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BUSINESS PLANNING IS KEY TO SUCCESS

Every year, there are some people who attempt to run businesses without taking the time to draw up a business plan, and every year lots of them come unstuck. The sad thing is that if most of them had taken just a little time to plan ahead, they could have avoided the pitfalls.

Perhaps part of the problem is that *business plan* sounds so daunting, but it's actually just common sense. Drawing up a business plan makes you ask yourself some pretty basic questions:

- who wants to buy what I'm selling?
- how good is the competition?
- what's the right price to charge?
- am I going to run out of money before the sales start to come in?

Getting the answers to these questions can mean the difference between being a successful small business - and being out of business.

When the Pell family from Newport acquired The White Hart Inn at Llangybi near Usk earlier this year they knew they would need a strong business plan to turn around the ailing business. The building which dates from the 1500's is full of character and it has taken the family over six months to restore the Grade 11-listed building to its former glory.

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The Pells have made a substantial investment in restoring the building and are now starting to see the fruits of their labour reaping rewards. The day to day running of the enterprise is left to David Pell (25) and his younger brother Greg (23). David, who is responsible for management and the development of the business previously worked for a medical company while Greg has extensive experience in catering having worked in the sector for some time and has recently, completed a degree in hospitality management.

The enterprise has been supported by NatWest who are providing a relationship service from its Newport Business Centre.

Their initial business plan projected a 100% growth in turnover within the first 12 months and they are currently on track, not only to meet this objective, but exceed it comfortably within the period. Wet sales is still a defining feature of the pub and to attract a wider customer base they stock a varied range of real ales including the variety offered by the Wye Valley Brewery which is particularly popular with visitors to the area.

The restaurant is key to the success of the business with Russell Watkins, previously of Junction 28 Bassaleg, employed as head chef. The menu is varied with all the produce sourced locally when ever possible. As well as catering for diners, the old stable room also serves the purpose of a meeting or function room while the next phase of the development will be the introduction of Bed and Breakfast accommodation which is planned for early next year.

David Pell, commented: “Careful planning is critical to developing any business and particularly one trading in a highly competitive marketplace such as ours. From the outset you need to have clear ideas of where you see the business going in the longer term, what you want to achieve and have a route of how you intend to attain this. Your approach shouldn’t be completely rigid in its ideals; flexibility and the ability to adapt to your market are fundamental.

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You need to work to find a balance between where you are aiming to position yourself in line with consumer demand which can take time, and due to nature of people this can be ever-changing. There are ways in which we do things in certain areas of the business which have evolved and adapted from our initial operating period. The ability to do this, regularly re-assess your position and keep things fresh is crucial for any business that wants to achieve its goals.”

Andrew Jones, Senior Business Manager at NatWest’s Newport Business Centre, said: “Every good business should start with two things: a good idea, and a strong business plan. Choosing the right idea can signal the success or failure of your business. David and Greg have invested a lot of time and energy into researching their business and have tailored their service to meet the needs of the local community. The importance of preparing a business plan can’t be over emphasised and it be constantly reviewed and evolve as circumstances change. I’m delighted NatWest was able to support the initiative and wish David and Greg all the success at The White Hart Village Inn.”

NOTE TO EDITORS:

- Photograph attached of David and Greg Pell.
- For more information visit www.whitehartvillageinn.com
- Business address, The White Hart Village Inn, Llangybi near Usk.
- David Pell available for interview on 01633 450 258.
- Photography by Brian Jarrett.

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