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LOCAL NEWS

BUSINESS SKILLS EVENTS

Please find below a list of Business Skills workshops that Development Partners, sponsored by HIE Innse Gall, are conducting throughout the Outer Hebrides. These FREE evening workshops will assist you and your business with various accounting, marketing and sales techniques.

Skills Title	Barra Barra Learning Centre	Benbecula Dark Island Hotel	Stornoway Caladh Inn
Personal Selling	Wed 12th March	Thu 13th March	Wed 26th March
Cash Flow Forecasting	Mon 10th March	Tues 11th March	Tues 18th March

For further information please contact Development Partners at:
 Development Partners, FREEPOST IV496, 4 Ballifeary Road, INVERNESS, IV3 5BR
 Tel: 01463 223993 / Freephone 0800 838 321, Fax: 01463 710845,

Email: lesley@developmentpartners.co.uk
OR

Otherwise please contact HIE Innse Gall on 01851 703703 or innse-gall@hient.co.uk.

WHO CARES WINS – AWARD NOMINATIONS



Why should I nominate my business for the Who Cares Wins awards?

1. It is good publicity for your business and reward and recognition for you or your staff's hard work.
2. If shortlisted you will be invited to attend the awards ceremony and dinner in Benbecula on the 26th March 2008.
3. It is confidential and the nomination form will only form part of the overall judging process.
4. Who Cares Wins feedback, participation in training and any other supplementary evidence you wish to provide, will also be taken into consideration.
5. It is quick and easy, click the link below and it will take less than 10 minutes to complete.

NOMINATE YOUR BUSINESS NOW!

Click on the link to complete the short questionnaire:
<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07e2929a2mfd8csxq2/start>

Alternatively, contact us and we can email or post a form to you.

Nominations close on 10th March 2008 at 5pm

Tel: 01851 703 703

Mob: 07810804718

email: info@whocareswins.org.uk

CARBON FOOTPRINT EVENT

The practice of carbon footprinting is going to become increasingly important. Whether through legislation or simply through increasing scarcity of a dwindling resource, energy prices are going to go up. Carbon footprinting allows you to identify the areas of vulnerability in your business, so that you can take action to reduce them. It is an ongoing process of identifying and reducing areas of high carbon-intensity processes and materials in the supply chain.

The Highlands & Islands Food and Drink Forum have recognised the increasing importance of raising the awareness of Carbon Footprinting and allow the Food and Drink sector to gain a competitive advantage. They have organised a half-day event which will give companies the chance to learn more about what carbon management is and this will include discussing the Draft Climate Change (Scotland) Bill; defining the scope of the carbon footprint for your product or service; gathering data about processes; calculating the footprint; and finally managing carbon. Delegates are encouraged to bring along as much of their own data as possible, so that the workshop exercises can be carried out on their own processes.

The event will take place in the Caberfeidh Hotel, Stornoway on Thursday, 13th March at 1.30pm. Attendance costs £25 and should be booked by contacting Solas Events.

Please contact Rachel Phillips on rachel@solas-biz.co.uk or telephone her on 01599 534 999 to find out more and reserve your place. Attendance costs £25 and should be booked by contacting Solas Events. Further information about the event is also available at http://www.scottishfoodanddrink.com/view_item.aspx?item_id=54143&list_id=list1-7170&list_index=19.

INAUGURAL PSYBT REGIONAL GATHERING HAILED A SUCCESS!

The first ever Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust (PSYBT) Annual Gathering of Volunteers and Businesses was held in Era - the newly transformed and renamed Heb lounge - on Monday 25th February 2008.

Councillor Roddie Mackay, recently appointed as PSYBT Western Isles Regional Chairman opened the proceedings by thanking everyone for attending and spoke about his experiences as a PSYBT Panel-member and Aftercare volunteer, before underlining the value of events like the Regional Gathering in bringing businesses together to share and exchange views, information and contacts.

The event was attended by PSYBT Chief Executive Mark Strudwick and Director for Marketing and Communications, Margaret Gibson. The Chief Executive gave thanks to the PSYBT businesses and volunteers who attended. Mark commended the businesses on their successes and commented on the high survival rates of businesses in the islands compared to other areas. He also reinforced the importance of networking and the mutual benefits of forming strategic alliances with other local businesses.

Networking was a key feature of the evening and attendees were encouraged to circulate, meet new people and share information. Several 'networking clues' were placed around the venue to promote this. Those present also undertook workshops on Marketing with Margaret Gibson - and on Money Matters, facilitated by PSYBT Volunteer and Comhairle Financial Awareness Officer, Sandra Macrae.

