

Broadband helps Sue to be the boss



Business and People

BOSSCo is a limited company, started in 1999 and conceived as a 'business department store' especially to meet the needs of the newly self-employed and those who work from home. The two directors are David and Sue Fernandez, both of whom have a management consultancy background.

BOSSCo is based in Gatley (it runs the gatley.net web site) and offers a full range of physical and virtual services for small businesses, working particularly with start-ups and SoHo (Small Office, Home Office) entrepreneurs.

The company help micro businesses to get online and use broadband and Sue encourages interaction among the businesses.

BOSSCo recently won a Big Chip award for its Workout Zone, which offers wireless Internet access for your own laptop, secretarial support and telephone answering service, print and design, networking opportunities as well as food and drink.

Getting on to Broadband

As an experienced Internet user, Sue says that, "many small business do not have internet access, never mind choosing between dial up and broadband. Its more a case of "you don't know what you don't know". Broadband and the Web should be integral to how you do business and not an appendage." Sue is spreading the word: "There is a big learning curve for new Broadband users. People are turning to Broadband to keep control on their internet spend, particularly when their children spend a lot of time on line - playing, working and communicating. The side effect of changing to Broadband is the realisation of the benefits of high speed internet. Businesses simply have not known the benefit using broadband can bring to their business. They don't see the need for it because they haven't had the experience."

Learning Online

Sue joined the project because she was interested in marketing and experiencing e-Learning. She liked the 'open learning' aspect of the programme and the toolkit provided – she would never have generated enough time to do a conventional course and so being able to log on at any time was useful. Sue needed something short and relevant – 'just in time, just enough and just for me'.

The choice of material and the scope of the course were good and Sue was selective in her approach, choosing priority areas for study.

Sue would have preferred more challenges and 'cross-examination' and certainly more interaction with other learners; workgroups could give an added impetus to the work. She thinks the experiences of others are vital and "you can add to the teaching material by hearing "I tried this, or I did that, or you could try this ... or what if we did this?" This would be a good add-on and you could do it through chat rooms or work groups."

'you really need broadband if you want to be a serious user of e-mail'

Marketing

The marketing plan is always there as an *aide-memoire* and "from now on it's a question of tweaking it more than anything else and it could certainly help to identify new markets and a new customer base." The activity undertaken for the project "was good at kick-starting thought patterns."

Sue recognises that lots of businesses have no actual business plan and clients need to get the message that it is important for marketing to be an integral part of the business. Marketing and sales is key to the success of any organisation.

The company's role in supporting small businesses will continue and two things Sue is very passionate about are "making sure that technology is available to very small businesses and ensuring the survival of independent retail businesses." These two priorities are interlinked and achieving them will help to maintain "choice, excitement and innovation."

Clients will continue to need help with Broadband. Sue is now developing ideas for broadband integration for the future of learning for small firms.

Finally, the overall value of this project is that it is not just about broadband or marketing, it is about raising profile: "Numbers don't matter as much as changing perceptions and increasing knowledge. The rest will follow."

The Future

BOSSCo is a 'multi-functionary' business and there are a number of different ways for expansion. In the next few months they plan to recruit more staff and launch new products.

A successful project, "Improving Marketing Effectiveness of SMEs using Broadband"

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