Huddersfield University Wins EU Grant to Extend E-Business Training for Local SMEs

Submitted by: Dexterity
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- Actinic ecommerce software to help Yorkshire firms and recently unemployed -

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29 October 2003 ~ Against a backdrop of recent studies showing upward growth trends in online spending, such as Forrester Research's report quoting a rise of 46% in UK online sales to #10.4 billion in the last year, ecommerce software developer Actinic announces that its partner, Huddersfield University, has been awarded a Workforce Development Grant from the European Social Fund. The money is being used to introduce free e-business training over a twelve-month period for forty Yorkshire small businesses and fifty recently unemployed people. The core of these courses will be the ecommerce module which, as on other existing e-business programmes, will be based on Actinic's ecommerce software.

The West Yorkshire Enterprise Agency, has given the University the grant as part of its brief to help local companies develop smarter ways of working using the latest IT business tools. "We have always had close links with the local business community and this EU money will allow us to build on the success of our Electronic Business MSc degree. Our target in the next year is to help forty small companies to develop an IT strategy, including identifying whether they are suitable for selling over the web. We estimate that at least 50% of the firms could increase their turnover and profits in this way, " explains Pete Wraith of Huddersfield University Business School (www.hud.ac.uk).

The training for ninety employees from these forty companies is free of charge and comprises a mix of intensive workshops (one to three days each) at the University, projects in the workplace, and distance learning materials available on CD and online.

Wraith adds, "In addition we will help fifty unemployed people to make a fresh start by teaching them how to create and operate an online store. We've chosen to carry on using Actinic packages for this because they are easy to learn and yet have the scope to develop with the business. We also like the software because it enables us to demonstrate many aspects which Actinic provides as standard, such as SSL security, support for different payment methods, order processing, integration to accounting software and selling digital goods."
This training involves up to four weeks of free e-business tuition in the basics of web design, digital image manipulation, marketing and ecommerce.

Chris Barling, CEO of Actinic comments, "I think the potential for ecommerce use by small businesses has been greatly underestimated. It's much easier and has a much wider application than most people think. In this context I warmly welcome the provision of free training for such businesses. There's nothing like seeing for yourself what's possible to motivate faster adoption of ecommerce, which can benefit the whole economy."

A former student from the University, Rebecca Hearne, currently working with Motorworks in Meltham, adds,

"Setting up a web shop with Actinic was far easier than I had imagined. I had a basic site up and running within a day although the full store with over 5,000 parts will take a couple more days."

For details of the courses go to: Jane Key, Workforce Development, School of Computing & Engineering. Tel: 01484 473850, j.t.key@hud.ac.uk

For further comment, contact:
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About Actinic Software Ltd
Founded in 1996, Actinic specialises in developing PC-based ecommerce software for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that want to sell online. Its products include Actinic Developer, Actinic Business, Actinic Catalog and Actinic Audio Store. Actinic is a key partner in the DTI's UK online for business programme.

Actinic powers more UK ecommerce sites than any other company. Research shows that over 50% of SMEs using packaged software to run their e-stores use Actinic. Search for 'acatalog' on Google to see the vast range of online stores that run using Actinic. Some of Actinic's better known UK users include the Royal Opera House, Lloyds of London, Focus Do-it-All, Robert Dyas, the Royal Navy and Help the Aged. Visit www.actinic.co.uk

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