

Executive xpress

Issue: August/September 2010

TRAFFORD ENTERPRISES

A Trafford Enterprises publication

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even more
successful!***

The Perfect Customer

Everyone's Twittering - Should you be?

Cutting Costs Through Efficiency

+ Much More!

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FORTHCOMING NETWORKING EVENTS:

For Members Reference Only. Guests are welcome to attend our events, subject to successfully booking in with a guest co-ordinator.

Elmbridge Focus Networking Dinner

Monday, 16th August

Woodlands Park Hotel, 6.30pm - 9.30pm

Guildford Focus Networking Dinner

Tuesday, 17th August

The Hurtwood Inn Hotel, 6.30pm - 9.30pm

The Annual Trafford Garden Party

Tuesday, 24th August

South Hatch Restaurant, 3.30pm - 6.30pm

Tunbridge Wells Premier Dinner

Wednesday, 8th September

The Royal Wells Hotel, 6.00pm - 9.30pm

Epsom Premier Networking Dinner

Tuesday, 14th September

The Chalk Lane Hotel, 6.30pm - 9.30pm

Elmbridge Focus Networking Dinner

Monday, 20th September

Woodlands Park Hotel, 6.30pm - 9.30pm

Guildford Focus Networking Dinner

Tuesday, 21st September

The Hurtwood Inn Hotel, 6.30pm - 9.30pm

Epsom Club Networking Lunch

Tuesday, 28th September

South Hatch Restaurant, 12.30pm - 2.30pm

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 Elmbridge's Keith Grover:*

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Everyone's Twittering, but is it for me?

Karen Purves explains why being on Twitter should be a key element in most businesses marketing strategies.



Karen Purves

**Well, Stephen Fry's doing it!
Jonathon Ross is doing it!
Even, Barak Obama is doing it!
But is it all hype?**

The long answer is *yes, it can be*. It can be an incredible waste of time especially as when you sign up most people are not quite sure what to do!

The short answer is *No!*

Twitter is an essential tool within any businesses social media marketing tool kit. Marketing? That's everything you do in your business – so, don't limit your thinking to just promotions.

This is about positioning, branding and delivering to your values every day, with every action, every word. We are truly getting in the realms of prospects and clients seeing whether you really walk your talk!

So, there is a strategic element to Twitter – and all the social media tools. To disregard this aspect could be harmful in the long term.

What is "Twitter"?

Twitter is a micro-blogging tool where you have 140 characters to comment, promote, converse and share. Think of it like an elevator pitch – concise, friendly and informative.

Now Twitter is just the latest in the increasing number of social media tools to be developed. And, this is part of the revolution in the way people want their information, a shift from selling to buying and how businesses market their wares.

What are the benefits of using Twitter?

The benefits of Twitter are

- √ You have access to people and the information they have to offer
- √ You learn from the information sent by others
- √ You let others know what you are about
- √ You can promote your blog posts
- √ You can generate traffic to your website
- √ You can make connections that may lead to joint project
- √ You can generate sales

Now, not all of these will come to you without a bit of planning and understanding the etiquette!

The basis of twitter is that you follow people who are of interest to you. Who - will depend upon your business but, generally, these would include your clients, prospects, suppliers, people offering services, and that's just business! You can follow people who

have the same hobbies as you – the list can seem endless.

And that brings up the point, to know what you want to get from Twitter so you can set out your stall appropriately. Twitter is a new channel for marketing your business.

A “New Channel”?

This means a new way of keeping in touch and letting people know about your business, news and events. It helps you get the word out to people who may not be on your mailing lists.

Also, if your follows like what you post, then they will forward your message to their followers. So, you see Twitter is an exciting way of getting news out with the prospect of the ripple effect.

Now, there’s a lot around about getting followers, creating a huge following in seven days. The downside of following lots of people in the hope they will follow back is the reason they are following is because you follow them – not because you offer good information or they are interested in you!

Build your following from your contacts, add it to your business cards, put it in your signature for all electronic communications and before you know it, people come and then you can share tips, insights, information, promote your latest..., converse and you just don’t know where it can lead.

You can download this free report “How To Use Twitter For Business”

(<http://tweet-4-biz.com>) to help you get started on building your tribe and position in the emerging world of social media marketing.

Karen Purves is the Chief Marketer of HaveMoreClients.com specialising in working with small business to ensure their marketing is effective. This involves mentoring, having dollups of know how and expertise just when you need. The emphasis is enabling small business owners to be better at marketing than doing it for them.

