

What a month January was! Here in Oxford we saw every kind of weather; sun, rain, hail and snow included. There is a great quote by Kin Hubbard, an American journalist, which says 'Don't knock the weather. If it didn't change once in a while, nine out of ten people couldn't start a conversation'. I struck up a conversation with a group of people whilst I was stuck in the snow, on a bus, for nearly two hours. It certainly helped pass the time, and one of them will be a useful business contact. This made me think; don't wait for the next snowfall to talk to people, keep networking all the time, you never know when you will meet someone useful. *Angela Liddiard*



Pictured are Emma, Maggie and Holly

We are having fabulous feedback regarding getting a job from the students who left us just before Christmas. These students are reaping the reward of all of their hard work, both through their degree studies and here at OMBS. Here is what one of these students told us about their first job:

'I cannot believe that I have got a job, I definitely don't think that I would have done if I hadn't come on this course so THANK YOU. The course gave me the confidence to apply for the job and also the confidence so I can walk into the job and know far more about office life and skills.'

I am leaving the course with AMAZING friends, brilliant IT skills and a job which is just fantastic so one big thank you.'

This month's IT Tip

PowerPoint 2007 has an inbuilt feature which enables you to import any number of photographs so that you can create photograph albums.

Click on the **Insert** tab/**Illustrations** group, then click on the **Photo Album** button. Click on the **File/Disk ...** button and browse to where your photographs are stored. Select which photographs you wish to use and press the **Insert** button. From the following box you can change the order of appearance, rotate the pictures, change the brightness etc (although this is probably easier done later in PowerPoint). Press **Create** and your pictures are immediately imported into your presentation. Now you can enhance your presentation by applying animations, transmissions, music etc.

Website of the month

<http://www.applausestore.com/> If you would like to be in the audience for a TV or radio show, visit this website. They have thousands of free TV and radio audience tickets, including shows like Britain's Got Talent, QI, The Brit Awards, Top Gear, Buzzcocks and many, many more.

Social Media – an essential part of life?

Is there a person alive under the age of 25 who does not have a social network profile? Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc; they have all integrated themselves into the way that we communicate with our friends and colleagues. The latest figures from Facebook state that they have over 350 million active users.

Many businesses are now realising that Social Media marketing is much more effective than traditional routes. For example: Pepsi-Cola have relinquished the advertising slot that they have held for 23 years at the Super Bowl in favour of Internet and Social Media advertising. Don't be fooled into thinking that this is a medium that only the big brands can embrace. Facebook figures show that more than 700,000 local businesses have active Facebook pages. 40% of Facebook users have 'befriended' a brand on Facebook. This gives those brands an opportunity to really communicate with their customers – something that is just not possible in offline media.

Twitter hits the press regularly when a 'celebrity' uses it to complain about being stuck in the snow, or a lift, or to tell us that they are just about to drink a cup of coffee. However, switched on brands are using Twitter to engage with their clientele in order to promote their products and get feedback on them, and on the company's performance. It is integrating itself in many other ways: last year an American company advertised for a Marketing Manager and one of the criteria for applicants was that they had at least 250 Twitter followers. I wonder how long it will be before that becomes the norm here.

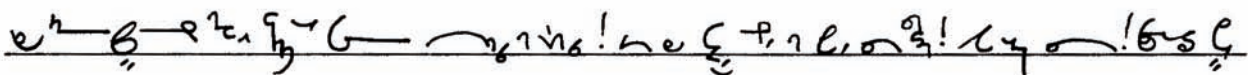
Tweet was voted the 'Word of 2009' according to ADS (American Dialect Society). The criterion is that the words nominated have to be 'newly prominent or notable in the past year'.

Politicians are now recognising just how simple it is to interact with their constituents; many of them have Twitter accounts and regularly 'Tweet'. This enables people to see how hard they are working and give them an opportunity to speak with them in a way that their monthly constituent's surgery simply could not. It also gives them the opportunity to gather opinions on projects or proposals and even to raise funds for campaigns. It is widely reported that during the month of February 2008 Barack Obama raised 55 million dollars for his campaign fund using the power of social networks.

Charities are regularly using social networks to raise awareness and to raise funds. Only last month the rap star Wyclef Jean used Twitter to appeal to fans for aid following the earthquake in his homeland, Haiti.

The whole premise of social networking is becoming so ingrained into our society that there are now plans that the study of them could become part of the school curriculum and lead to a GCSE qualification.

It is time to stop thinking of social networking sites as just a bit of fun; they are now a serious business tool that is being exploited by small businesses, big brands, charities and individuals alike.



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