

Is your business ready for smoke-free?

From 1st July 2007 England goes 'smoke-free'. This means that smoking will be banned in most enclosed public places, including workplaces, and certain vehicles.

Come along to one of the free Wealden Seminars to hear ideas on getting ready for this new law. There will be speakers on the new laws, planning issues for outside shelters and tips for supporting your staff.

SEMINAR 1

Wealden Council Offices, Hailsham
Committee Room 1
Access via Leisure Centre
Tues 8th May 2007, 2-4 pm

SEMINAR 2 *

Wealden Council Offices, Hailsham
Committee Room 1
Access via Leisure Centre
Wed 9th May 2007, 10-12 noon

SEMINAR 3

Wealden Council Office, Crowborough
Committee Room 1
Thurs 10th May, 2-4 pm

SEMINAR 4 *

Uckfield Civic Centre
Wed 16th May 2007,
10-12 noon

To book your free place[s] contact us by telephone on 01323 443302 or by email smokefree@wealden.gov.uk

*Bengali, Cantonese and Turkish interpreters available at these seminars on request.

For more information visit:

www.wealdenbusinesshelp.org.uk

or www.smokefreeengland.co.uk

or ring 0800 1691697

Here is a selection of frequently asked questions about the new smoke-free regulations which have been reproduced from www.wealdenbusinesshelp.org.uk for Wealden Business Focus readers.

Q. Do I have to provide smoking breaks or outside smoking areas for my staff?

By law, employers must give staff an uninterrupted rest break of 20 minutes when their daily working time is more than six hours. Staff can, of course, smoke

during their rest period, if they choose, but they must not smoke in an enclosed or substantially enclosed area. As an employer you must decide whether or not to permit smoking elsewhere on your premises, e.g. in open car parks, grounds or shelters and you should indicate where smoking is allowed in your smoking policy.

Q. I'm a sales rep and my boss told me I'm not allowed to smoke in my car at any time, whether I'm working or not. That can't be right, can it?

Any vehicle used for work comes under the definition of a workplace, so if is enclosed it will need to comply with the new laws. However, vehicles will not be required to be smoke free if they are used primarily for the private purposes of a person who:

- a. owns it, or
- b. has a right to use it which is not restricted to a particular journey

Q. Who enforces these new smoke free laws?

District or Borough Councils will enforce the new laws. In many cases this will be environmental health practitioners, who already have experience of law enforcement. Initially, officers will take an informative approach to seek compliance through persuasion and guidance. However, the council will take firmer action against persistent or troublesome offenders.

Q. What are the fines if someone is caught breaking the law?

The regulations propose that the maximum fine on conviction for an offence relating to the display of no-smoking signs is currently £1000. Where the fixed penalty procedure is used for an alleged offence relating to the display of no-smoking signs, the fixed penalty is £200 and a discounted amount

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Spotlight on successful local businesses

Employment Land Review

Wealden District Council’s planning department is currently in the process of producing a Local Development Framework (LDF) which is a series of documents making up the new style Local Plan.

Work is underway on production of the Core Strategy, one of the key documents which will look at the spatial implications of the issues which affect the quality of life for those living and working in the District. The Council will be producing an Issues and Options paper outlining the possible distribution of new development within the District. This will be published for public consultation purposes in June.

Part of this process involves looking more closely at the amount and location of land allocated for employment use. This will require a thorough analysis of the current supply and likely demand for typical employment uses such as offices, workshops, factories, warehouses and distribution centres.

Both Wealden and Eastbourne Councils have signed up to the concept of the Hailsham/Eastbourne Triangle, an Economic Blueprint for the area and which is a commitment to stimulate development of this area by raising its profile and making it more attractive to business.

Employment is clearly an important issue for Wealden and Eastbourne, and this will remain a key factor, especially as the population of both areas is likely to grow. Both Councils are in the process of preparing their LDF and have recently agreed to work together to jointly commission an Employment Land Review covering both Wealden and Eastbourne.

