

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

21st August 2009

1. An Initial Success

If you enjoy initials, you will love OFF Ltd. This enterprising Chamber member is in the PEFC, FSC, BBA, TRADA and UKTFA. OFF is also a member of Tree Appeal which hints at the company's main product line, timber frame homes. Keen observers of the construction industry may well be familiar with the Forest Stewardship Council, the Programme For the Endorsement of Forest Certification, the British Board of Agr ément, the Timber Research And Development Association and the United Kingdom Timber Frame Association. Others who have worked closely with this Sandwich-based manufacturer are only too willing to sing its praises. Ringing endorsements from DJ Ellis Construction, Walker Homes and Croudace Homes reveal the progress that this company has made in recent years, proving that an initial success can be sustained and developed. It also shows that the endorsement of independent respectable third parties can promote your business. PEFC is "an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation" and TRADA can claim that "TRADA's origins go back over 70 years and its name is synonymous with independence and authority." Chambers of Commerce also have deep roots and an established presence in the East Kent coastal community. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber works in partnership with the Channel Chamber of Commerce, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary next month, and in close liaison with the Dover & District Chamber of Commerce which will be congratulating itself on its 160th anniversary next year. Any organisation in the private or public sector which has yet to join TEKC, CCC or DDCC is advised to email admin@tekc.co.uk for details of how your local chamber can reduce your costs, increase your income and if at all possible do both.

2. More About Shops

After the Thanet & East Kent Insider's lead article of 7th August about Margate shops and the double page spread in Kent On Sunday which kindly quoted this Chamber at length, Chamber member HSBC has drawn our attention to an ONS report that retail sales in Britain rose by 0.4% in July 2009. The increase took the annual rate of growth in sales to 3.3%, which is the highest since May 2008. The figures for June have also been upgraded to 1.3% from 1.2%. Another Chamber member is also quick to see some encouragement in the news. Richard Lowe, head of retail at Barclays Commercial Bank, is quoted in the national press as saying, "Tourism, both international and domestic, has had a part to play in a seasonal boost to the retail sector. With foreign tourists benefiting from attractive exchange rates and UK residents opting to stay at home this year, there will be a positive impact on the number of shoppers visiting the high street." Judging by the crowds and the anecdotal evidence from traders at this summer's Ramsgate Yacht Week, Broadstairs Festival and Whitstable Oyster Festival, the switch to UK holidays is producing genuine benefits to East Kent shops.

3. Apprentices

Small and Medium Enterprises in Thanet are being offered an opportunity to benefit from a subsidy of £105 per week to welcome a 16 or 17 year old apprentice into their company. The candidate will be employed by Kent County Council for one year under the Kent Apprenticeship Scheme at a cost to the host company of just £50 per week. There is funding available for 30 places subject to certain qualifying National Vocational Qualifications. For details, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "KAS Apprenticeships".

4. Do You Own a Black Tie?

If you own a black tie and never have the chance to wear it, the Ramada Hotel Dover may be able to assist. This Chamber member is hosting a Charity Dinner on 25th September 2009 where black ties are stipulated for gentlemen guests. To gain entry, you might like to wear the appropriate other garments with it as well. The occasion is a dinner to support the Beyond The Moon Charity which helps children with a life threatening illness, see www.beyondthemoon.org/UK/welcome.html. Anyone who has read the brochure "Some children have few tomorrows" cannot be failed to be moved by the work of this most worthwhile organisation. If you enjoy champagne, a five-course dinner and dancing till midnight or would simply like to donate a prize for the raffle, give the Dover Ramada a call, tel: 01304 872841, or email events@ramadadover.co.uk.

5. Financial Advice

Chamber member County Consultancy is offering advice on employee benefits and mortgages. For a review without obligation, contact James Galbraith, tel: 01843 579316 or call direct to his mobile, tel: 07973 971115. Also available for financial advice are Certax Accounting, tel: 01843 280004; HSBC tel: 0845 7404404; Kent Local Business Team at Barclays tel: 07775 548 588; J Cleverdon tel: 01843 866599; L & G Mortgage Solutions tel: 01843 845600; Levicks Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 862716; Lloyds TSB tel: 01227 462242; Michael Martin Partnership Limited tel: 01227 770500; Millen Neckler & Co tel: 01843 599977; Neville Weston tel: 01843 594571 and Universal Independent Mortgage Services tel: 01843 599773.

