

Capturing character and craft: the lifeblood of your market town in pictures

In the debate about the vitality of our market towns, it is often said that independent traders are key. There is a strong sense that they give a town some of its character and add variety to the shopping mix alongside national and regional chains.

Town campaigns to promote the retail and hospitality offer have taken a number of forms, most commonly publication of a shoppers guide.

OTCN Ltd is keen to pilot an alternative based on taking quality photographs of a town's independent traders which reflect their character and their craft, and capture the commitment behind local businesses.



How it works

This project would involve taking photographs of the owners/managers and staff of small businesses and independent traders outside (and/or inside) their business premises in a particular Oxfordshire market town.

The photographs would be a modern-day interpretation of the archive photographs commonly taken in the 1920s, but seen throughout the years for individual streets and shops.

The emphasis is on supporting the business offer and the personality behind the business, celebrating hard-work, innovation and customer service.



The Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network Limited
By post to: c/o 35A Market Place, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 8AH
Registered in England and Wales. Company Registration No. 5446666. Registered Office: 9400
Garsington Road, Oxford Business Park, Oxford. OX4 2NH.

How could the photographs be used?

The portfolio of images will have a multitude of marketing and PR uses that can contribute positively to everything from shop local campaigns to seasonal celebrations. This could include:

- Use in creative locations to promote a business and/or town, such as bus sides, projections on buildings, in local museums/libraries, as postcards...the list is endless
- Use in digital form to improve and personalise websites
- Use in charity campaigns that promote local loyalty and corporate social responsibility, such as calendars, work with schools...
- Use by individual shops in-store or for their own promotional, advertising and PR campaigns

As part of the emphasis on 'local' we'd aim to use a town-based photographer where possible and to engage young people from schools and/or colleges in the project.

The potential media engagement and marketing benefits are considerable. Similar projects have been delivered successfully in other places by town centre management partnerships and by professional artists.

If successful, the project could be rolled out to other Oxfordshire locations to create a full "county" archive.



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Outcomes

- A business personality picture portfolio(s);
- A visual social archive 2009 (worst economic recession since WWII);
- The development of a new embryonic relationship with groups of small traders who might not have interacted previously;
- Material for small-business exhibition opportunities;
- An opportunity for small traders to purchase souvenir images.

Why?

- To raise the profile of independent traders by looking at the personality behind the business;
- To explain why people run their own business and the skills and commitment that they have to providing a service;
- To create a business "social archive" at a particular point in time that can be revisited, and compared, in future years;
- To create a shop-front visual archive at a particular point in time that can be revisited, and compared, in future years
- To create a portfolio of images that can be used for a range of marketing initiatives;
- To create an endearing and legitimate reason to engage with small business owners and their shop staff that could prove beneficial for promoting future initiatives.



Project Delivery

The stages of the project are as follows:

1. Agree funding package
2. Tender photography work to “people/personality” photographer, preferably one in the chosen town
3. Explore opportunities to engage students from the local school(s) or college
4. Approach traders and arrange appointments
5. Photographs taken
6. Images evaluated
7. Archive research undertaken
8. Arrange exhibition

Costs

- Project Management
- Photographer
- Exhibition
- Match-funding – there is the potential to generate income through souvenir photograph sales to each participating business and for exhibition sponsorship.

A detailed quotation would be developed once it is clear how many target ‘traders’ there would be in a particular town, the fees needed to cover the cost of photography and the potential for sponsorship/matched funding. There is also the potential for some offsetting of costs by sale of pictures to traders.

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*Photographs used in this document are the property of Alison Nicholson/OTCN and are for illustration rather than as examples of the kind of images the chosen photographer for each project might take.



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