This review will consider the current provision of business sites and premises, whether existing or proposed (typically those on industrial estates or larger office buildings) together with the likely demand over the next 20 years. The aim of this exercise is to decide how much land to reserve for future use, whether it should be re-allocated for other uses such as housing, and whether more

land is required on more appropriate sites. The review will also look at the types of tenure which businesses favour and ways in which the planning system can stimulate the local economy by ensuring a high standard of accommodation which meets current and future demand.

Roger Tyms & Partners (Planners and Development Economists) who have been contracted to undertake the review, face a challenging task. There are many issues which could affect the nature of employment in the future. For instance, will more people be working from home; will people want to work in attractive surroundings closer to home now that broadband and the internet is widely available; will manufacturing reduce even more as firms move abroad seeking cheap labour? It is therefore very difficult to ascertain the amount of land required to meet future needs and where this should be, taking into account likely changes in each of the employment sectors.

Even if it is possible to answer these questions and identify an ideal supply framework, market forces may prevent this happening. A thorough understanding of all the issues is essential if plans for the future are to be realistic and fit for purpose. This will require talking with some key individuals and organisations as well as a review of facts, figures and other research documents. However, both Councils need to ensure they are best placed to stimulate employment opportunities so those who live in the area can enjoy a healthy economy whilst maintaining an attractive environment and ensuring access to a range of facilities. The Review should be completed by the middle of June and a report will be available on the Council’s website www.wealden.gov.uk

For more information on the Local Development Framework please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01892 602497/602498 or email planning@wealden.gov.uk

Seminars from Eastbourne & District Enterprise Agency (EDEAL)

Date(s)	Course Title	Location	Duration	Cost inc VAT
08/05/07	Mind Your Own Business	Eastbourne	1 Day	£95.00
10/05/07	Marketing Matters – Marketing Planning & Promotion	Eastbourne	1 Day	£95.00
16/05/07	Fire Safety – Do you comply?	Eastbourne	1 Day	£65.00
23/05/07	ABC of Selling – Intermediate Level	Eastbourne	1 Day	£95.00
05/06/07	Book-keeping for Beginners	Eastbourne	1 Day	£50.00
07/06/07	Marketing Matters – Electronic Marketing Techniques	Eastbourne	½ Day	£65.00
14/06/07	ABC of Selling – Advance Level	Eastbourne	1 Day	£95.00

EDEAL provides FREE, CONFIDENTIAL and IMPARTIAL BUSINESS ADVICE to all businesses, ranging from pre-start to mature. The service embraces social enterprises and voluntary organisations as well as private, commercial companies. They can be contacted on 01323 413500 or email info@edeal.org.uk



Business Crime Prevention from The Safer Wealden Partnership

Contrary to popular perception, crime against business is not a victimless crime. It affects not only the employer and employees who depend on the business for their livelihood, but also the consumer in terms of the increased costs that are inevitably passed on as a result of crime. Crime against business can also have damaging consequences for local communities, and disadvantaged areas in particular, by acting as a barrier to business growth.

Reducing the risk of crimes against your business will help to support its long-term success. Security and crime prevention should be integral to any business plan, not just a reaction after the event.

The degree of security any premises needs is obviously governed by the nature of the business, but it is a fact that a thief will look for an easy target. So look at your premises and think how you could break in – then act.

Opening windows must be fitted with key operated locks, and more vulnerable windows should be fitted with internal security bars or grilles.

External doors should be fitted with deadlocks which meet BS3621. Consider the need to strengthen the door frame by fitting steel strips (called London Bar or Birmingham Bar) which offer extra protection against barging from outside.

Many businesses find it necessary to

restrict free access into the premises, and have Access Control systems fitted to the main door. If cash has to be kept on the premises overnight, use a good quality safe, which should be secured to a floor or wall. The nature of the business, and value of goods on sale will determine whether CCTV or an Intruder Alarm System is required. Your Insurer will advise you, and remember if you do have an alarm system fitted, use an approved installer. Police or your Insurers can advise.

