



**Building
Better
Business for
Brentwood**

Brentwood Chamber of Commerce

Newsletter

All the latest news in Brentwood – including special announcements, events and much more

January
2018

Dear member,

A message from your Chairman

Happy New Year to all our members, and I hope that it will prove prosperous for you and your business.

Whilst nationally 2018 holds a certain amount of uncertainty for businesses, particularly as Brexit negotiations continue, I am feeling positive about the outlook for businesses in Brentwood. This year certainly promises to be an exciting year for the Chamber, with several new initiatives.



The Chamber's inaugural Brentwood Business Awards, which will be judged this summer, will culminate in a gala awards ceremony in November. The awards provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the high quality of businesses in the Brentwood area. Entry to the awards is free of charge, so we encourage all of you to enter at least one category.



Some of you may have fond memories of the Chamber Summer Barbecues several years ago, when our then Chairman, Shenfield butcher Roger Kelsey, supplied the meat each year. We have decided to re-introduce this popular event, but your current Chairman will not be supplying the meat! This year's Summer Barbecue will be hosted by Chamber member Orsett Hall Hotel on Wednesday 4 July (a day on which there are no World Cup matches scheduled!).

We will, of course, continue our popular monthly Business Breakfasts, and 'Netwalking' will be back in May.

All of these activities will increase the workload of the Chamber, and I am delighted to announce the appointment of Caroline Judd to the new position of Chamber Office Manager. Caroline will be working for the Chamber on a part-time basis and will be the initial point of contact for many of you when contacting the Chamber.

I have recently finished working on our budget for 2018 with our Treasurer, Peter Clements, so it is probably a good time to remind you that the Chamber receives no grant, and is solely dependent on members' subscriptions.

If you have not yet done so, could you please pay your 2018 subscription as soon as possible.



Finally, please let us know about any items of news which you think may be of interest to Chamber members – we will be happy to consider them for inclusion in our newsletter.

Wishing you all the best for 2018.

Colin Barber
Chairman

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Meet the Executive Committee



This month: Paul Mason-Hughes, Community and Partnerships Manager at Havering College of Further and Higher Education.

Q: May we have a potted history of your business life?

I joined Havering College nearly ten years ago having worked for a number of years in advertising and publishing. My role at the college is a varied one, working with businesses and stakeholders to offer training to local residents that will enable them to gain sustainable employment or progress in their career. For example, we've trained everyone from articulated truck drivers with Tesco to railway track maintenance engineers to work on Network Rail, Crossrail and TfL London Underground projects. We have also worked on EU-funded Erasmus exchange programme

projects with learners in France and Malta, as well as projects with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Q: What made you decide to join the Chamber and how long have you been a member/on the Executive Committee?

My work with local stakeholders brought me to the Chamber a couple of years ago, although the college has been represented on the Executive Committee for a number of years. I enjoy working with the Chamber because businesses are ultimately people and if people are afforded the opportunity to learn better skills they will make better businesses.

Q: What are the best things about being a member of a Chamber of Commerce and what would you say to encourage other businesses to join?

The Chamber has a varied membership across all areas of business, so you get to ask questions and learn from others. New businesses can learn from old ones and vice versa. Most importantly, the Chamber gives local businesses a collective voice and the opportunity to influence key decision-makers in local government and beyond.

Q: What about your hobbies/interests outside of work?

I am a season ticket holder at London Stadium and even if the football isn't great, the resonance of 50,000 East Londoners singing 'Bubbles' always is. I failed in my attempts to be a rock

star guitar player as I never made it beyond the pub. I spend a lot of time these days watching the kids taking part in their activities, as do the majority of parents.

Q: Can you tell us something interesting about yourself that not many people know?

I once featured on Bulgarian prime time TV in a show about Bulgarian business activities overseas. That's all I'm saying on that one unless you're willing to buy me a few pints...



Paul Mason-Hughes. Photo by Carmel Jane

Q: You're on an extra strict version of Desert Island Discs and you're told that you can take only one item to the island: what would you take?

The obvious answer is some form of survival tool but given the security restrictions at airports these days, the Leatherman might be difficult. Being shipwrecked is a different scenario, though. To cover all eventualities, a pair of Blundstone boots in Stout Brown would be my preferred option as they are sturdy and work with most outfits. If we are talking discs, then Billy Bragg's album 'Don't Try This At Home' – quite ironic if stuck on a desert island...

www.havering-college.ac.uk



Havering College



Julian Goode. Photo by Carmel Jane

Going for gold (standard quality)

The importance of having top quality website and social media content is explained by Chamber/ Executive Committee member Julian Goode, who runs Brentwood -based business Julian Goode – Digital, Content, Social Media.

