

MAKE YOUR BUSINESS VISIBLE...

Hiring new staff can be a minefield. Louise Jenner shares her thoughts and recommendations
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What can a good accountant do for your business? James Twigger reviews the benefits of employing a professional
[See Below](#)

Home working has become the norm. Dean Kelly explains how to ensure your ICT is up to the task
[See Below](#)

Marketing should be seen as an investment not a cost. Simon Dolley tells us why
[See Below](#)

Nov 2020 Edition



Ask the Editor

Welcome to issue 6 of South Devon Biz covering the issues important to South Devon businesses. If you have a topic or question you would like us to cover in the next issue please do send me an email to:

Maureen

maureen@astralitybusinessservices.co.uk

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Meet the Editor

I moved to Torquay in December 2019 to set up my business Astrality Business Services. I previously held the position of CEO of Hampshire Chamber of Commerce responsible for a membership of over 1700 businesses. Prior to this, I spent 15 years in banking the latter part within business lending.

The biggest challenge

Starting a business in an area knowing nobody. A significant part of the business was to be in business event management, which has been hard hit by Covid. The other focus, business planning has also seen a decrease in demand with Government grants and loans available without submitting the normal plans & strategies.

How has this been overcome?

By being very flexible, focusing more on the marketing areas of work for the time being as well as being present at online events. This has given me a network of contacts who refer to me, and to whom I am confident referring. Face to face networking will always be the preference but at the moment, everyone needs to embrace the online options.

Integrating into Torbay

Being known is vital for any business. I have

joined several networking groups and from that have been invited onto the Steering Group for the new **Torbay Business & Chambers Network**. Together with my partner, I am also helping to run the weekly **#torbayhour** on Twitter linking in with **Riviera FM** and of course publishing this newsletter along with **Q** from **QballCreative (Q-Ball Media Group)**

Advice for others

Planning is key, you don't go on a car journey without a map or Satnav so do not start or continue your business journey without one either. Don't be afraid to outsource. The insight and advice this can bring into your business is invaluable and leaves you to focus on gaining and delivering business. Thirdly collaborate

When not working

In normal times, I will be regularly found at a racecourse anywhere in the UK and have a small share in two racehorses at the moment. Musical theatre is also a favourite and looking forward to the times we can freely attend shows again.

In the current times, I am making the most of the opportunities to improve my photography skills and am in the process of setting up an Etsy shop for mounted prints.



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Hiring the right person.

When interviewing, we are often so focused on hiring someone who can do the job really well that we overlook 2 vitally important traits that will decide whether the person we hire is actually going to be right for the job, long-term.

Who are you replacing?

You may be trying to replace someone brilliant or you may have let someone go who caused you issues. Of course, you may be recruiting for the first time or expanding and creating new jobs. Exciting times for any business but also fraught with danger.

So, it's easy to get focused on 'competency' and yes, it is important that you hire someone who is capable of doing a good job.

However, let's reflect on that situation where you are replacing someone who caused issues. These people often can be described as 'competent.' That's not what caused the problems. Issues around competency can be easily rectified with training. The problems that cause you to let someone go are more often behavioural issues, aren't they?

Someone brilliant at the actual job but who is unreliable can cause numerous problems and trust issues with colleagues and customers alike and can damage your hard-won, professional reputation.

Likewise someone you worked with who was reliable and competent but who rubbed people up the wrong way was also bad for business.

If you've been managing people for a while, you're bound to have had these experiences and the last thing you want to do is hire someone else who will cause you even more aggravation.

Sub-consciously we try to filter out these problems but consciously we are still looking for the person who can do the job best. We focus on our list of technical questions and check candidates' qualifications but decisions based on this criteria alone are more likely to result in hiring mistakes!

Why? Well, most candidates apply for jobs they know they can do. (Someone might try and wing it but they are rare and can be quickly found out.)

Most candidates apply for jobs they know they can do.

Say you interview six candidates. Five out of six are competent. Four out of five have similar qualifications and comparable experience. How will you choose who to hire?

My belief is that you will hire the one who managed to demonstrate that they are both 'reliable' and 'likeable.' More than likely, it will feel like a hunch.

You will say, "My gut says we should go with Sarah" or "I feel like Tom would be

the best fit." Hopefully, you're right and everyone lives happily ever after.

But, given that costly hiring mistakes still happen, it's a gamble. So, what can you do better when you're wearing your interviewer's hat?

2 Vital Traits

My suggestion is simply that we ask as much about 'reliability' and 'behaviour' as we do about 'competency.'

When you can judge candidates fairly on these two vital traits as well as on their competency, you will sky-rocket your chances of hiring a superstar. Someone does the job brilliantly, who is super reliable and who fits in and helps your business flourish.

Successful Teams

Take a moment to think about the successful teams that you worked with in the past. The ones where the members are loyal and long-serving. They all work to their strengths and they aren't shy of putting in extra effort when needed. They'll move mountains for that company.

Now you know how to hire those people too! Recruit for reliability and like-ability as well as for capability.

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Most services can also be provided remotely if you are based outside of South Devon.



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Is your ICT Effective for Home Working?

"With more of us working from home, it is important to understand what ICT challenges need to be considered"

I launched my business in the May 2020, yes in the middle of lockdown and I knew that a large amount of my time would be "working from home". I wanted to ensure that the way I worked and the way the business operated was both productive and secure.

