

**Camborne Town Crier Column  
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**by Matt Powell, Business Growth Manager,  
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Credit crunch, fuel prices, inflation, housing market collapse, interest rates...all seems to be doom and gloom at the moment, and if "analysts" are to be believed, it's going to get worse before it gets better, and it's only natural that as consumers tighten their belts, the business community will have to do likewise.

But where, if anywhere, are the silver linings – the opportunities for small businesses? Well, it's an interesting fact that in the current climate, it costs almost £10 to shop in Truro before you even get out of the car (fuel prices plus car parking), so there are avenues that businesses in Camborne can explore to tempt shoppers away from Truro and to "shop locally".

Equally, with families watching the pennies, it is also interesting when you start to compare prices of individual items – I have found bread, eggs, a variety of meat, fruit and veg, all cheaper on the high street than in the supermarkets – if you're cheaper than Tesco, make sure shoppers know that you're cheaper than Tesco!

Shoppers are still willing to be parted from their cash so small businesses need to be concentrating on what makes them different, makes them stand out from the crowd, whether it be a unique product or unparalleled product knowledge. Every business has its USP – what is yours and do your customers (and potential customers) know about it?

Finally, have a look at your costs – earlier this year I suggested some ways in which you could look at reducing your business costs (from changing energy supplier to renegotiating deals with suppliers). That still holds true, but do you know how far your products have travelled to get to you? Food miles (or whatever type of miles are relevant to your business!) are starting to become an issue for shoppers and with rising fuel prices, now seems to be an ideal time to investigate ways to reduce the number of miles your products travel before getting to the shop floor – if nothing else, the fewer the miles travelled, the lower the cost to you will ultimately be, savings that can either be passed on to your customers (to make you cheaper than Tesco!), or can be absorbed into your business – meaning better profit and being in a better position to negotiate the current tough times. Equally being able to tell your customers that you yourself "shop locally" is a useful marketing tool.

We are, undoubtedly, facing a period of uncertainty on a national, if not international level, so the question is what can you do locally to give your business the best chance of riding out the storm?

As ever, please feel free to get in touch to discuss these, or any other issues, that may be affecting your business.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt Powell".