



And it is a bumper February for the SW Newsletter so eyes down and looking!

EU Small Business Act

Wanted: Business people passionate about education and training

Bite sized, modular, just in time training - yes it does exist!

Employing the wrong person could cost £10,000 or even jail!

Company Law simplified

VAT Aggro!

Could Business Link send you customers?

Is your business 'low carbon'?

Small businesses wanted with an interest in fishing, boating, leisure or floods!

EU Small Business Act

The EU has decided to create a 'Small Business Act' and they are actually asking us what should or should not be in there.

Just click on the link for the on line questionnaire:-

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=SBAeurope&lang=en>

I like it as you do not have to answer all the questions, just the ones you want to. Even better there are lots of opportunities to add your own comments.

The questions I liked best was 'should small business be excluded from EU legislation'? The more answers the better.

You have until the end of March to have your say.

Wanted: Business people passionate about education and training

Education and training are top priorities for the FSB in the SW. Mainly because we are convinced that the right education produces schools leavers that we want to employ. And because the right training at the right time can help a business thrive.

But feedback from members says that all too often, the public sector is letting small businesses down.

We are looking for members prepared to give up a few days a year to help represent the FSB at outside meetings and conferences. If you are interested, please contact Vivienne Rayner on 01179 510017 or at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

And you don't have to be in training or education to help – in fact, in many ways the FSB can be better served by people from 'ordinary' businesses – not that there is any such thing of course!

Bite sized, modular, just in time training - yes it does exist!

I understand the Open College Networks provide a large number of training modules. The training outlined is bite sized. It can be delivered by a number of providers across the SW. I am told you just ask!

The modules are stand alone or can be grouped to form a qualification. These look as if they are what FSB members have been asking for. More information on their website at: - <http://www.nocn.org.uk/> As always, please let me know what you think.

Employing the wrong person could cost £10,000 or even jail!

Laws passed in 2006 come into force at the end of February 2008 and effectively turn the owners of small businesses into immigration officers. If you have employed someone who turns out not to have permission to work, you could be fined up to £10,000 or even risk up to 2 years in jail. So as if we didn't have enough to do, small business owners are expected to check certain documents to ensure their new employee has the right to work. And to make sure you can prove you have checked, you are supposed to take copies!!!!

Full details can be found at:-

<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/employersandsponsors/guidancefrom290208/guidance/summaryguidance0208.pdf?view=Binary>

And don't forget the FSB's legal service. Log on online with your membership number, check out the 'Fact Sheets' on the left menu. There is one on employment law – click on that and find the document called 'Preventing illegal working'. All the information is there and for any queries, just call the help line.

Sadly it never occurs to the powers that be that small businesses may only recruit staff once every 2 or 3 years – and very time the rules are different and harder to follow. And they wonder why small businesses are seriously thinking about downsizing!

Company Law simplified

We are told that the company law requirements for small businesses have been simplified – full details are at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file42261.pdf>

And as usual, please let me have your comments.

VAT Aggro!

As if having to register for VAT is not bad enough, it now seems that the new checks are delaying registrations by as much as 26 weeks and in one case 8 months!

The new money laundering regulations as well as the checks required to prevent 'Merry go round' and Missing Trader fraud are largely to blame – but knowing the reason does not make it any easier for people who need to be VAT registered.

So here are some points to ponder:-

1. You have to register for VAT so that by the end of the month after your turnover reaches £64,000 you are registered. For example your turnover goes over £64,000pa in February you must be registered and accounting for VAT from April 1st.
2. If your customers are other businesses and they are VAT registered, it may pay you to register anyway.
3. If your customers are everyday people who are not VAT registered, you may decide to keep your turnover below the £64k level.
4. If your customers are everyday people who are not VAT registered, is your business ready for the higher price that charging VAT will cause? It may be an idea to seek advice on how to prepare.

And if your registration still takes too long to come through, you might want to complain to **Rt Hon Jane Kennedy MP**. She is the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and as such the Minister responsible for HMRC which includes the VAT office. If you do complain, it would be very helpful if you could send an electronic copy to vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk .

Could Business Link send you customers?

The change in the way Business Link works means that more and more the private sector is included as part of the solution. Could your business benefit from this?

Business Link is now operating on offering information, helping the business work out where action is required and then suggesting several private sector providers who should be able to help. To be effective Business Link staff need to be able to refer businesses on to suitable people in the private sector and there seems to be a shortage of such people.

So if you offer business support services, take a look at <http://www.suppliermatching.co.uk/>

This database actually serves the South East as well as the South West, so the possible market is quite large. At the moment, there is a shortage of people to serve Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. They are particularly looking for advisors who can help with Public Procurement.

If you do decide to register, please, please read the section on 'Hints and Tips' before registering. The broker will only know what you put on the form and that section is intended to help you get the most from your registration.

As always your thoughts, comments and experiences would be very welcome. We have found the new Business Link much more open to feedback – and they actually do something about it which is a very refreshing change. So let's hear your experiences with this database, good as well as bad at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

Is your business 'low carbon'?

If you can show that your business is 'actively pursuing and promoting a low carbon, sustainable approach' then you can nominate yourself for an award!

Sustainability South West is running South West C+ Carbon Positive Awards 2008. Full details are at http://www.sustainabilitysouthwest.org.uk/news/profitting_from_a_low_carbon_economy/
The deadline for entries is 10th March 2008 with the awards ceremony at the Met Office, Exeter on 1st May 2008.

Small businesses wanted with an interest in fishing, boating, leisure or floods!

And finally, an appeal from the Environment Agency for people to sit on their advisory committees.

The Regional Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Committee (RFERAC) gives advice on maintaining, improving and developing fisheries. It also advises on conservation, ecology, recreation and navigation issues. There are seven vacancies for people with a special interest in migratory, coarse, still water and trout fisheries. Also anyone with an interest in recreation or are riparian owners.

The Regional Environment Protection Advisory Committee (REPAC) advises on environment protection including performance, policy implementation and priorities. They are looking for people from the regulated industries (ideally nuclear), land/air interests and environmental interests.

The time commitment will be about five days a year as well as time for reading papers for the meetings. The appointments are unpaid but there are travelling expenses and financial loss allowances. Applications should be made by March 28, 2008 to Sarah Harding, Tel 01392 442184. sarah.harding@environment-agency.gov.uk. Interviews for REPAC applicants will be held on April 28 and May 6 & 9 for RFERAC applicants. Appointees will take up their committee posts on June 1.

Any comments or thoughts about anything in this newsletter should go direct to Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

Vivienne Rayner
13th February 2008