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Unfair competition

Is your business affected by competition from organisations funded by the tax payer? If it is, we want to know.

Recent examples include Bath Council trying to sell flowers for Valentines Day – seen off in fine style by Bath Branch and the then RO Rupert Cox.

Other instances are

- i) Community cars where the local council has funded the organisational start up costs and publicity for this unfair competition to taxis and private hire.
- ii) Translation services from colleges and universities
- iii) Charity shops selling significant quantities of new goods

The RDA has specifically asked to hear if we have any members involved in training where they consider they have been put at a disadvantage by a college or school or other body paid for by the Government or councils.

If you think a competitor may be tax payer funded, and you are suffering as a result, please let me have the details at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

A Day in the Life.....of a Small Business..... Can you help?

Would you be prepared to speak about a typical day in your business and how you spend your time?

Members representing the FSB at various SW Events have been very concerned that so many educationalists, administrators etc have no understanding about small businesses. To start educating the public sector about what it really means to run a business, the FSB will be presenting a half day seminar in March. Part of the programme will be 3 or 4 members just talking for 5 or 10 minutes about their business and the joys and headaches it produces.

If you would like to be considered for this, please contact Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk with information on the kind of business you run, how long it has been going and your future ambitions. We want to present a cross section of businesses and business experience including businesses that have failed.

Apprentices

If your business employs apprentices, SW Policy would very much like to hear your experiences. How easy is it to organise the training? What is the paperwork like etc? What are the on-costs, like insurance?

If everything is great, I would really like to hear what makes the difference and which organisation you do the training through.

If you are having problems, what are they? And if you recently stopped employing apprentices because of the problems encountered then please do get in touch.

With the Government push to increase training levels, the FSB is increasingly being asked why small businesses don't do more training. We need up to date information from you to explain how the system or how parts of the system still do not meet the needs of small businesses. We like to know where it is working well, because then we point to how things should be done.

Information to Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk please.

And here is the latest news on help with training – but hurry as funds are limited

Leadership & Management - Success!

The FSB has for some years been saying that Leadership and Management starts when the business starts. So far Government has put a lower figure of 20, then under pressure from the FSB 10 and now businesses with just 5 staff can get help.

If you employ between 5 and 249 employees, you could access up to £1000* (on a 50/50 basis) for leadership and management development for yourself, your managers and your supervisors.

You will need to do a minimum of 6 hours of development activity – but the Train to Gain team will be able to help you identify the best activity for you and your people. Or you may already have ideas of your own. We have told things are fairly flexible. Funds are limited, so it is first come first served.... and the fund will close at the end of March 08.

Level 3 Trial – equivalent to BTEC National Diplomas

In answer to shortages in skilled workforce at craft and technician level, the FSB has persuaded the Learning and Skills Council to make money available for staff to achieve a full craft qualification. This is available whether they have an existing qualification or not. The employer will need to contribute a third of the cost (£692). To access this funding, learning must start before the end of March 08.

Both schemes are subject to availability and eligibility.

Find out more by phoning a skills Broker on 08456 047 047.

As always, feedback is very welcome – if it is working well we want to be able to say so. And if there are problems.....

Policy research – can you help?

Much of policy is 'evidence based' – that is it is based on some form of research, that if we can help researchers find the small businesses they are looking for, we do. So if your business is within an hour's easy travel from Bristol, we have 2 researchers who may well appreciate your help.

Stephanie Tailby is from the University of the West of England and is working for ACAS – the 'Advice and Conciliation Service'. She wants to find out more about the kind of advice and support employers would find most useful in effectively managing people problems that inevitably occur in workplaces.

She is looking for 3 or 4 businesses, with between 25 and 100 employees who do not have a specialist HR manager on site. The interviews will be around an hour in length and ideally will be with the senior manager or owner, the manager with responsibility for HR matters and a line manager.

Organisations and individuals participating in the study can be assured that their identity will remain anonymous. Organisations will be referred to simply by the broad industry sector in which they operate (for example, 'a manufacturing company' or 'a company in the financial services sector'). Individuals will be denoted simply as 'managers'. The researchers are aiming to complete the company interviews by the middle of November. Further details from Stephanie Tailby [Stephanie.Tailby@uwe.ac.uk] or phone 0117 328 3477

Val Saunders is looking at people in occupations which are unusual for their gender. She would be interested in women working in construction or engineering and men working in retail or childcare and the businesses employing them.

They are looking to find 'what works' and share this as best practice to encourage other firms and other people to do the same. The research will last until June next year and we are looking for some 25 businesses.

For more details contact Vivienne Rayner on Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk or Val Saunders at val.saunders1@btopenworld.com phone 01458 253 224 or 07753681457

Queens Award for Enterprise

The 2008 Queen's Awards for Enterprise are now open for nomination. You can nominate a business or an individual.

