



New Style Newsletters

A way of communicating and keeping our members informed is through our newsletter. Consequently we are providing more content and with a new Editor, are looking into ways of connecting our members. One of our initiatives is *In the Spotlight* where we will be showcasing a Partnership member each newsletter.

Action Plan 2015-16

The Town Centre Partnership are delighted to announce a new Action Plan for the 2015-16 financial year. The plan focuses on a number of activities to drive footfall into the town centre and new proposals for 2015-16 include:

- A new town centre Festival of Motoring.
- The creation of a library of new promotional images for the town centre.
- Promotional notice boards for the town centre Heritage Trail.
- Free staff training courses for Partnership member businesses.

To view the entire Action Plan, please visit www.andovertcp.co.uk

A-Boards Update

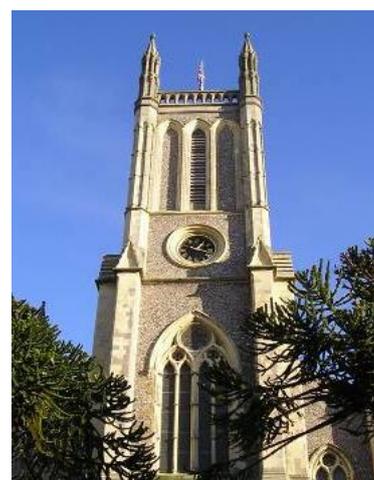
Applications are still being welcomed by the County Council for any Andover Businesses wishing to display an A-Board outside their premises and it is currently expected that licences will be issued in early July, to allow for the necessary legal processes to take place. For further information, please contact Hampshire Highways on 0300 555 1388.

Roadworks Update

It is approaching a year since the formation of the Andover Town Centre Partnership. Thanks to all of our members for their involvement in this key local organisation. We are aligning our membership year to fit with the financial year and so have recently invoiced all member businesses only half of the standard annual rate to take us through to April 2016. As you know we are improving services to members of the Partnership. For any queries about joining the Partnership, please contact Chris Gregory.

Newsletter Sponsors

We are very grateful to Mark and the team at Cartridge & Personalised Print World on Bridge Street for their sponsorship of this newsletter.



Expanded Markets Events

As part of our package of events, the Town Centre Partnership are working with the Andover Markets Company to create expanded markets events this year. The first one of these took place on 2nd May and remaining dates for this are as follows:

1st August
Savour Andover
Food & Drink

3rd October
Independent Andover
Independent business

5th December
Festive Andover
Christmas

Highway works

The improvement works in the upper High Street area are running according to plan, with a projected completion date of August 2015. The project is being carried out on behalf of the County Council to improve pedestrian access and slow vehicle speeds and includes a number of street enhancements. For further details, please contact Mildren Construction on 0845 603 5633.



Recent News

The Andover Town Centre Partnership assisted Kathmandu Variety Food Store to collect clothes, sleeping bags and tents for the Nepal Earthquake victims. Thanks to the generosity of Hampshire, the collection was an overwhelming success.

An Interview with Kit Malthouse, MP.

Kit Malthouse is the Conservative Member of Parliament for North West Hampshire having been elected with a clear majority (a 23,943 majority over the runner up) in the recent general election of 2015. He was the former Deputy Mayor for Policing in London and subsequently for Business and Enterprise until March 2015. We discuss with Kit Malthouse his aspirations as the MP for North West Hampshire and what makes him tick.

1. What do you hope to achieve in Andover and North West Hampshire in the short, medium and long term?

The foundation of Andover's and NW Hants success will be our schools and over the next few months and years I will be putting my shoulder to the wheel to bring all our schools up to the standard of the best. From that success all good things should flow - ambitious schools mean a highly skilled work force which leads to thriving businesses, well paid jobs and lively towns and villages.

2. What do you do to relax?

I turn off my phone and play with my kids or spend time in the garden.

3. What book are you currently reading?

The code of conduct and related rules of the House of Commons!

4. Describe the highlights in your life so far.

The births of my three children are easily the most profoundly affecting experiences of my life.

5. What was the most amusing moment during your recent campaign?

A prolonged leaflet tug of war through a letter box with a particularly tenacious terrier. He won.

6. What would be your Desert Island food?

Ice cream - food of the Gods (and perfect for a desert island).

7. Which flavour?

Rum and Raisin.

