



Business vouchers for SMEs

Business Voucher: University of Surrey School of Management

Academic Partners: Professor Michelle Lowe and Dr Steve Wood

Business Partner: Dandy Doos Fun Family Salon

RIBEN is currently operationalising the fifteen £3,000 business vouchers with the assistance of Business Link South East. An initial call for applications has recently closed and RIBEN is in the process of selecting two or three pilot studies to test the scheme during Autumn 2009. Detailed discussions have been held with one pilot study SME.

Dandy Doos is a hairdressers and beauty parlour which currently has two outlets, one in Loudwater and one in Chesham. The Dandy Doos concept is novel, as alongside traditional hair/beauty services the salon provides a range of children's parties. The owner of Dandy Doos is keen to access university expertise advice from RIBEN on aspects of marketing of her current locations and services. In addition, she seeks strategic advice on potential expansion of her business into new markets in the medium term.

Indicative projects:

- A retail SME is considering introducing a simple customer loyalty scheme to improve customer patronage. The KP's role is to offer advice on cost-effective methods to enhance customer loyalty, based on insight into existing schemes, methods, and consumers' reactions to them.
- A local independent garden centre is seeking to understand the changing nature of consumer demand for gardening and leisure products in recession. The KP's role is to review the available evidence on changing customer behaviour in recession, competitor responses, and offer advice to the SME on potential marketing strategies for better aligning its business with demand.
- A local Chamber of Commerce wishes to review possible ideas for the better promotion of its town's retail offer, including the possibility of an awards scheme. The KP's advice is in the form of research into best practice for town centre promotion elsewhere, guidance on what might constitute an award-winning retailer entry and suggestions as to the composition of an awards panel.
- A retailer trading association is seeking to understand how its SME members may cost-effectively introduce mechanisms to enhance sustainable consumption. The KP kickstarts the process with a review of the kinds of successful mechanisms which have been used elsewhere and an action plan.
- A small clothing retailer would like to use the Internet to sell its products more widely. The KP offers an initial piece of advice around the desirable objectives but also challenges of implementing such a strategy.

