Your feedback and why it is important…….
Here's a chance for you to tell it like it is – on the radio!

Is the Tax man or the VAT man a late payer?

Passionate about the right training? A chance to make a difference

Talentmap – a new way to manage your recruitment, staff skill needs and training **–** book now for June 30th

Research & Development seminars – funding and involvement

SW Regional Development Agency - looking for new Board members, especially rural business people
Flu –will your business survive a flu epidemic?
Wanted: businesses to give evidence on access to finance

Your feedback and why it is important…….

Your emails describing your experience of the tax man, of business rates, of what's on offer at the local college, of the availability of finance and everything else that affects the way the way you run your business are absolutely invaluable.

Earlier this month, the FSB's South West Policy Unit met with the Bank of England, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the House of Commons South West Regional Select Committee. In each case the discussions were based on information from FSB members – much of it from your emails. Indeed, Kevin Butler of the Bank of England says the FSB provided the first evidence of the credit crunch starting to affect the real economy back in March last year.

While I try and respond to each email individually, it is not always possible – but your thoughts and comments are very much appreciated as they allow us to 'tell it like it is'.

Here's a chance for you to tell it like it is – on the radio!

The FSB will be holding a radio day at the end of July. The news angle is flexible working - mainly how small businesses have prevented redundancies by shortening hours and so on. To show exactly what we mean, we are looking for members to talk about their businesses.

We are looking for businesses who have shortened staff hours; thought of innovative ways of keeping on staff; small businesses calling for short-time working; or those that have recruited staff or anything new, different or unusual ways of adjusting the hours worked in your business to meet changing needs.

As we have deadlines to hit with the Radio people, I need the information from you by June 30th. If you have something interesting but are wary, let me know and I'll get Prue from the FSB's Press and Parliamentary to have a chat about it all with you.

Look forward to hearing from you by June 30th at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

Is the Tax man or the VAT man a late payer?

A member has been in touch to say he is owed over £7000 by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. It was agreed in January, but when contacted in May HMRC were unable to say when it would be paid.

Has anyone else had this experience?

If you have please email Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk with the information – we will not use it without specifically asking for your permission

Passionate about the value of training – the right training?

Small businesses are much more reliant on what is 'on offer' than large business – simply because they do not have the cash to buy privately or the clout to influence the 'offer'. So it will not be a surprise to hear that Training and Skills are top priority for the SW Policy Unit.

And we are looking for members to help with this – and on this occasion we really need businesses that use or receive training, rather than training providers.

The 'help' will be working with Peter Ashton, SW Policy Unit Chair, to represent the FSB on the SW Regional Employment and Skills Partnership (RESP).

If you would like to help or want to know more, please email Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

And on that subject.....I am getting comment from the "Training & Skills" areas that the present "demand" for up-skilling is being swamped by the funding supposedly available, but there is apparently a miss-match between the demand and the uses that the funding can be put to. If you have examples of this, please let me know at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

Talentmap – a new way to manage your recruitment, staff skill needs and training – Make a date in your Diary for June 30th

There is a lot of help out there for employers but many of us find it too complex and difficult to get what we need. About a year ago, a broad coalition of employers, governments and brokers came together with the UK Commission for Employment & Skills to create a simple view of the education, employment and skills systems in the UK.

Over the past 12 months the FSB has been working as part of this coalition to find a way to simplify matters. As a result talentmap™ is almost ready to launch.

1. It's a simple framework to help employers understand and plot their activities within the context of the wider talent & skills development offer.
2. It's an interactive web-tool where you can search for practical support and funding, build your own talentmap™. on line and share with colleagues, suppliers and others in the talentmap™ community.

Designed by employers for employers, talentmap™ is due for launch this summer but we want to check it out properly first.

There will be a workshop in Bristol on June 30th to introduce talentmap™ and demonstrate the web tool, as well as explain how it can be customised for your own use. There will also be on line trials of the beta version.

If you want to hear more, drop an email to Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk and as soon as the details are available, she'll get them to you.

Research & Development seminars – funding and involvement

Following the success of the Bristol R&D funding seminar, companies are invited to learn more about R&D tax credits, grants for R&D, European R&D funding and international R&D collaborations.

Organised in cooperation with tax accountants Smith & Williamson and Hazlewoods LLP, UK Trade & Investment (soft landing zone), South West Regional Development Agency and the FP7 national contact point, you will find plenty of opportunities to network.

There is no fee for this event and a breakfast buffet will be served. Registration now for the Plymouth on 25 June and Gloucester on 2 July.

SW RDA board member recruitment

The South West Regional Development Agency is recruiting for new board members for 2009/10. There are five positions available, two from the business community and three local Authority vacancies. They are particularly looking for someone with rural business experience.

Applications are to be received by noon on Friday 3rd July through the RDA recruitment website www.rdaboardappointments.com

Flu – how will your business manage if we are hit by a flu epidemic next autumn and winter?

It is looking more and more likely that the current swine flu outbreak will continue and will get worse next autumn and winter. If it does, how will your business manage?

Talk to your usual businesses advisor or check out the Business Link website at:- http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074458463

Wanted: businesses to give evidence on access to finance

You may be surprised to know that more businesses go under as things improve than as things are getting worse. The reason is the usual one – cash! As you expand, you need more cash to finance the expansion – obvious when you think about it!

So the Government is investigating whether more needs to be done to make sure enough finance is available when the economy improves.

Christopher Rowlands, who is leading the review, said:

"We are keen to hear directly from businesses to ensure our recommendations reflect their needs in an appropriate way."

The call for evidence is open until 17 July 2009.

To contribute evidence to the review, visit the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills website at http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file51817.doc.

The terms of reference for the Rowlands Growth Capital Review can be found at http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file51655.doc.

It would be a big help if you would let me know what is being said so we can be feeding the same message in through our contacts. As always, please email me at Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk

Vivienne Rayner
June 2009