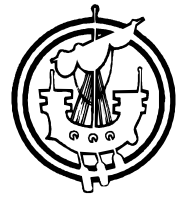




Your Business Advantage Bulletin

Issue 52



In this week's issue:

- **Weekly News Items**
- **Key Dates for 2007**
- **Minimum Wage Penalties**
- **The Art of Selling**
- **Public Sector Contract Tendering**
- **2007 income Tax Deadlines**
- **Free Anti-Virus Software for Small Businesses**
- **How to Write a Marketing Plan**
- **Local News and Training**
 - **NESTA – Starter For Six**
 - **Free E-Commerce Workshops in Stornoway**

Weekly News Items

Warning for Hairdressers

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are organising a 'Bad Hand Day' campaign to highlight the importance of protecting hairdressers from dermatitis. On average 70% of hairdressers suffer some form of skin condition as a direct result of their profession. Therefore the HSE is warning of the possible financial consequences to owners and advising hairdressers on how to avoid suffering from dermatitis through offering prevention guidelines like wearing non-latex gloves when working with water, dye and shampoo.

See the online guide at by pressing Ctrl + click to follow the links:

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=250767&NewsAreaID=2>

<http://www.badhandday.hse.gov.uk>

Encouragement for Scottish Retailers

The Scottish Retail Consortium has released its 'Manifesto for Retailers' urging the Government to assist shop owners by encouraging enterprise and growth to boost the Scottish economy.

Read more by pressing Ctrl + Click:

<http://www.brc.org.uk/details04.asp?id=1069&kCat=&kData=1>

Minimum Wage Penalties

If an employee lawfully files a complaint that their employers are underpaying them the HM Revenues and Customs can order the business to pay the wage arrears. Failing to pay the national Minimum Wage will result in fines of £200 per underpaid worker.

Ctrl + click to read more at:

<http://www.sbs.gov.uk/sbsgov/action/newsDetail?type=NEWSITEM&itemId=7000036860&r.s=email&tc=EA014#>

http://www.startups.co.uk/Small_firms_unaware_of_minimum_wage_obligation.YWop_R5ojdegVw.html

Urges to Put 'Bed Tax' to Bed

The imposed 'Bed Tax' would adversely affect the British Tourism industry states a recent report. It is stated that it could add as much as 5-10% onto the cost of serviced accommodation making Britain less appealing to domestic and international tourists.

Press Ctrl + click to follow the links:

<http://www.uhy-uk.com/pages/posts/88-of-hotel-operators-believe-a-bed-tax-would-put-tourists-off-visiting-the-uk517.php>

Rules for Providing References

When providing references for previous employees employers should be careful that the information they provide does not breach various legislation including data protection, discrimination and the Disability Discrimination Act.

Ctrl + click to read more at:

http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/birminghampost/business/tm_headline=bosses-facing-references-gag%26method=full%26objectid=18231785%26siteid=50002-name_page.html

2007 Tribunal Awards Increase

The yearly increase in the Tribunal Awards will come into effect on 1 February 2007. For an unfair dismissal the 'weeks pay' will increase from £290-£310 whilst the maximum compensatory award for unfair dismissal will increase from £50,400 to £60,600.

Ctrl + click to read more at:

http://www.blplaw.com/news_updates/ebrieflegalalerts/detail.cfm?contentID=7242

Local Food Promoted

Tony Blair is backing the 'Just Ask' initiative to raise awareness of where produce originates and to encourage food businesses to share their knowledge with their customers. Accordingly this positively aims to promote the use of fresh locally produced goods which will benefit the local economy.

Ctrl + Click for more information on this item:

http://www.cla.org.uk/News%20and%20Press/News_Releases/Food/Food/6293.htm/?CLA=ed78952359ac9cd5eeadf00efe4c137e&lnkCk=ART_CONTENT_1&statID=944393

Cutting the Red Tape

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) plans to reduce the bureaucratic red tape by a quarter before 2010, consequently saving businesses approximately £700 million annually. They will achieve this by simplifying and improving legislation including consumer protection and employment dispute laws.

