

January 2012



The Voice of the Black Country

Newsletter of the Federation of Small Businesses, Black Country Branch covering Wolverhampton, Walsall, Sandwell & Dudley

Using Social Media in your Business



Are you unsure what Social Media is?

Are you aware of it on a personal level but don't know how it could work for business?

If you answered "yes" to either of the above, this presentation is aimed at you.

Internet Marketing expert, FSB member Maureen Wright, will present a simple introduction to what social media is all about in a business context, including

- **What is Social Media and why might you use it**
- **Overview of some of the key social media platforms**
- **Deciding what is relevant to your business**
- **How to get started**

This overview will bring you up to speed on the basics of social media and how some businesses use it, so that you can decide whether or not Social Media is important to your business and, if it is, what next steps to take.

You will take away some practical advice about tools you can use and how you might use social media to achieve your business goals.

On 11th January Maureen Wright from experts WSI will be explaining everything you need to know and how to get started introducing social media into your business.

Maureen Wright WSI
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DIARY DATES

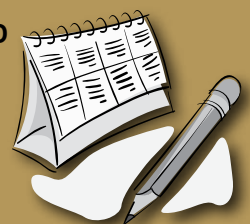
The next branch meeting will be held at The Lodge, Wellington Road, Dudley, DY1 1RD with a complimentary hot buffet and refreshments

11th January 7.30pm - WSI - Using Social Media in your Business

Future meeting:

8th February 7.30pm - Barry Mapp - Get to know your brain

For up to date meeting information <http://www.fsb.org.uk/staffs-and-west-midlands/events-diary>



Find it in the Black Country

Spotlight on Willenhall Bathrooms & Interiors

Black Country Planning Charter

If you have any venue or materials access requirements please ring Karen Woolley on 01332 517176



Welcome to FSB Conference 2012

The FSB annual conference 2012 is to be held at the Scarborough Spa Complex from March 22nd to 24th 2012. Booking details are online.

The FSB website <http://www.fsb.org.uk/conference2012> will help keep you updated and tell you everything you need to know about the workshops, exhibitors, guest speakers and more. When completed, it will also feature videos, reports, audio, interviews and more. Scarborough is visited by over four million people each year and boasts both tourism and

industry that outweighs its population of 50,000. Mark Prisk, Small Business Minister, who attended the 2011 Conference has said the following: "This year's FSB National Conference provided a great opportunity for me, as Small Business Minister, to speak directly to FSB members, both in one to one surgery sessions and at an open question and answer session. The Conference always provides lively discussion and I very much enjoy engaging with the FSB in this forum."

PREVIOUS SPEAKER IN SEPTEMBER..

Torquil Clark explains SMEs Facing Pension Uncertainties

At our September branch meeting we were delighted to welcome Ian Hill, Pension Technical Manager at Torquil Clark Employee Benefits. He explained how the countdown to ensure that all eligible workers are automatically enrolled in a workplace pension scheme-benefiting from minimum employer contributions- has begun. The minor delays recently announced for small and medium sized businesses are likely to be a mixed blessing causing more long-term problems and adding further uncertainty to an already uncertain economic climate.

The government has delayed the Staging Dates for businesses with fewer than 50 employees until after the next election in 2015, citing the difficult economic conditions. The delay also means that large and mid sized companies will benefit as the proposed minimum employer contribution will remain at 1pc for a further year. Instead of rising in 2016, it is now likely to increase to 2pc in 2017 and 3pc in 2018.

On the surface, this looks like good news for employers who will have at least an additional year to find the funds required by the contribution rise. However, since the increase is dependent on staging dates that are yet to be announced, this will again make financial planning more difficult and small businesses are absolutely critical to making these reforms work, because their staff are the least likely to have a workplace pension.

With businesses needing to be able to plan for the future with some degree of certainty, the fact is that they do not know when potential calls on their cash flow will occur; therefore it is important to do something in the borrowed time to plan effectively.

Delaying too long could mean that SMEs could find provider capacity exhausted, leaving them facing the prospect and consequences of non-compliance or trying to engage with NEST at the last minute, one of the many reasons why employers need to consider the significant impact that auto-enrolment will have on the bottom line, payroll systems and processes.

There are many pension schemes in existence that need reviewing, originally set up to aid an organisation's talent management strategy. Simply providing a pension scheme is not enough. To realise their reward spend, employers need to invest in education and communication so that employees are in a position to value and appreciate the benefit on offer and to make informed choices knowing the consequences of their actions.

