

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

26th March 2009

1. Reduce Your Costs

Last week's article on Open Source Software (OSS) has generated much interest from members anxious to reduce their licensing costs but reluctant to depart from their current devotion to branded proprietary software. The good news is that OpenOffice.org can be downloaded and used for any purpose including domestic, commercial, educational or public administration. You may install it on as many computers as you like and make copies to give to family, friends, students and employees until your heart is content. It is free of charge. The skills necessary to use it are very similar to those required for the most popular, branded packages. The files generated have a high level of compatibility with Microsoft Office and can even open files created in previous versions of MS Office which the latest Microsoft Packages allegedly cannot. Please note that the correct term to describe this software is "OpenOffice.org" as the "OpenOffice" title is a trademark registered with the Benelux Office for Intellectual Property for use in the Netherlands. Orange has also chosen OpenOffice as the title for a portfolio of services relating to the use of its mobile telephones. To see if the cost savings of OpenOffice.org are appropriate for you, look at <http://www.openoffice.org> for a detailed description and to download the free software. Computer geeks with bad haircuts and incompatible t-shirts will know that the current primary development platforms are Microsoft Windows, Linux and Solaris. For less technical mumbo jumbo and better quality t-shirts below beautifully coiffured hair styles, contact OSS specialists Cariss, tel: 0870 224 5421 or any of the following IT companies with expertise in computer office management systems: 5 Star Computer Systems tel: 01843 844000; Apex Networks tel: 0870 3303141; Coastal Data Systems tel: 01843 846935; Deltace International tel: 01843 861888; I.P. Computer Consultants tel: 07971 316738; Mach Associates tel: 0870 3219986; Sota Solutions tel: 01795 413500; Web Dandy tel: 01843 582502.

2. Business-To-Business Sales

Following a recent exchange of emails, telephone discussions and suggestions from members, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber is establishing a Chamber Business-To-Business Network. Members are invited to submit their offers to other members by email to admin@tekc.co.uk. We recommend that you prepare a specific proposal that is not available to the general public e.g. "10% discount on all purchases by Chamber members" or "£10.00 off any item costing over £60.00" or "Free ink cartridges with every printer" or "20% off any survey booked in 2009". We will compile a list of member-to-member offers and circulate this to all members in May. We are grateful to Friend Growers of East Northdown Farm, Margate, tel: 01843 862060, for their guidance and encouragement with this initiative.

3. New Members

We welcome the following new members: Howards Blinds & Curtains tel: 01227 772779; established in 1980, this company supplies blinds and curtains for homes and offices. IOT Scaffolding tel: 01843 822888; this company provides scaffolding services to commercial and domestic clients across Kent. Flambeau Europlast tel: 01843 854000; this company is part of the US Nordic Group and manufactures a wide range of blow moulding and injection moulding products. A total of 68 companies have joined the Chamber since January 2008. We celebrate the arrival of all of them and look forward to supporting their work and helping them to trade with other companies in the area.

4. Changes in the Law

We are grateful to Robin Evans of Boys & Maughan for the following update on imminent changes in legislation includes significant changes in Employment Law. From 1 April 2009, holiday entitlement will increase to 28 days per year pro rata and 5 April 2009 marks a rise in Statutory Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Pay. On 6 April 2009, statutory dispute resolution procedures will be replaced by a revised voluntary ACAS Code of Practice to help resolve issues earlier and informally. Also on 6 April 2009, the right to request flexible working will extend to employees with parental responsibility for children up to the age of 16 years; Statutory Sick Pay rises; employers underpaying workers will face new penalties in accordance with the enforcement of the National Minimum Wage; and in Trade Union Membership Law, unions will have the right to exclude members who belong to political parties like the BNP. If you need help re-drawing policies and implementing changes to stay in line with your obligations under the new legislation, contact Boys & Maughan tel: 01843 595990, Girlings 01843 220274, Barnes Marsland tel: 01843 221466, Bell Denning tel: 01843 262020, Brachers 01622 690691 or Robinson & Allfree 01843 592361.