Using skills and expertise accumulated running digital media for the England & Wales Cricket Board for 15 years, Julian’s mission now is to help local businesses maximise their digital content. He believes that everyone should have quality content illuminating their websites and social media channels.

“Everyone in business with a website or using social media is in the content business,” he said. “It’s just a matter of degree, business category and budgets. Identify the business objectives you need to support via your site, blogs and social channels, do that as well as possible and don’t let up. Keep your eye on the ball!

“In sport, that might mean using innovative content to drive people from Instagram to your website to buy match tickets. For a small Brentwood business it could be getting people to sign up to your email newsletters to receive special offers, or promoting a specific product in your online shop via Facebook and Twitter using great pictures or video.”

While much of Julian’s career has been spent in the sporting ‘arena’ (it includes a 10-year stint as a sports journalist before his time at Lord’s),

Julian says the same principles and lessons apply across the business world.

“Build an audience and provide them with engaging content and well-presented information about your services and products,” he advises. “That helps build a relationship – transactional, or, to start with, simply digital. If you don’t believe your own website or social media feeds represent you professionally enough, you’re doing yourself a disservice. If you analyse your competitors, and they’re doing it better than you, then you could miss out in winning new customers or building engaging relationships with existing customers.”

Julian understands how the digital challenge – including the cost – can be daunting. But, he says: “Don’t try to do it all. Focus on what you do best, and don’t be afraid to go and look for specialist help when you need it. If you wouldn’t write or print your own brochures, why build your own website, write all your own content, or run your own social media feeds? At the very least, consider earmarking some marketing budget to get them polished so that they present your business in the best possible light online.”



www.juliangoode.co.uk
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Dates for your diary

Business Breakfasts, at Marygreen Manor, 7.30am networking for 8am breakfast; to book, visit www.brentwoodchambers.co.uk

Friday 12 January – Sponsored by Ardleigh Green Janitorial Supplies and entitled “Myths and Magic”

Friday 9 February – Sponsored by Wortley Byers Law

Friday 9 March – Sponsored by Aching Arms, a baby loss charity

Friday 26 January – Private guided tour of the Houses of Parliament

One ticket left at time of going to press

Raise your profile through Business Breakfast sponsorship

Snap up an exclusive, high-profile Sponsorship Package for our popular Business Breakfast. Available each month, the package includes:

- A one-minute introduction at the previous month's Breakfast
- Five free places at your sponsored Business Breakfast for your clients and/or employees
- A ten-minute slot for you to give a presentation about your company at your sponsored Breakfast
- Scope for publicising your company at the event, including the exclusive opportunity to place your publicity materials on attendees' chairs
- Publicity for your sponsorship/your company in the previous month's Chamber newsletter (production schedules allowing)
- Publicity on the Chamber website.

The sponsorship package, comprising all of the above and providing an invaluable opportunity to raise the profile of your business among Brentwood's businesses, costs only £100. For more information and to reserve your month in 2018, please email Chairman Colin Barber – Colin.Barber@brentwoodchambers.co.uk

The Bitcoin 'bubble' - are we in for trouble?

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make money or a fragile bubble that is set to burst? Bitcoin has been described as both.

It used to be looked upon as a mere plaything for criminals and nerds, but there's no ignoring it now. This digital currency launched on the Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) futures exchange on 10 December – allowing investors to 'bet' on whether Bitcoin prices will rise or fall. And in the run-up to this launch its value soared to more than \$18,000 per Bitcoin.

As businesspeople we need to keep ourselves up-to-date with financial issues in general but with Bitcoin it's not that simple. One of its controversial aspects is that many people still don't see it as 'a thing'. Although it is called a 'currency', many people still argue that it's more of an asset, a commodity, something with no real use or accessible value.

So although Bitcoin's introduction to the CBOE has been seen by some as legitimising the 'currency', other people are still flagging up warnings. For instance, a major investor, Neil Woodford, who manages billions of pounds of investors' money, has likened it to the 1637 craze for Dutch tulips: when tulips rocketed in popularity, this convinced thousands that there were fortunes to be made, the price of the bulbs rose by 2,200% in four months and then countless livelihoods were ruined when the bubble burst.

So, let the investor beware – and 'watch this space'!

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