

The bottom line

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Motivation is key to better performance

TIMES are tough but you are managing to survive and not lose any business, even if you are not winning too much new work.

However, you are working harder and longer and your margins are tighter. As a result, you are earning less money.

Does this sound like a familiar story?

It happens to be true for most of the smaller and medium-sized businesses in Sussex but, considering we are in the middle of a recession, it is probably better than most businesses thought they would be doing.

The big question facing many companies is: "How do we keep our staff motivated?"

We want them to work harder, be more focused and more productive, but there is no money in the kitty to pay them any more.

Indeed, the reality is that you should probably be asking your employees to take a pay cut.

There are a few simple rules you should follow to help your staff and your business through this period.

Firstly, be clear what your targets are and don't make them unrealistic.

Anyone forecasting significant growth at the moment, other than a few niche exceptions, is going to be disappointed so do not plan to fail.

Set your business a realistic budget, which you have a chance of achieving.

This should include any cost cutting measures or cutbacks you need to make, and make sure that you, the boss, are included.

You must lead by example.

Secondly, communicate the plan to all your employees. Get them on your side and ask for their input and suggestions.

It is amazing how committed most people will be if they feel part of the team and understand what is going on within the business.

Praise success and don't continually criticise "understandable" failure.

Highlight the examples of instances where strategies, processes and campaigns have worked.

Your positive stance in the jaws of adversity will help your employees and motivate them to do better.

Make sure you offer continual feedback and recognise any extra effort put in by your employees. A simple "thank you", even when times are tough, will be appreciated.

There is a balance between the carrot and the stick but, during difficult trading periods, leadership and communication are vital.

If you do your job properly, your staff will remain motivated and will perform better at theirs.

● For more information on EMC's full range of services, call Mr Askaroff on 01323 410144.

'Green industry is key to city's fast recovery'

BRIGHTON and Hove must move on from its reliance on the professional services industry when the economy begins to recover, business leaders have said.

About 30% of the city's workforce is employed in the sector, with thousands of people at Legal & General's offices in Hove and Amex in Brighton as well as hundreds of others employed at smaller firms.

Tony Mernagh, chief executive of the Brighton and Hove Business Forum, will outline the need to develop other industries at tonight's State Of The City event, an annual meeting where business leaders outline their future economic vision for the city.

Mr Mernagh said: "The recession has had an impact but instead of concentrating on that we must start preparing for the upturn.

"Business and financial services across Britain are not going to generate the sort of income, jobs and growth that we have seen in the past. We need to think about what we are going to replace it with.

"The big white hope is the environmental industries, such as low-carbon transport and renewable energy."

Mr Mernagh warned that Britain is already playing catch-up with parts of Europe, such as Germany and France, which have been investing in green technology for many years.

He said: "In Brighton, we are not just competing with other parts of Britain but other parts of the world. We should explore whether the creative industries could start taking up some of the slack, too."

The State Of The City event will also feature a question and answer session with experts including Gilly Bartrip, area director for Sussex at the South East England Development Agency, Phil Jones, managing director of Wired Sussex, and Julie Stanford, president of the Brighton and Hove Chamber of Commerce.

The event is free to attend and takes place tonight at the University of Brighton's Sallis Benney Theatre in Grand Parade, Brighton, from 5.45pm to 9pm.

appointments

New role under construction

EXPERIENCE:
Joanne Walker



BRIGHTON-BASED construction company Morgan Ashurst has appointed Joanne Walker as supply chain manager for the South.

Joanne will be responsible for managing the company's sub-contractor supply chain for Morgan Ashurst's southern offices, including the Brighton office in Dyke Road Drive.

Joanne, 34, began her career as a trainee estimator and joins Morgan Ashurst from Mansell Construction Services, where she worked as a senior procurement surveyor.

She brings 14 years' experience to her new role and has a degree in construction management.

Joanne said: "I'm really pleased to have joined Morgan Ashurst. It is one of the biggest construction companies in Britain and has a number of exciting projects, particularly in the education and healthcare markets."

Mental health highlighted in diversity group seminar

EMPLOYERS can avoid a repeat of a recent court case which cost a council millions of pounds by attending a mental health seminar.