In order to restrict climbing access to first floor windows, consider painting drainpipes with anti climb paint. Shutters or Grilles fitted to display windows can also be a deterrent, but you should consult your Local Planning Authority or Landlord.

For more specific advice you can contact your local Crime Prevention Officer on 0845 60 70 999.



Members of The Safer Wealden Partnership (SWP) include Sussex Police, Wealden DC, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, ESCC, East Sussex Downs & Weald PCT and the Sussex Police Authority. For further details of the SWP please contact Neil Banks, Community Safety Co-ordinator on 01892 602746 or email cdrp@wealden.gov.uk

Advertise your business free of charge!

The Wealden Online Business Directory exists to enable you to market your business free of charge.

If you haven't yet registered, log on to www.wealden.gov.uk/business and click on our 'online business directory'.

This allows you to add your contact details, a brief description of your business, and even a free link to your

website! If you've already added your business, please take a moment to check that your entry is accurate and up-to-date. By submitting a new on-line form we can ensure that your entry is updated with the new information you provide.

For more information please contact the Economic Development & Tourism Team – details on the back page.

Is your business ready for smoke-free?

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of £150 if the penalty is paid within 15 days from when the notice is issued.

The regulations propose that the maximum fine on conviction for an offence of smoking in a smoke free place is currently £200. Where the fixed penalty procedure is used for an alleged offence of smoking in a smoke free place, the fixed penalty is £50 and a discounted amount of £30 if the penalty is paid within 15 days from when the notice is issued.

Section 8 of the Health Act 2006 places a legal duty on any person who controls or is concerned in the management of smoke free premises to cause a person there to stop smoking. The regulations propose that the maximum fine on conviction for failing to prevent smoking in a smoke free place is currently £2500. There is no fixed penalty notice for this offence.

WEALDEN BUSINESS SUCCESS <<<<

Much Ado Books



Much Ado Books, Alfriston has been named the South East Regional Bookshop of the Year, part of the British Book Industry Awards. It puts them on the national shortlist against for other shops around the country. Lynne Truss presented the award on Saturday 14 April. Much Ado Books are also celebrating winning another national contest, for the best window display using a costume from the film 'Becoming Jane'.

Increasing your **Net** profit

As part of its ongoing commitment to the local community, Blue Planet Internet Solutions in Uckfield is working with local government and the Uckfield Regeneration Programme to deliver "Uckfield Country", a website for tourists looking for attractions and services in the area. "We are delighted to be involved with promoting local businesses to Uckfield's tourists", says Mark Vaesen of Blue Planet. "We believe that by following some simple rules, all businesses can use the web to improve their bottom line, either by increasing sales or by saving money".

5 ways your website can be more effective

What's the site for?

First, ask yourself how your website fits in to your other marketing activity and what you want the site to do. Are you using it for credentials or will you do business on-line? Will you refer to it in your sales pitch? Do you need new customers to find you on the search engines? Is the site a way of communicating with your existing customers more effectively? If so, could you use it to cut your costs?

Know your target market

Not only can you use your site to get more business, but you can use it to get the type of business that you really want. Identify who you want as your customers and which products or services you want them to buy, then design your site to promote these areas most strongly.

Deliver your message

What makes you different? If you can capture your USP and get this message across in a punchy headline or a well-chosen picture, you've grabbed your visitor's short attention span and increased your chances of a sale. Follow it up with a

clear indication of what they can do next to find out more. You could have more information on the site itself, or you may feel you have more chance of making a sale if you're talking to them face to face.

Make it easy

So you've done the hard bit and persuaded them that they're interested - don't let them get away. Make it easy for them to know what to do next. If you'd prefer them to call you, make it clear and provide your telephone number in as many places as possible. If you need some information before you contact them, why not direct them to a short contact form?

