

# The bottom line



Sarah Ogden,  
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**M**ORE and more companies are asking our advice about social media – what it is, how they use it and whether they should get involved.

Social media can be defined as people publishing. It puts the power of the internet right into the hands of the people who are using it, enabling you to interact, comment and publish your thoughts and views on any subject under the sun.

Imagine publishing an article in this paper and having letters to the editor commenting on your article within minutes.

It has always been said that the pen is mightier than the sword and social media is quickly proving this to be the case. It is establishing itself as a vital resource in shaping our decisions and informing our opinions. It links people with information, services, and each other.

For those unfamiliar with the digital landscape, social media such as blogs, podcasts and social networks can be intimidating. While initial ventures into this online territory can be unnerving, smaller companies actually have the advantage over enterprises.

How can this be? Well, the larger companies are bound by their corporate image. Their contributions to the social media conversation are often subjected to the layers of bureaucracy needed to approve a comment before it is posted. This means any genuine contribution can get lost by the time it is posted online.

This is where small businesses have the edge.

Free from the red tape of their counterparts, they are often fast enough and responsive enough to actually engage in online conversations as they happen. And unlike the huge multinationals with staff around the globe and a shared culture and mindset, here a few small differences in opinion are not an issue.

**I**n Brighton, many small businesses are actively involved in social media, Midnight included. We have a thriving blogging community (check out [brightonbloggers.co.uk](http://brightonbloggers.co.uk)) and it is not unusual to stumble across Brighton-based businesses on LinkedIn, a business social networking site. Others, like Midnight and clothing shop Yoma, even have their own MySpace profiles.

Social media provides small businesses with a cost-effective way to build their credentials and reach new people – both clients and potential employees. There is no hard and fast rule about what you have to talk about. It could be a piece of industry news, an account of internal processes or simply your personal musings.

It is important though to assess which social media channel or channels feel right for you. Experiment with the options.

Unlike the large corporates, nobody will hold it against you if you decide podcasting wasn't really your thing after all.

But be warned. While the tenets of social media are openness, integrity, involvement and sharing, out there in cyberspace everyone can hear you!

## More prizes and more sponsors unveiled at launch

by ANDY DICKENSON

PICTURE: JIM HOLDEN

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FIVE new sponsors and three new awards were announced at the official launch of the Brighton and Hove Business Awards.

Traders, celebrities and community leaders attended the lavish party at Komedia in Gardner Street, Brighton, last Wednesday.

Now in their fourth year, the BAHBAs have become firmly established and recognised for their ability to celebrate the diversity of the city, as well as those companies, organisations and individuals helping to put it on the map.

Representatives from each of the new sponsors – Legal & General, Brighton and Hove City Teaching Primary Care Trust, Career Development Group, First Capital Connect and Hudson & Bridges – attended the launch.

Organiser Caraline Brown said: "The city has responded magnificently to this award scheme.

"The BAHBAs are certainly going from strength to strength and I am delighted to welcome so many new sponsors.

"I am also grateful to our existing sponsors for continuing to fly the flag for the city – The Argus, NCP, University of Brighton, Nixon McInnes, Charterhouse Commercial Finance PLC, Brighton and Hove City Council and of course, Brighton and Hove Life magazine.

"Without our sponsors we would not have an award scheme and we would like to thank them for their ongoing support."

There are three new categories for 2007:

- The Employer Engagement Award, seeking the city's best work experience schemes and sponsored by the Career Development Group;

- The Business in the Community Award, which will identify those city businesses doing most to



**PARTY TIME:** Judges Clare Rogers, Marcella Whittingdale and Sue Addis at the BAHBAs launch at Komedia

# Awards kick off in style

help young people reach their potential, sponsored by Legal & General;

- The Healthiest Workplace Award, sponsored by Brighton and Hove Teaching PCT, to recognise companies which place a healthy working environment high on their business agenda.

Last year's winners included Brighton Fringe Festival, PETS,

The Joogleberry Playhouse and Gresham Blake.

Darren Brown, the 23-year-old managing director of Cybertrak Software Ltd was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year, while Sue Addis from Donatellos was named Outstanding Brightonian.

This year's awards will once again be staged in the Oxford

Room of the Hilton Brighton Metropole on Thursday, September 20.

To enter the awards is free. Just visit [www.bahba.org.uk](http://www.bahba.org.uk) for details about each category and what the judges will be looking for.

The closing date for nominations is July 12.

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## events

MARC KOSKA, chief executive of Star Syringe, in Pippingford near Forest Row, will be one of the guest speakers at the launch of this year's Sussex Business Awards.

Mr Koska won three awards last year – Business Person of the Year, Innovation in Business, and International Business of the Year. He will be joined on stage by Charita Jones, owner of Momma Cherri's restaurant in Little East Street, Brighton, last year's Entrepreneur of the Year.

She said: "Being named Entrepreneur of the Year at the Sussex Business Awards has been one of my major highlights since opening the restaurant six years ago.

"For our hard work to be honoured by other established business people has given us the strength and the inner pride to continue."

Details of categories for the awards will be given at the launch event which is free to Sussex-based businesses from all sectors.

The launch is at the De Vere Grand Hotel in King's Road, Brighton, next Tuesday from 6.30pm. Places are limited. To book, visit [www.sussex-business-awards.co.uk](http://www.sussex-business-awards.co.uk) or call the awards office on **01273 207155**.

Guests will get the chance to put questions to previous winners and judges and the Brighton and Hove (Actually) Gay Men's Chorus will provide the entertainment.

**BRIGHTON Housing Trust, provider of services for homeless and vulnerable men and women in Sussex, has launched a training programme for workers in the housing and support sectors.**

**Between the beginning of May 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 ranges from £30 to £75 for a full day course.**

**Co-ordinator Amy Hines 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](http://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 criss-crossing 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 as well as sustainable products and services. We are calling on local businesses and organisations to lend their support to help make this event a success."

Companies that are interested in taking part in the fair, which takes place on Saturday, June 23, should contact Melanie Laurie on **0845 0264636**.

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](mailto:james.lancaster@theargus.co.uk)

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

Free in every Tuesday's edition of The Argus

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