

Collaborating for Success

Collaboration was the topic of conversation at the latest Malvern Small Business Forum. Hosted by Christina Walker from BeSpoke Voice Coaching, the evening opened up doorways to potential new relationships being formed which, after all, is what networking is all about.

What is collaboration?

The Cambridge Dictionary describes collaboration as:

The situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing

For businesses looking to collaborate together, it is crucial to keep this definition in mind. The group discussed the various reasons why we collaborate as businesses and what is needed to make a successful partnership happen.

Everyone was keen to offer their suggestions. There were some notable examples, including:

- Trust
- Generosity
- Understanding
- Mutual respect

The topic of confidentiality was also mentioned as well as the discussion of understanding what the overall goal and achievement of the partnership will be. Is the goal to host a mutually beneficial workshop, or helping each other to gain new leads and customers?

What holds back collaboration?

From this, the group began to look at the other side of collaboration – the difficulties that businesses can encounter. Again, everyone came up with some interesting reasons, some based on their own experiences.

A lack of trust was one of the reasons mentioned, as well as a worry that the other party would not put in as much effort. Greed and selfishness appeared to be two of the strongest concerns, especially when the topic of money and customers was examined.

Collaboration is not always easy. A successful partnership rarely happens overnight – it is the result of building trust, working hard together, and clear communication. It was important for the group to consider the obstacles that they could encounter, as well as discussing how to overcome these obstacles.

Connecting and collaborating

Even as the discussion was happening, potential collaborations were already starting to form. Two members of the group began to consider the possibility of hosting a social media workshop using both of their skills and connections. Ideas were flying across the table, opening doors to relationships which may have otherwise been hidden.

Christina also got everyone thinking about what they could contribute to a partnership. These included a free written profile about the business, 'taster' sessions, and even photography.

What would you happily give as part of collaboration? Take a look at your business and think how you could start helping another company without asking for anything in return.

A successful evening

With a free-flowing discussion and potential partnerships starting to form, the Forum was certainly a success. For our next meeting, we will be treated to a tour of Malvern courtesy of Carl Flint, so put a note in your diary for July 18.

For more about the Malvern Small Business Forum, email us at info@msbf.biz.

Happy Collaborating!