

ISSBA

How important are small businesses to the local community?

James Davey, chairman of Ipswich and Suffolk Small Business Association (ISSBA), looks at why small businesses are important to the local community.



ISSBA is passionate about supporting small to medium-sized businesses in the county. Over the past 28 years we have seen many businesses flourish from small beginnings to becoming leaders in their field and we should be proud that Suffolk supports such entrepreneurs.

Whilst small businesses may not generate as much money as large organisations, they are still a critical component of and major contributor to the strength of local economies. Small businesses present new employment opportunities and can grow into larger, more profitable organisations.

Small businesses can contribute to local economies by bringing growth and innovation to the community in which the business is located and helping to stimulate economic growth by providing employment opportunities. Small businesses tend to attract talent who invent new products or implement new solutions for existing ideas. This allows larger businesses to benefit as many large corporations depend on small businesses for the completion of various business functions through outsourcing.

Adaptability to Changing Climates

Many small businesses also possess the ability to respond and adapt quickly to changing economic climates. This is due to the fact that small businesses are often very customer-oriented. Many local customers will remain loyal to their favourite small businesses in the midst of an economic downturn. This loyalty means that small businesses are often able to stay afloat during tough times, which can further strengthen local economies.

Future Growth

Small businesses do not always stay small. Businesses that grow into large businesses often remain in the community in which the business was first established. Also many micro businesses have grown to become major players in the national and international marketplace. Many computer-industry leaders began as "tinkerers," working at home. Microsoft is a prime example of how a small business idea can change the world.

If you are a small business, or thinking of starting a business, you are in a great county to succeed. Businesses with a local focus have the advantage of cultivating a loyal customer base and with Suffolk bursting with small businesses, my message is: let's all support them where we can.

■ For details how to join ISSBA and for information on all future networking events www.issba.co.uk.

ISSBA
 IPSWICH & SUFFOLK
 SMALL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Financially speaking



Celebrating excellence

By Andrew Strickland,
 partner at Scrutton Bland

The universities of Britain are an enormous success story: the world rankings of universities show a clear dominance of institutions in the USA and in this country. The quality of the scholarship, the teaching and the research means that there are a great many universities in Britain of world renown.

Higher Education is being seen increasingly as an English language experience. Those who do a first degree in a language other than English will often seek to complete their studies with an advanced degree delivered in English.

This results in a very competitive world market for international students. This is a market in which British universities excel, despite strong, impressively resourced, competition from the USA, Canada and Australia. We are able to attract such students, and the fee income that comes with them, due to the stellar academic qualities of our universities.

Our thoughts may focus on Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College and one or two other extremely high ranking universities. However the strength of the British universities is not focussed on a very small number of institutions; it is present in breadth throughout our Higher Educational system. Despite severe resource constraints when compared with many other countries, they deliver the highest quality academic scholarship on a world scale. As well as being able to take pride in our own universities, we should

pause and reflect on the high quality of the universities which have developed in many countries which we have strongly influenced. Part of the way in which Britain has shaped the modern world has been in the quality of the educational legacy: this has been a part of the cultural heritage that we have left behind, from Virginia, where we first stepped ashore in North America, to Hong Kong, our final bastion in Asia.

Other very significant success stories in our educational system are the very fine sixth form colleges which take learners through their A levels. Sixth form colleges provide enormous choice, normally to 1,800 or more students, on their two-year courses. They generally demonstrate very significant success in the numbers taught, the A level grades achieved in absolute terms and the relative value added to the GCSE scores.

There are many people whose lives are more complex than a path straight through school to university. Further Education colleges often provide further opportunities to progress through the educational system. They do this by running courses which provide access to Higher Education for those who left school at 16. There are many people who decide, at a later stage, that they wish to return to education. Further Education colleges offer this priceless opportunity to them, for the benefit of all of us.

Vocational training is often seen as the Cinderella of education in this country.

This may be due to intellectual snobbery or for other, more complex reasons rooted in our layered society. This view needs to change, regardless of the reasons for it. Training in practical, vocational skills is just as important as any other form of education of training and it is deserving of rather better resources than are currently enjoyed. Further Education colleges provide such training very successfully, and to extremely high standards, despite significant resource constraints.

Education really matters: the pace of change in our economy means that we all have to consider whether our education and training remains relevant. Lifelong learning is a living concept and is far more than a sterile slogan: it reflects a reality that none of us can ever become complacent with our knowledge and skills. We all have to recognise the need to break with the old and to embrace the new in this rapidly changing world of ours.

At Scrutton Bland we are very pleased to include amongst our clients five Higher Education institutions, five sixth form colleges and 14 Further Education colleges, stretching from Peterborough to Kent.

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