



Destination Growth

Flagship event helps region's business to grow

Summary

EEDA-run Destination Growth is the East of England's biennial business event, open to the region's most ambitious successful small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). A programme of master classes, keynote speeches and practical workshops give delegates the people, tools and inspiration to accelerate the growth of their businesses. Many leaders have seen positive impacts on their business after implementing strategies learnt at the event and through meeting with valuable new contacts on the day.

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| County: | Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk |
| Programme: | Business Support |
| Date: | December 2009 |

Main messages

- EEDA-organised event gives local companies access to top business thinkers
- Workshops provide practical advice on how to accelerate business growth
- Enables leaders of the region's SMEs to share experiences
- Showcases some of the best ideas coming out of the East of England
- Offers a unique networking opportunity

Looking for Inspiration

Sureya Landini is managing director of Blue Donkey, one of the region's most successful telemarketing companies. She had become concerned about public loss of confidence in telemarketing services, following the actions of a number of rogue companies who had brought the industry into disrepute. She knew Cambridgeshire-based Blue Donkey would have to change its business model if it was to carry on being successful in a climate of tough new legislation and public distrust.

Sureya explains this is why she was drawn towards the first EEDA Destination Growth event in November 2005: "We knew that Blue Donkey excelled in terms of quality and capability, but we weren't sure how best to exploit this, that's why I was so





excited by the high calibre of speakers at the event, some of whom had been respected names on my bookshelf for years.”

Sureya found the inspiration she was looking for. “One thing all the speakers said was that being good is no longer good enough – your business has to have the edge in the way you add value in terms of people’s overall experience when they deal with you.” After attending the conference Sureya realised that the key to Blue Donkey’s future success was to be completely transparent about their quality systems.

This led to the company seeking and gaining ISO (International Standards Organisation) and IIP (Investors in People) accreditation. They have also worked to ensure all communication with clients is open and transparent, investing in IT systems and appointing a quality assurance manager to make this happen.

“Our growth between 2006 and 2007 has been 24%,” comments Sureya, “and we attribute this directly to the changes implemented as a result of ideas taken away from Destination Growth. This success is in contrast to a recent industry report highlighting the telemarketing industry as a whole, which states that in the top 100 companies in our sector [which includes Blue Donkey] 23 businesses are facing failure.”

How does Destination Growth work?

EEDA has attracted over 1,000 of the region’s most ambitious small and medium-sized enterprises to the three Destination Growth events. “Everything within the event was created specifically to give decision makers the tools to grow their businesses.” Richard Ellis, chair at EEDA. The most recent event had a specific focus on supporting businesses through the recession by providing them with the practical tools to survive and thrive in the economic climate.

One of Destination Growth’s major attractions is its line-up of high-profile speakers. Many are successful business people, who will share their experiences with delegates. The events have featured inspirational speeches from: Greg Dyke, former director general BBC, Michelle Mone, founder MJM international and creator Ultimo, Jessica Sansom, head of sustainability at innocent drinks, Jerry Greenfield, the founder of Ben and Jerry’s Ice-cream, Jacqueline Gold, chief executive of Ann Summers, and retail tycoon Gerald Ratner. A master class by creative-thinker Edward de Bono was so successful in 2005 that he





returned again in 2007. Likewise, Professor Malcolm McDonald, marketing expert, has returned year-on-year following excellent feedback from the business leader audience.

Delegates are repeatedly impressed with the quality of the speakers and the full-day programme of practical tools, insights and inspiration. Surveys carried out after the event found that 64 per cent of attendees had implemented a change within their business as a result of Destination Growth '05, and 45 per cent believe it had a positive impact on their business.

The 2007 and 2009 events have built on the success of the 2005 event and each attracted more than 750 of the region's top business leaders. "Nowhere else are delegates be able to rub shoulders with 20-30 top international business speakers, all in one place, at one time, on their doorstep," said Richard Ellis. "And it is the only event in the East of England that pulls together such a broad range of public sector business support providers into one place." The exhibition area featured over 50 exhibitors all of whom provide important advice and services to businesses in the region.

The event focuses on four specific themes, which are of most importance to growing businesses:

- Innovation
- Sales and marketing
- Leadership
- Financing your business

These are dealt with through a mixture of master classes, keynote speeches and practical workshops.

Another key aspect of the day is networking. All delegates are asked to take part in a dedicated networking slot where they can maximise the networking opportunities available to them - with other business leaders, speakers and the business support organisations exhibiting.

Conclusion

Through Destination Growth, EEDA brings together the region's most ambitious small and medium-sized businesses, enabling their leaders to find innovative





and practical ways of growing their businesses. The event provides a unique opportunity for companies to share their experiences and to showcase some of the region's top business ideas, helping to build a sense of pride in the East of England's business community.

Extra quotes

Sureya Landini, managing director, Blue Donkey

"These events are important because the treadmill of running an SME does not allow for enough risk-free learning. The responsibility of being in a business that employs people is sizeable and often unforgiving, which is probably why so many people describe the job as lonely. Having the chance to learn from some of the most revered business brains, and to share experiences with people in a similar position to yourself, is wonderfully empowering."

Christine de Ferrars Green, partner at Mills & Reeve (a sponsor of Destination Growth 07)

"We've got a long track record of working with SMEs, helping local businesses grow and sharing our knowledge in terms of legal expertise. So we're happy to work closely with EEDA to support an event that helps bring economic regeneration and growth to the region. Destination Growth creates a real buzz within the business community – it gives business leaders a focus and creates an environment where they can freely share ideas and experiences."

Additional information

For more information about Destination Growth, please visit

www.eeda.org.uk/destinationgrowth