The Gathering also heard from two PSYBT-supported businesses, Willie Campbell of The Open Day Rotation and Christine Macintosh of Heb Hostel, who outlined their fascinating individual life journeys - from leaving school to setting-up their respective businesses.

The evening concluded with a stunning performance by Willie Campbell of several of his latest songs - who has just released his new album, 'Down by the Head'.

The PSYBT assist over 500 young businesses per year in Scotland with advice and funding to start up or expand their own businesses. The Western Isles is one of 18 PSYBT regions and since the Trust began in 1989, 336 young people in the Western Isles have received support to enable them to start up and continue their own businesses. Several of these young business people were present at the Regional Gathering along with some of the volunteers who support them through the Panel process and with one-to-one Aftercare advice.

PSYBT in the Western Isles offers start-up funding and advice to young people aged between 18 and 30, with a business idea of their own. For further information contact: Jane Campbell, PSYBT Regional Manager, Business Advantage, Town Hall, Stornoway, on 01851 707475 or visit www.psybt.org.uk

BUSINESS TIP

STAFF PAY ISSUES

Full-time employees are currently entitled to 24 days paid holidays and part-time employees are entitled to the same on a pro rata basis. However this will change to 28 days on the 1st April 2009 (based on a 5 day working week).

Public Holidays – Employees do not have a statutory right to paid leave on bank and paid holidays. If given they can count towards the minimum holiday entitlement. Please visit the governments Public Services website for more information on Holiday Entitlements - <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/WorkingHoursAndTimeOff>

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) – The basic rule is that SSP is payable to employees earning on average £87.00 per week before tax and National Insurance and is payable on the 4th and subsequent days of absence for a maximum of 28 weeks at £72.55 per week (standard rate). Employers can ask for evidence that you are sick and this will usually be in the form of a doctors sick note, other evidence may also be requested. Please visit the Department of Work and Pensions website for more information -

Please note that this information is for guidance only and therefore visit the websites above for more information.

SELECTION AND INTERVIEW TIPS

The following are important points to take into consideration when selecting and interviewing for a position:

1. Screen applicants – compare the information on each application form/curriculum vitae with job description and personal specification to identify the best candidates.
2. It is recommended to have more than one person to undertake the short-listing and interview process to minimise bias.
3. It is illegal to base your decision on race, gender, disability, religion, age or trade union membership. Obviously there are certain circumstances when this regulation can not be put into practice, by way of illustration hosting auditions for a woman's part in a theatre production.
4. Send a letter to unsuitable applicants and why they were not selected to go to interview.
5. Send a letter to the short-listed candidates clearly stating the date, time and location of the interview and if they have any special requirements that need to be catered for to ensure for fairness at the interview stage.
6. Keep a note of all correspondence during the selection and recruitment process for a minimum of 12 months in case discrimination queries arise.
7. Choose an interview setting with little distractions (noise, lighting, temperature, disruptions).
8. Prior to the interview prepare and structure questions, referring to the job description and personal specification, to follow throughout the interview to allow for consistency and fairness throughout the process. Use open-ended questions as much as possible to allow candidates to elaborate on their answers and not just answer 'yes' or 'no'.
9. Remain as neutral as possible during the selection process.
10. Take notes immediately after the interview to ensure important points/experience/traits are noted.
11. Check references thoroughly before the final offer is made.
12. Inform all interviewees if they were successful and send letters to unsuccessful applicants detailing your reasons.

For more information please visit the 'Employing People' section of the Business Gateway website at <http://www.bgateway.com/bdotg/action/layer?r.l1=1073858787&topicId=1074207535&site=202&r.l2=1073858914&r.s=t> and also visit the Small Business website– www.smallbusiness.co.uk

TIPS ON AVOIDING BUSINESS FAILURE

It is a common fact that most businesses will fail within its first 3 years, moreover more than half of these will fail within their first six months.

It has been suggested that after a business failure it's a good idea to take a break, step back and evaluate what and how everything went wrong before starting a new venture.

