

# The bottom line



Kim Stoddart, founder of ethical media relations company Green Rocket.

**M**ORE and more companies are taking advantage of the current swell of public interest in environmental issues to promote the supposed eco-credentials of everything from the latest 4X4s to luxury items and even, would you believe, airlines.

However, today's consumers are increasingly sceptical about the claims and those companies that are shown to be merely jumping on the environmental bandwagon with tokenistic gestures will be met with a justifiably frosty response.

If companies are going to market their ethical or green initiatives they must be prepared to prove the merit and validity of their words and carry them through. Authenticity is key if you are going to make your business more environmentally friendly and merely greenwashing your eco-credentials will not cut it with your customers.

Your desire to make positive changes needs to be genuine and not based on tokenism.

Your approach needs to be honest and somewhat modest. You should know your limitations and make them clear to customers from the start; people don't expect you to change the world on your own but they will expect you to do what you can.

**D**on't boast and make sure if you talk about initiatives that they are carried through. People are much more responsive to this approach where they can see companies are making a genuine effort.

Don't get caught in the trap of wanting to do something because it's fashionable, such as planting a tree every time you win a new piece of business; this reeks of tokenism and could potentially backfire on you. Do your research and maybe go for less glamorous options that make a genuine difference and if needs be, bring in an expert to help guide your changes.

Engage your people and get them to feed into ideas. If they can see that owners and managers are committed to positive change and they know that they can feed into this process and be valued for it, then this will help your company continue to improve its performance in this area. This is key to the process and an essential part of innovation which is important to every business whatever sector you are in.

Lastly, don't be fearful of change. Making your company more environmentally friendly will benefit your business as well as the environment. Do however be fearful of not making changes because if you don't start planning them now you may risk damaging your company's reputation in the long term. It is much better to be seen as a forward thinking company that is committed to doing what it can to make changes than one that is stuck in its ways and has its head in the sand.

We are in the process of working with the City Council, Business Link, EcoSys and others to launch a new initiative that will help businesses in Brighton and Hove to become more sustainable in their outlook, supporting them over time with accessible and practical advice. As part of this project Green Rocket has produced a factsheet with information and guidance on sustainable business practice.

**EVERY month Business publishes a list of employers who are doing the most to help disadvantaged people in Brighton and Hove into gainful employment. The table is compiled by Engage, part of the Business Community Partnership. To get involved contact Claire Mitchell on 01273 774796.**

| Business / Employer                                | Engage Organisation(s)   | Number of People in Placements | Number of People in Employment |
|--|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| A J Taylor Electrical                              | Constructing Futures   | 1                              | 1                              |
| <b>A R Bradley Groundworks</b>                     | <b>Constructing Futures</b>  | <b>1</b>                       | <b>0</b>                       |
| Al Green Complete Services                         | Careers Development Group  | 2                              | 0                              |
| <b>Argos</b>                                       | <b>Sussex Deaf Association</b>   | <b>1</b>                       | <b>0</b>                       |
| Blockbuster Entertainment                          | Careers Development Group  | 1                              | 0                              |
| <b>Brighton &amp; Hove City Council City Clean</b> | <b>Sussex Deaf Association</b>   | <b>1</b>                       | <b>0</b>                       |
| <b>Brighton and Hove City Council</b>              | <b>Brighton and Hove City Council (Work Placements)</b>  | <b>4</b>                       | <b>0</b>                       |
| Brighton and Hove City Council Trading Standards   | 50+ Training for Work  | 1                              | 0                              |
| <b>East Sussex County Council</b>                  | <b>Job Centre Plus in partnership with Kennedy Scott and Working Links (Brighton and Hove Clients)</b> | <b>9</b>                       | <b>0</b>                       |
| Peacehaven Golf Club                               | Careers Development Group  | 1                              | 0                              |

## Events

# How to turn your customers into gold

BUSINESS consultant Dale Howarth will offer "down to earth" and "practical" advice to help you increase profits at a workshop later this month.

Turning Customers into Gold is for people who want to improve their company's bottom line and get the best return from sales, marketing and customer service.

Bobby Scragg, business link adviser for Eastbourne, said: "A marketing plan should form part of your overall business plan, as marketing can make a large contribution to the profitability and success of your business. Communicating this plan is extremely important as it ensures that all members of staff understand the goals and aspirations of the business."

The workshop is being held on Thursday, June 21 at the Sovereign Harbour Yacht Club, Eastbourne, from 8am to noon. Places are limited to one person per company. For further information and to book a place, please call **01732 878555**.