Keep them coming back for more

Getting a new customer is much harder than keeping an existing one. Your website should be another way of doing more business with your existing customers. Keep your site up to date so they have a reason to come back. If you run events, promote them on your website. If you have a new product or service, promote it on your home page.

Don't forget - your website shouldn't be seen as a cost to your business, it's an essential investment and you should seek to get the best possible return on your money.

For more help on making your website more effective, contact Blue Planet Internet Solutions on 01825 760909 or by visiting:

www.blueplanetinternet.co.uk

Developing and maintaining your presence on-line has never been easier.

Wealth Management: Are you paying too much tax?

Are you fed up with paying too much tax?

If the answer is 'yes', then at John King Consulting we can help you manage your tax rate professionally and effectively, thereby ensuring you keep more of that hard earned cash!

Using a tailored approach to client's individual circumstances, we are able to structure their business and personal affairs so that the maximum tax they pay is the minimum they legally have to, and not a penny more!

Tax law contains many allowances and reliefs that can help minimise tax liabilities, but unless you know how to apply them to your particular circumstances, it is unlikely you will be able to reap the benefits. That is where we come in. Over 20 years in the profession as well as being members of the Chartered Institute of Taxation – the 'Gold' standard in the UK for tax qualifications – means we have the experience, qualification and professionalism to offer quality advice to you and your business.

This is so, whether it be tax on employment income, profits of a trade, gains when you sell chargeable assets, or even when you make a gift of assets during your lifetime or through your Will when you die. There are literally hundreds of tax saving tips available for businesses, far too many to list here, but as an example:

EMPLOYING YOUR SPOUSE IN YOUR BUSINESS

If you are self employed and your spouse helps out with general administration, or any other business role, it is quite legitimate to pay him or her a salary. Just follow sensible commercial rules and you will have no problem justifying the payment to the Inland Revenue. In particular pay a market rate for the type of work done, and number of hours worked. Sole Traders with higher rate tax liabilities will benefit most from this arrangement.

CHILD CARE VOUCHERS

The government has improved tax incentives in this area considerably over the last few years. The 2006 budget announced that child care vouchers (used to buy daytime care from qualifying providers i.e. nurseries or crèches etc) can be given to employees and directors up to a maximum of £55 per week free of tax or National Insurance. As you would expect, there are some rules that need to be adhered to but for small owner managed companies this is a great way to extract money from the company tax free. Husband and wife directors can claim the £55 per week each. The effects of the voucher payments on Tax Credit entitlement should be reviewed first and advice is essential.

A FEW TIPS IN CONNECTION WITH YOUR PROPERTY/HOME

DIY builders beware! Always be aware that HMRC could try to argue that you purchased your home with an intention to make a profit, in which case Capital Gains Tax exemption will not be due. If you are selling off part of your garden make sure it is sold before the house and immediately adjoining land. Although not normally applicable to your home, Furnished Holiday Lettings are treated as trading income rather than investment income. This can be of material benefit when it comes to tax planning on eventual sale.

If you undertake a barn conversion for your own occupation, you can reclaim the VAT on the building materials. Each spouse of a married couple or each partner in a civil partnership has their own CGT annual exemption. Thought should be given therefore to transferring part of an asset subject to capital gains tax to your spouse before selling it.

As a B&B provider, you will not pay business rates provided you do not offer accommodation for more than 6 people.

LOW INTEREST LOANS PROVIDED BY EMPLOYERS

It may be possible for a company to lend an employee (or a director) up to £5,000 with no tax implications. This can be useful if say the employee needs to buy out his company car to avoid benefit in kind tax charges for example.

CAPITAL GAINS – USING HOME AS OFFICE

If you claim tax relief for the use of a room as an office you can avoid any possibility of CGT on a sale of your home if you make sure that the room is not used exclusively for business. A portable TV and your golf clubs stored in the home office could be sufficient.

For further tax tips and general commentary on various tax saving strategies, please request a copy of our latest 'Tax Report' newsletter.