The three categories for the business awards are:

- International Trade
- Innovation
- Sustainable Development

Individuals can be nominated from business, education, training or youth work and they must have:

- made an outstanding contribution to the growth of an enterprise;
- promoted entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in others; or
- encouraged others to start a business.

The deadline for applications is **31 October 2007**. Applications can be made online at:

<http://www.queensawards.org.uk>

Credit crunch raises fears for small business finance

Have you found it harder to get finance recently? The FSB is asking as we want to keep an eye on how small businesses are affected by such developments.

It started with the run on Northern Rock and the Bank of England has worked hard to calm things down. But we need to gauge the impact on small businesses and the real economy. So if you or a business you know has been experiencing problems with getting credit please contact Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

The next 2 items show how the FSB is getting its message over about the burden of regulation. Not yet the red tape bonfire we hope for, but steps on the way!

One website for October 1st regulation changes

Business Link has launched a new web page on the regulations coming into force on 1st October: www.businesslink.gov.uk/ccds.

This is a project being run by the Better Regulation Executive which the FSB has been feeding into. If you have any feedback or suggestions for the page, please let Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk know. The BRE is hoping to incorporate suggestions and make improvements ahead of the next common commencement date of 1st April 2008.

The EU is asking if red tape makes your life difficult via new website – please tell them!

It is now your chance to tell the EU about the red tape problems it creates for you and your business at http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/admin-burdens-reduction/index_en.htm .

They are also going to use this information to work out the cost of such regulation.

The FSB has been campaigning on this topic for a long time and we now have the chance to really make a difference – but only if members go online and tell the EU the problem!

Commission Vice President Günter Verheugen, responsible for enterprise and industry policy took on board the FSB's comments admitting that fulfilling administrative requirements reduces the time available for entrepreneurial initiative.

The consultants will also examine how these EU requirements have been transposed in national legislation in order to identify “**gold plating**” (i.e. when Member States have decided to go beyond what is required by the EU).

But if nobody responds, they will assume there is not a problem. So please do tell them all about it!

*And just to remind you of the kind of thing we are talking about, there is a new **Landfill Directive that came into force on October 30th***

Basically it states that liquids can no longer be sent to landfill and that business waste must be pre treated. And of course you need a paper trail to prove it!

Full details can be found at:-

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/1745440/444663/landfill/1789720/?version=1&lang=e>

Cash for small businesses with ideas on climate change.

Small businesses with big ideas to combat climate change are being urged to compete for awards of up to £40,000, as the Shell Springboard programme opens for its third year.

And by doing so, capture a share of the market predicted to be worth £2.8billion to UK businesses by 2008.

Up to 6 awards of between £20,000 and £40,000 are on offer in each of 3 UK regions. Last year awards of £40,000 were made to eight businesses from across the UK.

The deadline for applications this year is **9th November 2007**. Full details, and an online application form can be found at www.shellspringboard.org.

The website has details of all the shortlisted and winning businesses.

And finally, we have severely criticised the Government for not doing enough to publicise recent changes in legislation. They must be listening as they have organised a whole series of roadshows on the new

REACH legislation and how it may affect different businesses

REACH will have an impact on anybody who uses chemicals. To find out more come along to one of the free roadshow briefings across the South West. Throughout the day there will be plenty of time for questions.

For dates and information see below or visit www.hse.gov.uk/reach

e-mail: reachmeetings@hse.gsi.gov.uk

phone: 0845 4089574

or write to: UK Reach CA, Building 2, Floor 3, Redgrave Court, Merton Road, Bootle, Merseyside L20 7HS.

I would like to register an interest in attending the following roadshow briefing (please tick)

6 November 2007	Hatherley Manor Hotel, Down Hatherley, Gloucester	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 November 2007	The Langtry Manor, Bournemouth	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 November 2007	Stanton House, Swindon	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 November 2007	Business Link Offices, Plymouth	<input type="checkbox"/>
22 November 2007	Engineers House, Clifton Down, Bristol	<input type="checkbox"/>
27 November 2007	The Westbury, Bodmin	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 December 2007	Abbey Manor, Yeovil	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 December 2007	Cleve Hotel, Wellington, Near Taunton	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 December 2007	The Buckerell Lodge, Exeter	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name _____

Address _____

Company _____

Sector _____

e-mail _____ **Tel** _____

FSB Reports

Just out and available on the FSB's website are reports on Business Support, on Banking, on Health & Safety and what members would do with the 7 hours a week they currently spend on red tape.
 Just go to:- <http://www.fsb.org.uk/>

Feedback on this newsletter and comments about small business issues are always very welcome
 Vivienne Rayner
 12th October 2007