Ctrl + click for more information:

<http://www.sbs.gov.uk/sbsgov/action/newsDetail?tc=EA014&r.s=email&type=NEWSITEM&itemId=7000036541>

Breaking the Sound Barrier

Businesses are being urged to have their employees hearing tested. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) have launched the 'Breaking the Sound Barrier' campaign which is a confidential 5 minute telephone test to identify whether they have suffered any hearing loss.

Ctrl + click for more information:

http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-12809-f0.cfm

Key Dates for 2007

1st January 2007

COMPANY INFORMATION TO BE ON ALL WEBSITES

This was the deadline for all UK companies to update their websites to include certain information. Every company is now required to list their:

- Company Registration Number
- Place of Registration
- Registered Office Address

Not only should this information appear on websites but also on all order forms and company emails.

Other required information includes the companies name (organisation and trading name), address and email address, membership details, VAT number and whether their prices includes tax and delivery costs.

END OF LIFE VEHICLES (PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY) REGULATIONS

This results in car/vehicle manufacturers having to accept responsibility of disposing of vehicles at their end of their working life creating a culture of 'Producer Responsibility'.

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=252780&NewsAreaID=2>

<http://www.cartakeback.com/>

6 April 2007

COMPANIES ACT 2006

This Act will convey improved policy for company names and private companies which include not requiring company secretaries and removing the requirement to hold Annual General Meetings. Shareholders also benefit through enhanced proxy rights and timely reporting and accountability systems.

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/bbf/co-act-2006/index.html>

FLEXIBLE WORKING – THE RIGHT TO REQUEST AND THE DUTY TO CONSIDER

The right for adult carers to request flexible working hours will soon be permitted. This right was previously only available to parents of children under 6, or 18 if the child is disabled.

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/employment-legislation/employment-guidance/page35662.html>

1st July 2007

WASTE ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT (WEEE) DIRECTIVE

'Producer Responsibility' will also be applied to producers of electrical goods to meet the environmental costs of disposing of goods such as fridges, toasters and washing machines. This results in consumers being provided with a free disposal service whilst instigating a culture of recycling by both consumers and producers.

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=249686&NewsAreaID=2>

POSTAGE PRICES TO INCREASE

The price of a 1st class stamp for a 100g letter will increase by 2p to 34p whilst a 2nd class stamp for the same weight will increase by 1p to 24p. Accordingly a larger first class letter will rise by 4p to 48p and a 2nd class will rise to 40p. Royal Mail will also introduce a range of new products and services aimed at benefiting business customers which will include discounts on bulk mail.

http://www.news.royalmailgroup.com/news/article.asp?id=1859&brand=royal_mail

1st October 2007

MINIMUM LEGAL AGE TO BUY TOBACCO INCREASES

The Government will increase the minimum age for purchasing tobacco from 16 to 18 years old.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/NewsHome/NewsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4141772&chk=IC9dJO

For further information on new legislation and amendments to regulations that will come into effect in 2007 please press Ctrl + click to follow the links:

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file22991.pdf>

The Art of Selling

Good salesmanship is imperative for your business to sell the optimum amount of goods and reach its sales targets.

In order for you to sell your goods and services it is advisable that customers know the real reasons why it would benefit them and in the end give you their money. By describing and portraying the fundamentals of the product, including how and if it was made locally, there is a higher probability of increasing your sales simply by emphasizing the products facts.

It has been stated that 'a good salesperson creates impressions' by stressing the benefits and difference their product would have on the customer ultimately resulting in the public buying into your product.

On the other hand an important point to note is that being over-zealous and pushy may drive custom away, therefore a balance is required for Good Salesmanship.