The following are some tips on how to avoid failure:

1. **Take time** thinking through your business concept – do not rush into things.
2. Undertake **market research**. Ask yourself 'Who are my customers?' and 'What makes my product better than my competitors?'
3. Market your business; establish a **marketing** campaign including industry fliers, press releases, posters, open days and special offers to name but a few examples. Thus making sure that you reach as many new customers as possible.
4. Keep an eye on your **cashflow**; do not just concentrate on being a success. If you do not have any cash to carry you through the quiet trade periods you will fail. Do not just leave it to your accountant.
5. Ensure your **prices** are not too low or competitive – make sure they will cover your costs.
6. Always **question** what you are doing to ensure your meeting demand, keeping up with your competitors and new technologies. Those who do not do this tend to eventually fail!
7. Make sure you have more than one **customer** to avoid fallout if they fail. A large base of small customers is safer.
8. Make sure you deliver a **quality** product or service. There is no need to try to offer lots of different

- products at a lower quality. Concentrate on what you do best and the rewards will be noticeable.
9. Ensure you **manage** your business efficiently. Know where you stand at all times. Ensure you plan, organise, direct, control and communicate your product and aims to your customers and staff.
 10. Get information and **advice** from trained and experienced advisors and experts in your field and who are familiar with your industry.
 11. Have **fun!** Make sure you enjoy running your business. There will be hard times but grafting at the beginning will make it easier in the future.

For more information and advice please visit the <http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Avoid-Business-Failure&id=400943> or read the UK Small Business Marketing Bible (<http://www.ukmarketingbible.com/>)

BUSINESS NEWS

INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION REGULATIONS

The Information and Consultation of Employees Regulation 2004 is to be extended to include businesses with 50 or more employees. From 6 April employees at the organisation with have the right to be informed and consulted on business decisions that will directly affect their employment. A minimum of 15 employees' must ask to view the information before negotiations with the employer can occur. For more information please press Ctrl and click on the following link <http://www.berr.gov.uk/employment/employment-legislation/ice/index.html>.

OTHER NEWS

MADE IN BRITAIN – SEARCH FOR SCOTLAND’S BEST PRODUCE

Waitrose is searching for the best food and drink producers in Scotland for its inaugural Made in Britain Awards. If you are a British food or drink producer making a great product, with a business employing no more than 10 people and an annual turnover of less than £2 million, you are eligible to enter.

Five Made in Britain Food Producers of the Year will be selected with each winning £5,000 to develop their business, and a guarantee from Waitrose to stock its product under its Local and Regional Initiative (subject to meeting Waitrose technical standards). Winning products will be on display at the Country Living Christmas Fair 2008. The overall Made in Britain Food Champion of the Year will be chosen from these five and will receive an additional £5,000

Find out more by following this link - www.waitrose.com/madeinbritain. The closing date for entries is Monday 14th April 2008.

PSYBT BACKS THE SCOTTISH THISTLE AWARDS

With the nominations for the 2008 Scottish Thistle Awards getting under way in March a new set of entrepreneurs are being invited to take part. The Princes Scottish Youth Business Trust (PSYBT), supported by the Moffat Charitable Trust and Visit Scotland, have created the 'Young Tourism Entrepreneur Award 'to recognise young people between the ages of 18-30 who are making a difference in the tourism industry.'

The judges will be focusing on how the business grew from initial market research to realisation and its sustainability and growth. Community and economic impacts together with customer relationships will also be focused on.

With the Scottish Thistle Awards being the top Scottish Tourism accolade entering can only be beneficial as they reward excellence, promote quality and encourage professionalism and innovation.

To find out more about the Scottish Thistle Awards, and how to enter this new category, along with the other exciting categories, please visit www.scottishthistleawards.co.uk.

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:

- Please visit the Business Advantage website for loan and business advice and information www.cne-siar.gov.uk/eds/business/index.htm.
- The Princes Scottish Youth Business Trust offers start-up funding and advice to young people aged between 18 and 30, with a business idea. They also offer expansion funding and more information is available at <http://www.psybt.org.uk/Regions/WesternIsles.aspx>.
- www.hiebusiness.co.uk - very useful for staff and clients and very user friendly support so well worth visiting. The site will be regularly updated so any changes in legislation etc will be incorporated promptly.
- The Business IT Guide is operated by e-skills UK and assisted by The Highlands & Islands Enterprise offering useful hints and tips on IT solutions for small businesses as they have found that small businesses in the UK are losing millions of pounds from lost revenue due to not being adequately IT literate. Please visit them at www.scotland.businessitguide.com
- A regular 'Socio Economic Update' is published containing useful information on the local economy at: <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/factfile/index.htm>
- 'Aim-Hi' (www.aim-hi.org) is an online forum for the Creative Industries sector - 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.

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Good luck

The Business Advantage Team

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