

Broadband helps Alison capture new markets in Japan and Canada



Business and People

Proofwrite offers proofreading, copy-editing and web-proofing services. The company is run by Alison Walters, whose background is in insurance and training. She was always good at English and had studied creative writing, so when she was thinking about a business that could be operated from home, she

decided, and trained, to become a copy editor and proofreader. This is not just about checking grammar and spelling prior to publishing; it is about style as well. Proofwrite was originally part of another company and Alison undertook the proofreading work, together with the accounts and administration. The workload gradually increased, the business became a limited company itself and eventually Alison took it over. It is still run from home as a limited company and is run by Alison with a team of freelance proofreaders and editors.

Getting on to Broadband

Using Broadband keeps the phone free and deals with transfers of large files. There used to be problems with a dial-up connection that switched off after 20 minutes, which is not much use when you are receiving 30 minute downloads.

With Proofwrite doing a lot of work for students. Alison wanted to keep prices down so there has always been a need to keep overheads low. This had stopped Proofwrite from subscribing to business phone services but now broadband is on all day and the costs are the same at all times.

Another advantage of Broadband is speed of file transfer. This is now much more important as clients demand quicker responses and are moving away from sending hard copy. Broadband is also useful for proofreading direct from web sites, some of which are very large with huge numbers of links and associated pages. Although there is actually a need to convince people that correct grammar and spelling is important on web sites, this is a growing market.

Learning Online

Alison has completed a few LearnDirect courses such as advanced Word, and Excel spread sheeting and she found that these were better than using a manual or relying on a help function. It is also much easier to log on to a web site at a convenient time than to go to a training centre.

She joined the SME Marketing using Broadband project through Wigan Business Club and felt that it came at just the right time. Although marketing was something that had become increasingly important, she admits that she probably wouldn't have done anything about it immediately had the project not come up. The course materials were good, everything worked and, thanks to broadband, it was all very quick. Alison did not really miss the face-to-face contact with the other participants that you get with a 'traditional' course, but she enjoyed the dissemination events.

'Using broadband keeps the phone free and deals with transfers of large files'.

Marketing

At present, business is gained principally from the web site or from existing contacts. The Proofwrite site is maintained by a web design friend who built it and they are very keen to monitor usage and get the keywords right so that overseas customers will find it. Customers in Japan and Canada have been brought on board from the site and it all seems to work very well.

The target market for Proofwrite's services could be anyone who produces written material. It could be a flyer, a brochure, a thesis or a web site with pages of text. As part of the marketing activity for the project, Alison defined market segments and built them into the completed marketing plan. It was felt that the business was more 'seat of the pants' before, but the marketing plan is now going to be used as a tool for much more active promotion of the business in future.

The Future

There is an expectation of tangible results from taking part in the project but it is still too early to talk about figures. One likely development over the next 12 months is that the business and industrial side will be split off from the service for students.

Broadband has helped with proofreading of web sites and that is perhaps the biggest area of expansion but Alison has been heading into copywriting - a new direction that offers good opportunities. She continues to be very keen on networking at business clubs and is interested in agencies providing advice on further exploiting the Internet.



A successful project,

"Improving Marketing Effectiveness of SMEs using Broadband"

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