John King Consulting (Tax Advisers – Accountants – Business Advisers) is servicing an ever increasing number of businesses within and around the borough of Tunbridge Wells and Wealden District. A calendar of one to one Tax Surgery sessions are being planned to take place in these areas, which are free of charge. If you are interested in attending such a session please call 01622 655384/07771 765912 or email: info@taxation-advice.com

Company Director is John King CTA ATT who is a qualified Chartered Tax Adviser. His CV includes: HM Revenue & Customs (June 1983 to September 1996); Self employed tax adviser (September 1996 to May 2001); and Partner of The Raymond Stewart Partnership, Chartered Accountants (From May 2001).



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People with Plans, Progress

Mike Taylor makes a case for Writing Business Plans

Failing to plan is tantamount to planning to fail. A surprisingly large number of people, especially in the SME (Small & Medium Enterprise) business sector refuse to commit time to what most enterprise experts agree is fundamental to the success of any fresh commercial opportunity. Some two thirds of all Start Ups fail in the first two years largely through lack of experience, market research, promotion and a basic SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) analysis.

Writing a business plan is a must!

For many people producing a robust and stimulating Business Plan is one of the more nasty 'must do' essentials at the outset for a business Start Up programme. For anyone just beginning this exciting journey there seems a myriad of very experienced people with seemingly mountains of good advice to offer in almost every area of business operations. But, it's the actual writing bit that can seem scary. Yet, even if the Start Up is self-funding experts agree that the Business Plan 'bible' can be the glue that ensures a new business initiative remains stuck to its goals, both in the dark early days and later, once the enterprise is up and running around a fully-functioning framework.

Components of a good business plan

'Executive Summary' – pulls together the key aspects of the proposed project, the benefits and the return on investment.

'Business Opportunity' – covers the motivation behind undertaking the project in the first place.

'Alternatives' section – outlines the choices and, if appropriate, what would happen if the plan were not implemented.

'Assumptions' highlights areas which are taken for granted. For example, this might be planning permission being given if any building work is involved.

'Market Analysis' – examines the customer base, and the current and future issues affecting the business environment together with a profile of the customer base and how they will be canvassed.

'Financial Analysis' – covers the proposed investment expenditure and the projected revenue forecasts that reveal if the idea is feasible.

In most cases, a bank will have a Web Site-based Business Plan template with sections for completion by the customer. It still means however, the client is left to dramatize each section in his or her own words. And there's the rub!

Time for a Period Business Review?

For those with an already established business a three or five Year Review Plan can form the foundation for a clearly defined route for charting the firm's future direction . . . Taking time to review the current position of a business as part of initiating the Review Plan

can sometimes reveal areas for improvement in efficiency and cost reduction as well as operational or financial weaknesses. With these addressed, consideration can then be given to the possible shape, size and position of the business in three to five years' time - and the route, barriers and milestones to achieving it.

The Campaign Plan

While the Period Plan may make reference to growing the business in new areas, a Campaign Plan will research the what, why and how implications of implementing it. It seeks to answer crucial questions by developing details of the product or service under consideration, who the potential customer base will be and why, together with a structured marketing analysis to support its launch. In some instances the Period and Campaign Plans can be linked to form a cohesive follow-on programme.

Begin with the end in mind

Creating an Exit Plan may seem somewhat premature, especially for those just embarking on their first business Start Up venture. Statistics suggest that of the huge number of people running SMEs most have no Exit Plan, or even any ideas for when the time comes to leave their business. Yet, some might argue that for a business to be considered a success today it must be capable of providing a financially remunerative exit for its owner tomorrow.

The Exit Strategy

This may well be considered critical to maintaining the operational integrity of the business. For instance the premature death or disablement of the owner or another key person could result in significant changes to operational finances. Another consideration is when married business partners are unable to carry on amicably, perhaps ending in divorce. How will the business be divided up without causing financial ruin for both parties, and the destruction of the business itself? These factors can be looked at in isolation or as part of the Start Up, Period and Campaign documents.

