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MARKETING

NEXT EVENT | 5:00PM
Thursday 5th December 2019

How's your 2020 vision looking?

We're a marketing agency that helps tell your brand story through design, digital and PR.

**LET'S FORM AN
ALLIANCE** *in 2020*

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Notes from our chairman

As the year comes to a close can I thank everyone who has organised and attended our events over the last 12 months. There is one more to go with our Christmas meeting planning in full swing. It should be an excellent end to our year with lots of networking, some team building with balloons (the mind boggles) and festive entertainment provided by Torfaen Voices Choir.

Many thanks to Alliance Marketing Agency for their kind sponsorship. Alliance will be helping us all with ideas on how to raise the profile of your business and build your brand.

The New Year's calendar of events starts with a free event at Pages Fish and Chip Restaurant in Cwmbran on the 30th January 2020 which is open to any business who wants to join or renew membership. It's normally very well attended so get this date booked in your diary.

We have had some excellent events this year including an away fixture in Ebbw Vale to meet our business neighbours, a trip to the ice-cream van in the summer, some entertaining and informative speakers and of course a lot of networking so thank you all for being involved. Join, re-join and spread the word as next year promises more innovation, more networking and more chances to promote your business.



Ashley Harkus

Chairman, Torfaen Business Voice



All of our quarterly Torfaen Business voice events are held at Greenmeadow Golf and Country Club, Cwmbran

Our next event

Our Christmas meeting is on **Thursday 5th December, 5pm Greenmeadow Golf Club**, and we are very pleased to announce that Alliance Marketing Agency are sponsors and host for this event.

Based in Newport, Alliance are one of South East Wales' leading marketing agencies, helping businesses tell their brand story through award-winning design, digital and PR services.

During the evening's short presentation, Alliance will provide useful, easy-to-follow advice on how local businesses can kick-start their own marketing efforts in readiness for 2020.

Following this presentation will be a few rounds of facilitated networking, some team building fun and entertainment from The Torfaen Voices Choir.

Members are entitled to 2 free places at this event, so make sure you bring along a colleague, client or business contact so that we can provide each other with valuable connections for our businesses.

Members of Torfaen Business Voice can also bring along a Pop Up banner – please indicate if you are bringing yours on the electronic booking form.

Book Your Place:

<http://bit.ly/tbv-dec-2019>

Dates for your diary

30/01/20 - TBV Membership Recruitment Event - 5:00pm - Pages Fish & Chips, Cwmbran

19/03/20 - Torfaen Business Voice - 5:00pm

18/06/20 - Torfaen Business Voice - 5:00pm

17/09/20 - Torfaen Business Voice - 5:00pm

03/12/20 - Torfaen Business Voice - 5:00pm

IN THIS EDITION:

PAGE 3

Are you using Google My Business?

PAGE 5

How to get great press on a budget

PAGE 6

What is reputation management?

Are you using Google My Business?

Google My Business (GMB) has been available for companies to use FREE of charge for over five years but nearly 40% of SME's (small medium sized enterprises) still don't use it and many of those that do are not making full use of it.

Gareth Waters, co-director of Newport based Alliance Marketing and board member of Torfaen Business Voice explains why in his opinion this is an oversight by local businesses, and what you can do to make the most of this fantastic tool to help visitors find your company information when they are searching online for local businesses like yours.

To throw in another statistic that will hopefully attract your attention and encourage you to read on, Google recently announced that Google My Business was used for over three billion direct connections (globally) between customers and businesses per month as well as three million bookings!

Do You Know What Google My Business is?

In short, it's a FREE service provided by the most popular search engine in the world that helps local businesses showcase who they are and what they do on Google.

Google uses location to provide users with the best possible experience. It makes searching and discovering the information they desire very fast and efficient.

Google My Business (GMB) is very relevant for local searches so that, this is the important part, when someone in your locality is looking for the products and services you provide, they will see your company information on both Google and Google maps.

Your company listing will either appear when they search for you directly or when generally searching for the products or services you provide.

Are Your Posting on Your GMB Profile Regularly?

Just under your business name on your GMB profile you will see a feature where posts you have uploaded to your account will appear. They are a bit like mini blog posts and can be used to promote special offers, events, products. It's very easy to post here and Google will even show you examples from your competitors. Add photos or a video to your post – this will help it to stand out and capture visitors attention.

Is Your GMB Listing Up to Date?

This might appear obvious but is all the information contained in your GMB listing up to date? Check that information including business name, contact details, opening hours, business categories and product/services

is accurate and relevant.

Are you using a local telephone number – we recommend you do this.

Are the categories you are using the most appropriate for your business. Have you prioritised them in order of importance? Are they specific to what you do? Don't try to list too many as this can cause confusion.