**THE role of business in Brighton and Hove will be hotly debated next week.**

**The city's chamber of commerce is holding its first State of the Nation event where company representatives will discuss their aspirations for the seaside resort.**

**The event will be chaired by Roger French, managing director of Brighton and Hove Bus Company and the panel for the evening will include Alan McCarthy, chief executive of Brighton and Hove Council, Julie Stanford, president of the Brighton and Hove Chamber of Commerce, Derek Maddison, manager of Churchill Square and**

**Tony Mernagh, executive director of the City Business Forum.**

**Ms Stanford said: "This event offers a unique opportunity to hear from and ask questions of the people who can make a difference. Come and tell us what you think about the city and how it could be an ever better place to live and work."**

**Mr Mernagh added: "The city's success over the past five years has been stunning but with success comes challenges and it is imperative that every business has the opportunity to input into the solutions. This event will give a snapshot of the economy as we stand poised to become one of the world's great seaside cities."**

**You are invited to email any questions to secretary@businessinbrighton.org.uk. The free event is taking place at the Thistle Hotel, King's Road, Brighton next Wednesday from 5.45pm. Register at www.businessinbrighton.org.uk or call 01273 719 097.**

THE UNIVERSITY of Sussex School of Science and Technology (SSST) is to open its doors for its first technology showcase next month.

The IngenioUS event will allow academics, students, business leaders and funding bodies to explore cutting-edge research projects at the university through lectures, exhibitions, demonstrations and tours.

Organiser Julia Harris said: "IngenioUS will offer an unprecedented glimpse into the future." Guests expected to attend include directors from some of the largest blue-chip companies in the UK, careers advisers and leading research council representatives.

Helen Underwood, an electronic design engineer with Sussex-based machinery manufacturer Eurotherm, said: "As a company interested in the involvement of innovations in technology, we are keen to come along and see what is exciting the researchers at the moment. We have also found the University of Sussex a good place to spot new talent."

The event is taking place at the University of Sussex in Falmer, near Brighton, from 10am to 4pm on Wednesday, June 13.

**THE Brighton Housing Trust has launched a training programme for workers in the housing and support sectors.**

**Between now and the end of September, 23 courses are on offer, ranging from professional boundaries, equality and diversity and managing difficult and aggressive situations, to welfare benefits training, management training and a Health and Safety Risk Assessment Qualification.**

**The cost of each ranges from £30 to £75 for a full day course.**

**Amy Hines, co-ordinator, said: "In 2006, BHT transformed its approach to staff training. Traditionally training had been purchased from providers in London and elsewhere. Building on experience and expertise within BHT, we now have courses designed to meet the development needs of staff, the service delivery needs of our clients, and the commissioning needs of our funders."**

**"Our training is tailored to the specific circumstances found in this region. This is why we are now opening up our training programme to people from other organisations**

**operating in Sussex".**

**Details of the training programme can be found on the website www.bht.org.uk or by contacting Amy Hines on 01273 645401.**

FIRMS are being urged to help make Sussex's first EcoFair a success.

The event, which is taking place in St John's Park, Burgess Hill, in June is the first of its kind in the region and comes as concern for the environment mounts.

EcoFair has been set up by ecotecture, an ecological architectural practice based in Bolney, near Haywards Heath, and is being run in conjunction with Burgess Hill Environmental Issues Forum and Mid Sussex District Council.

The fair will feature a series of zoned streets crisscrossing the park with stalls promoting everything from sustainable building materials to energy efficiency, Fair Trade crafts to local food and drinks produce.

Joanna Saady, director of ecotecture and the founder of the EcoFair event, is calling on the support of businesses and residents to help put the event on the map. She said: "EcoFair has been set up to educate people on the ethos of sustainability and raise awareness of the environmental issues that are dominating society. People want a greener way of life; they just need some help to take the first step. The EcoFair will be a starting point that gives people from across Sussex easy access to expert advice."

Companies that are interested in taking part in the fair, which takes place on Saturday, June 23, should contact Melanie Laurie on **0845 026 4636**.

If you would like your event included on this page, contact James Lancaster at Argus House, Crowhurst Road, Brighton, BN1 8AR, or email james.lancaster@theargus.co.uk

## Isn't it about time you checked out Business?

Free in every Tuesday's edition of The Argus  
**01273 544785**

[nikki.sitwell@theargus.co.uk](mailto:nikki.sitwell@theargus.co.uk)

