



Central Lancashire
Business Club

bringing local businesses together

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Impression

Newsletter
Issue 16, March 2009

THE NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY 7.45 for 8pm
3rd March 2009

Annick Morris

The speaker at our March meeting will be Annick Morris.

I first met Annick when she was a very lively 7 years old and I was immediately inspired by her. Now 22 years old, Annick has been blind since birth but has achieved so much. In 2001 she received a "Child of Achievement" award and with typical modesty said that she felt that there were others who deserved it more.

Annick is a radio amateur and can read Braille so fast that she has even read the news bulletin on the Radio Society of Great Britain's GB2RS News.

Now studying business at Runshaw College, Annick will be informing us about the equipment that enables blind and partially sighted people to work in business.

Please do support Annick by attending the meeting.

I know that you too will be inspired.

FREE BREAKFAST SEMINAR

'Internet Marketing - Building a Successful Web Business'

This seminar event is back due to popular demand.

The Pennine Lancashire Business Net is holding a free e-business breakfast event - under the No Limits brand - in Burnley on **26 March 2009**.

Specifically designed for Owners, Directors and Senior Managers of businesses prepared to be inspired by exceptional speakers with thought provoking ideas at the leading edge of this topic. It is also relevant to webmasters and marketing managers who influence online marketing strategies.

This powerful seminar will give businesses all the tools, techniques and approaches to equip them for a successful online future. Jan Klin, one of the most sought after speakers in internet marketing, will share some great success stories and powerful success techniques; including a free webinar for every delegate - a complementary and highly practical electronic tutorial.

I am enclosing an invitation to the breakfast which includes a full description of the seminar. If anyone wants to attend all they need to do is fax the form back to us or email ddu@blackburn.gov.uk

New business start-ups and people thinking about going into business will find support at this event for getting the most from innovation and technology.

'Internet Marketing - Building a Successful Web Business' - free breakfast event

T. 01282 832792

Pennine Lancashire Business Net

<http://www.penninelancashirebusiness.net>

For more information and to book your place call 01254 582426 or email ddu@blackburn.gov.uk



£10m High Growth Programme for the Northwest launched

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and the Northwest ERDF Programme have launched a new High Growth business support programme designed to help businesses in the region with 'Starting a High Growth Business' and provide 'Coaching for High Growth' that will support and grow the Northwest economy.

With the support and investment of the new ERDF programme, the NWDA aims to deliver the £10m programme to assist 1,000 High Growth, new and established businesses in the Northwest. The funding consists of £3m ERDF and £7m NWDA.

The current difficult business environment presents new challenges for growing a business. Historically, only about a quarter of small businesses achieve growth in any given year with around 7% of new VAT registrations achieving high growth over an extended period. There are still opportunities for those businesses with the aspirations for significant growth and all businesses need to prepare to take advantage of the longer term upturn in markets.

Providing support is essential and this project will be targeted towards businesses from all sectors with high growth potential whether at pre-start, start-up or existing stage. In total around 1000 businesses will be supported by the programme which is expected to deliver over £250M additional GVA with a resulting 2000 additional jobs.

High growth companies are defined as either new businesses that have the scope to grow to £0.5m within 3 years or established SMEs that have the ambition and capability of achieving a minimum of 20% per annum growth.

The project aims to provide intense coaching and support to businesses in the Northwest that demonstrate this high growth potential.

Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of the NWDA said: "There are significant challenges to be faced in the economy and the NWDA is introducing a

range of measures to support all businesses. With every challenge there are opportunities and the aim of this scheme is to focus solely on those companies that have the aspiration and drive to achieve significant growth. The targeted support from this new High Growth project will better prepare around 1,000 businesses to give the greatest return to the growth of the economy."

David Malpass, Director of European Programme at NWDA, said: "In March 2000, the EU Heads of States and Governments agreed to help Europe to "become the most competitive and dynamic growth economy in the world". Providing support, such as dedicated coaching, will help new businesses from all sectors with high growth potential to achieve their goals."

Simon Caunt, Assistant Regional Director, CBI, said: "Helping NW businesses with aspirations for significant growth is an essential part of the wider business support available in the region. The changing economic climate will present different challenges for small and medium enterprises over the next year and it is vital that government support is focused where it is needed most. The help, support and guidance provided by coaching programmes such as this will enable these businesses to realise their potential and deliver sustained growth for the North West economy."

