

### SHOP DOCTORS DISPENSE PRACTICAL HELP



**Independent retailers were given a boost when the Shop Doctors came to Blaenau Gwent recently to hold a series of marketing workshops or 'surgeries'.**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council invited Main Marketing and PR Limited to provide practical support for shopkeepers and improve the health and vitality of their shops.

Branded as the 'Shop Doctors', two experts on different aspects of marketing ran four workshops over two evenings for business owners from the valley towns of Tredegar, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Abertillery and Blaina. The initiative was supported by the Heads of the Valley Programme and Blaenau Gwent Local Public Health Team.

"I thought the course was really good. It certainly gave me a better insight into business and some very practical help; I learned a lot", enthused IT man Daniel Andrews, from D & N Computing in Tredegar. Fellow retailer Steve Ruddock, who runs Unique Photography Services agreed: "It was great, full of good advice and ideas.

Some shopkeepers tend to think they know it all and there's nothing more to learn. I know a lot but the course helped me re-focus; it reminded me of much that I'd forgotten and I learnt new things, so my time was well spent there."



One of Steve Ruddock's delightful portraits

### Free to retailers

The workshops were free to attend, which was appreciated by the retailers. During the workshops many of the retailers signed up for a subsequent private consultation in their own premises with Diane and Bill, to have individual, customised advice – another initiative of considerable value to these business owners.

*"It is impressive that the council are doing something to help", said Susan Woodward from Little Gems in Tredegar.*

Abertillery based Jessica Whorton from the Sisterz beauty salon echoed the sentiments "You're always learning in business, you don't stop. I thought the course was good; it gave me a boost. It also highlighted things I haven't done for a while. It was also good to think about work without actually being in work."

The programme consisted of four workshops or 'surgeries' on different facets of marketing: injecting great customer service ideas into business, advertising and promotions and visual merchandising. It was devised and presented by Shop Doctor Diane Jackson, Managing Director of Main Marketing who is a retail marketing specialist with a real passion for helping independent retailers survive and thrive. Diane founded the successful Retail Survival courses which have been presented across many parts of England and Wales for almost ten years.

Her fellow 'Doctor' Bill Smith is an expert in visual merchandising and gave many insider tips and techniques to the audience.

## Just what the doctor ordered!

Tredegar retailers Jody Jones and Sian Thomas from Jack and Jill's nursery specialists were delighted they'd attended the workshops. "I learned lots of new things and we've put loads into practice since the course: it certainly gave us ideas for the growth of the business", said Sian.



Jody added "It's motivated me to do so many things. Now I find there just aren't enough hours in the day to do all I want to, having been on the course! I've now determined how to rationalise my product range and that's already paying benefits; I've introduced various initiatives that my customers really like so I'm engendering real customer loyalty – just what the Shop Doctor ordered."



## Optimistic

"I'm certainly more optimistic about the future of my business since the course." Jemma Amos, owner of Sh'Eclipz Hair and Tanning Studio in Blaina.



## How to meet the challenges of the future

Maybe your Regional Development Agency could help fund a project like this in your area.

If you're a Town Centre Manager, a Project Officer or in a position to help independent retailers in your area, Email the Shop Doctor at [shopdoctor@retailsurvival.co.uk](mailto:shopdoctor@retailsurvival.co.uk) or call 0845 129 9948.

*Julie Davies and Wendy Dando from Brynmawr's Davies Wallpaper were in agreement, "the course was worthwhile; it gave us some good ideas to go forward."*  
*"I was very impressed with the course; it was relaxed, informal and very informative."*  
*Richard Caitlin, DIY Centre in Abertillery.*