Read the UK Small Business Marketing Bible for more tips on selling or go online at www.ukmarketingbible.com

Public Sector Contract Tendering

Small business owners tend to feel that they have a very slim chance of winning public sector contract. Time constraints for compiling the complex application form and the notion that preferred suitors are pre-selected prior to the invitations to tender are published are the main grievances that small business owners state why they do not apply.

The following are guidelines that may be able too assist when putting together a bid for public sector contracts:

- Does your business meet all the requirements on the specification?
- Decide what kind of information is required to be in the bid including human resource, financial and references from previous clients.
- Is the contract attainable or can you sub-contract?
- Will you require specialist advice from consultants to adapt your bid to requirements?

The Times stresses that small to medium sized businesses should only bid for a public sector contract if the tender will be core to the businesses operations.

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

<http://business.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,8213-2504458,00.html>

http://www.supply2.gov.uk/supplier_faqs.shtml

<http://www.scavenger.net/product.php?productid=1644&cat=0&page=1&partner=EnterQuest>

2007 income Tax Deadlines

Self employed individuals and partnerships are required to submit income tax returns annually to avoid penalties. The HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) tax year runs from 6 April to 5 April the following year and there are a number of deadlines that a business needs to adhere to in order to avoid penalties.

31 January 2007

- Deadline for submitting your tax return for the tax year to 5 April 2006. Failure to do so will incur a £100 penalty
- Pay balance of tax and National Insurance for year ended 5 April 2006 or consequently incur a 5% surcharge.
- Pay 1st installment of your tax for the current year.

31 July 2007

- If you did not forward your tax return for January you will incur another £100 penalty and also a second automatic 5% surcharge if you have not paid the tax and national insurance balance.
- The 2nd installment of the current year's tax is also due.

30 September 2007

- Deadline for sending in your self assessment form if you would like HMRC to complete it for you.
- If you submit a paper tax return by this date they will collect outstanding amounts of less the £2000 via your Pay As You Earn code which would spread payments over the year.

30 December 2007

- Deadline for completing tax return online.

Find out more information about your tax returns by pressing Ctrl + click on the following links:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/sa/keydates/keydates.htm>

<http://www.startups.co.uk/aIdTgfY.html>

Free Anti-Virus software for Small Businesses

PC Tools are offering Anti-Virus Internet Security software free to consumers to protect them from online virus's and worms. There is also a more comprehensive version of this award winning system available for purchase offering high speed updates and a dedicated support team.

Ctrl + click for more information:

<http://www.pctools.com/free-antivirus/>

How to Write a Marketing Plan

Marketing Plans describe how you will be increasing your trade, which strategies you will be employing to achieve this and the time frame that you expect to put these tactics into practice. The plan should consist of the 'Four P's which make up the marketing mix – Product, Price, Place and Promotion - which describe what you are going to sell, for how much, where and how you will advertise and market it to your target audience. It will also forecast the predicted spend and budget on marketing ensuring that costs do not gain a life of their own whilst also assisting with budgeting for unforeseen costs.

The plan ultimately aims to increase custom and sales and therefore the target audience needs to be identified to ascertain whether there is a market and to assist in understanding your customers. Market Research is imperative in order for the plan to be viable and successful. Your product will not appeal to everyone and therefore market research should assist in identifying the groups who are most likely to buy your product. Communicating with the

public will also identify who your direct and indirect competitors are and how your business can offer the public a better service.

Periodic reviews should take place once the marketing plan has been implemented to ensure that the targets and budget are being accomplished or whether the targets need to be adjusted to accurately reflect the market.

http://www.startups.co.uk/Marketing_Plan.YdeNewdohaKbGw.html

http://www.mybusiness.co.uk/Write_a_marketing_plan.YcYM82totKRAKg.html

<http://smallbusiness.co.uk/5.5/sales-and-marketing/guides/30441/write-a-marketing-plan.thtml>

LOCAL TRAINING NEWS

Plan NESTA – ‘Starter For Six’

The National Endowment for Science’s (NESTA) Scotland-wide enterprise project – Starter For Six – are offering free training and the chance of being awarded grants of up to £10,000.