Contact Ian for advice at ian.hill@torquilclark.com

tel: 01902 576707 or mob: 07875 334003 and visit their website for further information www.torquilclark.com/benefits/home/

Torquil Clark Ltd, St Mark's, Chapel Ash, Wolverhampton, WV3 0TZ



Willenhall Bathrooms & Interiors

Clear pricing, a commitment to quality and a professional approach to business has contributed to the rising success of Anthony Mathews Fitted Interiors Ltd (trading as Willenhall Bathrooms & Interiors). We have been supplying and fitting interiors for over 10 years, growing the business slowly, listening to our customers needs and negotiating deals with suppliers to gain great deals on high quality products.

Our sensible and confident approach to business meant that at the start of the recession, when others were cautious to invest, we decided to open our flagship showroom in Willenhall and we have successfully beaten the downturn, growing our business year on year.

We appreciate that in the current climate it's neither practical nor affordable for our customers to move house, so the best way to maximise the space and comfort in their homes and to the value of one of the biggest investments they have, is with a new bathroom or kitchen.



Managing Director, Adrian Nichols, is proud of the company's Black Country roots, re-investing into the local economy through locally sourced products and providing work for our small team of local fitters and other subcontractors. "We don't have to offer artificially inflated quotes followed by false reductions in a bid to make customers buy - our customer recommendations speak for themselves. We ensure our products are fairly priced and reflect our customer's needs; we are clean and courteous in customers' homes and provide a personalised after care service with warranties of up to 5 years."

Visit our small but beautiful showroom at 6-7 Walsall Street, Willenhall (near St Giles Church). Open M-F 9.30-5 and Saturday 10-4. You can also view furniture ranges, example prices and before and after videos at www.fitted-interiors.co.uk

Willenhall Bathrooms **01902 606400**
& Interiors **fitted-interiors.co.uk**
Kitchens • Bedrooms • Home Offices

Your Spotlight here!

For an opportunity to promote your business to over 3,000 Black Country Members send your Spotlight to Michelle McAuliffe, branch secretary, email: michellemac@blueyonder.co.uk or phone: 07951 831351

Making Employment Law more Employer-friendly

The Government has announced its response to the consultation on resolving workplace disputes. This is because it believes that fears about being sued are discouraging business, especially small ones, from taking on staff or tackling underperformance

The most important proposals are:-

- Steps will be taken to encourage more mediation
- All claims will have to be notified to ACAS before an Employment Tribunal claim is brought, and parties will be given the option (but not forced to) of trying to conciliate the Claim first. There will be some changes to the rules about time limits as a result.
- The qualifying period of continuous service for an Unfair Dismissal claim will be raised to 2 years from the current 1 year
- There will be a fundamental review of the Employment Tribunal Rules of Procedure
- Tribunals will have the power to impose penalties (i.e. fines) on employers who breach employment rights, in addition to them having to pay the employee compensation
- The maximum deposit that can be ordered where a case is weak will double to £1000 and the maximum costs award that can be made without a County Court assessment will double to £20,000

A separate consultation is also underway about making Claimants pay fees to bring a case in the Employment Tribunal and for the Hearing itself, which it is hoped will discourage frivolous claims.

Since most parties try to resolve matters before litigation if they can, and since ACAS can always assist if asked, it is hard to see that the conciliation proposals will make much difference. Similarly increasing the qualifying period will just encourage people to claim for discrimination, whistleblowing and the like where there is no such requirement - and which tend to be the most complex and expensive claims.

Fees will not act as a deterrent to people who are exempt from them because they are on a low income after being dismissed!

The Government is also considering whether firms with less than 10 employees will be exempt from being sued for Unfair Dismissal if they dismiss the employee with compensation and consulting on whether employers should be allowed to have "protected conversations" with employees which would allow them to have frank discussions about poor performance without fear that they could be used in evidence at a Tribunal later.

Contact Richard Ennis on 01902-577714 or rennis@reespage.co.uk for more information at Rees Page Solicitors, 8/12 Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton, WV1 4BL



Black Country LEP 'London 2012 Games' seminar

Join special guest Steve Rider to hear about business opportunities STILL available from the London 2012 Games.

The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership would like to invite you to a FREE half-day seminar where expert speakers will reveal the millions of £££s worth of business opportunities still remaining from the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Famed sports broadcaster and journalist, Steve Rider, who has covered every Olympics since Moscow 1980 and fresh from ITV's celebrated coverage of the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand, will give his fascinating, personal perspective on the business of the Olympic Games.