6. Credit Control

We are grateful to Barclays Business Banking of Ashford for reminding us of the dangers of neglecting credit control. The Thanet & East Kent Insider regularly features advice of "Getting The Money In", but it appears that in the South East generally, getting paid for products or services completed may be becoming more difficult. SEEDA reports in its Regional Intelligence Snapshot for the South East that "Late payment has reportedly worsened over the last two months, with evidence of payment terms being stretched to 70 days in some sectors. In some cases, problems are exacerbated by poor credit control procedures, where companies haven't adapted to the changed circumstances of the recession." In liaison with members, this Chamber has produced a handy two-page guide entitled "Credit Management: Increase Your Profits, Safeguard your Future". For a free copy, Chamber members are invited to email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line, "Credit Management Advice".

7. Test Your Reflexes

How do you react to change? How fast are your reflexes in adjusting to market conditions? Several Chamber members have recommended a simple but challenging test which can be found at http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/sleep/sheep/reaction_version5.swf. Are you a "sluggish snail" or a "turbocharged cheetah"? Anyone with an average reaction time below 0.2 seconds should contact the Ferrari Formula 1 team immediately.

8. Fair Competition

Arie de Geus, the former Corporate Planning Director at Royal Dutch Shell, famously stated that "The ability to learn faster than your competitors may be only sustainable competitive advantage". But when does healthy competition become unsavoury? The Office of Fair Trading has just published proposed new changes to its guidance which place a greater responsibility on company directors to ensure that competition law is not breached. A proposed compulsory disqualification period of 15 years is proposed for directors found to be in breach of competition law and unfit to manage a company. The OFT welcomes comment on the proposals before 20 November 2009 from "businesses, trade associations, professional bodies, regulators and company directors". For a copy of the 30 page "Competition Disqualification Orders; Proposed changes to the OFT's Guidance", email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Competition Law Consultation".

9. The Venerable Elvis Speaks

Ever since David upset the rulebook by using a sling against Goliath, participants in all forms of combat and sporting competition have been tempted to innovate in order to gain an advantage. But when does the innovation become cheating? The recent case of Tom Williams of Harlequins faking a blood injury in a rugby union tie against Leinster led to a four-month ban from the game for the talented winger and a three-year ban for his celebrated coach, Dean Richards. Caster Semenya, the South African gold medalist at last week's World Athletics Championship, has been asked by the world governing body to submit to the indignity of a gender test. The Secretary General of the International Amateur Athletics Federation has done little to quell the controversy by declaring that, "At the moment, the athlete must be given the benefit of the doubt. " In such moral dilemmas, the good people of Thanet have turned to their spiritual leader for guidance. The Venerable Elvis is a hermit who lives simply in the hinterland between the disused power station at Sandwich and the abandoned quarry at Manston. His age is indeterminate with estimates ranging from "At least 100 years" to an astonishing, "He remembers the battle of Waterloo quite well". Whatever the true date of his birth, his words on issues of the day are closely followed by the local populace. Since the arrival on these shores of Augustine in 597, good advice has always been appreciated in this part of Kent. The Thanet & East Kent Insider is blessed with exclusive access to the great man. Paying particular attention to avoid being followed, early last Thursday morning our reporter followed the secret path to the hermit's hovel and asked him to comment on morality in sport. It took the Venerable Elvis a mere 35 minutes to reply, remarkably prompt by his standards. After stroking his long grey beard in silent contemplation, he finally replied, "If you can't cheat fairly, don't cheat at all". We are indeed blessed to have such a wise man in our midst.

10. Our Sponsors

The Thanet & East Kent Insider is grateful for the support and sponsorship provided by Girlings, Express By Holiday Inn and Adecco. Girlings Solicitors has been managing the legal affairs of commercial and private clients for over a century. Twenty-six partners and one hundred and twenty members of staff ensure a comprehensive range of services from the local offices in Ashford, Canterbury, Folkestone, Herne Bay and Margate. Offices in France and Spain complement specialist departments for charities, individuals and companies. For details, telephone 01843 220274. Express By Holiday Inn took on the daunting task of restoring the former Prospect Inn at Minster. The result is a spectacular hotel that combines the best of Oliver Hill's 1930s design with ultra modern facilities and technological support. Conveniently located for business guests and holiday makers in East Kent, the meeting rooms and 105 bedrooms are available at competitive prices throughout the year. For details, telephone 01843 820250. Adecco is the world's largest HR solutions company offering a comprehensive service of temporary and contract staffing, permanent recruitment, outsourcing, outplacement, career services, training and consulting. The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) has appointed Adecco as the Official Recruitment Services Supplier to London 2012. Adecco is represented in Thanet and Dover by its Broadstairs office, tel: 01843 609292.

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

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