For further information please contact Karen Purves on 01737-735400 or send an email to info@havemoreclients.com, or follow Karen on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/karenpurves>.



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Motorists Should Take Care in Hot Weather

**Paul Bulloch gives motorists some sound advice
on having a summer of trouble free motoring.**





Motorists Should Take Care in Hot Weather



Paul Bulloch

Much of the UK has been basking in summer sunshine, and whilst the vast majority of people enjoy the uncharacteristic heat, there are a few additional precautions motorists should take to avoid possible problems whilst out on the road...

Fluid Levels

Ensuring you are properly hydrated in the summer heat is essential to avoiding driver fatigue, and of course possible serious health issues. Make sure you have plenty of water/drink on board before setting off on any prolonged car journey, along with snacks in case of a breakdown or sustained traffic incident.

However, you should also ensure your vehicle fluids are kept up to sufficient levels. Make sure you, or a qualified mechanic have checked brake, clutch, power steering, oil and coolant levels to avoid possible breakdown.

Also ensure your vehicle is regularly serviced, and ensure your service agent has checked for leaking coolant hoses/broken electric cooling fans which could result in overheating of your vehicle.

Tyre Pressures

You should ensure that your tyres are inflated to the manufacturers recommended level – note that pressures should be adjusted for heavy loads or towing. Its also important that you check for damage/bulges on tyres as higher summer temperatures heat up tyres and can aggravate existing damage. Damaged tyres should be changed as soon as possible.

Don't forget to check your spare tyre also – or where no spare is available,

that you have appropriate tyre inflation/repair kit on board.

Keeping Clean

It's a good idea to check your washer fluid levels, and to make sure your windscreen/mirrors are clean to ensure maximum visibility. You should clean your windscreen inside and out to remove smears, which will catch sunlight and impair vision. Using newspaper is great for removing built up traffic film!

Also check your wiper blades – they are usually pretty cheap and simple to replace if worn, and will also help you keep a clear line of sight.

If you suffer from hayfever, and are taking medication, ensure that the medication does not cause drowsiness. There are a number of hayfever solutions in the market which can be taken before driving, and its important you try and minimise the symptoms of hayfever which can lead to distraction and possible accidents.

Travelling Abroad

If you are taking your vehicle abroad this summer, ensure you have the correct safety items for the country you are travelling to. European Safety Kits are available, which provide for items required for travel to most European countries.

If you have a lease vehicle, ensure that you have a 'Vehicle on-hire Certificate' (VE103), which is available from your leasing company. You should ensure you contact your provider with as much notice as possible before you intend to travel to allow sufficient time to process and post this document out. It's important you travel with this document, to prevent your vehicle from being impounded by authorities.

You should ensure that you have European Breakdown Recovery to cover you for any breakdown situation whilst you are abroad.

Ensure you have adequate insurance which covers your vehicle when travelling abroad – speak to your insurance company if you are unsure.

Other Safety Tips

Keep your keys safe, and dry. Don't forget to take them out of your pocket before going into the sea!

Take care with fire! Carefully extinguish any cigarette's before disposal – they could cause a fire by the roadside!

For more information about this article contact Paul Bulloch, Managing Director of Concept Vehicle Leasing, a National Vehicle Leasing, finance, maintenance and Fleet Management Provider. You can contact them by calling 0800-043 2050 or visit www.conceptvehicleleasing.co.uk.



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The Perfect Customer

**Andy Szebeni shows you how to identify your perfect customer,
and in turn generate a lot more business!**





The Perfect Customer



AndySzebeni

We have been speaking to a number of clients we ask a simple question when we speak to them: "Who is your ideal client?". The answer, which is often a serious and considered response is "Anyone that spends money with us".

I attend several business groups where we train our fellow members on what to look for when seeking leads to pass to us. The mantra at all of them is "be specific".

Time and time again you see a handful of attendees at these meetings complain that they don't get any quality referrals. And they are

consistently the same people who are never specific. When asked what business they want leads into, this group of underperformers begins their pitch with "Anyone that..." or "You already know what we do..". Conversely, those that seem to get the most business (not, I don't say leads but actually refer to clients won) are those that seem almost super-specific.

I believe the reason that most of these under-achievers are not specific, is because they have never taken the time to analyse where their best business comes from. They are not ignorant people and they are not lazy. I think they have just never been convinced of the need to analyse and articulate their best customers.

