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# NEWSLETTER

CHORLEY  
& SOUTH  
RIBBLE  
BUSINESS  
CLUB

April 2006



**THE NEXT MEETING**  
TUESDAY 4th March  
7.45pm for 8pm @ Lancashire College,  
Southport Road, Chorley

## Communication or Conflict!

Our next speaker is Rivca Rubin who is going to run a very practical session to get us thinking... Very much a 'how to' session. She is a professional trainer working with a great range of organisations e.g. The Lowry Arts Centre; The Octagon Theatre; The Manchester Business School; Youth Justice Councillors; the Royal National Theatre; Manchester University/Science Department; Newcastle Gateshead Initiative to name a few. She asks you to bring a lively mind and a notebook/pen/paper.

## CROSSFIELDS SADDLERY GOES TO THE LANCASHIRE OSCARS

Last week I attended the BIBA's (Be Inspired Business Awards), Lancashire's biggest and most prestigious awards ceremony. The competition has grown in both size and stature and is now recognised as 'the one to win' by businesses across the county. There were eleven categories with four finalists in each category shortlisted from over five hundred entries. Although I didn't win my category (Myerscough College Rural Business of the Year), I felt quite proud to be nominated as the other three nominees were much larger and long established companies. As my husband said, as a one woman operation, as well as doing the saddlery work, saddle fitting, accounts, marketing, PR, running my internet shop, I also do the cooking, cleaning and ironing!

As you are all aware, it's a huge learning curve setting up your own business but it's worth always asking people particularly those in the club for any help they might be able to offer. I have learnt a lot by being a member of the Business Club and would like to take this opportunity to thank the following for their free advice and help:- Steve Ward, David Kevill, Graham Archer, Phil Lancaster and Lisa for bringing business my way.

If any of you know any horsey or doggy people, please get them to ring me on 01254 830947 or look at my website [www.crossfieldsaddlery.co.uk](http://www.crossfieldsaddlery.co.uk).

Hilary Cox, Crossfields Saddlery

## Unusual marketing company celebrates 15 years of success

Long-time business club member The Competitive Edge, based in Chorley, is now 15 years old!

The business's success is based on a novel idea in the world of marketing. Proprietor, copywriter Dea Parkin, founded the company back in 1991 on the premise that, by working together with other freelance professionals, she could offer a similar quality service to an advertising or design agency at an economical rate. It proved a successful formula. Over the years, she and her colleagues working in design and photography have created promotional literature and ad campaigns, and offered marketing advice, to companies large and small.

The Competitive Edge is currently helping several local firms in Preston, Blackpool and Chorley – including retailers, manufacturers and business-to-business concerns, several of which are Business Club members – and also works with national and international furniture and furnishings manufacturers including Bill Beaumont Textiles, Sweet Dreams of Burnley and Recor of Hasselt, Belgium. Work produced includes brochures and catalogues, leaflets, direct mail, point-of-sale and websites.

Dea, who previously worked as a copywriter for a Preston advertising agency, writes or edits the text, although she spends at least as much time liaising with clients and co-ordinating work. "I've always believed in creative people talking face to face with the client," she asserts. "So my designer and I always meet the client together. That way, everyone's clear about the client's requirements and the client feels in control. It means jobs are finished speedily, keeping costs down, and efficiently, to the client's absolute satisfaction."

The Competitive Edge is home-based, reducing overheads, and over its 15 years of business has worked with several freelance graphic designers and other creatives. "I now know just who to turn to for which job," says Dea. "These days, it's mainly Lisa from Impression! Generally, freelancers are a great route to excellent service, yet companies are often shy of employing them direct, or aren't sure how to best co-ordinate their work. With The Competitive Edge, businesses are able to hand over project management to an approachable, experienced team and get back the results they want. Companies find it reassuring, cost-effective and highly professional."

Over fifteen years, The Competitive Edge has also offered a stand-alone copywriting service to companies of all kinds and to schools and colleges, and trade and consumer PR to manufacturers in the home interest market.

Call The Competitive Edge on 01257 233614 or email [dea@compedge.net](mailto:dea@compedge.net)

# THE LAST MEETING

The speaker at the March meeting of Chorley & South Ribble Business Club was Steven Brewer. Steven has spent 18 years at the sharp end of business-to-business sales and training within blue chip organisations. During this time he won awards for his ability in direct sales and managing teams nationwide. In his role as a freelance consultant and trainer he has helped many companies to realise their full potential via a successful, well trained and highly motivated sales operation. He is also a Fellow of the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management and a member of the Professional Speakers Association.

Steven gave a highly enjoyable and informative presentation covering many aspects of marketing a company, including how to identify your target market, the importance of having the right company image and how to make that dreaded follow-up call.