The Northwest High Growth programme combines two 'Solutions for Business' products ('Starting a High Growth Business' and 'Coaching for High Growth') from within the Government's recently announced national package of 30 publicly funded business support products. 'Solution for Business - funded by government' helps companies start, survive and succeed and makes government support simpler for business reducing the number of support products from 3,000 by 2010. Access to the Northwest High-Growth programme is available from Business Link Northwest, the primary gateway for business support in this region, or visit www.nwda.co.uk for more details.

Useful people

Lumenata Lighting recently won a substantial order on the back of a contact made at the business club!

"You may remember the Chief Executive of Chorley BC giving a talk on her vision for the future. I asked her how keen she was to use local businesses and she replied that she is very keen as long as they are technically capable and competitive. Well, she was true to her word and gave us the chance to bid on the lighting design for the refit for Chorley Market. We won the order that has been worth over £15k to us and we would not have won it had I not been at the business club meeting. A strong message to all those members who never attend the meetings, other than to give a presentation on what they do!!!"



COMMITTEE CONTACTS

committee 2008-2009

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Lancashire Adult Learning

can now deliver a range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) across Lancashire to volunteers as well as paid staff. NVQs at Level 2 are FREE* NVQs include:

- IT (know as ITQ)
- Business Administration
- Customer Service

Stop Press! NVQ Customer Service Level 3 is now FREE*

NVQs are an excellent qualification, which show competency in the workplace and are recognised by employers. Passing an NVQ will give candidates a well deserved sense of achievement and the chance to move on to new heights. Funding is available now - so act today to take advantage of gaining a free* qualification for you or your colleagues.

For more information about NVQs, please contact the Frieda or Kay NVQ Team on Tel 01257 276719 or visit www.lancashirecollege.com

(*criteria applies, please ask for details).



RESOLUTION CORNER

with Resolution Opportunities

Risky Business

After the recent debacle we all have heard of Risk, in fact too much of it. However, what does it mean and what should we do about it?

Risk is defined as "The chance or possibility of something going wrong and suffering loss, damage, injury, danger etc."

Some risks can easily be identified, others not. Most of us will easily identify assessing the risk of crossing a B road to say the M6 motorway, however, what is involved in the risk assessment? A Risk to a Business can cause a major impact on it's future survivability. Defining each risk identifies the Impact level which can be encountered.

There are two factors involved. The likelihood of it happening and the harm it would cause. These two factors are combined to register the Impact on the business and the overall Risk involved. Low risks can be ignored or at least investigated later, they are not worth the effort. Only the medium and HIGH risks are investigated and mitigated. Reducing these will significantly reduce the Impact to the Business.

Often costs can be reduced at the same time, there may however be some areas which require investment to alleviate the severe impact and cost incurred if a disaster occurred. Obviously sometimes the cost of this can be excessive and may not be a worthwhile proposition, importantly these have been assessed the issues have been challenged. These still need to be repeatedly re-assessed, the solution may have altered. The final act is to incorporate this into the Disaster Recovery Plan.

The Business has fully assessed the risks, worked on how to mitigate the impact and reduce the potential for a Disaster, survivability has been secured.

Don't become a Risky Business.

Likelihood of Harm	The RISK - Severity / Impact		
	Slight Harm	Moderate Harm	Extreme Harm
Very Unlikely	VERY LOW RISK	VERY LOW RISK	HIGH RISK
Unlikely	VERY LOW RISK	MEDIUM RISK	VERY HIGH RISK
Likely	LOW RISK	HIGH RISK	VERY HIGH RISK
Very Likely	LOW RISK	VERY HIGH RISK	VERY HIGH RISK

Be Prepared, Be Resilient.
Failure to Plan is Planning to Fail

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COMPARING COMPUTERS TO CARS TO COMBAT THE CREDIT CRUNCH



The news is still full of talk of a recession, so **The IT Dept** is keen to help you to save money, by keeping your existing computer systems working more efficiently for longer. Would you like to replace less equipment, reduce downtime, lessen user frustrations and cut costs?

Michael Donkin, Director of 'The IT Dept', takes the novel view that computers are very similar to cars; you service your car regularly in order to avoid breakdowns and problems. So why not do the same with your computer?

