

## Leicestershire Business Network - Rob Potter, CEO Channel 2020

Before you find out what the different workshops have come up with, I'd like to spend a few minutes introducing a new mechanism for collaboration.

Trying to eat and listen to me is going to be a lot to digest. But let's give it a go.

There's no doubt, about the value of your contribution today. The Leicestershire Economic Strategy will be all the better for it.

But its only a start. You will all go away from here and in a few days the event will be a distant memory. So is that it? Job done? Is that really what you came here for?

What about any new ideas you might have? What if when you're watching Eastenders and you have a flash of inspiration? Probably hardly likely- but hey, anything's possible.

And another thing- did you have a sense during the workshops that you needed a bit more support info to know whether your ideas or concerns had any substance? You wouldn't normally make a business decision without some research first.

Clearly, we need a mechanism to help us with all of this... and to make what we've done today the start of a stronger new relationship.

That's why within the next four weeks, the LSEP will be launching an online business consultation site- called the Leicestershire Business Network.

Another business network! Just what we needed!!!

Hear me out- because I'd like to think this one is a little different.

Firstly let me quickly say that this is not trying to compete with any other network. Its aim is to act as a device to bring the different business associations together.

### Features

- *Opportunities for members to create their profiles and tag their interests with those of other members*
- *Social networking between community members- sharing content, ideas, micro-teams*
- *Community rating of all member contributions*
- *High quality streamed video with full screen capabilities*
- *A bank of rich-media resources- videos, PowerPoint presentations, animations, images, reports, weblinks, audiofiles, articles, TV features*
- *Options to add additional media feeds- TV/ radio/ RSS news*

This site uses all the latest gizmos that you see in My Space, You Tube and lots of the other popular social networking sites. But its is developed specifically to facilitate what Leicestershire businesses need

- to stay in touch with the process of building a strategy
- plus giving the choice for Leicestershire business people to stay in touch with each other.

Some of you might think that online community networks are fine for the young, the nerds or those who have a fear of going outside. But today, they're growing rapidly to support the niche interests of all kinds of people- even business people.

Most sites are deadly. They're dull, complicated and about as attractive as John Prescott's underpants.

So what's going to make people interested in this?

How does it work?

When I first log on and register, I'd be asked to create my own profile page- about me and my business.

Throw in a few issues that particularly interest me... a few hobbies I like... links back to my business website or maybe other sites I find useful... and my own bank of ideas/ proposals I've written... articles or reports I've liked... videos I've found useful for my business...

Its all geared to:

- what I want to share with other members about the Leicestershire economy
- what I want to share with them about finding business success or local business suppliers (e.g., a good accountant or solicitor)/ maybe an article about better using communications technology to drive business success

The site allows me to tag up with other members (via a search mechanism) who share the same interests/ who might want to collaborate with me on a proposal or even a venture.

I will also be able to feed documents, articles, web pages, presentations, videos, images into a central bank if I think that others could get some use out of any of these.

Alternatively, I might go to the Leicestershire Business Network media bank and dig out support materials for a new proposal I'm preparing. If for instance I want to set out a proposal on one of my pet interests- say a Leicestershire TV service, I could check out whether anybody else had considered the subject.

I could check out the developing Leicestershire Economic strategy and see whether my proposal fits with some of the core local objectives.

I might like to email other members and discuss my proposal in a forum area.

Then when I'm happy, I could complete my proposal, and post it to the ideas and proposals presentation area.

Once in this area, other members can vote on whether they think it has legs or sucks.

Top rated ideas always appear in top position- a bit like recommendations on Amazon. But it's an easy way to show consensus.

This part of the site will be available for any external body to see- whether it's the media, a council, or a business. Why's it useful? Because it's the best form of business democracy we have. Its far from perfect- but it beats anything else we've got. And clearly its valuable for developing Leicester shire Economic strategy.

It's a big project. Its pioneering. Its innovative. And it could fail. But that's down to you and I. We'll try and throw as much valuable content to give businesses plenty of reasons to keep returning. Without this it simply won't be compelling enough to engage business people.

So I urge you to check it out and see if it works for you. The temporary Leicestershire Day site will have further information. Let us know your views.

Don't think of it just to create and share your ideas on the Leicestershire economy. It will hopefully give you access to other great local business minds and resources that may **add value to their own business**.

Its not a quick fix. People will be skeptical. Others will be uncomfortable with the technology. Some will dismiss it as quirky nonsense. But that's what most people once thought of the hi-tech forms of communications we've come to take for granted today.