To be a success, business planning in all its forms must have the faith, support and commitment of senior management, even if it's the smallest singleton set-up. It may be initially just a matter of taking time to draw up some basic ideas, but if it produces that 'light bulb moment' – a wake-up call if you will – which results in thinking, 'yes, we could do this' it'll have been worthwhile and could form the basis for professionally constructed Plans for your Business.

Article written by Mike Taylor, Client Manager, Words for Business. Words for Business write bespoke Plans for Businesses working with each client to produce effective professional-quality documents. Tel: 01892 654418

In the next issue, Mike will consider why businesses should plan in case they are hit by a disaster.

Government Response to the Lyons Inquiry Final Report and Recommendations

Central Government has welcomed the publication of Sir Michael Lyons' final report of his Inquiry into Local Government saying that his core proposals support and extend the commitments Central Government has already made to strengthen local government's role and help it deliver better public services and build sustainable communities. Central Government's response to business related issues is as follows:

BUSINESS RATES

We agree that business rates are a successful and stable property tax, and that there is no case at this time for changing the current Retail Price Index (RPI) cap on annual increases in the national rate of tax. However we accept the case for improving some aspects of the regime.

EMPTY PROPERTY RATE RELIEF

In particular Sir Michael has endorsed Kate Barker's conclusion that the current system of providing relief for empty property from business rates is not justified and should be amended. UK office rents are amongst the highest in the world while more than 10 per cent of property in the City of London is currently empty. We believe that reductions in this relief could help encourage more efficient use of, and a readier supply of, property and lower rents for businesses who rent their accommodation, as well as removing unjustified imbalances and distortions. The Government will therefore legislate as soon as possible to remove the current relief for most types of empty property after a period of three months, or six months in the case of industrial property and warehouses. In so doing we will pay careful consideration to the implications of such changes for classes of empty property which receive special treatment within the current system of empty property relief and would not improve property supply. We are also confirming that we will exempt empty property held by charities from a business rate charge.

OTHER RATE RELIEFS/EXEMPTIONS

As Sir Michael proposes we will consider the merits of extending rates to include derelict and vacant previously developed land, and assess other reliefs and exemptions to business rates. However we have no plans to change the existing relief given to charities, which will not form part of this assessment.

LOCAL SUPPLEMENTARY BUSINESS RATES

We also intend to consider Sir Michael's proposals for a local supplementary business rate and these proposals will form the basis of a consultation in due course. We agree that a local supplementary rate could provide welcome flexibility for local communities to raise additional resources to invest in themselves and strengthen their local economies, and we will consider what the best options may be, working closely with business, local government and other stakeholders, and ensuring that local businesses have a proper say in the development of plans for a supplement by local communities.

For more information and a full copy of the report see the Lyons Inquiry website at: www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk

WEALDEN BUSINESS SUCCESS

Beacon Press

Beacon Press in Uckfield, has printed the Complete Pictures of Gilbert and George, a book published to coincide with the largest ever exhibition of the two artists work at London's Tate Modern from 15 February to 7 May. Beacon Press has also printed 27,000 copies of the Tate exhibition catalogue accompanying the exhibition. Gilbert and George visited Beacon throughout the project. Using only four colours, Beacon created a colour space on press that matches and, in some cases, exceeds the eight colour proofs used by the artists.

Want to get on the property ladder?

More Government funds available

Moat is the appointed Homebuy Agent for the new HomeBuy programme, a government led initiative to enable the following groups to purchase a property:

- Key workers (as defined by the government)
- Council/housing association tenants
- Other priority groups who are making a direct contribution to the local economy, including other workers essential to providing frontline public services.

HomeBuy offers a range of schemes to help people onto the home ownership ladder when they would otherwise not be able to afford to purchase a home.