The project is supported by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Six Cities Design Festival and is aimed at Scottish entrepreneurs, either individuals or groups, who have an innovative and creative business idea related to science, technology and/or the arts.

Twenty entrepreneurs from each city/region will be assisted per year and the package they offer includes mentoring, training and the opportunity to bid for a grant of up to £10,000. The regions are Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Stirling.

In the first instance they are offering ‘Idea Generation’ workshops to allow individuals to network whilst also refining your business idea.

The idea’s must include the following:

- Commercial potential
- High level of innovation and creativity
- The applicant must be familiar in their chosen area and industry.

Application deadline for the Idea Generation workshop: 22nd Jan 2007

Application deadline for the full Starter for Six programme: 12th Feb 2007

For an application for and further details please press Ctrl + Click on the following link:

www.nesta.org.uk/starterforsix

Email: starterforsix@nesta.org.uk

Free E-Commerce Workshops in Stornoway

The Scottish Tourism Forum (STF) have organized a series of Highlands and Islands e-commerce workshops in partnership with Highlands and Island Enterprise, VisitScotland and VisitScotland.com after the success of last years sessions. The workshops aim to familiarize participants with consumer trends and to allow them to attain the best possible results from trading on the internet and ultimately increase the businesses overall sales. Again these workshops also allow businesses representatives to network and discover other innovative ways to market your business.

The sessions include business case studies, an overview of current markets and an insight into the assistance available in participant’s areas. The latest trends and innovations are also covered as the e-commerce market is a dynamic sector through constant changes in technology and trends.

The workshops are available to all professions as they are ultimately designed to boost your profits. Prior to each workshop a ‘pre-event self-evaluation form’ is completed to allow STF to

assess your business and ascertain what barriers you face and what stage your business is at. One-to-One sessions will also be available to speak to a variety of industry professionals that will also be attending the sessions from the supporting companies.

Dates

- Tuesday 23 Jan 2006, **Tarbert, Loch Fyne**: Stonefield Castle Hotel.
- Wednesday 24 Jan 2006, **Oban**: Oban Caledonian Hotel
- Thursday 25 Jan 2006, **Fort William**: The Alexandra Hotel
- Wednesday 31 January 2007, **Elgin**: The Eight Acres Hotel
- Thursday 01 February 2007, **Inverness**: The Maple Court Hotel
- **Tuesday 27 February 2007, Stornoway: The Cabarfeidh Hotel**
- Wednesday 28 February 2007, **Portree**: The Aros Centre
- Wednesday 28 March 2007, **Wick**, Mackays Hotel
- Thursday 29 March 2007, **Kirkwall**, Ayre Hotel
- Friday 30th March, **Lerwick**, The Shetland Hotel

We look forward to seeing you at the workshops!

To register and pre-book your one to one sessions please contact Elaine at the Scottish Tourism Forum at: elainet@stforum.co.uk or tel: **0131 220 6321**

For more information visit the STF website:

http://www.stforum.co.uk/tourism_in_scotland/forum_events/ecommerceroadshows.html

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. If you wish to discontinue your subscription to Business Advantage please send a blank e-mail to 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

This information is meant as a starting point only. Whilst all reasonable efforts have been made, the publisher makes no warranties that the information is accurate and up-to-date and will not be responsible for any errors or omissions in the information nor any consequences of any errors or omissions. Professional advice should be sought where appropriate.

Extracts republished from the Enterquest Bulletin with the permission of Cobweb Information Ltd (www.cobwebinfo.com). Access to the full bulletin can be obtained at www.enterprisequest.com. Reproduction or copying of information in this bulletin is strictly forbidden without prior written permission from Cobweb Information Limited. © 2006 Cobweb Information Ltd