Be Specific and Add Detailed Information About Your Products and Services

GMB has a really useful function that allows you to add individual products and services to your GMB profile. This listing includes the ability to upload individual photos and descriptions for each product you sell.

Restaurants can even add individual dishes from their menu. The options available to you are comprehensive and we thoroughly recommend you make the most of them.

This also helps you make your business more visible and if you update these on a regular basis it will again help improve the prominence of your listing.

Pictures Will Help Your Profile Stand Out

Most of us will naturally look at a picture before we read any content. By using pictures you can make an immediate impact with visitors to your GMB profile and there is lots of research that tells us that businesses with photos can expect to receive approximately 35% more click throughs than those without.

60% of consumers say that local search results with good images capture their attention. Upload photos of your office (interior and exterior), of your team, products, events etc.

Wear Your Local Favourite Badge with Honour

It was recently announced by Google that the top 5% of local businesses will be awarded with a 'Local Favourite' badge. To make sure you maximise your chances of achieving this and gaining the increased visibility, you should invest time your time and efforts into ensuring your GMB profile is complete, kept up to date and you are using as many of its functions as possible.

Reviews

Please don't be afraid to ask your customers to leave reviews about your business on your GMB profile. Reviews are not only a fantastic way to gain the confidence of prospects who are in the market or looking

for the products and services you provide but they will also help where you appear in local search results. Remember to reply to every review you receive be it good or bad as it demonstrates to others that you care about your customers.

The more 5 star reviews you gain the more click throughs you will receive as they are prominently displayed on your profile.

Just in case you are still questioning the importance of reviews, bear in mind that 80% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations and a third of customers said they judged a business based on how they responded to a review.

Keep Ahead of Your Competition By Keeping Up to Date With New GMB Functions

GMB is always evolving and Google are always adding new features for you to take advantage of. Don't be afraid to try the new features and you can also do your own research to find out what is planned for the future.

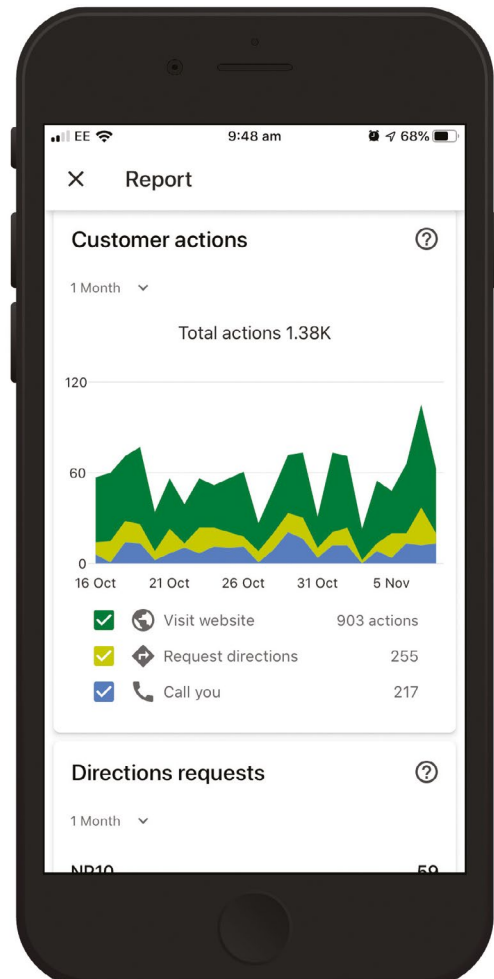
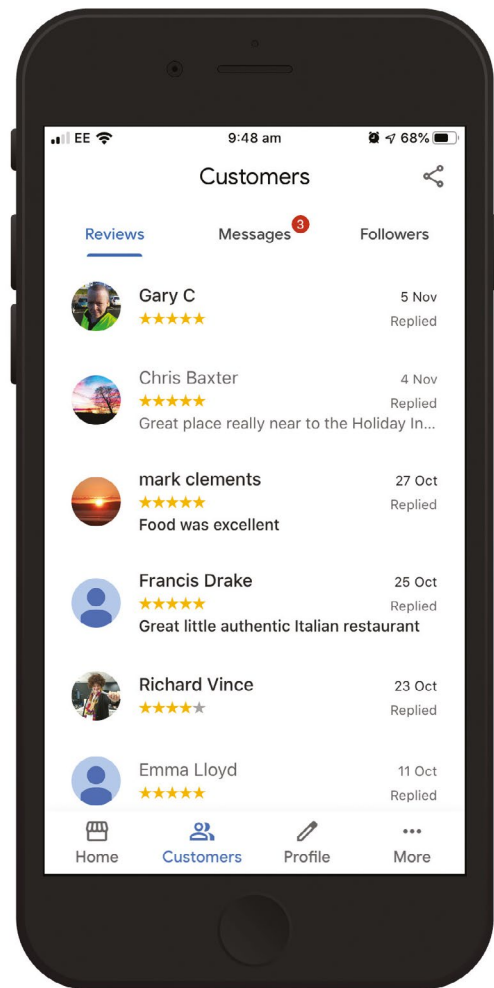
Google Questions and Answers

As the name suggests, this is a question and answer feature on your listing that provides visitors with a chance to ask questions.

