

Can marketing make your business more profitable?

A RECENT survey amongst Chambers members shows a surprising level of optimism about the future, with two thirds of respondents expecting their business to do better than last year.

But the results of the survey, which aimed to gain a better understanding of how Surrey businesses are standing up to the recession, showed a worrying complacency about marketing, according to Philippa Varey of Surrey Marketing Consultancy (SMC).

Research prior to the last recession showed that businesses which thrived in difficult times were those which already placed a strategic emphasis on marketing and had an entrepreneurial culture, said Philippa. "Responses from members show a rather different picture; businesses are confident about their operational and financial skills, but a quarter lack confidence in their marketing expertise and a fifth have doubts about their strategic skills. However, 60% have taken external marketing advice to bridge this gap, with the vast majority feeling more confident as a result. Half of those have already seen a direct improvement in business profitability, with the remainder

believing it is too soon to tell."

She said that a surprising number of respondents still believed that marketing was just about promotions and on-line visibility, rather than a total business approach. Many were putting their faith in finding new customers rather than investing in their existing ones.

She suggested that at the halfway point of 2010, businesses should take stock and ask themselves if they were confident that their business strategies were robust enough to withstand the next stage of recession. Her top tips for 2010 are:

- Take professional advice to revitalise your business strategy.
- Bring skills and knowledge into your business: train your staff or use external experts.
- Invest in your existing customers. They'll buy more, stay longer and recommend you to others.

For advice about marketing and to see the full survey results, visit www.SurreyMarketingConsultants.co.uk

Finding the perfect match



Dawn O' Leary

By Dawn O' Leary,
Davis Burton Sellek

FINDING THE right professional advisers and developing a close working partnership is key to a successful business. It's not just about working relationships - it's about having an all-round relationship with your accountant/business adviser. Getting on with them on a personal level is as important as chartered qualifications, credentials and client testimonials.

Dating agencies use science and algorithms to find matches for their clients. Business owners have to rely on recommendations from family and friends and referrals from trusted sources to find the right business adviser. But it also pays to do your homework on and off-line. What impression did you get from the website? What impression did you have after you met them? What research had they done on you and your business? How were you greeted? Was the enquiry follow-up timely? Were they enthusiastic and/or passionate? Did you warm to the staff? Did the partners have similar views to you?

Above all look for someone with a personality, core values and attitudes similar to your own. Always spend time with the partners of a practice before you make a final decision so you can be sure of a successful long-term relationship.

Have your say at:
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SURREY POLICE AUTHORITY COLUMN



Peter Williams
Chairman, Surrey Police Authority

AS I write, we are in the midst of an intriguing General Election that could perhaps bring significant changes to policing and we at the Authority are following it carefully. In the meantime, we continue with business as usual. Having come to the end of the process of setting this year's policing budget and Local Policing Plan for Surrey, we now begin the process of scrutinising the force's delivery of the Plan's targets.

The Authority monitors performance in the force's key areas of activity through a number of regular panel meetings. These involve Police Authority Members and officers together with officers and staff from Surrey Police.

Some panels and their responsibilities include:

Citizen Focus - looking at the force's performance in areas such as neighbourhood policing, contact management, consultation and communication.

Controlling Crime – scrutinising crime reduction and protective services such as counter-terrorism and major crime investigation.

Finance & Performance – monitoring the force's finances to make sure they remain within budget, monitoring performance against the Local Policing Plan targets.

Human Resources – overseeing the way the force manages its workforce, with subjects including recruitment, retention and training.

Professional Standards – checking the force's handling of complaints.

These panels allow us to work closely and in detail with the force. We hear a great deal about the good work being done across the county to make Surrey Police the high performing force that it is. When things go wrong – thankfully a rare issue here - our panels allow us to hold the leaders of the force to account and take steps to resolve the situation.