

### Practical support for businesses

Ian Lingard, Business Projects Officer at Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is very aware of the need for practical help and support to businesses in the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB5) areas in the borough. He feels strongly that providing these workshops is a practical and effective use of Blackburn Town Centre Renaissance Programme funding and other available funding because they equip businesses with basic marketing skills in order for them to attract more business and maximise turnover. He was naturally delighted with the results of Main Marketing's course.

### A great foundation

The workshops had been created to provide solid, practical help for businesses of all kinds and their usefulness was confirmed by all the delegates.

Lee Cunningham from Memory Tube Kiosks commented "The Competitive Edge course is a great foundation for anyone starting a business; I rated the advice very highly," – a sentiment echoed by Susan Thornber from Natural Preserves Ltd: "This series of workshops is a vital building block for the growth of any business. It certainly gave me more

confidence in what I could do for the business. I'm very optimistic that our business will flourish and go from strength to strength." After the four workshops delegates were offered a one-to-one session with the course director to

discuss their individual business needs and this again proved very fruitful for all participants. "Diane really does know her stuff and she presents it in a digestible, accessible and entertaining way. It's logical and structured and the whole experience has been very

fruitful," commented newspaper entrepreneur, Paul Vaughan. "We were given lots of ideas on how to grow the business – it's given me more confidence in what I offer and a great deal of optimism."

### Invaluable course materials

The course materials written by Di Jackson, were particularly praised by the delegates, who confirmed they keep dipping into them because they're so useful and user-friendly. "I'm learning the theory of marketing on an HNC course at the moment, but this course from Main Marketing was about putting the theory into practice. The course materials are fantastic – they're in regular use."

### Could the NHS learn from Main Marketing?

Enthusiasm and confidence knew no bounds for one delegate who had, following the course, implemented their own customer services feedback questionnaire. "I even challenged the effectiveness of a questionnaire I received from the NHS and put a note on my response to advise them how to make it more effective!"

### Four practical events

The Competitive Edge is a series of four workshops on different facets of marketing, delivered in an informal but dynamic way, each 90 minutes long. Additional networking time is provided. Delegates receive full supporting material, including delegate notes and workbooks full of examples and exercises to complete and a relevant business book. Where possible a pre-visit to the delegate premises or telephone introduction will be made and an individual consultation is offered after the course has been completed. The Competitive Edge series is run by Main Marketing in many areas of the country as a very cost-effective solution for Project Officers who want to support the growth of new business in their area.



# Optimism abounds in Blackburn businesses



All the businesses who attended a series of workshops run by Main Marketing & PR Limited during 2008/9 are now really optimistic about the future.

"The Competitive Edge" is a series of four workshops created and presented by marketing specialist Diane Jackson. The course is designed to help businesses find their competitive edge and stay ahead of rivals and the latest course delegates from a variety of businesses in the Blackburn with Darwen area were unanimous in their optimism.

"I've certainly recognised the signs for where as a business we can get a competitive edge", said Laura from Select Medical "and we're very optimistic about the way forward for this business."

Business owner Rosa Panaro from the Sir Charles Napier had been a teacher previously and so was obviously very interested in anything educational. She was delighted with the course: "I've taken quite a few things on board from it and it's given me good ideas to work with – it was great. I really feel I know and understand my customer so much better."

Other graduates who are now running their own business also felt the real benefit from the practical help they received.

"This course put all the theory into practice - it's rare to find such an excellent learning environment," said Paul Vaughan from the Blackburn Independent Newspaper Group. "I have learned to appreciate the value of and need for market research – it's vital. I've undertaken lots of market research since the course and had an excellent response."

Susan Thornber from Natural Preserves Ltd enthused, "The Competitive Edge workshops helped us understand what you can do yourself and what you need specialist help with. In our case, we've taken Diane's advice and have now recruited a Press Officer for the business. We have lots of good ingredients for the way forward."

