3 years old at the time of entry, employ no more than 60 people and be privately-owned.

The deadline for entries is Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2007 and the awards lunch will be held on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2007 at the Royal Kensington Garden Hotel, Kensington, London. For more information on the awards please press Ctrl and click the following link: [www.startupsawards.co.uk](http://www.startupsawards.co.uk).

## **2007 EDGE AWARDS – DEADLINE LOOMING**

As per our email in May the Edge Awards deadline is now looming. The Edge Awards, organized by 'Edge' who are an educational foundation and campaign, recognise and reward organisations that provide practical learning opportunities for young people between the ages of 14-25 years old. The awards span the breadth of Britain and offer cash prizes for each individual category which amount to over £300,000. These prizes are to be used to provide apprenticeships, work placements and other practical learning opportunities.

Not only are 'Edge' searching for organizations but also individuals that have become a success in their field from practical learning opportunities gained earlier in their careers.

There are 3 categories open for nominations and these are:

- Edge Small Business Award (under 50 employees)
- Edge Business Award (over 50 employees)
- Practical Learner Award for an individual nominated by an employer

The deadline for entries to arrive at Edge is the **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2007** and for more information and contact details please visit [www.edgeawards.co.uk](http://www.edgeawards.co.uk).

## **BUSINESS TIP**

### **SPIRALING AFFECTS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Surveys show that 76% of consumers would move to a competitor if customer service falls below expectations. Comparing this to 91% of consumers who took the survey stating that they would return to the same business if they receive exceptional customer service with most stating that they would also recommend the service to others. This shows the impacts and importance of good, and exceptional, customer service to a business as it can result in a 25-85% increase in profits as *the costs of poor customer service are too high to be ignored*.

73% of customers stated that they have experienced a business making no attempt to make the customer stay after experiencing adverse customer service. However 35% stated that a simple apology would help persuade them from going to a competitor in the future.

The British Standards Institute (BSI) found that 88% of surveyed consumers thought a defined standard would assist in improving and standardization the level of customer service that is expected of services. Therefore a new code of practice was devised – BS8477 'Code of Practice for Customer Service'.

The code is designed as a benchmark for businesses to assess and improve their customer service which would also give them a competitive edge. The standard aims to establish principles of good customer service and good practice in terms of customer relations, information, responsiveness and recording

systems. For more information please visit [www.bsi-global.com/en/Standards-and-Publications/Industry-Sectors/Services/Customer-service](http://www.bsi-global.com/en/Standards-and-Publications/Industry-Sectors/Services/Customer-service).

Furthermore if you would like to proactively and continually improve your customer service please visit the [Who Cares Wins](http://www.whocareswins.org.uk) website on [www.whocareswins.org.uk](http://www.whocareswins.org.uk) as this initiative strives for excellence in customer service throughout the Outer Hebrides. Further information can also be obtained by contacting Lisa Maclean on 01851 703703.

## **TIPS TO OBTAINING PRESS COVERAGE**

*“Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising” (Mark Twain)*

Obtaining press coverage is sometimes what small and start-up businesses think that they can only dream about however it is not outwith their reach as it is just a matter of knowing what the journalists want.

There are 3 main factors that journalists look for in a press release or news item and these are the human angle, the personal story or the impact that the story will have on people. Items that support or challenge peoples thinking are also lucrative news items.

One point to note is to only provide the journalist with positive items and facts about your business and avoid the negatives that could portray the exact opposite message that you were trying to publicise. The story must be relevant and interesting to those reading the publication and therefore researching what has already been featured will assist in acquiring its relevance to the readers. It may also be worth noting that if it is a press release you are issuing that you should tailor it to suit the needs and wants of each publications audience.

Contact the various press and media houses that you wish to send your press release too in order to ascertain publication deadlines and the relevant contact details for journalists. The journalists may also be able to inform you what are the particular topics that interest the public at that moment and this may also assist in building a relationship with them which may benefit you and your business in the future by being invited to take part in features and articles.

The press release that you issue must tell the reader who you are, what you offer, why or what event/service or product you are publicising and when and how they can take advantage of it. Avoid using unnecessary jargon or over-selling your business however do use statistics whenever possible to back up your information. Also interviews, case studies, quotes and photographs will also assist in capturing a journalists, and readers, attention.

For more business tips please visit [www.smallbusiness.co.uk](http://www.smallbusiness.co.uk).

## **BUSINESS NEWS**

### **SWITCH TO MAESTRO**

As from the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007 businesses selling goods online and accept debit cards must have changed their Switch logo's to Maestro. Furthermore they should also display that they support MasterCard SecureCode (3D Secure) for their cardholder authentication processing.

For more information please visit [www.streamline-esolutions.com/support/index.php?page=system](http://www.streamline-esolutions.com/support/index.php?page=system).

### **VISITSCOTLAND'S WEB IN A BOX**

Web In a Box (WIAB) is VisitScotlands new e-commerce tool enabling accommodation providers to set up and manage their own website including automatic online bookings.