Imagine your company was to conduct an advertising campaign. Would you not research first which magazines you might book the ads with? And then, would you not say things in your advert that appealed to its readers? But how do you know which magazine to put the ad in and what to say in your ad that will attract customers?

You analyse what customers you want to attract, of course!

Have a look at the customers that:

- spend the most with you
- are the least trouble to manage
- tell you how much they appreciate your business
- refer you to other clients
- generate the best net margin

And you can start to narrow down your ideal clients. Flesh out this description, make it real. Then work out where they are all hiding and focus your selling attention on these prospects.

A&P is a specialist sales training organisation. They are different because they guarantee their results. If the delegates do not generate increased profits that cover the cost of their place, A&P give back the delegate fee. A&P's training includes bespoke and follow-up modules to ensure that the learning is relevant and sticks.

For further information about this article contact Andy Szebeni from A&P on 020-8662 7702 or visit www.a-and-p.com.

SOLICITORS

Choosing And Using

Alan Williams explains what to consider when choosing your solicitor.





Solicitors – Choosing Them And Using Them



Alan Williams

Solicitors do not get a good Press.

They have acquired (or been given) a reputation for giving unconstructive advice, being hard to get hold of, using incomprehensible language and, above all, not providing value for money. The reality, of course, is somewhat different – there are good solicitors and bad solicitors, as in any profession.

So as a key decision-maker in your business, how do you pick lawyers who are going to help your business? And having done so, how do you get the most out of them?

First of all, you need to understand how solicitors operate. Like any other business, they are in it to make a profit. But different firms have different approaches as to how to make their money – and, indeed, how much to make.

Much airtime and paper nowadays is taken up by legal gurus advising law firms to “commoditise” their services. The idea is that in order to maximise profits, a large proportion of legal processes and transactions can be standardised to a greater or lesser extent.

What this means to the solicitors’ practice is that carrying out the work on any particular matter is delegated to the most junior possible (and therefore cheapest) fee-earner, who will generate standard documents and perform standardised procedures. At the same time, the partners in the firm will spend the bulk of their time managing these juniors, rather than

doing any actual legal work.

Internally, their focus is on minimising risk. They will manage the client relationships, but will not necessarily be completely *au fait* with the details of the matters being handled.

The larger the client company, the better this model works. It is particularly suited to client companies with their own in-house lawyers who have an in-depth knowledge of the relevant business, leaving the external solicitors to deal with legal transactions and specialist areas of legal advice.

The law firms which espouse this model tend therefore to concentrate their business development efforts on attracting large corporates. They tend to be the City firms and the larger provincial firms, and their partners generally receive substantial profit shares (partners in some of the “magic circle” firms in London earn over £1m a year).

Smaller client businesses are less important for the firm's future, and can be left to be dealt with by non-partner solicitors.

The downside to this approach for the SME business is that the standardised process is developed for the most complicated of the particular type of transaction. Very often the scale of the transaction or the size of the businesses involved does not warrant the level of complication or volume of verbiage being produced.

Nevertheless, because the process *has* been standardised, that is what the client ends up being forced to accept and pay for.

But not all firms operate to this model.

It will help if you have a clear idea of what your own needs are in terms of input from your legal advisers.

Typically, most of the decisions in a smaller business are taken by the business owners, who rarely have much in the way of legal experience.

They need experienced, pro-active help and advice as to what to do in order to achieve their objectives in matters with a legal element. They need a person who is focused on finding solutions to problems.

They need an adviser who has the imagination to be able to put himself or herself in their shoes, and who has sufficient experience to look at the broader commercial picture.

They really need someone who is able to be an ad hoc member of the management team, who is in reality what could be described as an "out-

house in-house lawyer", for whom the actual legal process is subordinate to the achievement of the client's commercial objective

The kind of solicitor most suited to your SME business is likely to be one for whom these kinds of business relationships are of paramount importance. But for that very reason, such firms tend not rely much on advertising to attract business.

Space advertising does not normally generate the kind of response for them that makes its cost worthwhile, and Yellow Pages is really for the high street operators. Where they get their business from is recommendations, from their existing clients and from people they know in other professions – accountants, surveyors, IFAs and the like.

It follows that in order to identify this kind of relationship-focused firm, what you will probably need to do is to talk to your friends and acquaintances in similar situations and to your existing professional advisers, to see if they know a firm they are happy to recommend.