Last week, Cheltenham Borough Council lost a £1 million claim against an employee, who withheld a history of depressive illnesses.

The Brighton and Hove LEADER (Local Employers Acting on Diversity, Equality and Race) has organised the seminar to help people avoid similar situations.

The event will bring employers together with legal experts and specialists in mental health. It aims to help employers

work through the practical difficulties surrounding mental health issues, such as supporting staff through illnesses, protecting individuals from discrimination and helping staff stay well.

LEADER chairman Claire Mitchell said: "The most striking thing about last week's court case is that Cheltenham Borough Council admitted it probably wouldn't have employed the woman if it knew she had a history of mental illness.

"In a society where one in four people suffer from mental ill health at some point in their lives, this attitude is causing a ridiculous waste of talent.

"But it is difficult for employers, too, especially smaller businesses, which don't have the resources for HR professionals. LEADER workshops bring experts and employers together to provide an opportunity to work out how to get the best out of your employees as well as staying out of court."

The event takes place on July 2 at the A4e offices at Lyndean House, 43-46 Queens Road, Brighton, from 3.45 to 6pm.

Entry is free to LEADER members and costs £15 for non-members.

For more information, email claire.mitchell@engagesolutions.org.uk.

events

BUSINESSES are being invited to take part in the Crawley Business Debate, organised by Crawley Borough Council.

The event will allow people to discuss the issues that matter to them and put questions to the council leader and other prominent local business people.

It takes place at Virgin Atlantic's headquarters at The Base, Fleming Way, tomorrow, from 5pm.

Places are limited and prior registration is essential. Anyone interested should register online at www.crawley.gov.uk/business or call 01293 438704.

THE Children's Mutual is inviting independent financial advisers to a free seminar to help them find out more about Child Trust Funds (CTFs).

The event will cover how CTFS work, who is eligible and how they can help their clients meet the growing costs as their children become young adults.

It takes place from 10am tomorrow at the Cisswood House Hotel in Sandygate Lane, Lower Beeding, Horsham.

To reserve a free a place on the workshop, email roadshow@thechildrensmutual.co.uk.

A SPEED networking event is being held, with some of the money raised going to charity.

The event is being held on Thursday at the Hilton Brighton Metropole in King's Road at 6pm.

It costs £14 plus VAT, with £1 being donated to The Argus Appeal, which helps various good causes across Sussex.

For more details about the event, visit www.sussexbusinessbureau.co.uk or call 01273 447111.

THE Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex Branch of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) will welcome Judy Stokes as guest speaker at its next meeting.

Judy will be giving a presentation about business information system InfoTrace.

The meeting takes place on Thursday at the new Crawley library in Southgate Avenue, Crawley, from 6.30pm.

It costs £10 per person and

pre-booking is essential. Non FSB members are welcome to the event.

For more information call Jane or Sharon on 01403 734257.

SUPPORT organisation Business Link is running a free quality management workshop for businesses aiming to win contracts related to the 2012 London Olympics.

More than 50% of the contracts have been given to small and medium-sized businesses but to compete, a business must be able to demonstrate its ability to deliver services and products to consistently high standards.

To do this it will need to have a quality management statement or policy in place.

The workshop is taking place on July 1 at Brighton Racecourse.

For more information, call Business Link on 0845 6009006 or email info@businesslinksoutheast.co.uk.

HOVE business association has organised a guided tour of industrial museum The British

Engineerium, in Hove, which is currently undergoing restoration.

The event on July 2 is open members and their guests, although places are limited.

To book a place on the tour, call Jill Humphrey on 01273 748948 or email events@hovebiz.com.

A DAY-LONG training workshop has been organised for HR professionals and managers, titled Effective Performance Management.

The course will explain how to manage and assess the performance of employees and techniques for ensuring organisational expectations are met.

Case studies will be used to illustrate the situations covered and allow full participation for all delegates.

The workshop costs £175, plus VAT, per place and includes notes, lunch and refreshments. It runs on July 9 at Innovis House in Crawley, from 9.30am to 3.45pm.

To book a place at the workshop, call Rachel Hopkins on 01293 861214.