The HomeBuy programme offers the following three options:

Open Market Homebuy – this offers an equity loan so that key workers and people in other priority groups can purchase 75% of the equity in a property of their choice from the open market. The remaining 25% is funded through the equity loan, (12.5% being provided by one of the four lenders involved in the scheme and 12.5% through government funding.

New Build Homebuy – new homes available on a part rent/part buy basis, where you purchase a share in a property, typically 50% (this can vary between 25% & 75%) and pay a discounted rent on the remaining share.

Discounted Rent – new homes available at a discounted rent (only key workers can apply for this scheme).

Further eligibility criteria will apply, all this plus general information on the HomeBuy programme can be found at www.homebuy.co.uk together with any new build properties that are currently available.

For further information please call Moat on 07002 662846

Wealden Visitor Information Folder

We are delighted to announce the publication of the brand new attractions and events Visitor Information Folder by Wealden District Council. The 34-page guide gives visitors and residents alike an insight into activities to enjoy throughout the year. It provides the ideal opportunity to effectively promote tourism related business in the area to a captive audience of visitors who are staying in the region.

The information folder is separated into themes;

Heritage, Walking and Cycling, Family Fun, Churches, Food and Drink, Gardens, Famous Connections, and much more. There are three pages of events throughout the year which includes, the Cuckoo Fair in Laughton, the Tulip Festival at Pashley Manor Gardens, and the Medieval Festival at Herstmonceux Castle.

The Visitor Information Folder has been distributed free of charge as reference copies to hotels, B&Bs and guesthouses. Each of the theme sheets is available to view, download and print online at www.wealden.gov.uk/tourism_leisure_culture/Tourism/index.aspx

A presentation folder with all the sheets is available to purchase at a cost of £15.00 each (40p per sheet + £1.20 folder) from Claire Moran, Wealden District Council, Tel: 01892 602886 claire.moran@wealden.gov.uk



'Customer driven' websites...

Spending a lot of money on your website will guarantee success, won't it?

It may have fabulous graphics and the very latest technology, but what if the customer looks for your telephone number, can't find it and goes elsewhere.

So who is your website designed for?

The answer should be your customer. It seems so blindingly obvious. But if it was that obvious, how do we account for the websites that make their customers watch ten seconds worth of moving images, before allowing them to enter? Would your local supermarket make you watch a presentation before they let you in their store? I don't think so.

So how do you start to create a "customer driven" website?

First you need to identify your customers. You can't create a website for your customers if you don't know who they are. You may of course have several distinct groups of customers.

How are these customers going to find your website?

If they are using search engines, such as Google, what phrases or keywords are they using? They may not be searching for your product or service, but what you offer is a solution to their need or

problem. Your customers find your site. What next? Anticipate the reasons for the visit, and provide navigation grouped by either the purpose of visit, or the type of customer.

If you are lucky, you will be offering exactly what they are looking for. Realistically, they will need to be convinced that your product or services can satisfy their needs or be a solution to their problems.

You need to have clear concise information about your products or services. Not everyone will email or call if they are unsure about something, some will simply go elsewhere. FAQ pages are great ways to answer all the common queries you get asked.

The customer is happy with what he sees. What now? It should be clear to the customer what they are expected to do next. This could be to actually purchase the product online, sign up for a newsletter, or simply to call or email.

Remember "Customer driven" websites make money.

How does your website measure up?

Stuart McGinn, Owner, NWK Media

www.nwkmedia.co.uk Tel: 01892 662800

For all Economic Development / Business Enquiries contact

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Sarah Pascoe

Economic Development and Tourism Manager

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Wealden Business Focus is published four times a year. If you would like to feature an article or raise a particular business issue for discussion, or are interested in sponsoring a page in the next edition, please submit details by **1st June 2007**. Please email information if possible, otherwise post to The Economic Development & Tourism Section, Wealden District Council, The Council Offices, Pine Grove, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 1DH.

'Wealden District Council aims to provide accurate, up-to-date information, however, it does not endorse any company featured in this publication'.