- Plus, last-minute purchasing by London 2012, right up to Games-time
- The Olympics in Coventry - 2012 Games' football at the Ricoh Arena
- Post-Games conversion work of all buildings on the Olympic Park to long-term "legacy" use
- New build on the Olympic Park after the Games, inc. construction of office blocks and several thousand new housing units
- Learn from a Black Country firm which has already supplied London 2012
- Find out more about the British Business Club and the expert opportunities it could open up for you
- Master of Ceremonies, Black Country Olympian, Hugh Porter

This event includes a hot breakfast and networking lunch.

**Friday 20 January 2012, 9am to noon
The Hawthorns, West Bromwich Albion F.C., Birmingham Road, B71 4LF**

This event costs nothing to attend, but places are limited. To book your FREE place please email p.mccarron@wmchambers.co.uk or call 0121 607 1751.



www.finditinthelblackcountry.co.uk

Find it in the Black Country

Find It In The Black Country is the Black Country's online business portal, designed to give local businesses the support, contacts and opportunities they need to pitch for – and win – bigger and better contracts.

Membership is free and makes it easier for your business, social enterprise or third sector organisation to trade with neighbours, find opportunities and get involved with networking events, seminars, skills development and expert advice.

Finditinthelblackcountry is the online business network for the Black Country, boosting the local economy for the good of its companies and communities.

Register today and help to build a bigger, brighter, greener local economy – and win more work!

<http://www.finditinthelblackcountry.co.uk/>

DON'T FORGET

Got an employment problem?
Ring the **FSB Legal Helpline**
BEFORE you take any action
0845 0727 727

Dudley Business First

How They Can Help

Dudley Business First offers a diverse range of free and tailored services to help you establish, grow, diversify or relocate your business in Dudley Borough.

They offer:

- A single point of contact to handle your business support or inward investment enquiry
- Land and property availability searches (commercial, industrial, retail and land - public and private)
- Support to help you identify and access business finance
- Signposting to partners and organisations offering tailored business advice
- Assistance with site assembly
- A dedicated development team to assist in the co-ordination of your project
- Identifying supply chain opportunities
- Promotion and identification of business to business and public sector procurement opportunities
- Co-ordination of familiarisation visits and tours
- Facilitate introductions to public and private companies, business networks and employment and skills providers
- Support to companies looking to trade at an international level
- Investment aftercare services
- Marketing and communications support
- Conferencing and meeting room facilities
- Information and research
- Promote the business case for investing and doing business in Dudley Borough

For further information call on 01384 812 001 or go to <http://www.dudleybusinessfirst.org>



Planning Charter

A ground-breaking new approach to planning, to ensure it offers a business friendly focus, has been launched across the Black Country.

And the success of the business friendly planning approach is now already being showcased to other regions across the country.

The four Black Country councils are leading the way after they unveiled their Business Friendly Planning Charter. The four local planning authorities produced and adopted the charter in just five months after the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership identified planning as one of its key priorities.

The charter offers a commitment to provide a flexible and, where possible, adaptable approach to planning to help achieve high quality development in the area.

And the business friendly approach is already being seen as an example of good practice with other LEPs across the country keen to learn from the Black Country model.

In response to this a case study explaining how the Black Country achieved the charter has now been made available online on the LEP website. To view the charter people should visit www.blackcountrylep.co.uk where the case study can be found by clicking on the 'planning' tab on the left hand side.

The new charter follows the Joint Core Strategy, a new joined-up planning policy adopted by the four councils. It ensures the four areas, working with the Black Country LEP, work together on attracting investment and development to the area.

Planning is one of six key priority themes set out by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership following its formation in January 2011.

Other priority areas are transport, business support & advice, skills & education, access to capital & investment and international trade. In addition there is a seventh priority around perception and communication, which includes a focus on the visitor economy.

Could your business be an Energy Hero?

With rising fuel energy costs your business may already be concerned about energy bills or be taking action to reduce energy bills. In some cases, quite small and easy actions can make considerable savings.

If you can demonstrate the benefits of your business's energy saving or energy generation over 2011/12, such as by measuring how much money and energy has been saved, your business will be eligible to enter the Dudley Energy Hero Awards in the springtime of 2012. The Energy Hero Awards 2012 is an annual awards scheme, now in its third year, to recognise, reward and showcase the great work carried out by businesses across Dudley Borough to reduce their energy use. There are a wide range of actions that can be undertaken to reduce energy used in your business premises such as:

- Fit insulation in your buildings loft, walls or ceilings.
- Use energy efficient lighting.
- Install renewable energy technologies, e.g., solar photovoltaic panels to reduce use of non-renewable energy.

- Encourage practical action by employees, e.g., turning off lights and office equipment when not required, use of video conferencing facilities.