Michael sees many similarities between cars and computers, such as:

- They are both essential, every-day, business tools
- You feel lost if suddenly without one of them
- They are both getting cheaper, while offering more gadgets
- You don't really know how they work, but you don't need to
- They are both based on a tin box with windows
- You hope neither suddenly crashes

The main difference is that we service our cars regularly, to prevent sudden break-downs and down-time. Why not do the same with our computers?

The IT Dept believes that businesses can save money by keeping their existing computers for longer, simply by having them serviced regularly. Servicing includes ensuring systems are secure by adding Microsoft patches, which also aids their efficiency. Checking and tweaking anti-virus and anti-spam systems provides the best possible protection; and ironing out small glitches that users have become used to living with saves staff time.

During the servicing of computers 'Event Logs' are scrutinised. It is these logs that often highlight issues before they become serious. There are additional checks which can be run to diagnose the state of the hardware and software, giving advance warning of trouble.

The IT Dept is seeking to avoid sudden downtime which adds to the hidden costs of running a company. Servicing only takes a few minutes per month for each computer, but can extend their useful life considerably.



THE CHAIRMAN WRITES

The years fly by

It seems incredible that it is a year since I wrote my last end of year report – how time flies. The year has been another good one for the Central Lancashire Business Club, being a year of consolidation rather than innovation. Following the previous year's change of name this year as been spent trying to spread the word of the benefits of becoming a member.

Following the issuing of membership cards this year for the first time we hope to be able to provide more member benefits by way of discounts from local businesses. Obviously this may take some time to arrange but we hope to build up a package of offers during the coming months. Don't worry if you have not received your membership card yet, they will be issued very soon. One card will be issued per organisation once the current year membership fee is paid.

As I approach the end of my third year as Chairman I am able to reflect on an enjoyable, interesting and rewarding time but above all else I value the friendships that have been made along the way. As you are aware I am hoping to pass on the Chair at the AGM to someone who is able to bring fresh ideas to the club, I feel that it is vital, in order to continue the club's success, to have a regular flow on new ideas. To whoever takes over I am able to say that I have genuinely enjoyed the experience and I will always be grateful for the support given to me by all the committee members, who all work tirelessly to maintain the momentum of the club, and also to the membership in general. Do I have any regrets? Well just one, I never quite managed to reach the 100 member mark that I aimed for.

We have again welcomed new members every month but these are offset by those who do not renew their membership. We will inevitably always have a few members who join, don't attend many, if any, meetings and at the end of the year are unable to see what they gain from membership. As with all organisations the more you put in, the more you get out.

We have had a steady stream of articles for the newsletter for which we are very grateful. Remember that now the newsletter is produced in an electronic form there is no limit to the number of pages therefore please keep your articles coming.

At the club meetings we are always delighted to see the 'regulars' and to welcome visitors. It would, however, be especially nice to be able to welcome those members who do not attend meetings. Again we have had an interesting series of speakers and, as is now tradition, I will briefly rewind the year.

In March we enjoyed a presentation of the major plans to redevelop Leyland town centre, which was

of particular interest to those members who live or work in Leyland.

April brought one of the highlights of the year with a presentation on the working of Job Spec, a division of the Brothers of Charity. Lee Morris, with his two able assistants, gave an interesting, humorous and, above all, an inspiring presentation.

The speaker for May was Mike Holman, the regional director of BNI who talked about effective networking.

In June we were educated to the human resource problems facing small businesses by Ian Langford and Stephen Balfe of Peninsula Business Services. This was certainly valuable information and gave many of us points to ponder on.

In July we were entertained by Mike Furness who gave an illustrated talk on the history and current day operation of the steam yacht Gondola on Lake Coniston, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all those present.

After the summer break our September meeting saw a double header of Mike Reece from Ology who gave us an insight into people's behavioural styles and David Coates, business reporter from the Lancashire Evening Post, who explained the LEP's plans for increased business coverage.

A very late cancellation by our planned speaker for October led to a hasty rearrangement and I admired Steve Ward's ability to think on his feet, for which I thank him. Steve, with no pre planning, led us through an interesting debate on a number of subjects.

November means Brian and our biggest turnout of the year! As always Brian Wilding from Chordale Wines gave us all a 'tasty' and very enjoyable journey through the wine industry. I never cease to be amazed by Brian's knowledge and I know that we all hope we will be enjoying Brian's presentations for many, many more years.