8. Before you became a politician, what would you consider was the worst job you ever held?

As a junior accountant they made me add up a huge computer printout to make sure the machine was getting it right. It took three days and I suspect it was designed to teach young Malthouse a lesson!

9. We understand you qualified as a chartered accountant with Deloitte and worked briefly as Finance Director of the Cannock Group. What do you think is needed to help SMEs in Andover and Hampshire? How do you think you can help them?

I have been building and running my own small business for 20 years and so I like to think I have a pretty good idea of what SMEs need. Whether it's specific problems or general day to day aggravations - I have largely seen it all over the last two decades and so should be able to help.

10. What do you think are the serious business challenges affecting businesses in Hampshire?

Hiring people with the right skills, rural broadband and access to finance, both debt and equity. The government did great work in the last parliament putting heavy pressure on the banks and launching the SEIS scheme but it can still be hard to find the money you need to start or expand a business and I will be working with the government to improve the landscape further.

11. What plans do you have to encourage more investment in Andover/Hampshire rather than in places like London?

I do think we need to put some time into the positioning of Andover from an inward investment point of view. TVBC do a great job and the Town has so much going for it so we need to work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to keep us on their radar. But first we have to ensure our offer is complete, which brings me back to the start of this interview and schools. Get them right, and the rest becomes much easier.

In the Spotlight

Sarah and Lucy (pictured right) are the partners at Oaktree Business Management, an independent, down to earth, honest, reliable and friendly accounting company in the middle of Andover Town. They specialise in all aspects of accountancy, tax, bookkeeping, payroll, workplace pensions, VAT, and company accounts etc – all you need when you start a business or any time after. With over 30 years accountancy experience, Oaktree offers sound business advice to help manage and grow your company or a new business venture. They appreciate the stresses and strains of running a business whilst juggling cashflow and accounts which is why they are passionate about providing a high quality service to all, be it established companies, start up, partnerships or sole traders.

Different clients need different approaches. That's why Oaktree finds it important to provide highly tailored accountancy services to suit varying sizes of business – to ensure that all of their clients feel in safe hands with promptness of service, value for money and personal service.

Trust is a major factor which they have earned from their clients. "Our clients trust us and our expert, unique approach. In particular, Oaktree provides fixed fees paid by monthly instalments (with no hidden extras), an efficient and reliable service, approachable, friendly staff, expertise and knowledge and a free consultation meeting".

If you would like help in getting your business off to the best possible start or have a review of your current tax affairs, please feel free to get in touch with Oaktree.

Looking Good !

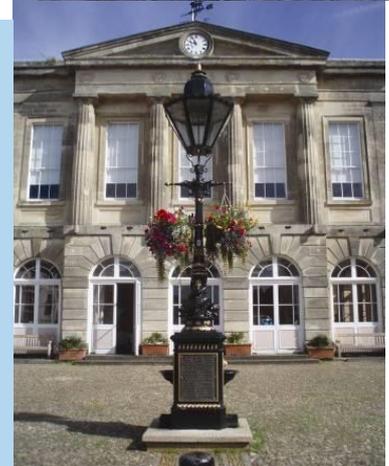
Every newsletter, we will focus upon a member at random. This issue, the spotlight is on Oaktree Business Management who are on the steering committee of the Town Centre Partnership. They perform the independent function of scrutinising the Partnership accounts.



Social media and online selling - by Lee Chong

The lifeblood of any business is its customers and the ability to sell to its customers. This is especially so for start-ups and for small medium businesses who find themselves in a double blind – as a new player they are not known to customers or their products/services are untested and also they may have limited capacity or the budget for advertising and reaching out widely. Although some businesses start off in a location which is dependent on local trade, many modern businesses also find that they are increasingly dependent on non-local trade as local customers go further afield as a result of greater mobility.

The businesses that are constrained by the above factors but who are yet able to survive or grow are able to take advantage of the changeable technological environment in various ways.



An Effective Digital Marketing Strategy

With the introduction of new and changing social technologies that appears constantly on the horizon, there is the potential to have effective digital marketing programmes on a tight budget, lesser resources and limited time. Most of these social media programmes are free or very affordable but it takes a savvy business to achieve an efficacious marketing programme which would attract new customers to the brand successfully.

What is an efficient digital marketing content? Whilst there may be different strategies for different businesses, and an element of trial and error may need to be factored in, strategizing wisely and prioritising in effective areas could produce desired results.