The software is initially for serviced accommodation only and aims to be cost-effective and easy-to-use. It incorporates a 'layout assistant' to assist you when designing your site, a 'data management tool' for updating prices and availability and also includes a secure booking engine to reassure potential customers that their credit or debit cards details are secure when a deposit is taken to hold the booking.

On one hand no commission is taken from any booking made directly on your site however on the other hand a 0.5% processing charge is taken from the total value of the booking to cover costs.

The information on your WIAB will also be available on the [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com), [visitscotland](http://visitscotland) and the 'Tiscover' network which powers the [visitscotland](http://visitscotland) niche sites and also in the tourist information centers.

For more information and to register your interest please contact Maryann MacIver, the Business Relationship and Marketing Manager for VisitScotland Outer Hebrides on 01851 701818 or email [VisitScotland](mailto:VisitScotland@visitscotland.com) direct on [webinabox@visitscotland.com](mailto:webinabox@visitscotland.com).

## **THE BUSINESS START UP COMMUNITY**

The 'Business Start-Up Community' website is an innovative and informative forum, or community for new entrepreneurs to ask questions on business topics, networking, acquiring best practice tips and new online tools that will help businesses to flourish and also providing a competitive edge.

The website [www.startupcommunity.co.uk](http://www.startupcommunity.co.uk) also offers specialist support for women who are going into business by working in partnership with 'Every Woman', who specialise in training and support services for women in business to give women the confidence and assistance to succeed.

## **SHARE FISHERMAN TAX SCHEME**

Share fishermen are being encouraged to join the 'Share Fisherman Scheme' to assist in ensuring they set aside funds for tax payments. As share fishermen are classed as self-employed the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have found that many do not set money aside for tax and national insurance purposes and this results in many fishermen experiencing financial difficulty when their tax bill arrives.

Participation in the scheme withdraws the risk of receiving penalties for late or incorrect tax returns as it allows fishermen to save money specifically for tax payments. This also allows the fishermen access to tax credits and other financial services like loans and mortgages.

For more information please contact the HMRC on 0845 789789 or 01779 483 314.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **ASBESTOS WARNING**

Following the removal of the 'Control of Asbestos at Work' regulations the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have released new guidance for businesses that work with asbestos. The guidelines include information on drilling, boring and removing debris which are helpful practices for those working with the hazardous material.

For more information please press Ctrl and click on the following link:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm>

### **WHAT'S ON YOUR PLATE**

'What's on Your Plate' is a new campaign being launched by the National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS) aiming to support Scottish Farmers and promoting their produce to the consumer. It has been stated that the benefits are two-fold as it not only assists keeping in good health but also a good local economy.

By pledging to support the campaign for Scottish food and farming you assist in supporting local communities by buying from local shops whilst also assisting with securing high animal welfare standards, employment and also the tourism industry.

For more information please visit [www.whatsonyourplate.co.uk](http://www.whatsonyourplate.co.uk)

## LADDER SAFETY

'Ladder Exchange' is a new scheme from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and aimed at those individuals and companies who regularly use ladders at work and their managers who supervise. The HSE estimate that there are 4000 'dodgy' ladders currently being used in the UK resulting in over a quarter of all falls and injuries being from ladders. Unfortunately approximately 13 people a year die as a result of falling from ladders and 200 suffer from major injuries and therefore ladder safety and knowing how to use them correctly is paramount.

Please visit the HSE's website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) for more information on 'Ladder Exchange' and guidelines on ladder usage. The HSE's message is *'that ladders should be used for low-risk, short-duration work'*.

## USEFUL LINKS

The following are useful links that may also assist you succeed and grow in your sector by networking with other groups and gaining more tips and information:

- A regular 'Socio Economic Update' is published containing useful information on the local economy at: <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/factfile/index.htm>
- A new online forum has been launched by 'Aim-Hi' ([www.aim-hi.org](http://www.aim-hi.org)) for all Creative Industries - please feel free to register your interest and visit the site at <http://s4.invisionfree.com/aimhi/>.
- The Creative Industries section of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar also publishes a periodic newsletter on the website at <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/eds/creativeindustries/index.htm>. Creative Industries focus on the arts, crafts film, and television, publishing, and new media sectors and therefore this is worth a read if you specialise in this sector to help you keep ahead of your competitors.
- Business Guru David Parish has published a book entitled 'T-Shirts and Suits – A Guide to the Business of Creativity' aiming to assist in combining best practice and an individual's creativity to succeed in business. The book is available online to download for free at both the following sites:

<http://www.davidparrish.com/page.asp?pgid=125&pgsid=33>

<http://www.merseysideacme.com/displaynews.asp?pageid=latestnews&item=842>.

If you have any feedback or suggestions for us to make this service more relevant please e-mail your comments to [business.advantage@cne-siar.gov.uk](mailto:business.advantage@cne-siar.gov.uk). If you wish to discontinue your subscription to Business Advantage please send a blank e-mail to [business.advantage@cne-siar.gov.uk](mailto:business.advantage@cne-siar.gov.uk) putting UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject box. Remember that we guarantee never to sell or give your e-mail address to anyone else.

**Good luck**

## The Business Advantage Team

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