

Newsletter

Dorking & District Chamber of Commerce



When the going gets tough... the tough get going

Famous words sung by a reasonably famous boy band, Yet never a truer word spoken (or sung) because in this gloomy economic cycle that we are going through, it is tough to keep your business going well.

So what is the secret of survival. Well in truth there is no magic formula. However we as a medium sized marketing and design group have traditionally done quite well in tough times. Why? - because we are relatively small so when the economy does take a dip, often first thing big companies do is to cut their big advertising budget - and spend less. That in itself could be argued to be a great mistake, but for us it is a boon because companies must still communicate with their customers. So they look for the less expensive option and often that involves looking for a smaller less expensive agency which is where we step in. Being based in Dorking our cost structure is a lot lower than our competitors in London. Yet we can offer just as

much if not more. With modern communications your location is no longer vitally important and at present more than 60% of our income comes from overseas.

The important thing with any business is to offer the customer good service, even more when times are hard. In our case that means clever, cost effective ways of helping our clients to sell their product or services to an increasingly competitive market...and there lies the secret of it all. In tough time you have to be more competitive. Your product/service has to be good - better than your competitors in terms of perceived value and quality. You need to make yourself stand out from the crowd of competitors. You can do this by creating a 'difference' in the service that you offer that includes features that provide real benefit to your customers.

Its always important to remember that it is cheaper to keep existing business by offering a bit more, to keep your customers happy and the competition at bay, rather than to have to fund the acquisition of new business.

So times are tough but business will still go on if you work at it. Get going - good luck!

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Photography - Paul Knivett

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter of the Dorking Chamber of Commerce.

The small business world is evolving rapidly. Competition is becoming more aggressive, sophisticated, better organised and better qualified. Only wilful blindness could hide that truth! And to top it all we are heading into a recession!

Many small business owners are asking themselves, 'How do I recession proof my business?' Make marketing a priority. Effective marketing is the critical missing element and great marketing is what will drive your business to new heights during the very tough months ahead.

Nicola Downs, Chairman Dorking & District Chamber of Commerce

This Newsletter was produced by Clockhouse on behalf of the Dorking and District Chamber of Commerce.
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Dorking Business

Task Force

Last month Sonja Sefke of Shrewd assembled a number of Dorking Businesses for a meeting to discuss what needs addressing in Dorking. The businesses were mainly retailers and discussion came pretty much from a united voice. Sonja's husband, Alex, ran the meeting and focused everyone's attention on the things that are needed in Dorking. We all were asked to write the problem areas on post-it notes and these were stuck on the wall in group. It was interesting to see how consistent the problems were to the issues raised and addressed by other groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and Dorking Needs Action (parking, transport, the market,

the Council etc). Constructive and detailed discussion followed and then a committee was appointed to meet again and consider how to make

change. Some of the members in the meeting were interested to learn more about groups like the Chamber of Commerce.



Photography - DTCM/Paul Knivett

Member profile:

Paul Knivett Photography

New eyes in Dorking - Paul Knivett, Commercial Photographer. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to all Chamber members. I am an independent, commercial photographer who moved to Dorking with my wife eighteen months ago. I am looking forward to becoming a part of the Dorking business community as well as another friendly

face about town. My website www.paulknivett.co.uk and profile on the Chamber website will give you an idea of what I do and how I like to work on location as well as indoors. Suffice to say I am happiest when I am behind my camera capturing commissioned images for public or private sector clients of people, products or places.

Well-taken photographs can convey a lot about your business standards and market placement whether that be on your website, within reports and tender documents, or accompanying press releases. As a Chamber member, please consider me to be a resource you can call upon to discuss potential photographic ideas to suit your business whatever that might be. I am able to travel so will be happy to assist if your work stretches significantly beyond the Dorking and District Chamber catchment area. I look forward to meeting more members over the coming months.

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Qualified member of the British Institute of Professional Photography.



Dorking is perfect for presents and art has never been such good value as today

The WOW Gallery like so many retailers is feeling the pinch. To ensure it continued survival, they have adapted and now sell both collector items and also a whole range of under £50 pieces, the majority of which are still the best of British arts and crafts. Inexpensive items like ceramic cupcakes and the Elephant Salt and Pepper pots for £16, rub shoulders with real collectable glass and wonderful ceramics like Richard Godfrey's teapot for £160 and a whole array of paintings.

As artists want paying - most of their Christmas stock is already in. So now is a great time to wander into WOW and see what is on offer – you can even drop in between 11-1 on Sundays up until Christmas.

Other stores also have inexpensive ranges of products that make perfect gifts and our oldest store in the town Fullers is now open again and looking wonderful. It really pays to shop

locally and Dorking has some of the best shops for gifts around.

Caroline Salmon, artist and owner of the WOW gallery, South Street, Dorking



Free Business Health Check



Dorking Business Link Advisor Irving Levy is already visiting businesses in Dorking and providing a free business health check.