Social media remains the most powerful and cost effective tool for any SME. It enables the businesses to gain a community of users, has the facility to reach out instantaneously to many and enable a business to share content and promote their products or services. It also enables a business to build up its brand identity and consumer relations and could also promote consumer trust which is key. Apart from paying for promoted posts, one of the main advantages is that social media advertising is generally free and user friendly.

With time a limited resource, the decision of which social media to focus on can be important. There are many sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Linked in, Pinterest, Flickr and Bebo. Relevant sites to a large extent depend on knowing your customer base and targeting which social web site they would most likely habituate. Sites are simple to operate, all that is generally needed is to set up a profile. It is important to remember to think about this in the long term, so selecting a handle (name to operate the social media) is important as changing or having to change a name midway once it is recognised by potential customers is likely to lose not only potential customers but also confidence. The most effective handles are those that are simple to understand, or cleverly linked to the brand or name of the business. An effective name can become a very valuable asset in its own right if and when it gets traction, develops a social presence and a customer base.



Snapshot advice

- Businesses need consumers' prior consent before taking additional payments (pre-ticked boxes are not permitted).
- Businesses must, unless otherwise agreed, deliver goods purchased within 30 calendar days.
- Businesses cannot provide a premium rate telephone line to contact the trader about an existing contract.
- Businesses must not impose excessive payment surcharges when consumers pay by credit or debit cards. (in force since April 2013.).

For Distance and off Premises contracts

- The statutory cancellation period is extended to 14 calendar days.
- Where a consumer has a right to cancel a contract, require the trader to provide the consumer with a model cancellation form.
- Extension of cancellation period to, broadly, one year if the trader fails to provide certain pre-contract information.
- Requiring online traders to make it clear where proceeding with the transaction will trigger a payment.

Optimising Potential

A common mistake some SMEs make is a failure to protect their name or to procrastinate protection. Social media raises your profile but on the flip side is that it also alerts opportunists and many a business has found, to their detriment, that the name has been taken when they finally decide to apply for protection.

Email marketing is also another great cost effective way to boost your customer base and to interact with customers. It is a great way to get repeat business and new customers. A good and effective email marketing strategy is heavily personalised. By this it is meant that it is correctly targeted at customers, focussed with the right level of detail and offers are tailored to the needs of the customers to optimise customer engagement. Information about customers and their particulars ie the contact list is the single most valuable asset of a business. There are various providers who specialise in collating and selling such data. Because of the value in customer list and information, it is imperative that a business complies with the legislation in collating and retaining such information. The Data Protection Act obliges the collector and user of the information to be handled according to people's data protection rights, ensure the information is kept secure and safe and there is stronger legal protection for more sensitive information, such as religious beliefs and ethnic background. Serious breaches could lead to a fine and damages.

Without a doubt, social media has added a new dimension to marketing in reaching out to consumers. The other aspect is of course online retail, which has added a new dynamic to businesses in getting customers and it is here to stay. There are many sites that host such sales and some of the sites, such as eBay in particular, now allow interaction between consumers and their suppliers so that not only can a business sell but also to collect a contact list on such sites. Businesses who do not reach out on online sales platforms are missing a trick. In fact some retailers have only online selling platforms, doing away with most of the traditional costs associated with paying rates and office rental. With so many positives, it is easy to see why many businesses have turned to and focused on the online selling platform. Online retail is a fantastic platform and can be very rewarding if certain legalities are kept in mind. There should be a robust list of Terms and Conditions to govern the relationship between you and the buyers, this would include basic terms such as the cost, delivery modes and costs, time of dispatch, who bears the risks and at what point, return policies, refunds and so on. This should be displayed and visible before a customer accepts or makes an offer online.

There are some watch-outs. As with any aspects of commercial life which evolves, the law is also evolving to keep up. From last year there have been new regulations designed to protect the consumer who is buying from a distance and does not have any physical contact with the products at hand.

The new *Consumer Contracts Regulations*, which subsumed the old *Distance Selling Regulations*, apply to all purchases you make at a distance. This includes online or over the phone sales although for online sales, there are extra additional rules for Distance and Off Premises sales (see *Snapshot on Regulations on the left*).



Your Town Centre Manager

Chris Gregory is a freelance Town Centre Manager, who is contracted for 22 hours per week for Andover.

Chris is usually in town on Wednesdays and Thursdays and wants to talk to all businesses, so please contact Chris using the details below to arrange a visit.

