

Broadband helps Vera create industries



Imaginative and affordable web solutions

Business and People

VG Net is run by Vera Green and offers web design, hosting, e-commerce, and market research. "The emphasis is on support for very small businesses and the personal touch." Vera moved the business to Macclesfield from Central Manchester in March 2003. Vera's background was in market research and she switched to self-employment 16 years ago, continuing in market research, using a large number of freelance researchers locally and across the region. There has been a shift of business emphasis over the past 10 years and now, 90% of the business is in web design and business support, with just 10% market research. Vera herself does most of the work, but she uses freelancers when necessary. There has been a big increase in business over the last six months with three main sources: local enquiries come from the web site; hosting clients move towards a bigger web presence and business comes in through recommendations.

Getting on to Broadband

Broadband is better for large e-mails, particularly for material for hosting and images to go on new web pages. Vera sees a general need for more broadband availability throughout the region and this will encourage the kinds of small businesses that can be run from home, especially in rural areas.

For her own business, she would like SDSL, which is just rolling out in Manchester; this gives you the same speed for upload and download and is much faster than the asynchronous ADSL

'Vera sees a general need for more broadband availability throughout the region.'

Learning Online

Vera would have preferred more feedback and interaction to make the course more of an e-Learning experience:

"It would be better if someone were there to say "you missed the point on that" or "did you think of trying this?"

"She acknowledges that interaction with the other learners is very valuable but it is highly dependent on organisation and management to make it work and, of course, it increases costs.

Looking at the content, Vera wanted something more suited to very small 'seat of the pants' business and questioned the relevance of some of the terminology. She felt that it had been designed for product-based businesses, not service providers and that, in particular, the campaign examples were more suited to corporates.

Marketing

The marketing activity was very valuable and a lot of work went into it. "I stepped back and looked at the business holistically." Vera thought about things that needed doing and planning for: "It does make you look at your own business objectives although whether you can actually do anything about it at the time is another matter!"

Marketing Continues

A suggestion for the marketing plan was to have it all online so it could have been submitted online for comments and make a bit more use of the technology.

Marketing activity has included a web-based survey of clients and prospects. Once this is done, it could be developed into a service that could be sold to others – a new business opportunity. Vera is well versed in market research already and does e-mail campaigns and other promotional tactics. From a planning point of view this activity has to be considered in terms of time rather than cost in money. It is a choice between what you do yourself, rather than what you spend cash on.

Overall, “marketing integrates with other functions, for example the financial functions and it becomes a part of the business and it all helps you to look at options in terms of costs.”

A successful project, “Improving Marketing Effectiveness of SMEs using Broadband”

With a £150,000 grant from Northwest Development Agency (NWD), Multimedia Marketing.Com Ltd (MMC) has successfully recruited 204 SME's based in Greater Manchester. This ground-breaking project brings Marketing to the SME community in a powerful way involving Broadband, the 21st century telecoms Internet highway that is always on and is unmetered in its use.

Multimedia Marketing.Com Ltd specialises in digitally based marketing training, particularly delivering marketing training over the net. Organisations as far a field as Japan, India and USA are benefiting from using MMC's world class content.

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This project is supported by:
North West Broadband Fund, NWD, DTI and UK Online for Business.



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The Future

Vera would be very interested in any more similar projects, especially as this sort of initiative spreads out: “Outside Greater Manchester, where there are lots of learning and training opportunities, you need to make an effort to get accepted on to North West projects. These projects need to spread out of the conurbations and serve the wider North West.”

She also makes a strong point about Macclesfield, where there is a big SME market, a strong history of self-help and self-employment and the town has its own Creative Industries Forum: “There is a ‘Macclesfield model of self-help’, a large pool of SMEs, it’s a good area and It has its own creative industries organisation. Agencies need to look more at places like Macclesfield.”