December brought our annual members' presentation evening. As always we had a very wide variety of presentations, highlighting the broad cross section of businesses our membership covers. Thanks go to The IT Department, Resolution Opportunities, Changeability, Chiropractic Associates and Pin Point GPS for their excellent presentations.

Also in December we enjoyed our Christmas Dinner at Leyland Golf Club and a most enjoyable night was had by all. My thanks yet again to Steve and Ann for the hard work in again making this event much more than a Christmas meal, although it might be better not to get everyone singing next year!!!

In January friendships were put aside at our competitive annual ten pin bowling competition. This year brought a change of champions with the Thomas Cole team being victorious. However I am not sure that splitting up the winning team for the last two years was entirely ethical Mr Lancaster! Thanks



Continued...

once again to Philip Lancaster for organising this event and to Steve Ward for providing the prizes and organising the presentation ceremony.

February saw us taking to the high seas in the form of a very interesting presentation on 'The Unusual Side of Cruising' by Mike Ridley from Resolution Opportunities. Mike gave us an insight to the 'behind the scenes' operation of a cruise liner.

So the end of another successful year for Central Lancashire Business Club. Thanking people always runs the risk of omitting someone deserving of thanks but I do feel that there are a number of people I must thank for their support during the last year. In addition to those mentioned above I would like to thank Lisa Thomason for her continued hard work in producing the newsletter and also maintaining our web site, Phil Lancaster for maintaining the membership database, Paul Ainsworth for maintaining our financial records in a very professional manner, Jon Neal and John Thompson for taking the minutes at committee meetings, a thankless task, Rachel Gill for turning visitors into members, Steve Ward for always being prepared to step in when I could not attend meetings, Brian Wilding for making sure we had our raffle prizes each month and Dea Parkin for helping achieve press coverage for the club. If I have forgotten anyone please accept my apologies.

As I prepare to hand over the reins I have one more thank you. I would like to thank Keith Ellison for 'persuading' me to become Chairman three years ago.

So what of the coming year. I hope we can reach the magic 100 members and I am determined that we will hold a satellite meeting in Preston, which due to circumstances beyond our control could not take place during this last year.

2009 also brings the club's 25th anniversary. The fact that the club has remained such a strong organisation for so long is testament to those with the foresight to launch the organisation and to all those who have had the enthusiasm to continue to run and develop the club since. Keep reading your newsletter for details of celebratory events later in the year.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank all of you, our members, for your support throughout the last three years, a period that has seen some major changes including a change of name for the club and the move to distributing the newsletter in an electronic format. Without your support the club would not be as successful as it is. Please do continue your support, it really is appreciated.



You may have realised that you are not getting the best out of your system - however, how do you choose a new one?

This article from **OX SYSTEMS** describes the main stages of a system change.

Needs and Requirements Analysis

Full consideration needs to be given to the detailed requirements and investment. Don't make a snap judgement based on sales presentations. A full requirements analysis is critical to a successful implementation and roll out of a new Management Information system.

The business and accounting system is the spine of the company. If designed well it will incorporate all business records, both financial and communications. Having information at your fingertips is critical to customer satisfaction and good decision making.

Appoint a team and allow creative input from staff. Maintain a Project Log, which includes all tasks, design issues, decisions, and ensure that all tasks are assigned timescales.

Budget & Timescales

Identify benefits & savings. Ensure the Budget covers software, annual fees, hardware, external consultancy, staff overtime, and personnel changes. Benefits include removal of the old system, improved financial control, and more efficient procedures.

Do not under-estimate the requirement for implementation consultancy and training. As a rough guide - add 100% to the base software cost when you are budgeting.

Annual maintenance / licence costs are usually around 20% of the initial software cost, and are increasingly compulsory as an on-going licence.

Always negotiate the price - particularly the initial software licence and consultancy.

New System Evaluation & Selection

Each department lists its requirements, classifying each as: critical, highly desirable or 'nice to have'. Prepare for compromise - particularly if the company should change the way it operates.

A selection of software can then be reviewed by inviting demonstrations. Observe not just 'if' your requirements can be met, but 'how'. In addition to functionality, other issues include: a good relationship with the provider, how many users the software has and a good helpdesk.

Narrow it down to a shortlist of two or three. To decide between these, a Request for Information (RFI) may be useful. The prospective software providers are requested to respond against each requirement as follows: "fully available", "not available" and "available only by modification".