I first took into consideration my home internet connection and checked on the download and upload speeds. There are a number of free services you can search for on Google but one I've always found accurate is <https://www.broadband-speedchecker.co.uk/>.

Do not be surprised that the actual speeds you get are not as much as your plan suggests. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) always market broadband plans at the maximum the service will provide.

I was conscious that my company message was offering "sustainable and paper-light" business solutions and needed to know that we were working this way.

I decided on various cloud-based services I wanted to run such as Microsoft 365, Salesforce CRM (customer relationship management) and video conferencing services like Zoom. So, it was vital the broadband connection could cope with these.

I knew I would expand soon to employ staff and that adding a new user to my Microsoft account was needed so I opted for Microsoft 365 Business Professional. This ensured I could integrate with my domain and be able to view my team's diary and work collaboratively with them on platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

Cloud computing services like these do require a fair amount of your internet bandwidth and processing power so advice should always be sought from your IT Support Provider.

Having a strong fibre internet connection also led to the conclusion that if I were to employ staff, that also worked from home, I should consider installing a dedicated internet link. The company would pay for this and have it managed by a 3rd party provider. Staff members will then feel valued and not feel obligated to work on company projects on their own internet connection that they pay for. This also ensures they can work productively, and company data remains secure and GDPR compliant.

I would recommend reviewing the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) website. There are several checklists to work through that will help you mitigate risk to data protection and use of employees' own devices. <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/working-from-home/>

Business communications is also key, and this high level of internet connectivity meant I could roll out a hosted business telephone service that resides in the

cloud. This was great news as I could promote the business with a specific geographic number, we could transfer calls between staff, no matter where they are located, have "on hold music", track my business call usage in real time via a web portal and have a fixed cost per month, with minimal capital outlay.

I have found cloud telephone services enable a business to be very agile and adapt to change quickly. One example could be that if, you had the service installed in your office with staff having either a desk handset or the softphone app installed on a PC or laptop then they would simply pick the system up and take it home with them. This level of business continuity could be vital for your business' survival should you be forced to work from home if future pandemic restrictions dictate this.

The business world is now seeing a rapid digital transformation age with IT a major factor in your budget planning. This planning could focus on business resilience and the impact a cyber attack may have on your business. Consideration should always be given to how and where your company data is stored. Do you back up your data and if so where? There are many options to explore and it is always advisable to speak with an IT professional to understand what is most important to you and a solution that meets your budget.

For more information:
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Marketing should be an Investment not a Cost

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Marketing



Marketing should be an investment not a cost

Have you ever heard someone say "I can't afford to do marketing at the moment"?
Is that true? If they feel they don't have enough money in their business, can they afford not to do marketing?

What they actually mean is that they can't afford to waste money on marketing. But who can?

Marketing spend should be justified and it should be an investment not a cost. It doesn't matter whether you are spending £5 or £5million (chance would be a fine thing), you should be receiving that back and much more.

So the question is, how do you make sure that you spend your money wisely?

Set goals

Make sure you have goals in place, without something to judge your success by, you will never know if you are achieving them and/or spending your money wisely.

Determine your target audience

Not many people will have something which is targeted at the whole population. Think about age, sex (try not think about this all the time!), social status, location, interests, income, etc. This will go a long way to determining the next two factors.

Work out your message

Think carefully about wording, imagery (whether graphic, photographic or video) and how this is all presented. What is your message and what are you trying to get someone to do?

Use the right media platforms

Find the right platform for your product, audience and what works for you. TV, Newspapers, Billboards, Radio, websites, apps, email, social media...all work differently. Here is just one example...

Case Study - Email Marketing

Lots of people think that email marketing is dead (GDPR, rather than killing email marketing has meant that it means you only email to the converted) but for some industries it can be the most effective. Retail businesses are one of those.

Create your mailing list. Make sure you have an opt in option on your ecommerce website, sign up forms, etc.
Run competitions to gather emails and include an opt in option.

Regularly cleanse the database, removing people who never open the emails, or old addresses, etc., this means you are only sending to those who might convert. Also don't worry if some people unsubscribe.

You should segment the mailing list by location, interests, demographic, etc. This enables you to target and/or vary your emails according to who you are sending to, you can even send the same offer to different people with different messages.

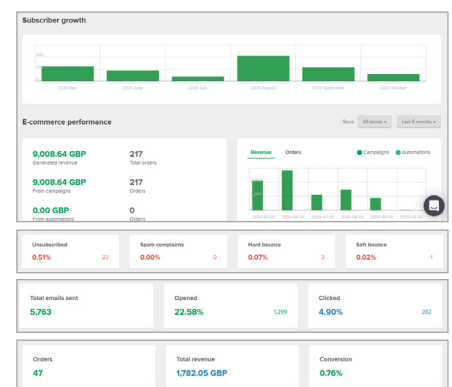
Make sure you connect your email marketing with your website, Facebook, etc so that it can track exactly what people do and then use the email tracking information to learn what works best and then adapt and improve your activities.

You will know

- how many open the email
- how many click through
- where they click in the email
- what they then do – did they fill in the form? Did they buy anything, if yes what did they buy and how much did spend?
- who unsubscribed, classed it as spam, had the email bounce, etc

Send emails with offers people can only get by email so that they feel like "premium" clients and are more likely to stay on your mailing list and act on it.

Plan and adapt like the above and then you should find that marketing is definitely an Investment not a Cost!



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Your brand is what other people talk about when you're not in the room

we create brands that work
and win business...