He certainly gave everyone food for thought by highlighting the importance of even the smallest element of marketing any business. His list of excuses why we can't make the follow up call sounded very familiar to me and I'm sure to many others. Steven encouraged those present to identify one thing they will do differently in the future. Lets hope my 'must do' lasts longer than my New Year resolutions!

As for the corny jokes Steven included in his presentation – I would have been proud of them and they are stored away for future use!

The second half of the meeting comprised the annual general meeting. The chairman gave a report on the activities of the club over the past year followed by membership secretary and treasurers reports showing that the club is in a healthy position both in terms of membership numbers and finances.

The following committee positions were proposed and agreed by those present: -

Chairman - David Kevill

Vice Chairman - Stephen Ward

Secretary - Jon Neal,

Treasurer - Mark Howarth

It was agreed that other committee positions would be decided at the next committee meeting. Steven Ward thanked the outgoing Chairman, Keith Ellison, for his hard work and dedication during the three years of his office.

David Kevill

## Top Tips from Business Link

### 10 ways to wrong-foot the competition

Use these strategies to keep your business ahead of immediate rivals.

1. Treat your business to an image makeover. Consider rebranding – a strong brand will differentiate your business from others and helps customers to recognise your firm. Simple steps such as painting your shop front can make your business look modern and inviting compared to your competitors.
2. Launch a new marketing campaign. Deliver leaflets in your area offering a discount if customers visit before a set date. Remember to ask them to bring the leaflet so you can measure the success of the campaign.
3. If it's financially viable, stage a sale or bonanza day on certain product or service lines. A snap sale is an excellent way of attracting passing trade and new customers. If new customers like what you offer, they will return.
4. Hold discount events – an evening or a day where everything is discounted. Advertise the event in the local press and hand out flyers to generate interest.
5. Introduce a loyalty scheme. Offer special discounts and offers on products and services for regular customers. Not only will this encourage existing customers to return, but more customers are likely to become members.
6. Offer bulk discounts. Put them in place at particular times (Wednesday nights: two pizzas for the price of one) or offer ongoing deals. But check you are making enough money before you ever offer a discount.
7. Watch your competitors' progress. If they are having great success with a particular product or service, see if you can modify an existing product of your own, or lower the price, to take advantage of the interest.
8. Launch a new product or service, and plan a marketing campaign around it to give publicity to your business as whole.
9. Join forces with a competitor against the others. You may both be able to reach corners of the market that were previously inaccessible. Or you might be able to work productively with a business in an entirely different market. Coffee shops and book shops have long been joining forces for reciprocal benefit.
10. Take customer service levels to new highs. Customers are more likely to return to a business where they feel valued than to one which may have slightly cheaper products but surly staff.

New and tighter noise legislation comes into force on 6 April. Here fellow business club members, **Northwest Management Solutions Ltd** highlight what the regulations entail.

Why is noise at work so important?

It is estimated that about 170,000 people currently suffer from occupation deafness, tinnitus or some other condition arising from exposure to noise at work.

- It is usually gradual, due to prolonged exposure to noise, although it can be caused immediately by sudden, extremely loud, explosive noises such as from guns or cartridge-operated machines.
- It is irreversible, but completely preventable.
- Research suggests that just over a million people are exposed to potentially hazardous noise at work.

What are the main changes to the law?

The noise levels at which various legal requirements come into force are being lowered. The first action level is being reduced from 85 dB(A) down to 80 dB(A). Meanwhile, the second action level is being reduced from 90 dB(A) down to 85 dB(A). These 5 dB(A) reductions sound small, but because of the logarithmic scale on which noise is measured these reductions are very significant – a 5dB(A) noise reduction means cutting current noise levels by around two-thirds!

There are other more minor changes to the legislation, but this reduction in permitted noise levels is by far the most significant.

What action should you take?

First you need to assess whether noise is a cause for concern in your workplace. If there are areas in the workplace where noise is intrusive and conversation is difficult and staff have to work in such conditions for most of their working day then noise levels may be around 80dB(A). If there is anywhere in the workplace where people have to shout at a distance of 2 metres to hold a conversation then noise levels are likely to be above 85dB(A). In either of these cases the Regulations require you to conduct a risk assessment. In simple terms this requires you to:

- Identify noise hazards
- Estimate likely exposure to noise
- Identify measures required to eliminate or reduce risks, control exposures and protect employees
- Make a record of what you will do in an action plan

Estimating noise exposure does not require very detailed or lengthy measurement - you are not required to make a highly precise or definitive assessment of individual employees' noise exposure. However, your assessment of exposure must be a reliable estimate with sufficient precision for you to be able to show whether exposure action values are likely to be exceeded. The assessment must also be made by a competent person to be suitable and sufficient as required by law. Competence is required to identify the measures required to eliminate or reduce noise and ensure that employees are protected.