5. The Arts & Money

The building of the new Turner Contemporary gallery began last December and is due to be completed in 2011. Michael Wheatley-Ward, Chairman of the Sarah Thorne Theatre Club, reminds us that theatres and Arts Centres are not condemned to lose money perpetually. He recalls his first day at work as a Management Trainee at ABC Theatres. The manager took him aside

and said, "I'll teach you how the money comes in before I teach you how to spend it and if you remember that in life, you will not go far wrong". The Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, would agree with you Michael and he said as much earlier this week ; or as he put it "it would be sensible to be cautious about going further in using discretionary measures to expand the size of those deficits".

6. Taxes

'In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.' So wrote Benjamin Franklin in 1789 and things have not changed much since. Income Tax in Britain was introduced in 1798 as a strictly temporary measure to provide funds for the war against Napoleon. That Corsican man has a lot to answer for, although he did give his name to a good brandy. The rate of 2p in the pound on annual incomes of £60 or more that William Pitt the Younger imposed mystified people then and the tax system of Alastair Darling the Older continues to baffle many people today. Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs is aware that many business owners receive their tax demand in the post and then turn towards the heavens with their hands clasped in silent supplication to a higher being. HMRC is aware of its public perception and as a result is hosting a road show on Tuesday 28th April, appropriately enough at the former convent of St Augustine's, 125 Canterbury Road, Westgate on Sea CT8 8NL. Free advice and guidance will be offered on any business tax query including VAT, submitting & paying returns on-line, importing & exporting and self assessment procedures. Throughout the day more than 20 government departments, support agencies and regulatory bodies will be available for free advice. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber will have a stand and looks forward to meeting members and readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider there. To book, simply visit the website at <http://www.businessadviseday.gov.uk/events/Information.aspx?EventID=1087&RegSystem=> Prayer books are optional.

7. New Pub

With record numbers of pubs closing, around 40 per week, and a tax system seemingly targeted at promoting supermarket sales of beer in preference to supporting licensed premises for supervised drinking in controlled conditions, it is unusual indeed to hear of plans for a pub to open; especially a new-build pub. Express By Holiday Inn is hoping to do precisely that and has submitted designs for a Vintage Inns pub to be constructed behind its hotel at Minster, close to Kent International Airport, Manston. The parent company, Geminex, undertook a sensitive restoration and expansion of the former Prospect Inn and would now like to build a pub next door. The planning application is due to be heard by Thanet District Council planning committee on 15 April 2009. Plans seen at the Chamber show a modern design that sits neatly beside the hotel. The pub would employ local people and provide a boost to business confidence in Thanet where the latest unemployment figures show 5.2% of the workforce claiming benefits. It is interesting to note that the number of unemployed now more or less matches the number of companies in Thanet. In other words, if every company in Thanet, large and small, were to employ just one more local worker, unemployment in the area would shrink to zero. Now there's a thought.

7. SEEDA and Thanet

As reported in previous editions of this bulletin, the Chairman of SEEDA, Jim Braithwaite CBE, visited the Thanet & East Kent Chamber earlier this month. Despite the cold winds of recession blowing through the British Isles, he enjoyed warm sunshine during his tour of companies in Broadstairs and Ramsgate. The picture below shows Jim flanked to his immediate right by Dr Susan Priest, SEEDA Director for Kent & Medway, and then Mick German, Director of MPG Properties. To his left is an itinerant vagrant of the sort that will presumably disappear when Ramsgate seafront is developed in line with the exciting plans for the Royal Pavilion, the Old Customs House and the Royal Sands development on the site of the former Pleasurama.



8. Sponsors

We are grateful to Adecco Recruitment, tel: 01843 609292; Girlings Solicitors, tel: 01843 220274, Evans EasySpace, tel: 0800 039 3900 & 07753 799 333 and Express By Holiday Inn tel: 01843 820250 for sponsoring this edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider.



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It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekc.co.uk.