

# Boosting digital skills for the hospitality, tourism and leisure sectors in Buckinghamshire

## Background

The tourism, hospitality and leisure industries were some of the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. Challenges like lockdowns, restrictions and consumer confidence led to uncertainty, loss of productivity and skills shortages (something also exacerbated by Brexit). Visit Buckinghamshire: Boost was designed to turbo-charge the sector's recovery and ensure businesses and individuals came back more resilient to future challenges, and more sustainable and inclusive to engage the widest range of potential customers and have a positive impact on society.

## Our solutions

Research shows that technology in these sectors is changing fast with international businesses now using sophisticated systems for booking, menu-less ordering, keyless room entry and state-of-the-art operating systems. However, research from the Next Tourism Generation Alliance also shows that many businesses in these sectors struggle even to manage their social media presence. Buckinghamshire Business First approached People 1st International to help remedy this by providing these businesses with a series of training courses in digital skills.

We developed the 'Boost your Digital Skills' programme, incorporating content we had created as part of the Next Tourism Generation Alliance project, to form a digital skills programme specifically for hospitality, tourism and leisure businesses in Buckinghamshire. The modules included:

- Boosting your online presence
- Digital marketing
- Social media
- Customer reviews

## Outcomes

The programme was delivered by People 1st International master trainers, over 10 weeks, in 2-hour sessions of 6 cohorts. A custom-designed certificate of achievement was

### Client: Buckinghamshire Business First

“ People 1st International developed a digital skills programme for us that achieved exactly what we wanted it to. The programme has given local hospitality and tourism businesses the skills they need to promote themselves online and across social media.

*The content was engaging, interactive and was aimed at exactly the right level. The trainers were brilliant – they created a great rapport with participants and contextualised the content to make it relevant. We've received some fantastic feedback from those attending the programme.*

*I'd certainly recommend People 1st International as a skills partner – they did an excellent job for us.”*

**- John Browning, Local Skills Improvement Plan Manager, Bucks Business First**

awarded to participants who were validated as having successfully completed the programme.

The programme was quality assured throughout development and delivery, ensuring a well written and technically robust set of training materials were produced and delivered to a high standard.

Feedback from the programme showed that 94% of participants rated the workshops as good or excellent and 96% rated the trainers delivering the workshops as good or excellent.

## Impact

A selection of business attending the programme shared how the training has benefited their business:

### English Bridge Union reaffirm digital strategy through Bucks Digital Boost programme

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The English Bridge Union is a not-for-profit, membership funded organisation committed to promoting duplicate bridge, and represents over 600 bridge clubs across the country. With an established website and active presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, they were keen to hear ideas on how to boost their online community engagement.

Whilst the business has an experienced communications officer in place that ably manages each of these channels, many of the skills have been developed through experience rather than formal training. Sam, the communications officer was eager to hear from experts and other similar business on approaches to increasing engagement on social media and how to maximise their online presence.



Joining three out of the four modules of the Bucks Digital Boost programme, Sam found the session on Boosting your Online Presence gave her the opportunity to review the homepage of their website with fresh eyes and with an outside perspective. As a result, they have made some changes to the structure and content, helping improve ease of navigation and the user journey. With Sam also keen to provide their member clubs with guidance on how to create an effective website, the hints, tips and advice gained through the module will reach a wider audience.

The Boost your Social Media Presence module also provided Sam with ideas on approaches to social media, including the type of content to post, frequency of posting and ways to tailor it for each channel. Sam gained reassurance that their approach on quality over quantity of posts was the right way to move forward, ensuring that content provides value to their followers. Overall, the programme has had a positive impact on the English Bridge Union and it's certainly one they would recommend to other local businesses looking to revisit their digital strategy.

## Parkfield Barns build digital presence through Bucks Digital Boost programme

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Parkfield Barns are set on a 700-acre mixed arable and livestock farm. Originally redundant old farmyard barns, over the last few years they were converted into seven self-catered accommodations with beautiful views over the local farmland.

Now fully established and open to rent for holiday makers, business travellers and for those attending local events, the business was keen to develop its digital presence using the support on offer through the Bucks Digital Boost programme.

Owner-manager Nancy had already developed a website with the support of her son and was keen to develop her skills and knowledge in the digital channels that could make an impact in promoting the accommodation to its potential customers.

Attending all four modules of the programme, Nancy found the interactive nature of the training extremely beneficial. Live in-session demonstrations meant Nancy was quickly able to identify and act on improvements she could make to her Google Business profile. Keen only to take on as much as she can manage at any one time, Nancy wanted to use the sessions as a way to build her knowledge and skills to apply at a later date. She found the reassurance provided by the trainer in taking a step-by-step approach to getting online encouraging.



Nancy is now looking ahead to utilising the knowledge and resources gained from the programme to set up and manage a business profile on other accommodation booking sites. With helpful toolkits providing a reminder of the key take-aways for each module Nancy is confident she will further develop their digital presence at a steady pace.