



Support for businesses during the recession

By Martin Pollins

In a recession, as well as in normal times, business owners need all the help they can get. The Government and other agencies have responded to this demand with a range of solutions and free resources that could, for many businesses, mean the difference between survival and failure. In this paper we look at some of the resources on offer and provide links for further information. There's no guarantee of success, but business owners who are better equipped are more likely to survive and even thrive than those who blindly blunder forward totally unequipped for the difficulties ahead.

Business Rates

If you have any queries regarding business rates, anticipate problems with payment, or wish to find out whether you qualify for Small Business Rate Relief, you should contact your Council's Business Rates team.

Credit Management

Barclays Bank is currently offering a business-to-business credit management solution free to all small businesses; allowing you to credit check your five biggest customers and track their credit rating for up to a year. You do not have to be a Barclay's customer. To find out more, telephone 07775 546023.

Managing Debt

Business Debtline is a charity working with the government and the UK's leading money advice agencies to provide confidential practical advice in dealing with debt and cashflow problems. Telephone 0800 197 6026 or visit their website at www.bdl.org.uk

Redundancy Support

The Continuing Employment Support Service (CESS) is a joint initiative of the Regional Development Agency and Jobcentre Plus. Working with the main government agencies, the CESS offers a free, tailored, in-house package of support to workers facing redundancy. The service includes advice on pensions, benefits, national insurance and careers as well as support with CVs and re-training. To find out more, please telephone SEEDA on 01483 470169.

Help with legal obligations

Businesses may be at risk of failing to meet their legal obligations, such as those covering food safety or health and safety at work. This might lead to problems and could even result in prosecution. Your Council's Environmental Health Section will provide free advice and guidance at an early stage and to help you stay within the law. This does not relieve you of your responsibility.

Free Impartial Business Advice and Support

A range of information and advice for businesses can be found by visiting www.businesslink.gov.uk/businesshelp. To receive a visit from a Business Adviser, please telephone 0845 6009006 or email info@businesslinksoutheast.co.uk

Business Link Advisers also offer support to businesses who wish to carry out a healthcheck. Advisers will help firms review performance and identify early signs of issues that could affect profitability. To book a healthcheck and ensure that your firm is maximising its cash flow,

optimising its marketing activity and has an effective business plan in place, you can contact your business advisor (your accountant or solicitor) or Business Link (details above).

Training

Train to Gain is a government funded programme that gives you access to a skills broker who can carry out a training needs analysis and help assess the skills that are available to your company now and what might be needed in the future. Advice on local training providers and funding to support training is also available. For more information, visit www.traintogain.gov.uk or telephone 0845 7512288.

Government Financing Packages:

Government is publishing a new booklet entitled "Real Help Now for People and Business". It attempts to put in plain language details of how to get help and what extra support is being introduced this spring. Information is available at: www.realhelpnow.gov.uk/pdf/national.pdf. The booklet will be updated as more help becomes available and explains how to get help:

- In avoiding repossession
- with housing and living costs
- with finding jobs
- with skills and training
- for graduates and apprenticeships
- for people with money problems
- for pensioners
- for businesses needing business loans and long-term finance
- for employers and employees

European Investment Bank Loans for SMEs

A total of £4bn is being made available through the European Bank for loans to 2011. Available through nominated commercial banks in the UK, further information can be found by visiting the EIB website at <http://www.eib.org> or by emailing info@bizezia.com and asking for the Bizezia publication No. 547- Support for UK SMEs from the European Investment Bank.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee

The Small Firms Loan Guarantee is supported by the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and a number of banks, building societies and other lenders. The scheme can potentially assist small and medium-sized enterprises that are unable to obtain a conventional loan because they do not have assets to offer as security. Ask for the Bizezia publication 34-Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme by emailing info@bizezia.com.

Other Support for UK Businesses

Bizezia's online business library now has over 720 titles covering a huge range of topics. Accountants, Lawyers, IFAs, Finance Directors, Recruiters and others subscribe to the library (details available at www.bizezia.com). Some of the publications aimed at helping UK businesses in the recession are:

- Support for British Manufacturers
- Support for UK SMEs from the European Investment Bank
- Financial Support for Entrepreneurs and Investors
- Support for Inventors
- DBERR and other Business Support Initiatives
- Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme
- Help for Rural Communities
- Business Loan Protection
- Cashflow Solutions for Small Businesses

- Internet Business Plan
- Marketing Research for Small Businesses
- Competitiveness-How the best UK companies are winning at business
- Marketing for Small Businesses
- How Small Businesses can do Business on the Internet
- 101 Ways to Promote your Business
- Business Survival Lessons
- Business Angels

Many of the above titles are available for subscription in the Business Survival packages available from Bizezia, in either Recession Survival Express (15 publications) or Recession Survival Classic (73 publications). Details are available at www.bizezia.com or by request to info@bizezia.com.

You can request up to 6 of the above Bizezia publications free of charge by emailing info@bizezia.com. Alternatively, why not make these and other publications available on your website for clients and prospects to download? Details are available at www.bizezia.com

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This article was issued to coincide with the launch of Bizezia's new website at www.bizezia.com. The article written by Martin Pollins MBA, FCA, CTA, former ICAEW Council Member, the Founder of The CharterGroup Partnership and LawGroup UK and now Managing Director of Bizezia Limited.

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