Having identified one or more possible firms, contact the individual solicitor there whose name you have been given. Ask questions about their experience in the kinds of legal matters on which you wish to have assistance. And listen to their own questions to you and for signs that they are interested in you and your business. The more remote and impersonal the source of your introduction, the more care you need to take.

Pick a firm to whom you are important.

Cost is of course an issue, but it should not be the deciding factor unless you need a "tie-breaker" between firms that are otherwise similar. In particular, do not allow yourself to be distracted by the easy comparison of hourly rates.

The fact is that the value that you get from your solicitors is more governed by the efficiency with which they deal with your work and the quality of the advice they give. But do get them to give you an idea of how much a particular task is going to cost, if you are able to define its scope sufficiently.

Even though a firm may not be the cheapest, if they are good they will have confidence in the quality of their service and will not be ashamed to explain how they have reached their estimate.

Above all, remember that your solicitor is going to be a colleague, at least from time to time – so choose someone with whom you feel comfortable.

For more information about this article and the services offered by Buss Murton, contact Alan Williams on 01892 510222 or visit www.bussmurton.co.uk.

Buss Murton help business owners with all the legal aspects of running their businesses, often working as "trusted advisers" as much as lawyers. Their approach is the antithesis of the current trend towards commoditised legal process production, and they concentrate on providing personal and experienced advice.

Cutting Costs By Becoming More Efficient – The Benefits Of Process Standardisation

Vaughn Haybittle highlights the benefits of process standardisation.





Cutting Costs By Becoming More Efficient – The Benefits of Process Standardisation

Efficient business processes create stakeholder value. Process Standardisation is a fundamental step to create efficient business processes. The benefits of which include:

- √ Reduced costs;
- √ Time saving;
- √ Reduced waste ;
- √ Improved service quality.

What are business processes?

All organisations have business processes. Some are explicitly aware of this fact and embrace process improvement initiatives. Other organisations do not explicitly think in terms of business process and employ less structure in how they execute their objectives.

The latter organisations generally have higher costs, deliver lower quality services, trade at lower stock prices and have lower levels of customer satisfaction.

“But our processes are already efficient”

Service organisations, in particular, are inefficient as they often do not have standardised processes.

A product or service delivered from a typical un-optimised process spends approximately 5% of its lead time having value added to it ¹. The majority of the work performed in an un-optimised process (in excess of 50%) is not adding any value to the customer ¹.

Process Standardisation is one of the first steps to take (after understanding what your customers needs are) to achieve cheaper, faster, more efficient processes.

The benefits of process standardisation include:

- √ Eliminating variation in how a service is delivered;
- √ Having a baseline for further improvement initiatives;
- √ Having an explicit process that is ‘visible’.

Opportunities presented by Standardised Processes

A standardised process provides opportunities for stabilisation and

Contract

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10 Top Tips for Choosing Your Employment Lawyer

Geoffrey Bignell provides employers and employee's with guidance on what they should look for when selecting an employment lawyer.



10 Top Tips for Choosing Your Employment Lawyer



Geoffrey Bignell

This advice is based on my own experience, years ago, of choosing an employment solicitor, and of talking to hundreds of clients about what they want and don't want. The same principles apply, whether you are an employer or employee. Here goes:

1. Choose a **specialist**.

Employment law is complicated - statute law alone runs to over 5,000 pages! It changes rapidly, with new cases decided almost daily. Ask your adviser whether he or she works

100% in employment law. You need a specialist.

2. Choose a **professional**

That means a 'solicitor' or 'barrister'. They are properly qualified and subject to strict standards of client care, under the supervision of the Legal Services Board. Anyone can call themselves a 'lawyer' or 'legal adviser'. An 'employment law adviser' may be quite a big firm, owned by a bank. This kind of firm, employing people who are unqualified and unregulated, may sometimes be cheaper, but clients often tell me that they have been disappointed by their services.

3. Choose an **advocate**

By that, I mean someone who represents clients in Employment Tribunals. Solicitors who do advocacy usually give better advice, for three reasons:

Representing clients in Tribunal is a great learning curve. Knowing how to present a case, knowing what judges

are looking for, and knowing how judges think, improves the quality of advice right at the beginning

Tribunals are stressful enough, without you having to rely on a stranger on the 'big day'. The majority of clients, in my experience, prefer to be represented by the solicitor they know and have a relationship with, someone who already knows their case inside out.