This is also a great opportunity for additional exposure, and you can add your own questions and answers thereby enabling you to add more relevant content to assist your prominence in local searches!

Not many companies check the Q&A section on their GMB listing which is a mistake because anyone can answer questions and provide all sorts of information which might not be accurate or what you want to communicate to potential customers!!! Check your Q&A section regularly and try to provide prompt and accurate replies to questions.

So there we have it. We hope that this post has convinced you of the value GMB could have for your business. The only investment you need to make is time and the benefits could be significant.



How to get great press on a small budget: 4 simple steps

Invest in great imagery

Invest in a set of professionally taken photos, both of yourself and of your product. They'll be an invaluable, long-term asset. You can use them in so many places including your website, social media channels, on printed materials, presentations and, importantly they'll help you get excellent press. High-quality photos mean journalists can allocate more space for your article, meaning more coverage for your business!

Learn to write a decent press release

If you want a chance of being published by authoritative media, including the local/regional and specific or niche press titles, you need to study and learn how news stories work.

Include a good headline that's relevant to the readership. The story needs to be written in the third person. You'll also want to include a quote, or quotes, from the business owner - you! This might feel strange, but it's how the article will be published, so save the journalist a job.

Finally, include a link to your site and some kind of editorial justification for journalists to leave it in – for example a discount for readers or an upcoming event.

Find reader angles

Consider the readership. As a start-up or small business, your story might simply be that you've launched, but already there will be a range of interested parties. People in your area may be interested to know of a new business launching near them, so include local papers and radio channels on your distribution list.

A tip: Universities and colleges love to hear about successful alumni, and their sites are authoritative and a great place to be published. Tweak your release so it's relevant to each readership, and send it along with a high quality photo or two.

Keep going

Keep thinking of what those same audiences might like to know next. Perhaps there are exciting things happening with your company. Maybe a celebrity tried your product and gave amazing feedback, or an employee or customer did something newsworthy or went viral on social media. Maybe you can start to create stories, by carrying out surveys or preparing infographics which are useful and relevant to your market. Each time, keep thinking of new audiences that could be interested – with a great story your business could gain national press attention.

Entering Awards – Business Vanity or Sanity?

What does entering and hopefully winning awards mean for our business? Is it just for vanity or does it make good business sense? Laura Waters, co-director of Solar Buddies provides her thoughts.

We have been fortunate to win a few awards since we launched Solar Buddies in 2011. Naturally, we are incredibly proud of these achievements and are currently still celebrating after finding out that Kelli, my business partner has been named as a finalist in the 2019 NatWest Everywoman Awards.

Well-deserved recognition and appreciation of your hard work and how you have made a difference be it individually or as a business. There are many of us who every day strive to do our best for our customers. We are all motivated and have a passion for what we do. Winning or being shortlisted for awards is confirmation or perhaps could be seen as a seal of approval from the award judges who are often industry experts or your customers.

Stand out from your competitors

In such a competitive world, winning or even being shortlisted can help you stand out from the crowd. It makes you unique amongst your competitors.

We all do business in a hugely competitive world where our potential clients and customers face a difficult decision about who to buy from. There is undoubtedly so much choice out there and having an industry recognised award can help them decide who to do business with.

An opportunity to thank those you work with

If you win an award, why not take the opportunity to thank your colleagues for their efforts? The words 'thank you' are a great motivator as everyone in an organisation likes to feel valued.

Attracting new employees

In terms of attracting new employees, awards can be very useful as they send out a clear message to potential employees, that yours is a great business to work for. Who wouldn't want to work for a highly regarded, successful business that is going places?

To conclude, winning an industry award, or just being shortlisted for one, is undoubtedly a good piece of news. So, don't keep it to yourself. Share it with as many people as you can. Include it in all your sales pitches and marketing activity. Get it out there on the social media platforms you post on and put it on your letterhead, e-mail footers and website.

What is reputation management?

Reputation Management

Ensuring you have a good business reputation is crucial. Originally a PR term, reputation management involves processes to effectively manage a business's reputation. In today's evolving, interactive and digital world, with the continuous growth of the internet as a tool for voicing opinions and reviews, what people say about your business and brand and how this influences others is more important than ever. Online Reputation Management (ORM) is the practice of attempting to shape a company's public perception online.