President Nicola Downs of Dorking Chamber was one of the first to sign and and Caroline Salmon at the WOW Gallery was also a early guinea pig. Caroline said "It is always really useful to look at your business from a distance and see how you are shaping up to your business plan. To have another person look at it too has to be really useful. My original business plan impressed, but suggestions

were made about creating new routes to market which I had not considered. Anything that doesn't cost a business should always be considered in this economic climate".

For more information contact Dorking Town Management on:
T: 01306 655017
E: town.manager@visitdorking.com

Or contact Irving Levy, Business Link Adviser Team Leader on:
T: 07748 115412
E: irving.levy@businesslinksurrey.co.uk

Dorking's Gala Night - Biggest Yet!

Christmas shopping in Dorking during this year's Gala Night promises to be great fun; the theme for this year is "Heroes & Villains" which has given joint organisers, Dorking Chamber of Commerce and Dorking Town Management huge fun organising an entertainment packed evening for all the family. Dorking's famous Gala Night takes place on Thursday 4th December, from 6.00pm till 9.00pm throughout the whole of Dorking.

A new and special attraction for this year is Santa's heroes ... real live reindeer who, along with their fancy-dress themed handlers, promise to bring a spirit of joy to the evening! And of course, shoppers and visitors can enjoy popping into the shops and businesses to see the bona fide 'Heroes & Villains' of Gala Night – staff dressed up especially for the occasion. You never know, Gandalf or Wonder Woman could serve you; there is a possibility you could bump into Luke Skywalker and The Joker, or walk past Batman and Magneto.



Photography - DTCM/Andy Newbold

The Chamber of Commerce executive committee will be out in force - all in costume - judging the best 'Heroes & Villains' themed shop competition. Roving musicians and entertainers will be all around Dorking while in the main square of St Martins Walk Shopping Centre bands and dancers entertain shoppers. Younger visitors can enjoy the live nativity scene featuring real animals in the rear square, Santa Claus will be in his grotto, which opens on Gala Night, or they choose what character to become with free face painting.

Many local Charities benefit from Gala Night with good causes having stalls and fundraising attractions across the town. Carol singers will celebrate the traditional side of Christmas or

you can enjoy a treat of Candy Floss and Hot Chestnuts, plus the town's extensive range of restaurants and hostelrys will be open until late.

Neil Phillipson of Astronomia and Phillipson Kennedy, who helps coordinate Gala Night says; 'With the special feature of live reindeer and a great range of excellent music, attractions and events, plus lots of shops already promising to dress up for the night as 'Heroes & Villains', Dorking Gala Night promises to be great fun for Christmas shopping'.

For more information on Dorking Gala Night, please contact Sandra Grant, Dorking Town Manager on 01306 655017 or town.manager@visitdorking.com



Photography - DTCM/Andy Newbold

Dorking Service Centre - your local garage is UK's best ... again!

A Dorking garage is this year's winner of one of the most prestigious awards in the UK motor industry – the 'Independent Garage of the Year' award – for the second year running!

Dorking Service Centre on South Street – part of the Bosch Car Service network – beat off stiff competition from garages across the UK to win the title in the Motor Trader Industry Awards 2008; the second year in a row that they have won the accolade, putting them in the perfect position to attempt a hat trick in 2009.

Managing director, Sid Swaine, received the award in front of over 1,300 industry professionals at a prestigious ceremony at London's Grosvenor House Hotel on Wednesday 16 July 2008.

A judging panel of industry experts found that Dorking Service Centre has put in place measures to improve its business over the past year, and that the garage consistently achieved outstanding levels of business performance and customer care.

Since the business opened in February 2004 it has:



Sid Swaine, Managing Director of Dorking Service Centre receiving their award

- Achieved a Bosch Quality Award;
- Attended to more than 8,000 vehicles;
- Looked after over 5,200 customers;
- Reached an 93 per cent repeat business level;
- Given back to local customers more than £30,000 in loyalty discount; and Won 'Independent Garage of the Year' award 2007 and again in 2008.

Sid Swaine said of winning the award for the second year running: "It is a

great honour for us to have won this important national award again. It shows that we have been consistent in our company ethos of putting the customer first and in providing the highest possible standard of service at the most competitive rates.

"This award is clear recognition of our culture and the tremendous effort put in by every member of our team, each one of whom goes the extra mile to deliver an exceptional performance." Dorking Service Centre is a member of the Bosch Car Service network, which consists of some 400 independent garages across the UK. Each must meet high standards of equipment, staff training and customer care, which are constantly monitored and vigorously assessed by Bosch.

All members of the network must also adhere to a strict Code of Conduct laid down by Bosch. The Office of Fair Trading recently approved the Bosch Code, thus providing added reassurance to customers that high standards of workmanship will be achieved and that there are proper processes in place to deal effectively with any complaints.



The Winning DSC team enjoying their success