Actions such as these can reduce the amount of energy used by your business thus providing some protection against rising energy costs and potentially improved profit margins.

For further inspiration and ideas, take a look at our energy case studies pages that profiles some of best energy saving and generation projects from across Dudley Borough at <http://www.dudleylep.org>. There are also contact details for advice and for submitting case studies.

Energy Heroes is sponsored by the Dudley Community Partnership and co-ordinated by the Dudley Climate Change Group that comprises public and voluntary sector organisations who work together to help businesses and others reduce their energy use and increase the generation of renewable energy.

If you have any ideas you wish to discuss or require further information about the Dudley Energy Hero Awards please contact Helen Swift, Sustainable Development Officer at Dudley MBC on 01384 814403 or email helen.swift@dudley.gov.uk

NEW MEMBERS

A Ali	Cradley Heath	Lear Print Ltd.....	Bilston
A J Lewis.....	Wolverhampton	LMI UK	Walsall
A Line.....	Dudley	M & J Work Solutions Ltd	Dudley
Alchemy Grant Writing & Consulting	Smethwick	M2 Studios (Mad Hat)	Wolverhampton
Andrews Creative	Wolverhampton	Media Enterprises Ltd.....	Wolverhampton
Avalon Motor Company	Wolverhampton	Mystique Hair & Beauty	Dudley
Barbara Clark Of Hagley.....	Stourbridge	Osteopathic Medical Practice.....	Walsall
Barrington Smith Financial Ltd.....	Walsall	Oxley Fish Bar	Wolverhampton
Bentley Florist	Walsall	PA Couriers.....	Stourbridge
Best Of Stourbridge Ltd	Stourbridge	Propackshot Photography	Wolverhampton
Bilston Engineering Ltd	Wolverhampton	Quinton Catering Ltd	Walsall
Bling Cosmetics	Willenhall	Real World Sales.com	Kingswinford
Bridge Gap Human Resources Ltd.....	West Bromwich	RS Essential Ltd.....	Wolverhampton
Broadway Service Station	Stourbridge	Signup4work Ltd	Bilston
Butterflies Flower Boutique.....	Willenhall	Simply Essential Hair & Beauty.....	Bilston
Capers Fine Foods.....	Cradley Heath	Snax In The City	Wolverhampton
Cartridge Nation	Dudley	Sole Trader Advice Network Ltd	Wolverhampton
Castle Engineering Resources Ltd.....	Dudley	Stourbridge Radio Group	Stourbridge
Crystal Clear Colonics	Walsall	Strike Angling	Rowley Regis
Davies Construction Midlands Ltd	Halesowen	Studebakers Ltd.....	Oldbury
Dirham Ltd.....	Wolverhampton	The Crown.....	Wolverhampton
Encore Eco Kitchens Ltd	Wolverhampton	The Greyhound	Wolverhampton
Events With The Edge.....	Stourbridge	The OFR Network Ltd	Wolverhampton
G S Kelcher Opticians Ltd.....	Walsall	The Old Bush Inn.....	Wolverhampton
Gold Directors.....	Wolverhampton	The Pearl Girl.....	Tipton
Group International Limited	Wolverhampton	The Pet Resort Ltd.....	Dudley
Harris Opticians.....	Wolverhampton	The Plough	Wolverhampton
Hydro Blooms	Wolverhampton	The Plough (Trysull) Ltd.....	Wolverhampton
I'm Your P A.....	Wolverhampton	The Pro Shop Newbridge Ltd.....	Wolverhampton
Integrity Financial Associates Ltd.....	Stourbridge	The Studio Marketing	
Intrinsic Soutions UK Limited	Oldbury	Design & Print Ltd.....	Wolverhampton
J & J Services (Midlands) Ltd	Wednesbury	The Sun Garage.....	West Bromwich
J K Bassi.....	Wolverhampton	Thomas Mann Cars	Wolverhampton
Jetaime Ltd.....	Wolverhampton	Yellow Cars	Wednesbury
Kiss	Wolverhampton	Zumba With Scott Ltd.....	Walsall
L & C The Communications	Wolverhampton	Zumba-Rellas.....	Walsall

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DON'T FORGET

Got a problem with HM Revenue & Customs?

Ring the **FSB Legal Helpline** first,

BEFORE you take any action

0845 0727 727

Next Meeting:

11th January 7.30pm

WSI -

Using Social Media in your Business

SHOW YOU'RE A MEMBER

Don't forget to use the FSB logo on all printing and advertising material by using the logo which you can obtain from the FSB website:

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/default.aspx?id=24&loc=general>

You will need your FSB membership number from your membership card to log in and follow instructions on how the logo should be used.