When you might need ORM

- Bad reviews from unhappy customers about their experiences with your company
- Damaging comments from users, customers or unhappy staff
- Negative content about your brand
- To control the presence of your competitors or unauthorised distributors, like those with a similar website name to yours

While you can't really get rid of problematic rankings or content altogether, good ORM is about replacing the negative search results with positive ones. Problematic pieces can be moved down, or off, the most important search page – Google's front page. With good ORM you can control brand presence on key search engines and create more positive listings.

Processes of reputation management

Repair - Looking at where the issues are affecting your reputation and repairing the damage.

Rebuild and recuperate - Using search engine optimisation (SEO) and PR techniques, including posting blogs and distributing press releases, to rebuild your online reputation and bury negative stories and content further down search engine results pages.

Maintain - Continuously monitor SEO to ensure good ORM is maintained.

Online reputation management strategies

- Removing blogs on topics irrelevant to your business
- Creating links to each page of content to strengthen internal links
- Creating a site page dedicated to all positive reviews about your company
- Refining technical aspects of site pages, like meta titles and meta descriptions to better match how your audience search
- Changing your site's page structure so content that's hidden deep in your site becomes more accessible

Changing your site's page structure so content that's hidden deep in your site becomes more accessible
Off-page strategies include:

- Building links from your site to all positive content about your brand on third-party sites
- Creating new content by blogs and features for business-relevant bloggers and authoritative sites, with links to your website
- Putting together a PR campaign or distributing press releases to the media about your company news and developments, with relevant links to your site



How to market a service business: The ABC's

When you provide a service such as coaching, consulting or training you are selling something intangible that cannot be seen, as products can. It's harder for clients to compare your service to your competitors. You are actually promoting yourself – your own time, expertise and experience.

Ask for referrals

When you provide a service, clients have to know and trust you before they will buy from you. They are more likely to call when someone recommends you.

- Ask for referrals when someone says “thank you” to you. This can be a client you’ve just helped, or a prospect who asks you for advice
- Every time you receive a referral, send a personalised thank you to the person who recommended you. When a recommendation becomes a job, send something else to thank your referrer.
- A great way to receive referrals is to give them. Be generous and think about who you can connect. When did you last give a referral? Who could you recommend right now?

Business networking

Networking is a great way to meet potential clients. This gives them the chance to start getting to know you, to decide if you're someone they can work with.

- There's a huge range of events you could attend and it's easy to waste time and money going to the wrong meetings. Look for the ones that attract your ideal clients.
- Stop selling. Too many business owners try to sell themselves while networking. When you meet someone for the first time ask questions and get to know them. Offer free advice or put them in touch with other good contacts.



- Networking is about building relationships, getting to know people over time and developing trust. Keep attending events and keep in touch with people you meet.

Content

How can you use content to promote your business?

- Write about what you know. Sharing knowledge and experience through written words works shows you really know your topic. Share your expertise through email newsletters, blogs, online articles and social media updates.
- Speak about what you know. Whenever you're on stage, video it and put that video onto your website. Create short video clips of advice.
- Write a book: Done well, a book can become a powerful promotional tool

If you're on a tight budget, stick to these three activities and you'll get a really good return on your investment.

Join our TBV Recruitment meeting:

Thursday 30th January 2020 at 5pm
Pages Fish & Chips, Cwmbarn
E-mail to book: info@southwalesbusiness.co.uk



Meet the Member



Tom Watkins



“As one of the four professional rugby regions in South Wales, Dragons Rugby represents a wide geographical area encompassing the historic heartland of Gwent. This region supports the largest contingent of rugby clubs (73 in total) in Wales including famous clubs such as Newport, Pontypool and Ebbw Vale. In 2016 the region completed a dynamic brand and business refresh as part of the new ownership model changing from ‘Newport Gwent Dragons’ to ‘Dragons Rugby’

Through the wide-reaching efforts of the Dragons community department, Dragons rugby remains true to the values of supporting grass roots development of the game and providing opportunities to all within the region. This directly leads into the success of the Dragons Academy, where the region continues to promote the ‘Dragons Way’ trading on the historic values of Gwent rugby and developing young people both on and off the

field. Despite continued commercial growth and wider engagement the foundations of the Dragons will always remain focused on and built around young local talent from the region.

As business development manager for the region it’s my job to connect with businesses from our area and make sure we are doing all we can to promote them to their full potential. There is a huge variety of options when working with a professional sports team from brand awareness, to corporate social responsibility through supporting our community initiatives.

If any of the businesses are interested in talking with me about how working with the dragons can benefit their business, my door at Rodney parade is always open and the kettle is always on.”

Contact

Email: tom.watkins@dragonsrugby.wales
Tel: 07538 210128

We would like to thank our contributors:



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