Your case is likely to be better prepared for trial by your advocate, rather than by someone who can shuffle off the papers to someone else. That's human nature.

4. Choose a solicitor who **works for both employers & employees**

He or she has more rounded professional experience and is likely to have a better insight into how 'the other side' is thinking and plotting.

5. Choose a solicitor who will give you a few minutes' free

discussion.

This helps you to

√ Decide if you get on

√ Check you are dealing with a qualified person

√ Check your solicitor is accessible and speaks plain English

√ Get confirmation that your problem is something your solicitor can help with. I had a request the other day to move a piano!

√ Agree a fee for the initial consultation

√ If relevant, ask about your solicitor's success rates

6. Decide if you actually need to see your solicitor in person

Much work is done, nowadays, by e-mail and 'phone. My office manager was once a client. I did not actually meet her until we met on the day of her Tribunal hearing. If you do not need someone local, you have a wider choice of solicitors. Londoners may not

need to pay London fee rates. As a firm in the South East, we have clients as far as away as the USA, France, Scotland and Wales.

7. Check whether you have employment legal expenses insurance

If you do, your insurer may direct you to a panel solicitor. If you are an individual, remember that you can choose your own solicitor, as soon as your claim is issued in the Employment Tribunal.

8. Ask about fees

Most solicitors do most work on a time basis. This is because it is simply not possible to decide at the outset the amount of work you will need. But for some work (for example compromise agreements, drafting contracts or restrictive covenants), you should be able to agree a fixed fee.

A third option is some form of contingency fee (where legal fees come out of compensation) or conditional fee (where your legal fee varies, according to outcome). Such fees are only feasible where your aim is to make someone else pay you money.

If your solicitor works on a time basis, you should receive an estimate for every stage of the work you need. You can choose a solicitor on price alone, but this is not always cost-effective.

You really want value for money.

9. Remember that you should feel in control

Ask your solicitor to confirm that you will see copies of correspondence and receive updated fee estimates.

10. Check the "terms and conditions" before you sign

Are they in plain English and are you happy with them?

Just Employment helps employers and individuals with employment law problems. They aim to be fast, friendly and accessible, providing not only expertise but practical solutions. Their team has an enviable track record of success in the employment tribunals and Employment Appeal Tribunal.

For more information about this article and the services offered by Just Employment Ltd contact Geoffrey Bignell on 07905-119548 or visit www.justemployment.com.



CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme

Martyn Young provides important information about the CRC scheme, with registration fast approaching - those who need to register must do so soon!





CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme



Martyn Young

Previously known as the Carbon Reduction Commitment

The CRC Energy Efficiency scheme registration process closes on 30 September 2010.

Last year the Environment Agency which supervises the scheme sent out letters informing all users of Half Hourly meters that they needed to register, irrespective of the usage. To date there are many companies who have not yet registered.

What has not been so well publicised are the fines that can be charged for failing to register.

Registration is mandatory for almost ALL organisations that had Half Hourly meters in 2008, they will have to provide how much half hourly metered electricity they consumed in the calendar year 2008. The few exceptions are on climate agreement schemes.

If the 2008 usage was above 6,000MWh in 2008 (across all meters in the UK) then businesses will have been required to register as Participants and be recording usage since April 2010. This equates to a spend of about £500,000 per annum. Group companies need to aggregate their usage and report at group level. Participants have to pay to register.

If usage was between 3,000MWh and 6,000MWh you need to make an information disclosure and disclose

consumption records for 2008. No payment is due.

If the usage was below 3,000MWh in 2008 there is no further action needed other than making an information disclosure, and no fee to pay. Failure to register before 30th September 2010 will lead to civil penalties, which for companies below 6,000MWh is a fine of £1,000 for missing the deadline, and for companies over 6,000MWh a fine of £5,000 plus £500 for every DAY late, plus publication on non-compliance.

For more information on this article or the services offered by Atlantic, or further information on the CRC scheme, please contact Martyn Young on 08456 185 088 or visit www.atlanticbr.co.uk.

Atlantic to reduce the indirect cost base of clients, and their reward structure of "pay by results" makes this happen effectively and promptly. They recognise customer service as paramount and therefore do not always chase the lowest ticket price, but look for the best fit for the client.



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That means our service to you is personal and tailored to your requirements, and because you always speak with a "real" person when you call, we can work with you to utilise our knowledge to provide you with the right recommendation.