How NWMS can help?

NWMS can help by carrying out a noise risk assessment in your workplace, using a suitable sound level meter to provide the reliable estimates of noise exposure that the Regulations require. This is followed with a written action plan to ensure that you comply with this legislation. Even if you've had a noise assessment in the past, now might be a good time to review it. Good practice says that the assessment should be reviewed every 2 years – workplaces change and machinery tends to get noisier as it gets older.

Call us today. All business club members receive a **20% discount**.

NWMS Ltd, The Retreat, Cobbs Brow Lane, Newburgh, Lancashire, WN8 7ND Tel: 01257 464940

## We're Proud to Announce...

The Impact Socket Supplies Team is celebrating its successful achievement in attaining the ISO 9001:2000 accreditation, awarded to us by the British Standards Institution. Having survived and prospered in a very competitive business for over thirty years, we feel extremely proud to have gained this recognition.



ISS has also launched its new product catalogue for 2006. The catalogue has a fresh new look and includes many new products, which are now in stock.

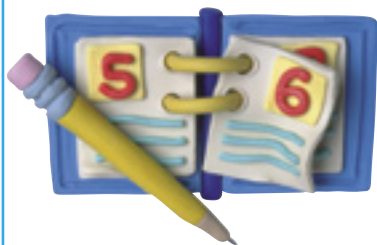


Based at Park Mills in Chorley and being the UK's foremost manufacturer of impact sockets and accessories, the ISS Team will continue to provide dedicated services and quality products for all their valued customers.

## March Meeting



Guest speaker Steven Brewer, Fellow of the Institute of Sales and marketing Management and a member of the Professional Speakers Association



## Dates for the Dairy

April 5th	Rivca Rubin
May 2nd	John Allan - Federation of Small Businesses
Jun 6th	Malcolm Ashton

## Committee contacts

Chairman - David Kevill

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Membership Secretary & Club Contact

- Lynda White

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Secretary - Jon Neal

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Database Controller

- Phil Lancaster

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## NOTICEBOARD

**WANTED: Old Washing Machine - Nothing fancy but must be in working order. Will collect.**

Email any offers to  
studio@impressiondesign.co.uk

## The chairman writes



Business As Usual

First of all I would like to say how honoured I am to be invited to be your Chairman and I only hope that my contribution can come close to the tremendous effort and hard work of my predecessor Keith Ellison. I must at this point express my sincere thanks to Keith for ensuring the continued success and growth of the club and I am delighted that he will continue to be an active member of the committee.

In my opinion, there is no need to make any major changes to the operation of a club that is already very successful, however, I strongly believe that all organisations need to continue with a process of evolution to maintain levels of interest and I will hopefully be able to introduce one or two subtle changes.

My mission for my term as Chairman is to continue to increase membership levels. The more members we have, the better a self-help, support and networking group we will become. If each of our members introduced just one new member over the coming year, not too difficult a task, we would double in size (yes I know that is obvious) and be an even more vibrant organisation than we are now. So that is my challenge to you, please spread the word and invite your business contacts to one or our meetings. Everyone will be made very welcome and, whilst I hope that they will become a member, no one will be pressurised to join.

Now a little bit about my background, for those of you who don't already know. I am a local lad (ok, at my age 'lad' is stretching it a bit) having been born and raised in Chorley and have spent all but three years, when I worked overseas, living in the Chorley & South Ribble area. My working experience has been largely in accountancy and general management, in one form or another in an A to Z of industry ranging from dishcloths in Adlington to copper mining in Zambia.

I learned my trade the 'hard way', leaving school with just 5 o'levels, my first job being as an assistant accountant on £8 per week - ah the good old days when 10 shillings (sorry 50p) could buy you a few pints and a bag of chips! Progressing through the ranks has proved to be the most valuable learning experience anyone could have and enables me to relate to all levels in an organisation and to give advice that is based on personal, practical experience.

I currently work as a business trouble-shooter and advisor through my company Kevill & Co (www.kevill.co.uk) and work for various clients in a number of business disciplines. My belief is that 'no matter how good, there is always room for improvement' and I will take that ethos into my reign as Chairman.

From 1990 to 2002 I was a business advisor to the Young Enterprise scheme, a role I thoroughly enjoyed. Being able to give just a tiny help on their career path to over 100 youngsters gave me a great deal of satisfaction.

I have appeared on Radio Lancashire's 'Later with Carole' a number of times for business phone ins on various topics. My real claim to fame, however, is playing the back end of Daisy the cow in pantomime in Africa but I'll say no more about that. I have gained significant benefit from being a member of the club, now it is my turn to help other business people to reap those same benefits. I can't do it, however, without the help and support of each and everyone of you.

Thank you once again for trusting me to be your Chairman and I can assure you that I will do my very best to repay your trust.