The RFIs should then be scored with numeric values which combine the importance and availability of the requirement. Totalling the scores will give a strong indication of choice, and may settle the decision where staff are in disagreement.

Process Design

Appoint a team to design new procedures. It would be unusual for existing practices to migrate unchanged from one system to another.

Ensure that departmental managers or team leaders are involved in the design. This ensures their requirements are met and gives them an opportunity to review the software first hand.

Change inevitably attracts staff reaction, positive and negative. Inclusion from the outset can keep people positively involved in the process.

Implementation

Technical: Installation is conducted by the IT Department or a senior member of the Finance Dept, in conjunction with a specialist of the software supplier.

Settings: These are system choices arising from the design process, eg. "Allow sales when stock in negative: Yes, No or Warn". Some settings are irreversible.

Take On: Set up customers, suppliers, products, stock locations, chart of accounts. Transfer open balances, ie. customer, supplier, general ledger and stock count. Transfer open sales and purchase orders.

Stationery: Stationery takes an inordinate amount of time to design and implement. Start early, and respond immediately to any matters arising.

Testing: Ensure that everything is tested and problems eliminated, including the take-on, reports, stationery, reconciliations and controls.

Training

Training is critical: everyone agrees this in principle. However it is frequently the victim of trimming the new system budget. There should be some formal training with the new software supplier For economy, train team leaders; they then train their staff.

Reports Build

The Reports Build process is critical to the successful launch of a new accounting system. Reporting is frequently the reason for a system change in the first place, yet it often drops down the priority list as the main go-live date draws near.

Go Live

Many companies choose the year end date, coinciding positively and negatively with the financial accounts and audits. However, changing mid-term

can leave a poor 'prior year comparison' position and a less accurate balance sheet. Inform staff of their responsibilities - often a weekend is involved.

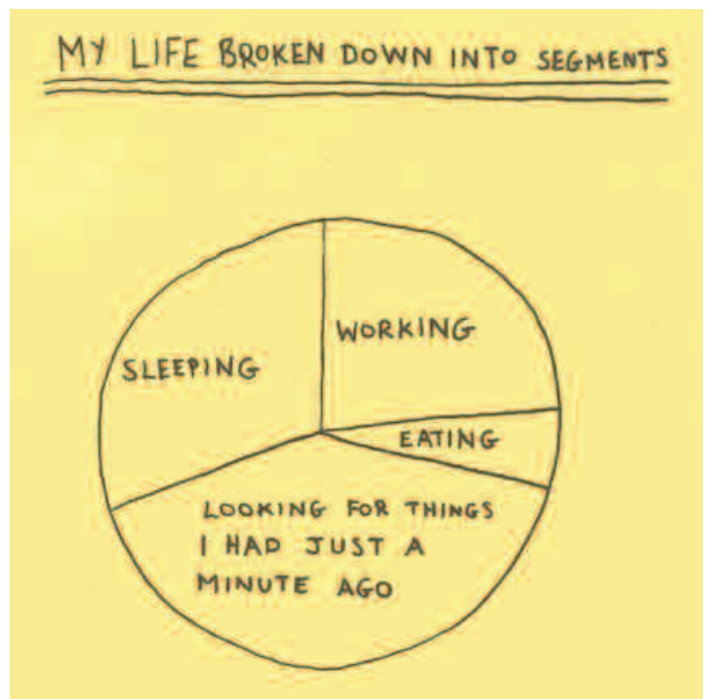
Post-Live Evaluation

Have all the objectives been achieved? If not, what is the resolution? Are management and staff aware of there unfinished tasks? Does the Implementation Team continue to meet? Does the Implementation Director continue to report to the Board?

Conclusion

If you have concluded that a change is necessary, I hope you find this information useful; there are more details on the website.

Paul Ainsworth, www.oxsystems.co.uk



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

This month - March

3rd: **AGM plus Annick Morris** - Equipment Needed To Enable Blind People To Work In Business

Future Events

April 7th **Alan Childs** from **PFEG** - The work of PFEG

May 5th **Martin McKenna Evatt** - A bespoke screenplay highlighting the importance of team work.

June 2nd **David Baker - Perrite** - Surviving the Credit Crunch

July 7th **Rob Molyneux** - Avalon Health

Final thought... No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.